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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

DISTRICT COMMITTEE – KIRKLEES RURAL

Thursday 13 November 2014

Present: Councillor Holroyd-Doveton
Councillors Armer, Barraclough, Bellamy, Dodds, Hardcastle, Iredale,
Marchington, Patrick, Richards, Ridgway, Sims, G Turner and N Turner

Also present: Approximately 35 members of public.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Greaves and Ward, and five members of public.

1 Chair's Welcome and Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and Committee Members introduced themselves.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 11 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Interests

No Councillor declared an interest in any of the items.

4 Admissions of the Public

It was noted that all Agenda items would be considered in public session.

5 Deputations/ Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Devolution Proposals for District Committees

Mr Greene, Head of Safe and Cohesive Communities gave a presentation on a proposed model for future area working and devolution. Feedback from the meeting would help inform the report to be presented to the full Council meeting on 10th December 2014.

The Cabinet had made a commitment to a new way of working which would create capacity and move some resources, responsibility and decision making closer to the geographical area where they are to be used. The context for the proposal was that the Council needs to save a further £69 million over the next 2 years.

A Cabinet working group had explored giving more devolved responsibility to District Committees and a mechanism to promote innovation at the neighbourhood or ward level. The model suggested that devolution in Kirklees could operate at three levels from April 2015:-

(1) Consult on strategic district wide planning for example waste services, cultural strategy, crime and community safety.

(2) Set a local vision and making recommendations to the Cabinet on local priorities and developing a local plan for partnership working.

(3) Influence the schedule of service provision in local areas for example street cleansing, smaller parks, large playing fields, allotments, grass cutting, road safety measures, parking issues.

A District Intelligence Assessment would be used to influence the local "plan of place". In addition to the existing revenue budget allocation to each District Committee it was proposed that 10% of the forecast New Homes Bonus grant would be allocated to each District Committee.

It was also proposed that Cabinet would invite expressions of interest for pilot areas to explore models of working at a more local level.

It was commented that 10% of the new homes bonus for Kirklees Rural area, an amount of £425,000.00, was grossly unfair as this geographical area was the largest in Kirklees and it pays more Council Tax.

It was commented that devolution is about transferring responsibility for decision making to the District Committee, but in this proposal Cabinet would continue to take the decisions. The current model of District Committees was moving further away from devolution, fewer meetings and covering a larger area meant that less people were engaging with it.

It was questioned whether the cost of servicing the District Committee had reduced and whether the position of Chair was paid less.

It was commented that this model would mean that Ward Councillors had all the work to do but Cabinet would continue to make the decisions.

It was commented that the previous Area Committee system worked well for this area, and did engage with local people, so why change it. Why had the Area Committee structure been changed a year ago yet no other change was proposed until next year? Nothing was being done for 12 months.

To make the devolution work would need six local committees below the District Committee, as discussed at the workshop held in September.

It was felt that the proposed model could provide an informed role for local people, there is a democratic deficit regarding community action, a change of tone on community engagement would be good.

Youth Council representatives enquired what plans were in place to involve young people in their local areas and were invited to put forward suggestions.

It was commented that the services and functions which it is proposed be cut in future were the ones being put forward in this devolution proposal.

It was noted that when devolution was first debated that it had been put forward that a procedure be put in place before any changes were implemented.

A request was made for the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet working group on devolution to be circulated to the District Committees. The Chair undertook to raise this with Cabinet.

RESOLVED –

That Mr Greene be thanked for attending and that questions be circulated to the Committee's email contacts to encourage individuals to give feedback.

7 Winter Maintenance

Mr Bowler, Head of Highways and Operations gave a presentation on the Council's arrangements for winter maintenance 2014/2015.

Mr Bowler explained what the Council does to grit the roads and what the provision and maintenance of grit bins looks like following a review. The grit bin service would continue to be funded by the Council's winter maintenance budget, the number of grit bins will be capped at the current level of 1,450 and Ward Councillors will take the lead on any requests to relocate existing bins. If any parked cars were in the way of the gritters those roads would not be gritted.

People could keep up to date with weather forecasts by observing snow warning signs, listening to bulletins on local news, checking the Kirklees website at www.kirklees.gov.uk/winter or on Twitter @KirkleesWinter Four Short You Tube films were available.

Priority routes for gritting were the main roads, main bus routes and steep roads that provide important links to main roads. Kirklees gritted 55% of its 1,200 mile road network.

Hospitals, Health Centres, Residential Homes and Schools were helped to stay open but not all schools were on the priority gritting routes. Ward Councillors played a key role in helping to get local farmers involved in clearing snow.

Individuals and groups were encouraged to help each other by clearing paths and keeping an eye on neighbours.

A question was asked about differential gritting (responding to snow on the hill tops). Mr Bowler commented that route based forecasting was used to optimise the routes gritted. The number of routes gritted had fallen from 55 to 29 and would possibly fall to 27 or 28.

It was noted that this was a crucial service helping to keep things going and people getting to work.

It was suggested that provision for grit bins should be an essential part of new developments above 250 meters with steep access, being included in the Local Plan for Kirklees.

A request was made for a smaller gritter to grit non priority routes with Schools and General Practitioner's Surgeries.

It was commented that liaison with Public Transport was not working. When routes were kept clear and open buses did not run. It was suggested that the Council should liaise with neighbouring councils in Lancashire, South Yorkshire and Derbyshire to keep high level routes open.

RESOLVED –

That Mr Bowler be thanked for his presentation.

8 Feedback from Committee Portfolios

The Chair reported that two portfolio meetings had been held recently on tourism and economic growth and regeneration. A schedule of future meetings had been agreed. Volunteers to take part in the portfolios were asked to come forward.

9 Area Committee Budget

The Committee noted the balance of its budgets and considered funding a number of projects.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the following capital schemes be approved:

- (a) £1,000.00 grant towards Honley Christmas lights display 2014.
- (b) £1,000.00 grant towards switch on of Meltham Christmas lights 2014.
- (c) £7,000.00 for a new footpath around Brockholes Recreation Ground.

(2) That the following revenue schemes be approved:

- (a) £2,400.00 for a community notice board and bin at Cowlersley Community Centre.
- (b) £1,300.00 towards major repairs and maintenance at Milnsbridge Village Hall.
- (c) £900.00 revenue towards 9 Christmas trees in Denby Dale ward and £1,300.00 for a tree at Kirkburton Memorial Park and a tree at Shelley Bottoms (Kirkburton ward) in 2014.
- (d) £736.00 for floral decorations in Holme Valley North ward, £1,848.00 for floral decorations in Holme Valley South ward, £3,068.00 for floral decorations in Colne Valley ward and £4,792.00 for floral decorations in Golcar ward.
- (e) £200.00 for marketing and promotion of a scheme to raise sponsorship for Christmas and floral decorations in Golcar and Colne Valley wards.

(3) That it be noted an underspend of £3,180.00 will be returned to the 2014-2015 capital budget regarding previous decisions (Hade Edge play area, Honley Wells ancient monument and Streetscene Initiatives in Denby Dale).

9 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

10 **Dates of Future Meetings**

The date of the next meeting was noted:

7.00pm Thursday 12 February 2015 at Kirkburton Hub, Kirkburton