

Central Community Assembly

Meeting held 24 January 2013

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ben Curran (Chair), Janet Bragg, Jayne Dunn, Neale Gibson, George Lindars-Hammond, Mohammad Maroof, Shaffaq Mohammed, Robert Murphy and Nikki Sharpe

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jillian Creasy, Bob Johnson and Stuart Wattam.

**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**

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Assembly held on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, and following queries from members of the public:-

4.1 Safeguarding Important Local Buildings

The Community Assembly Manager reported that, further to concerns raised in terms of the safeguarding of important local buildings, specifically Crookes Valley Methodist Church and Vestry Hall and the Crookesmoor Community Centre, John Stonard, Urban Design and Conservation Team Manager, Development Services, had been invited to a Members' Briefing on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012, to explain the Council's powers on this issue. Members had given consideration to a number of buildings in the Assembly area and had requested Mr Stonard to write to the owners, requiring them to undertake any necessary improvements in order to safeguard the buildings. She added that she would send a copy of the briefing note Mr Stonard had submitted to the briefing meeting to those people on the Assembly's contact distribution list.

Penny Ralph, who raised the initial concerns at the last meeting, stated that no action had been taken in respect of Crookes Valley Vestry Hall and that without urgent repair works, the building was in danger of collapsing.

4.2 Former Crown Sash Works Site, Whitehouse Lane

The Community Assembly Manager stated that, whilst the Assembly appreciated the concerns of local residents in connection with the fact that there had been no progress in terms of development, and that the site was still boarded up, the Council had no powers over the developer, who was only required to commence works within three years of the date of receipt of the Decision Notice. She added, however, that she would contact the Planning Case Officer to inform them of the concerns now raised and seek any information in terms of when development was due to start on site.

4.3 Traffic Issues in Walkley

The Community Assembly Manager stated that the suggested road safety measures in terms of traffic movements from the City Centre to Walkley routes at Commonsides had been logged by the Community Assembly Team and would either be addressed if and when the relevant funding became available or as part of the Streets Ahead project.

**5. CENTRAL COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY DISCRETIONARY BUDGET 2012/13 - UPDATE**

The Community Assembly Manager submitted a report (a) setting out details in terms of the allocation of funding from the Central Community Assembly's Discretionary Budget 2012/13 and (b) seeking authority for the allocation of any underspend from the agreed allocations set out in the report.

5.1 **Public Questions**

Members of the public raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- Further to the concerns now raised in terms of the apparent lack of notification of the Bring Out Your Rubbish Day on the Langsett Estate, enquiries would be made of the Waste Management Service as to the extent to which leaflets advertising the Day had been distributed.
- In the light of the concerns regarding the future of Community Assemblies, the information contained in the report now submitted, in terms of the allocation of funding from the Assembly's Discretionary Budget, should be seen as a good example as to how the Council can assist local residents and community groups.
- All Councillors and residents should be encouraged to sign up to the Fair Deal for Sheffield campaign in order to highlight the strength of feeling against the funding cuts being made by the Coalition Government, and the adverse effects of such cuts on Sheffield.

5.2 **Decision Taken**

RESOLVED: That the Community Assembly:-

- (i) notes and welcomes the funding allocations from the Assembly's Discretionary Budget during the 2012/13 financial year, as detailed in the report now submitted;
- (ii) delegates authority to the Central Community Assembly Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Assembly, to agree the utilisation of any underspend from the agreed allocations listed in the report, in line with the priorities set out in the Central Community Assembly Community Plan; and
- (iii) confirms the authority of the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Director of Legal Services, to agree the terms on which all funding referred to in this report is made available and to enter into such funding agreements with recipients of the funding and any other related agreements or arrangements, and on such terms, that she considers appropriate.

### 5.3 **Reasons for Decision**

Granting delegated authority to the Community Assembly Manager to allocate unspent funding from the Assembly's Discretionary Budget will help ensure that the maximum use is made of the available funding in fulfilment of the priorities set out in the Central Community Assembly Community Plan, which have been identified through consultation with local residents, groups and partners.

### 5.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

Alternative options for using the budget have been considered, and these have been reported to previous Assembly meetings.

## 6. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

### 6.1 **Petitions**

There were no petitions submitted.

### 6.2 **Public Questions**

Members of the public raised questions and responses were provided as follows:-

- (a) Anne Daw referred to a planning application for the use of the corner of Harcourt Road and Northumberland Road as a temporary car park, which had brought to her attention a number of development related issues affecting a large area of the City and highlighting the need to bring together local community

groups in the area with the University, Hospitals and Planning Officers to look at long-term solutions and plans for issues such as traffic planning and air quality. Ms Daw requested that the Assembly assists in establishing a working group to look at these wider issues.

The Community Assembly Manager stated that she would look into how the Assembly could assist in the establishment of a working group to look at such issues. Councillor Jayne Dunn stated that she had raised this issue with Planning Officers and was hoping to invite officers to a future meeting of the Community Assembly/Members' Briefing to explain how they could assist.

- (b) Mike Andrews questioned whether Members agree that Community Assemblies have been a worthwhile exercise in local democracy, with more public attendance than at other Council meetings, and whether they agreed that this local democracy has targeted resources to the needy areas within the Assembly area, even though the reasons given for the new systems appear to suggest otherwise.
- (c) Andy Shallice questioned since when has public attendance been a criteria for the success of Community Assemblies, or any other Council meeting, rather than issues such as the quality of relationships.

The Chair stated that the Council had been forced to make some very difficult decisions in the light of severe budget cuts and, unfortunately, stopping the Community Assemblies, in their present format, was one of the many proposals put forward. Councillor Janet Bragg stated that, whilst she appreciated the reasoning behind the proposal, she believed the decision had been taken based on a review of the Community Assemblies on a City-wide basis, and not specifically in the Central area. She indicated that this Assembly was very effective and that this was due to both the excellent work of the Community Assembly Team and the input and commitment of the many local residents who attended its meetings. She added that she relied considerably on the Community Assembly Team to assist her in resolving her casework. Councillor Shaffaq Mohammed stated that, unlike other Community Assemblies, this Assembly had representation from all three political parties, who worked well together for the benefit of the local communities. He commented that the proposal to stop the Community Assemblies was simply due to budget issues, rather than the ineffectiveness of the Assembly process.

- (d) Tom Deakin referred to a decision approving the implementation of a 20 mph zone at Winn Gardens, which had been made around two years ago, and queried why this scheme had still not been implemented.

The Community Assembly Highways Link Manager stated that the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for the works had been drafted and was ready for publication. The signage was complete and once the TRO had been confirmed, the works would commence, hopefully during Summer 2013.

- (e) A member of the public questioned whether, as part of the consultation on the future of Community Assemblies, would members of the public be able to include their postcode on the on-line comment form, in order that they could indicate which Assembly area they lived.

The Community Assembly Manager stated that members of the public should be able to include their postcodes on the form.

- (f) Gina McLennan questioned how the Council was able to find £2m for the refurbishment of offices in the Town Hall and contribute towards the 'Man of Steel' sculpture whilst, at the same time, proposing to end the Community Assemblies.

The Chair stated that the 'Man of Steel' sculpture would be located in Rotherham, and was to be constructed through private sector funding. The Town Hall refurbishment works were to be completed as part of the Council's Accommodation Strategy, and were required to bring the accommodation up to required standards, and which would save the Council £30m over the next 10 years.

- (g) A member of the public questioned why the proposed closure of Don Valley Stadium and Stocksbridge Leisure Centre affected the Council's budget as both buildings were owned by Sheffield International Venues?

The Chair stated that whilst Don Valley Stadium and Stocksbridge Leisure Centre were owned by the Council, they were operated and managed by Sheffield International Venues. The Council provided both venues with funding in terms of their operations. The arrangement also gave Sheffield International Venues the opportunity of drawing in additional funding.

- (h) Penny Ralph questioned whether the period of consultation regarding the future of Community Assemblies, which was due to end on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013, had been long enough?

The Community Assembly Manager stated that, whilst she appreciated residents' concerns regarding the apparent short timescale for residents to comment, the consultation had to link in with the Council's budget-making process, and the proposals had to be included in the budget report to the Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

6.3 In connection with the proposal to end Community Assemblies, members of the public made the following comments:-

- It was appreciated that not all Community Assemblies were well attended, but consideration should be given to continue with those Assemblies which have been well attended, and which have been viewed as worthwhile by local residents, such as this one, in some format.
- The Cabinet, at the Meet the Cabinet session, did not provide a clear reason as to why Community Assemblies should stop.
- By stopping Community Assemblies, funding would be decided centrally, or not at a local level.
- It will be very sad to lose the excellent service provided by the Central Community Assembly Team.
- The deadline for responding, as part of the consultation, was far too short and there was not sufficient space on the on-line comment form to provide a detailed response.
- The Community Assembly has provided valuable funding for numerous community projects from its Discretionary Budget. One such project had included funding activities for children and young people at Winn Gardens on three nights a week. Stopping this funding could result in some of these children and young people going back to hanging around on the streets and getting involved in anti-social behaviour.
- In terms of a proposal to move to holding Ward meetings, it would be difficult to hold discussions on some issues at such meetings, such as 20 mph zones. Community Assemblies were all about giving local residents the opportunity to voice their concerns.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

7.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Community Assembly would be held on Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013, from 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm at Quaker Meeting House, St James' Street.