

NORTH EAST AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES

THURSDAY 18 JUNE 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

7.30 PM

Present: Bixley Ward Councillors: E Phillips and R Pope
Rushmere Ward Councillors: K Cracknell, S Gage and A Ross
St John's Ward Councillors: S Darwin, K E Elavalakan and N MacDonald
SCC Councillors: S Adams, S Gage and P West

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carnall.

2. Unconfirmed Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be signed as a true record.

3. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business

Resolved:

that the Order of Business be confirmed as printed on the Agenda.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Residents Question and Answer Session

5.1. Councillor Darwin confirmed that no questions had been received in advance of the meeting and highlighted that if a question was received by 10am on the Tuesday 2 days before a North East Area Committee meeting, then a response would be provided by an appropriate Officer.

6. Updates from Ipswich Borough Council and Other Public Sector Organisations

- 6.1. The Chair invited Inspector Soraya Francis of the Ipswich East Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) to provide an update on policing priorities.
- 6.2. Inspector Francis reported that the Police had been busy despite the COVID-19 restrictions, and in terms of addressing social distancing had adopted the approach of Engage, Explain, Encourage and only as a last resort, Enforce. In recent weeks there had been an increase in domestic issues around vulnerability, mental health and safeguarding.
- 6.3. Speeding remained an issue on Tuddenham Road and the Safety Camera Team had undertaken some enforcement work on 4 May 2020; further requests had been received in relation to Bixley Road and Colchester Road, but as these roads were classified as fast roads due to the 40mph limit, it was not safe for Officers to stop speeding traffic and so these requests would be passed onto the Roads and Policing Team and Safety Camera Team.
- 6.4. There had been an increase in littering and groups of people gathering on the Purdis Heath Golf Course during lockdown, so additional patrols were undertaken in this area, which had addressed these issues.
- 6.5. There had also been an increase in drug offences during the lockdown period and by acting on the community intelligence received, a considerable number of 'cuckoo' addresses had been uncovered; the drug dealers were taken out of these premises and support was given to vulnerable people to prevent them from getting back into the same situation.
- 6.6. Councillor Gage commented that when there was less traffic on the roads some people had been driving faster and requested that Woodbridge Road, Cauldwell Hall Road and Rushmere Road (all 30mph limit) be added to the list for some speed enforcement activity.
- 6.7. Inspector Francis commented that during the past few months, Officers had been often working at different locations or on different teams, and requested that any issues be reported through the Suffolk Constabulary website or by calling 101, rather than by directly emailing Officers, otherwise issues might get overlooked; another advantage of reporting issues via these routes was that the issues could be risk assessed, prioritised and allocated resource accordingly.
- 6.8. Councillor Pope asked whether the lack of traffic had resulted in more people speeding or whether there were more people at home to notice people speeding. Councillor Pope reported that there had also been an increase in speeding on Foxhall Road both sides of the roundabout.
- 6.9. Inspector Francis commented that when she had been travelling to and from work during the lockdown more people were speeding, and added that she would request that more speed enforcement work be done, especially as more

children were currently out and about during the day.

- 6.10. County Councillor West asked what had happened to the Speed Indicator Device (SID) that the Area Committee had paid for, which had not been in use for some time. Councillor Darwin commented that the previous Inspector had advised that the SID could no longer be used by the Police. Inspector Francis reported that she would look into this matter and report back to the Chair.
- 6.11. County Councillor West asked whether there was any work that partners could do to help identify potential victims of cuckooing earlier in the process. Inspector Francis commented that those people whose properties were taken over by drug dealers were often substance users themselves, and in order to obtain get their drugs, would invite dealers in and then get pressured into facilitating drug dealing from their properties. This was the case at 8 'cuckoo' addresses recently, including one property where a County Lines dealer was operating, who had since moved out of the area; safeguarding measures were put in place afterwards to prevent the situation from recurring.
- 6.12. County Councillor Adams reported that she had recently put in a request to Suffolk Highways for a 20mph limit on Cauldwell Hall Road and commented on the various options available to address speeding and asked whether requests should be submitted to the Police as well as Suffolk Highways. Inspector Francis reported that requests should only be submitted to Suffolk Highways, who would then contact the Police to request road traffic collision statistics as necessary.
- 6.13. Councillor Phillips commented that the SID was bought at least 3 years ago using Area Committee funding and a list of roads were provided for its use and added that it would be good to bring it back into use.
- 6.14. Councillor Ross reported that the Council's Housing Officers had been trained on tackling the cuckooing of properties for drug dealing and had helped to train Housing Association and charity workers, who dealt with the most vulnerable people, to identify those people who could be targeted in this manner.
- 6.15. Councillor Ross commented that if the SID could not be used by the Police in the North East area or anywhere else in Ipswich, then a refund should be sought from the Police & Crime Commissioner, in the same way that money would be required to be returned by any organisation who subsequently were unable to deliver a project that had been funded by the Area Committee.
- 6.16. Councillor Gage reported that the SID was not in use because there was no resource allocated to move it between locations, plus not all requested locations had a suitable post to mount the SID onto and would have required Suffolk Highways to install a post for that purpose.
- 6.17. The Chair invited County Councillor Paul West as the SCC Cabinet Member for Ipswich to provide an update on behalf of Suffolk County Council.

- 6.18. County Councillor West reported that Family Support Practitioners were still working with young people, with those at high risk being seen on a face-to-face basis whilst observing social distancing, and those at a lesser risk being contacted through a variety of means, such as WhatsApp, text messaging and other social media platforms. Despite the current restrictions, work was continuing in partnership with the Police, Social Care and Probation Service, and the Diversion Programme was still accepting referrals from parents and organisations working with young people.
- 6.19. Suffolk Libraries had opened all but 2 of its branches by mid-July and were operating on a 'select and collect' service, where a customer could call up for books on a particular topic and library staff would provide a selection to pick from, as browsing was not yet permitted. The mobile library service re-started across the county from 7 July 2020.
- 6.20. SCC had been awarded £337k from the Government to implement emergency schemes to enable pedestrians and cyclists to get about safely whilst observing social distancing over the next few months. A list of schemes was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in line with the short timescale set to utilise this funding, but consultation would take place with Councillors over the next couple of weeks to get feedback on whether the schemes were operating successfully. Another larger tranche of DfT funding would be made available to extend schemes or make them permanent if popular.
- 6.21. Councillor Ross understood that there was insufficient time to consult due to the need to implement the schemes quickly to address the COVID-19 restrictions, but requested that consultation be undertaken as soon as possible during the 6-month trial period so that if a scheme was not popular it could be removed at the end of the trial period, rather than having to then wait for the consultation to be done. Councillor Ross commented that some of the schemes would clearly benefit cyclists, whereas others were to avoid rat runs, which might not directly benefit cyclists and pedestrians. As some schemes could result in an increase in traffic on other adjacent roads when normal traffic levels resume, e.g. Grove Lane scheme was likely to impact on Argyle Street and St Helens Street, Councillor Ross requested that any consultation with the public also include residents in surrounding roads.
- 6.22. County Councillor West commented that he had only seen the list of emergency schemes on the day that the Press release went out. Councillor Ellesmere and Councillor P Smart had been briefed and had raised concerns about some of the schemes; if any of the schemes did not work or were unpopular, then they could be removed. County Councillor West added that schemes were limited by the carriageway space available and therefore there was potential for schemes to create impact elsewhere, but this would be minimised where possible.
- 6.23. County Councillor Adams commented that SCC's Policy Development Panel had drawn up a list of schemes and consulted with IBC about the potential impact from road closures, so County Councillor West would have already been aware of the schemes; SCC Councillors should have been consulted on

- the schemes, emergency or otherwise, as SCC Councillors represented the residents in their divisions on highway matters.
- 6.24. County Councillor West reported that a report was to be taken to SCC Cabinet, formed on the outcomes of the Policy Development Panel, setting out a strategic package of schemes that would require £20million to deliver over a 5 to 7 year period if funding was secured. This was different to the £337k funding made available for emergency schemes to assist with COVID-19 restrictions with a requirement to be implemented in a very short timescale. Some of the emergency schemes were in the strategic package, but others were not. The SCC Cabinet paper had been worked on over the last year, whereas the list of emergency schemes was drawn up in response to the DfT funding and the need to implement these schemes in a number of weeks. County Councillor West agreed that it was not ideal that SCC Councillors had not been consulted on the emergency schemes prior to their submission to DfT.
- 6.25. Councillor Darwin commented on the change in priority at the Freehold Road/Britannia Road junction and the proximity of the junction to a major school; as most parents were not currently using this road, Councillor Darwin stressed the importance of clear signage and requested that information be circulated via the school network.
County Councillor West commented that he would raise this with SCC's Transport Strategy Team.
- 6.26. Councillor Darwin commented that Children's Centres use had changed during the pandemic as parents had not been able to access the buildings, and asked whether the outcomes of the Children's Centres consultation would be postponed as people had not been able to access the building to participate in the consultation.
County Councillor West reported that this question had already been raised to the SCC Cabinet Member for Children's Services. The report would be taken to SCC Cabinet in July following the consultation undertaken in January to March 2020. The current service had been adapted due to the COVID-19 restrictions, with a lot of material being available online and assistance provided over the phone. The proposals set out in the July report would provide for pre-school nurseries and a more holistic approach to supporting 0-19 year age range, with funding being diverted away from buildings and into people services, including outreach services.
- 6.27. Councillor Darwin commented that, in light of the increased of safeguarding issues highlighted by Inspector Francis, it was important that these buildings with support services within be available for parents to access after the pandemic.
- 6.28. The Chair introduced Mr Russell Williams, Chief Executive, to provide an update on behalf of Ipswich Borough Council.
- 6.29. Mr Williams commented that the past few months had been immensely challenging for the Council, but he was proud of what had been achieved by Council Officers. The first phase of the response to the pandemic had been

- easier in terms of decision-making as it was a matter of closing services in line with Government guidelines; the incremental re-opening of facilities would be more of a challenge to ensure that community unease was kept to a minimum.
- 6.30. Mr Williams reported that he had been in regular communication with Councillors and a weekly statement had been published on the website to advise the public of the latest situation. The Council had been working with the Police, SCC and Ipswich Central to enable the re-opening of the town centre in a safe manner, and the closure of Upper Brook Street to traffic during peak hours was one of the measures put in place. Footfall in the town centre was increasing and it was likely that bars and restaurants could potentially re-open in a couple of weeks' time.
- 6.31. With regards to the list of SCC emergency schemes to assist cyclists and pedestrians, Mr Williams reported that he had met with SCC this week and added that this was a list of proposals and not all of the schemes would automatically be implemented; any scheme that was ineffectual or unpopular could be adapted or removed during the 6-month period. Some of the schemes were self-explanatory, whilst others required greater clarification, in particular the 3 schemes in the North East area: in the Rushmere area, Colchester Road/Valley Road and Bixley Road/Heath Road, and further information on these schemes would be included in the next weekly update to Councillors.
- 6.32. Councillor Darwin reported that Community Action Suffolk had been providing information to the Resilience Hub about what voluntary services were still operating as part of the response to the pandemic and asked whether this information could be shared with Councillors so that they could be aware of what services were running in their wards.
Mr Williams reported that the Council had been involved in this process as part of the community strand of the response to the pandemic and Councillors would be updated on this matter in a future update to Councillors.
- 6.33. Councillor Gage requested that Council Officers be thanked for all their work in response to the pandemic, in particular, the emergency housing works provided to tenants, the positive attitude of the refuse collection operatives and the organisation given to grass root voluntary groups providing support to the community.
- 6.34. Mr Williams commented on the service provided by Housing Officers, providing reassurance to tenants, especially in sheltered housing, and the progress now being made on housing voids and restarting the Choice Based Lettings system. Mr Williams commented that he would pass on the message of support to Officers and added that the previous statement from the Mayor and the 3 Group Leaders had been appreciated.
- 6.35. County Councillor West highlighted that 1,950 individual volunteers across Suffolk had subscribed via the App to make themselves available to help out in the community, many of whom were not used, and this capacity could be utilised for other volunteer opportunities going forward.

7. NEAC/20/01 Area Committee Grants and Financial Update

- 7.1. Mr Fulcher, Head of Development, reported that the total budget at the start of the meeting was £28,006.35, which was £600 lower than stated in the report as £600 of the 2019/20 Making a Difference budget had been allocated, with the agreement of ward Councillors in Rushmere, to part fund a defibrillator unit to go outside Sidegate Primary School.
- 7.2. Mr Fulcher added that the Committee was requested to allow Officers to vary the funding guidelines to allow Area Committee funds to be made available to help deal with the Coronavirus pandemic, but all spending would continue to be approved by the Area Committee.
- 7.3. Councillor Pope asked about the funding allocated last year for projects, such as the Football and Well-Being Programme and Let's Talk Reading, that had not been able to go ahead due to COVID-19 restrictions, and whether this funding would be rolled over or clawed back.
- 7.4. Mr Fulcher reported that these projects were being revisited by the Community Team and could be brought back to a future meeting should the project need to change.
Councillor Darwin added that some of the projects could be paused for now and then restarted at a later date.
- 7.5. Councillor Phillips asked whether the other Area Committees had also been requested to grant delegated authority in relation to varying the Area Committee funding guidelines and setting up budgets for Making a Difference and venue hire.
Mr Fulcher confirmed that the same request had been taken to all of the Area Committees.

Resolved:

- i) that the financial statement in Appendix 1 of the report and its subsequent update be noted;**
- ii) that authority be delegated to the Head of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Head of Governance, to take all necessary steps to:**
 - advertise the availability of Area Committee Grants to support communities in recovering from the Coronavirus outbreak;**
 - enable the consideration of applications in relation to this scheme at the September meeting of this Area Committee;**
- iii) to allocate £500 per ward, a total of £1,500, from the North East Area Committee budget to establish a Making a Difference (MAD) budget for 2020/21;**

- iv) to allocate £300 from the North East Area Committee budget for costs associated with advertising and potential future venue hire for 2020/21.**

Reasons:

- i) To provide clear and transparent details of the amount of funds available to the Area Committee;
- ii) To enable Area Committee funding to be used to support communities in recovering from the Coronavirus pandemic;
- iii) To allow the Area Committee to devolve up to 10% of its annual budget to support small scale community initiatives;
- iv) To facilitate the good running of the Area Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.31 pm

Chair