DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 17TH JULY, 2019

A MEETING of the COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE on WEDNESDAY, 17TH JULY, 2019, at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:
Chair - Councillor Mark Houlbrook
Vice-Chair - Councillor Jane Cox
Councillors Nigel Cannings, Tosh McDonald and Kevin Rodgers

1   Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mick Cooper.

2   To consider the extent, if any, to which the public and press are to be excluded from the meeting.

None

3   Declarations of Interest, if any

Declarations of interest were received from Councillors Jane Cox by virtue of being a Director of ICE Theatre (a social enterprise - not for profit organisation) and Councillor Kevin Rodgers by virtue of being a Director of Permafuture Agroecology Limited.

4   Public Statements

There were no public statements made.

5   Social Isolation and Loneliness Alliance Update

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on the Third Sector Social Isolation and Loneliness Partnership Alliance and to ask Members to note the progress to date. A presentation was made to Members that provided a more detailed overview and the actions for the proceeding twelve months.

Members of the Panel expressed their disappointment that there was no representation from the Doncaster Culture Leisure Trust to provide responses to questions posed. It was requested by the Chair that a letter be sent to the Trust and to invite them to attend a future meeting of the Panel when a further update was provided.

The presentation outlined the following areas;

- Terms of Reference
- Where are we at in terms of developing the Alliance?
- Responsibilities of Lead Organisation

- Governance
- Key actions for the next 12 months
- Performance and Outcomes Framework
- Research links

It was acknowledged that social inclusion presented significant challenges on a national and local level, spanned all ages and was influenced by a number of issues. Members were informed that research had shown the impact that social isolation had on health, particularly elderly residents

A discussion took place, which addressed the following areas;

Model - It was reported that consideration was being given to using a similar model to that in place with Expect Youth. Concern was raised that using such a model would mean that services were commissioned out and therefore it would be difficult to measure the delivery of those services. Assurances were provided that the legal agreement would not allow that to take place within the 3 years although it was acknowledged that there was a need to agree how people would enter into the alliance.

It was recognised that this concept was about investing at the front end, establishing systems and undertaking funding and discovery work to support long-term sustainability. It was viewed that there were a number of opportunities available although further work still needed to be undertaken with the alliance. It was explained that in addition to the core membership, there were a number of new players presenting themselves. It was commented that it was about linking in and utilising what was currently available.

Comments were made about assets available within communities that could be utilised by groups. Given that local authority assets were being sold, there was a reliance on existing community provisions to be utilised   A Member commented that the vision was good and questioned whether there was a high profile project in place that had the potential to be expanded.

An area that was being looked at more closely was how resources were being targeted. It was queried whether there was any correlation between the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and levels of social isolation.   In terms of the £200,000 funding amount, clarification was sought around what was the expectation about the recipient of the grant. It was suggested that further clarity could be made within the Terms of Reference about how work could be targeted at a lower level to achieve positive outcomes and make the most impact. A question was asked on whether the funds would be taken up by bureaucracy with less money spent at source, delivering to communities.

Identification and Access - Concern was raised about how those people who were affected by social isolation could be identified. Members were informed about a piece of work taking place with the alliance to identify groups of people who were more likely to trigger social inclusion work. It was outlined that it was about working as one Council and becoming more localised about how we work.

In terms of accessing the project, it was explained that this could take place through triage and an assessment. A Member stressed the importance that the support

should be easy to access, otherwise individuals may give up. Clarification was provided that the focus of the alliance was about assessing what services would be most appropriate for that individual and was not a formal social care type triage.

It was raised by a Member that existing mechanisms and initiatives could be used to help identify those people who may benefit from this work, for example, through foodbanks and churches

Risks - Members were informed that further work was being undertaken to look at risks before the agreement is signed. It was explained that discussions were taking place around the responsibilities of the lead organisation and that the new governance arrangements would be finalised in the near future. A Member raised concern that such checks around risk were taking place after the lead organisation had been appointed. It was proposed that an update on risk registers and modelling could be brought to the Panel at a later date.

Campaign and Engagement with Groups - Members were informed that the name of the group needed further consideration to make it more positive sounding and that work with communications needed to be undertaken to look at rebranding.

Members were told that in terms of the mandate provided for 2021, that Doncaster will be the least lonely Place by 2021 and this area could be deemed as a Council priority in this coming year to raise the bar on social isolation through Team Doncaster and by utilising Council volunteering.

It was questioned what had taken place to reach out to small community groups (for example, in rural areas and hard to reach villages that had little or no access to funding) as concern was raised that not enough had been done to identify and engage with them. Members were informed that work had been undertaken through the Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator (VSF) around identification of community groups and that a newsletter was circulated on a regular basis. It was acknowledged that the VSF was very active in supporting signposting and applications for funding as well as encouraging such groups to connect better together. It was felt that although this work had been acknowledged, that more needed to be done.

Research - It was explained about important research work being undertaken with University of Sheffield Centre and potentially with York University.

Sustainability - Concerns were raised around how the model would continue and what plans would be in place after a 3-year period. It was questioned how it would be made sustainable and what options would there be, for example, whether it would be returned back in-house. A Member of the Panel commented that it could be more cost effective to return services back in-house.

It was stated that sustainability was a challenge even with larger organisations.

It was recognised that work would be undertaken more collaboratively which would also help identify pressures and gaps. It was noted that there were already a number of opportunities being presented through different work streams such as Primary Care Networks across Doncaster

In terms of challenges, it was acknowledged that there was a significant issue around accessing volunteers across all areas.

Members were informed that members of the alliance had undertaken an exercise around what was currently happening within the localities. It was commented by a Member of the Panel that existing community groups were already undertaking similar areas of work. It was questioned whether the work already taking place should be extended rather than commissioned through larger organisations during the 3- years of funding. It was felt that there needed to be further clarity provided on the direction of the alliance. It was noted that existing community provision could do more with the funds available to help with social isolation and loneliness.

It was noted that the alliance was about supporting local groups and that they would not be at a disadvantage based on the size of the organisation.   It was explained that efforts were being made to stimulate the market from 'grass roots' with smaller organisations benefiting from the support and skills of those larger organisations for example, with bid-writing.

It was stated that in 3-years, there would be an alliance group of individual organisations that did not operate under Council but that the Council would be able to influence as part of the governance structure.

Physical Environment – Concern was raised about the impact that the physical environment has on social isolation, for example, HMOs that could have an adverse effect on communities.

It was also noted that the Council was looking towards developing a more age friendly approach, which included elements such as planning as well as looking at developing more traditional values around friendly neighbourhoods. It was added that there was a great deal of work being undertaken within the Neighbourhood Teams.

Transport – Concern was raised that good transport links were key in terms of addressing social inclusion. It was recognised that this was a challenge, in particular in more rural communities and was an area that could be considered further through applying more innovative approaches.   It was commented that there were communities with voluntary drivers providing transport and similar initiatives in place and have worked very well. It was added that it might be useful to look at this area further and possibly conduct a trial within an area that experienced particular issues.

RESOLVED that;

i.   the Panel note the report; and
ii.   That an extraordinary meeting of the Panel be held in approximately 3 months' time to receive a further update on progress made with the alliance and for a representative to attend from the lead organisation, Doncaster Culture Leisure Trust; and
iii.   That consideration be given to reviewing the Terms of Reference of the Alliance to ensure they include a clear focus on the demographics and areas to be targeted (delivery base).

6   C&E O&S Workplan - Update July 2019

The Panel received a report updating Members on the Panels work plan for 2019/20.

A copy of the work plan was attached at Appendix A of the report taking account of issues agreed by OSMC at its meeting on the 27th June 2019.

The Chair informed the Panel that he had met with the Assistant Director on Environment in relation to work taking place around the Environmental Strategy and the involvement of the Communities and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Members of the Panel were informed that the work was in its early stages and there were a number of areas that would sit beneath the umbrella of the Environmental Strategy that they would be update on in the near future. It was acknowledged that there was a great deal of work being undertaken in this area as it was currently very topical, there had been interest from community members and it was part of a wider national and international debate.

There was also a brief discussion around the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Workplan 19/20 - July 2019 update.

CHAIR:_____   DATE:_____