

NORTH WALSALL AREA PANEL MEETING

Wednesday, 3 July, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road, Blakenall, WS3 1LZ

Present

Councillor Oliver (Chairman)
Councillor Westley (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Jeavons
Councillor Jukes
Councillor Lane
Councillor Phillips
Councillor Smith
Councillor Thomas

Officers

Jo Lowndes, Partnership Manager
Michael Greenfield, Area Manager
Ness Stephens, Area Support Officer
Matthew Underhill, Committee Governance & Business Manager
Jo Stewart, Communications Team

Other attendees

1/13

Welcome/introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions took place. It was explained that the Area Panels were Committees of the Council.

2/13

Apologies

Apologies for the duration of the meeting were received from Councillor J. Fitzpatrick and Councillor S. Fitzpatrick

3/13

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

4/13

Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

5/13

Funding Procedures

The meeting considered the funding arrangements for Area Partnerships:-

It was explained that new funding procedures had been introduced. It was explained that applications for funding would be assessed by Members at Area Panel meetings. The Panel had delegated authority from Council to approve, or otherwise, these applications. It was also explained that the Panel's authority was being sought to provide the Area Manager with delegated authority to approve urgent projects up to the value of £500, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and relevant Ward Members. It was also explained that all urgent projects that were considered would be reported at the following Area Panel meeting. The Chair explained that he felt it would be more appropriate for delegated authority to be provided for urgent projects up to the value of £1,000 as this would be of more practical worth given the value of a number previous projects. The Chair's amendment to the proposal was approved unanimously. The Chair noted that he was not aware of any restriction in the new procedures that would prevent the Panel choosing to lift the limit to £1,000. However, he agreed to allow officers to seek clarification on this issue. The Partnership Manager also pointed out that special meetings could be held where necessary to deal with urgent applications where a funding request was above the delegated authority limit.

In response to a Panel query it was explained that funding applications will initially be considered by the Area Manager and then passed to the Area Partnership Manager for review. At that stage the Partnership Manager might also seek clarification or further information. All projects which meet the criteria will then be submitted for consideration at the following Panel meeting. It was agreed that officers will advise Members in between meetings regarding any applications that have been rejected. Officers also explained that work will also be undertaken with applicants in order to help them meet the application criteria. The Chair highlighted his concern that the equal distribution of funding was not equitable as it did not reflect either the significant difference in the level of inequalities or disadvantage between wards, or variations in the size of population. The Chair also highlighted concern regarding the method of payment, which required organisations to self-fund activity and then reclaim the amount from the Area Partnership afterwards. He felt that for some organisations cash flow became a barrier to being able to make funding applications. The Partnership Manager explained that organisations were required to have the necessary funding in place for an activity prior to an award being made. She expressed concern that removing this restriction would lead to a significant increase in the number of applications received. However, it was agreed that in exceptional circumstances a funding award could be made prior to an activity being undertaken.

Following a Panel query it was explained that local organisations are made aware of the opportunity of applying for funding through the Partnership web pages and through promotion by officers. In response to a further Panel query it was explained that officers will signpost organisations toward Walsall Voluntary Action (WVA) for assistance in meeting constitutional requirements.

Officers also explained that organisations are asked to complete a post-activity review document. This includes feedback from participants and is an assessment of the outcomes and benefits of the activity.

Resolved

That the Area Panel:

- (1) notes that it has authority to make decisions on Area Partnership funding where allocated to an Area Partnership by the Council;
- (2) approves delegated authority to the relevant Area Manager for any urgent projects, up to the value of £1000, in consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and relevant Ward Members; &
- (3) in exceptional circumstances an organisation will receive its funding award prior to the activity.

6/13

Funding Report

The joint report of the Partnership Manager and the Area Manager was submitted:-

It was explained that carry-over of funding from the previous financial year had not yet been approved, therefore it was possible that funding for projects approved during 2012/13 might be drawn from the current year budget.

Projects that were approved prior to the change in the approval process included the Keep Out of the Cold Project. This project provided a venue for young people to visit between 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. prior to the start of the school day. The purpose of this project was to provide young people with a nutritious meal and the opportunity to learn life skills. Other projects included Mossley Young Leaders and the Bentley Lane Environmental Project which included a Community Payback clean up of the local area. Following a Panel query officers agreed to provide more details regarding applicant organisations, including objectives and lead officers.

In relation to new project proposals (Appendix 1) it was explained that the Harden Road Play Scheme included a 15 week swimming programme. This was in response to it being identified that many of the young people who attended the youth club were not able to swim. Following Panel queries it was explained that the Play Scheme had determined that Bentley Bridge swimming pool, Wolverhampton, was better suited to its requirements than alternative provision in Walsall.

Resolved

That the Area Panel approves the project applications contained in Appendix 1 to the report.

Area Manager Update

The report of the Area Manager was submitted:-

The Area Manger explained that work to develop the Strategic Priorities in Walsall had been undertaken across partners, with the Police chairing the partnership meetings. Area Partnerships were taking the lead on the following priorities: Safe Walsall; Children & Young People; Business and Jobs and Health and Well-being. This activity had involved many different groups within the community, including Beechdale residents meeting to consider issues relating to anti-social behaviour and implementing a opening and closing time for the Fun Park, as well as informing the Police about nuisance behaviour. In addition work continues with the operation of the Agenda 21 camera and the deployment of Dome hawk cameras.

In relation to Children and Young People it was explained that work was being undertaken with the Integrated Young People's Support Service (IYPSS) to identify and target both hotspot area and individuals who would benefit from contact with the service. Members were also assisting in identifying appropriate areas to target resources. In relation to Business and Jobs it was explained that work was being undertaken by the Area Partnerships with both Walsall Adult Community College and Walsall College to establish job clubs, as well as identify job related skills organisations. In relation to Health and Well-being it was explained that the challenge of obesity in young children as well as adults was now being addressed. This includes weight management programmes in Blakenall, Beechdale and Bloxwich. In relation to Creating cleaner and tidier neighbourhoods it was explained that in the Lea Area a clean up activity had been undertaken in conjunction with Tarmac, whg and other partners, together with volunteers. The meeting acknowledged the importance of the site remaining in its improved state and the role of the community in supporting this. A Panel Member expressed support for the joint partner working and community effort that had transformed the Lea. In relation to Whateley Road Playing Fields it was explained that written requests had been made to a local resident who had had fenced off land in order to keep animals. The Area Manager would be meeting with officers from the council's legal department to consider the next steps in enforcement action. A Panel Member highlighted the importance of effective enforcement action as historically the council had lost land when appropriate action had not been taken. The Area Manager explained that the objective was to return the land to proper community use to demonstrate that it could not be subject to any further fencing off or fly-tipping. The Chair noted that ongoing action and asked that the Area Panel continued to be informed on progress in this matter.

The meeting also considered the proposal for the introduction of a carbon recovery operation by BH Energy Gap in Beechdale. It was explained that the company had undertaken consultations within the local community. However, the Area Manager had responded to local resident concerns regarding the lack of the consultation activity and it had been agreed that the company would undertake further consultation work. The Chair

explained that the proposal for the carbon recovery facility was causing concern to local residents, including significant additional traffic on local roads. He also observed that a consultation with residents undertaken by the council rather than BH Energy Gap would provide a more balanced view of local opinion.

In relation to Big Local Mossley Councillor Westley explained that applications for funding to be drawn from the first £20k were now being considered by a committee He emphasised that the total fund available remained at £1m.

In relation to the Reeves Street railway bridge, Members were concerned that while Network Rail had explained that no further work was to be taken until 2016, the work being undertaken at the Broad Lane Bridge would have implications for Reeves Street.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

8/13

Area Plan Summary Document Approval

The report of the Partnership Manager, together with a Area Community Plan summary document was submitted:-

Officers explained that each Area Partnership has an Area Plan setting out activity against identified workstreams and priorities on a by ward basis. Following observations by Members offices agreed to make minor amendments to the document

Resolved

That the Area Plan summary document be approved.

9/13

Devolution through Area Partnerships - Update

The report of the Partnership Manager was submitted.

The Head of Communities and Partnerships explained that the update focused on the devolution of budgets and participatory budgeting. The purpose of this activity was to empower local communities by enabling local residents to participate in decision making through consultation events. This includes enabling local people to make decisions regarding the services they want delivered within their communities. Following a Panel query it was explained that officers would identify existing community events which could be used to undertake consultation activity, while other events were also being considered.

It was explained that the Walsall Plan 2013- 2016 had been approved which has a number of strategic priorities. While it was also explained that the functions of the new Area Panels would be reviewed in 12 months time. It was further explained that two pilot community hub projects were

underway, with a number of partner organisations participating in this activity.

Resolved

That the Area Panel notes the progress achieved against each of the seven proposals for devolution through Area Partnerships.

10/13

Election to the Local Police and Crime Board

A report was submitted.

Councillor Oliver moved:-

That Councillor Westley should be the Area Panel's representative on the Local Police and Crime Board.

Resolved

That Councillor Westley be nominated to represent North Walsall on the Local Police and Crime Board for Municipal Year 2013/14.

11/13

Dates and venues for North Walsall Area Panel meetings

In response to a Panel query it was explained that members of the public would be able to participate in Panel meetings following the conclusion of the standing items.

It was agreed that the meetings of North Walsall Area Panel be held on the following dates and venues:

Wednesday 18 September 2013, Beechdale Lifelong Learning Centre, Stephenson Square, Beechdale Estate, WS2 7DY

Wednesday 20 November 2013, Burrowes Street TMO, Burrowes Street, WS2 8NN

Wednesday 29 January 2014, Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road, WS3 1LZ

Wednesday 9 April 2014, Beechdale Lifelong Learning Centre, Stephenson Square, Beechdale Estate, WS2 7DY

Termination of the meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: