

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## Communities and Neighbourhoods Transitional Committee

### Meeting held 12 October 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillors Kaltum Rivers (Chair), Sioned-Mair Richards (Deputy Chair), Ben Curran, Karen McGowan, Joe Otten, Andrew Sangar, Sophie Thornton and Alison Teal

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#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors' Paul Wood and Moya O'Rourke.

#### **2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of meeting of the Committee held on 7 July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

#### **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 There were no public questions or petitions received from members of the public.

#### **6. UPDATE ON LOCAL AREA COMMITTEES**

6.1 Councillor Kaltum Rivers, Chair of the Committee, introduced Councillor Julie Grocutt, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Community Engagement and Governance and Lorraine Wood, Head of Communities, to provide an update on the progress of the newly established Local Area Committees.

6.2 The Committee received a report which summarised Local Area Committee progress.

6.3 Councillor Grocutt advised that six out of the seven public Local Area Committees had taken place to date, with the remaining one (South) due to take place on 13 October. There had been some challenges faced, but feedback following the first meetings highlighted that they had been well received and that interaction

was going well. She also acknowledged the hard work of the support team to get to this point.

6.4 Councillor Grocutt reminded the Committee of the purpose of Local Area Committees:

- The principal means by which the Council engaged, empowered, enabled and sought active participation of residents and community organisations on topics of local interest;
- To provide a geographical structure that would inform and influence how Council services were delivered;
- Oversee the production and monitoring of a Community Plan that reflected resident priorities and utilised a series of agreed devolved powers, responsibilities and budgets;
- To work with local partners and stakeholders to ensure services were joined up and operating effectively in line with the needs of local communities; and
- To work with Sheffield City Council services and partners to collaborate and support local community based delivery.

6.5 Lorraine Wood also noted the hard work that had gone into the programme. She outlined the structure of each Local Area Committee, including the membership and the staffing structure which provided support to the quarterly Committees. This structure included Heads of Service, Local Area Committee Officers, dedicated Communications Officers and Democratic Service Officers. She also noted that informal meetings were taking place with partner organisations to discuss engagement activities.

6.6 Lorraine outlined communication activities so far and advised that newsletters with engagement and contact details were being sent to all households. Social media activity had taken place, including Twitter, Facebook and webpages. A promotional video had been filmed incorporating sign language which gave a comprehensive overview of Local Area Committees and explained how to engage and become involved.

6.7 It was advised that the remaining Local Area Committee (South) was due to take place at Gleadless Valley Methodist Church on Wednesday 13 October from 6pm to 8pm.

6.8 The attendance at the Local Area Committees so far had been good despite capacity restrictions due to Covid 19 guidance. Attendance had been limited and was managed via Eventbrite. It was noted that the style of each meeting had varied and that conversations had

since taken place to consider which aspects went well and where there might be room for improvement. The 'hybrid' model, which included a formal agenda followed by an interactive session, encouraged engagement and led to commendable feedback. All feedback would be reviewed after the final Local Area Committee meeting had taken place.

- 6.9 Lorraine noted that lessons had been learned from the Local Area Committee meetings held so far and outlined the opportunities and challenges that had been presented. She explained that the Local Area Committee survey had been launched on 31 August and responses received would help to shape the Local Community Plan along with all the feedback received from the public meetings. 2,300 responses had been received from the online survey so far and work was being carried out with voluntary and community sector organisations to run engagement activities and distribute paper surveys to capture views from residents that were harder to reach.
- 6.10 The Committee were advised that engagement activity was ongoing to ensure that seldom heard voices were captured to fully inform the Local Community Plan. A low response had been noted from residents in rental properties, so work was also ongoing with housing colleagues to ensure tenants views were included. The online survey was due to close on 31 October and analysis would take place during November to help inform the Local Community Plans. Work with equality groups was also continuing to capture feedback.
- 6.11 Lorraine outlined the next steps, namely the next set of public Local Area Committee meetings which would take place in January/February 2022. The main function of these meetings would be to engage with the public on the draft Local Community Plans. A subsequent meeting would allow for formal agreement of the plans.
- 6.12 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows: -
- Committee members were pleased that efforts were being made to reach those who were digitally excluded, and that interpreters had been utilised to reach those with English as their second language.
  - It was noted that a similar level of time investment was needed for Transitional Committees as had been given to Local Area Committees, for example regular pre-meetings with members and officers.
  - An observation was made that an understanding of the budget process was needed whilst developing community plans.

- It was confirmed that each Local Area had £100,000 to fund priorities in their area. Priorities would be identified and formally agreed by March 2022. It was also noted that an underspend was likely during this financial year so a formal request would be made to carry the funds over to the next financial year.
- It was noted that preliminary work was ongoing to ensure Transitional Committees were fully informed and prepared in time for the implementation of a Committee system in May 2022. Powers would be devolved to Local Area Committees where appropriate to enable them to best represent local communities.
- Some feedback had indicated that a Local Area Committee meeting had felt like 'Town Hall on Tour', and a suggestion was made that it might be useful for members to visit other Local Area Committee meetings to gain ideas on different issues.
- The next year was expected to be pivotal in establishing a formal relationship between Transitional Committees and Local Area Committees. It was suggested that each Transitional Committee should receive formal views from Local Area Committee's via a standing item on the agenda, and that each Local Area Committee meeting should have a standing agenda item from Transitional Committees.
- It was hoped that formal registering would not be required for attendance at future Local Area Committees, depending on Covid 19 restrictions, thereby making them more accessible.
- It was noted that challenges may arise where questions were raised at Local Area Committee's that were not within their remit. However as this was an evolving process it was expected that the Local Area Committee team would follow a process to seek the information needed and report back to the appropriate Transitional Committee.
- As Local Area Committees continued to grow and adapt members could take responsibility for devolving decisions and finding solutions to all issues raised and ensure that Local Community Plans were representative of these issues.
- It was noted that there had been a low response to the Local Area Committee Survey from the student population. The challenge this presented was to find additional ways of engaging under-represented sectors of the community. Each Local Area Committee had an engagement plan with activity

designed to reach more residents, and communication methods would be reviewed as the process continued.

- A suggestion was noted that the Local Area Committee newsletters should not be generic and instead be focussed on the local area.
- Webcasting of public Local Area Committees had not been possible for the first cycle of meetings but was hoped to be in place for the January meetings. An interactive voting system was suggested but the cost of installing such a system was highlighted.
- Officers and partner organisations would be invited to Local Area Committee meetings as necessary to ensure that questions could be answered and concerns addressed.
- It was noted that Local Area Committee priorities were to be led by the public and that local members from all parties would work together jointly and take on responsibility of the issues raised.

**6.13 RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information now reported, together with the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) thanks Councillor Julie Grocutt and Lorraine Wood for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised.

## **7. INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEES**

- 7.1 Deborah Glen, Policy and Improvement Officer, submitted a briefing paper outlining the role of Transitional Committees, how they intended to work and how they would relate to other structures within the Council., namely the public, Co-operative Executive, Local Area Committees, Scrutiny Committees and senior officers. She advised that the report was on the agenda for the first meeting of each Transitional Committee.
- 7.2 Deborah noted that the learning from each of the Committees would be shared across all four Transitional Committees at the end of each cycle of meetings via a 'debrief'.
- 7.3 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows: -
- Transitional Committees were viewed as a big opportunity for new ways of working and how this could be modelled. The

City's electorate had voted for a modern committee system and work was well underway to deliver this new system.

- Executive Members had decision making powers and Transitional Committees had the ability to add value to real decisions.
- There would be some overlap between the four Transitional Committees, and collaborative working including working groups would be encouraged.
- In order to gain more in-depth knowledge of issues relating to this Committee, the option of receiving all reports, including all those going to Executive Members, was suggested.
- Access to information had changed significantly over recent years, so different ways of working should be explored between now and April 2022 to help Transitional Committees work effectively. Consideration of overlap of issues was necessary to assist the Committees in working together.

7.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee notes the contents of the report now submitted.

## **8. OUR APPROACH TO FUTURE PRIORITY BUDGETING**

8.1 Councillor Cate MacDonald (Executive Member for Finance and Resources) thanked the Committee for the opportunity to provide an update. She advised that this was to be an informal session, and that all views were welcome. She explained the intention was to work towards a prioritised budgeting system and wished to seek views and priorities from all Transitional Committees to feed into the budget process.

8.2 Also in attendance for this item were Eugene Walker (Executive Director of Resources) and Laurie Brennan (Head of Policy and Partnerships).

8.3 Eugene Walker wished to put some context to the budget process and noted that a report was brought to the Co-operative Executive in September 2021 which detailed the financial situation faced by the Council. He explained that last year's budget was balanced despite many pressures. He noted that a number of services had been significantly affected due to lost income during the pandemic; a situation faced across the country. He advised that Government funding had assisted but that pressures on some services were still being faced, particularly adult social care, children's social care and leisure services. Eugene emphasised the importance of understanding the challenge ahead and of setting clear priorities in

planning forward to influence future budgets.

8.4 Laurie Brennan added that there was an increase in focus on issues contained in the One Year Plan that allowed the organisation to look more at longer term objectives over the next 3 to 5 years. This would assist in building a comprehensive forward plan with a strategic focus and a priority led budget.

8.5 Laurie noted that conversations had already begun with Transitional Committees to determine their critical priorities collectively. He added that activity would take place outside of this meeting to consider feedback in more detail. This would create foundations for future years.

8.6 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows: -

- This year's budget process was well underway and would continue to be developed between now and December. Comments and feedback would be welcome during this time to feed into the process, which would also assist for the following financial year.
- Future priority budgeting would be about the outcomes that could be achieved and would include the HRA Business Plan.
- This was the start of the process and was about deciding priorities and setting the budget accordingly. Executive Members would be involved which would support longer term planning.
- Uncertainty about the decision-making process of the Committee was acknowledged and the need for Committee members to be kept informed of processes and timescales.
- It was noted that the Governance Committee had overall oversight of transitional issues, but that individual Transitional Committees had the opportunity to consider and debate their own ideas collectively.
- The importance of setting priorities was noted, and that Transitional Committees were about discussing the process and developing and encouraging new ways of working and trying innovative ideas. Voting was expected from time to time to ensure all Committee members views were represented.
- It was noted that Transitional Committees were about communities and priorities, and it was suggested that working

groups would be useful in discussing issues between formal meetings.

8.7 Councillor Cate McDonald thanked members for their comments and welcomed further feedback via email on any subsequent conversations between members of the Committee.

8.8 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

(a) notes the information now reported, together with the responses to the questions raised; and

(b) thanks Councillor Cate MacDonald, Eugene Walker and Laurie Brennan for attending the meeting, and responding to the questions raised.

## 9. PLACE SYSTEMS REVIEW HOUSING PROJECT

9.1 The Chair recommended that this item be withdrawn due to the absence of the Executive Member for Housing, Roads and Waste Management.

9.2 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee defers the Place Systems Review Housing Project item to a future meeting, the date of which to be confirmed.

## 10. WORK PLAN AND WAYS OF WORKING

10.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Deborah Glen) on proposed ways of working for the Committee and containing a draft Work Plan for the Committee for 2021/ 22.

10.2 The Chair made reference to the comments and suggestions made at this meeting as to how the Committee should work, and to the proposed topics for consideration, as set out in the report.

10.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee: -

(a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made; and

(b) requests that:

(i) arrangements be made for an informal working group to be set up for open dialogue to facilitate priority setting;

(ii) arrangements be made for an informal working group to be set up specifically to discuss the Housing Repair Service;

- (iii) a standing item on Local Area Committees be included on the agenda of future meetings of this Committee;
- (iv) a forward plan of key decisions be included on the 'work plan' agenda item of future meetings of this Committee;
- (v) arrangements be made for an informal working group to be set up specifically to discuss private sector licensing.

## **11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday, 16 November, 2021, at 10.00 am, in the Town Hall.