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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

DISTRICT COMMITTEE - BATLEY AND SPEN

Tuesday 23rd August 2016

Present: Councillor Gwen Lowe (Chair)
Councillors M Akhtar, F Fadia, M Grainger-Mead, S Hall,
S Pandor, A Pinnock, K Pinnock and D Sheard

Apologies: D Hall, L Holmes, V Kendrick J Lawson, R Light,
M O'Neill, A Palfreeman and E Smaje

In attendance: 28 members of the public were in attendance

1 Welcomes and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and Councillors introduced themselves.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 19th July 2016 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the public

All items were considered in public.

5 Deputations / Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

Councillors responded to questions relating to the seating arrangements for Councillors at the meeting, the move of Cleckheaton Customer Services to Dewsbury and the return of funding relating to an approved scheme, back into the District Committee budget.

Resolved:

That the relevant service be asked to provide the rationale for moving Cleckheaton Customer Services to Dewsbury.

7 Committee Budget Report

An overview of the budget balances was given.

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Dave Minich described the Cleckheaton Folk Festival and highlighted that the next year, for which funding was requested, was the 30th anniversary of the festival. Councillors highlighted the economic benefits to the Spen Valley and commended the volunteers involved.

Edward Phittness described how community volunteers had taken on the running of East Bierley playing fields and changing facilities following the asset transfer from the Council. The organisation had fundraised and secured £75,000 from Sport England and secured a loan from Kirklees Council towards the building costs of phase 1 of the project. Funding from the District Committee would cover the remaining costs as detailed in the report. The volunteers were commended for taking the facility into their control and thanked for their ongoing efforts.

Dave Minich described how a new management committee had taken on the organisation of the Cleckheaton Christmas lights event this year. The committee was fundraising but a small grant was required from the District Committee to cover the costs of erecting and dismantling lights and repairing and replacing lights where needed. Councillors commended the volunteers in delivering this significant local event.

Stuart Wider of Friends of Scholes recreation area described how the friends group had transformed the area into a well-used park, benefitting from perimeter pathways, seating and regular activities for all to enjoy. Volunteers had brought in external funding. The park suffered from poor drainage and was prone to flooding and the proposed scheme would improve the pathways and increase access to the park. Councillors acknowledged the transformation of the park through the work of the volunteers involved.

RESOLVED:

- (a) £14,000 revenue approved (Spen Valley) – Cleckheaton Folk Festival 2017
- (b) £40,300 New Homes Bonus approved – terms of the grant delegated to the Assistant Director, Communities and Leisure.
- (c) £3,746 revenue approved (Spen Valley) – Cleckheaton Christmas Lights
- (d) £10,000 New Homes Bonus approved – Scholes Recreation Footpath Improvements

8 Housing Revenue Account - Estate and Environmental Works Budget

Noreen Beck, Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, Neighbourhood Operations Manager gave an update on the budget and the schemes completed. Photographs showed the completed sites before and after improvement work. Key issues and learning points from the first round of budget approvals were summarised. Learning points included: simplifying the voting process, offering increased flexibility via a drop in session and distribution of scheme details in advance of voting so more residents could be consulted. If need be schemes may be brought more frequently to the District Committee for approval. The overall approach, process and timeline for the next phase, was agreed.

9 Tackling Poverty

The District Committee received a presentation from Nicky Hoyle, Consultant in Public Health. The Kirklees Joint Health and Well-being Strategy and the Kirklees Economic Strategy work as one to tackle poverty in Kirklees. The overall picture of poverty in Kirklees was illustrated. Statistical information relating to poverty in the Batley and Spen area – household income, residents with money worries, fuel poverty and education and skills deprived areas was outlined. The assets in Batley and Spen were also highlighted – there were high levels of people motivated to look after their own health, residents engaged in community led activity and schools as community hubs were emerging as important community assets. There was a comprehensive approach to tackling poverty including: policies to boost household resources, improve long term life chances of individuals and their families, prevent people sliding into poverty, and provide a backdrop of services that allow people to enhance their job prospects. The achievements in tackling poverty so far included improved uptake of free childcare and free school meals, a reduction in entitled non claimants, a BRASS course and better access to council facilities for anti-poverty charities. Low pay was also tackled. The presentation was followed by group discussion relating to: what can the District Committee do/ commission to address poverty? What else can the community do? How can the District Committee support them? Feedback of key discussion points/ suggestions included:

- (a) Provide more consumer advice perhaps in Kirklees Together Magazine.
- (b) Design an APP specific to Kirklees and ways of dealing with debt for example, finding discounted products.
- (c) Teach cookery on a budget.
- (d) Facilitate financial institutions working in shelters or offering advice clinics.
- (e) Get quality information from communities on hidden poverty in their areas.
- (f) Through TRA's provide a booklet for new tenants including where to go for furniture and debt advice. Turnsteads TRA provided such a booklet.
- (g) Promote free computer use in Libraries.
- (h) Eating better courses for school leavers/food for life in schools.
- (i) Recipe cards for simple meals at foodbanks.
- (j) Money for life skills – teaching children at an early age.

Individual pledges were encouraged to assist in reducing poverty.

Residents were thanked for their contributions.

RESOLVED:

Notes from the discussions and suggestions were to be collated and explored further.

10 Avoiding Scams and Frauds

A presentation from Farah Hussain of West Yorkshire Joint Services highlighted the huge amount of money lost to scams and frauds each year. It included a range of examples of scams, the impact on victims which included embarrassment and fear of repercussions, and negative health impacts. A range of contact methods were used by scammers including:

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- (a) doorstep – with rogue traders pressure selling and distraction burglaries.
- (b) telephone – computer virus scams, copycat Government scams, copycat telephone preference service scams.
- (c) Mail – including prize draw scams and missed parcel scams.
- (d) Online – free trial scams, holiday or ticket scams.

Victims may be included in lists circulated among scammers.

The West Yorkshire Joint Services SAFER project offers help to residents through:

- (a) Educational workshops for community groups.
- (b) Partner training.
- (c) Individual help for scam/ doorstep crime.
- (d) Provide benefit and debt advice.
- (e) Support at community events.
- (f) Cold Calling Control Zones.
- (g) SAFER Toolkits.

For an informal chat or to book a SAFER workshop email: safers@wyjs.org.uk or telephone 0113 939910.

11 Dates of Future Meetings

Date of the next meeting – Thursday 17th November 2016.