

Minutes of a meeting of the Bradford South Area Committee held Remotely on Wednesday, 24 March 2021

Commenced 5.00 pm
Concluded 6.40 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE
T Hussain Johnson Mukhtar S Khan Warburton Watson Wood	Bibby

Councillor Hussain in the Chair

14. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

15. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2021 be signed as a correct record.

16. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

17. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions submitted by the public.

18. **PROTECTING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK OF EXPLOITATION**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “E”**) which provided the Area Committee with an update to and built on the report presented to the District Area Committees previously regarding the issue of Child Exploitation (CE). It focuses on the Strategic Response to all forms of exploitation in Children and Adults and how partners from the Working Together to Safeguard Children – the Bradford Partnership and the Bradford Safeguarding Adults Board work to drive improvements across the District and to hold agencies to account for their work in their area. The report also outlined the emergence of other complex safeguarding themes and outlined how partners were effectively collaborating and focussing upon the protection of vulnerable Children and Adults.

A number of officers across different Council services were present, including a representative from West Yorkshire Police to give an overview and respond to Members' questions.

It was explained that this was a lengthy report, brought annually and covered the plethora of issues around exploitation in all its forms. A thematic case review would be published in late May/June and lessons will be learnt from this important piece of work.

The early help approach was a crucial element in tackling exploitation and nipping issues in the bud, before problems surfaced later on. To this end an area of focus was around those children not in education and ensuring that these children were tracked through the system, as well as an oversight on parents who had opted for elective home education.

A representative from West Yorkshire Police was present at the meeting and stated that the work of the Police in tackling exploitation in conjunction with Partners was expansive. As the primary agency responsible for ensuring convictions, the Service had invested huge resources in tackling historic cases as well as more high profile cases involving multiple victims and perpetrators, some of these cases were currently going through the criminal justice system.

Covert operations also formed a key part of the forces response, together with work in the schools in the district, which had yielded good results and hence preventive work was seen as key weapon in tackling exploitation, citing the early Help pilot in Keighley as an exemplar.

From the Hub's perspective when a child is identified as being at risk, a multi agency risk assessment is undertaken and a management plan initiated to manage the risk and protect the child. At an operational level all children at significant risk are reviewed and therefore a stringent approach is taken regarding exploitation.

Risk and intervention plans are reviewed and work on the project entitled 'Breaking the Cycle' was an intensive intervention project, targeting children at risk from being involved in criminal activity; links to the Youth Service formed a key component of this project, working to ensure that young people moved away from organised criminality and were better integrated into education.

During the discussion, a Member ascertained how a referral was made to

'Breaking the Cycle' project. In response it was explained that anyone can effectively make a referral, including, the Youth Service and that multi agency referrals and appropriate interventions are then looked at.

The Area Coordinator added that the Youth Service worked closely with the 'Breaking the Cycle' project, working in conjunction with area based teams at lower levels of risk as well as with voluntary sector partners; with referrals made appropriately.

A Member stated that during the course of the pandemic, a number of residents had reported an increased level of activity in both drug dealing and drug taking; with a perception that the Police were not tackling this growing criminality, although residents were actively encouraged to report such incidents to the Police. In response the representative from West Yorkshire Police stressed that the Police took the issue of drugs and organised criminality extremely seriously; and although he welcomed the encouragement to report such incidents, the complexities of organised crime had a regional, national and international component, and therefore was a challenging area. However the Neighbourhood Policing Team were very active in this area, with weekly warrants being initiated; work around county lines and tackling the way young people were being groomed into criminality.

Suffice to say that young people were often the victims and preventative work was seen as a key response; along with the work being done in schools , youth justice, the Early Help Hubs and work around cyber grooming to make some inroads. It was stressed that any criminal activity and including drug related activity can be reported anonymously to Crimestoppers.

A Member stated that he welcomed the decline in the number of children missing in education, however they had been a corresponding increase in the number of children being home educated and he ascertained how we compared ourselves with other local authorities. In response it was stated that we compared favourably in the area of missing children, and that the Council were adept at tracking children through the system, with some difficulties or delays experienced when children go abroad. In the area of elective home education, support was in place to ensure children received the best education and had access to resources, where possible, however it was important to note the elective home education was enshrined in law, and that safeguarding was not a particular issue in this area. However when children attended school, any safeguarding issues could be flagged up earlier.

A Member suggested that better liaison with the Youth Service, wardens and the ward officers would yield better results in tackling exploitation, as their knowledge of the local area was invaluable.

A Member ascertained what evaluation was being undertaken as part of the projects being delivered in tackling exploitation and what were the real outcomes and how were these being measured. In response it was explained that depending on how the individual projects were being funded, evaluation and outcome measurements were an integral part, and that much of the Home Office funding was dependant on achieving successful outcomes.

It was also explained that the Council was also embarking on a significant investment in expanding the Hub, which would yield significant result in terms of our ability to respond to the issue of exploitation, by offering a 24/7 model.

A Member suggested that more imaginative and increased use of social media platforms were also crucial components in getting the key messages across to

young people.

In response to a question regarding the high incidence rates recorded in the Great Horton and Tong Wards compared to other wards in the district, it was explained that in looking at statistics, a wider approach needed to be adopted, and although deprivation played a part, a wider district perspective had to be taken in tackling the issue of exploitation.

The Chair thanked officers, partners and the Police for attending the Area Committee and for providing a detailed response to Members' question, and it was therefore:

Resolved –

- (1) That the Area Committee considered the contents of Document “E” and requested that better liaison takes place between the Area Coordinator’s office and Childrens and Adults Social Care in tackling exploitation in all its forms.**
- (2) That the Area Committee receives a further update on the progress of the response to exploitation in 12 months’ time.**
- (3) That it be noted that Partners will seek further funding opportunities from Government funding streams to enable to continuation of service provision as outlined in Document “E”.**

ACTION: Chief Executive

Overview & Scrutiny Area: Children’s Services

19. THE SMART STREET LIGHTING PROJECT UPDATE TO AREA COMMITTEE ON PROGRESS AND SCHEDULE

The Strategic Director of Place submitted a report (**Document “F”**) which provided Members with a progress report of the Smart Street Lighting Project to date. It also explained some of the processes and activities to come and provided details of the significant benefits expected to be realised to the district as a result of this project.

It was explained that the Council approved an investment of £45m to enhance its current lighting stock, of approximately 56,500 assets, with the aim of significantly reducing energy usage, maintenance costs and also reducing carbon outputs. The Council will replace the existing inefficient lighting with more energy efficient LED’s whilst retaining most of the existing lighting columns, it is envisaged that there will be a need for the replacement of approximately 15,600 life expired lighting columns. The new lighting solution will be controlled using a Central Management System (CMS) via a Low power wide area network (LoRaWAN) thus providing a platform for Internet of Things (IoT) for connectivity.

The vast majority of the Works (48,300 assets in scope) will be carried out via an ‘External Contractor’, who will commence with the survey of all the existing street lighting assets within the District, including a column condition inspection to determine structural suitability. The results from the survey will assist the Council to identify what upgrade works are required for each lighting asset, giving them full control in generating the SSL Project’s operational work scope.

In response to a question regarding lighting columns that were deemed defunct, it was explained that the survey would identify structural issues and redundant columns and that replacement columns would be erected in situations that warranted them.

In response to a specific concern in a ward where a number of lighting columns had become redundant and the resulting concerns around burglaries and safety, it was explained that this had been an unprecedented situation in this particular area, however the contractor was working hard to ensure the columns were replaced in a timely fashion.

In response to a number of questions around the social value element of the contract and the use of local labour and opportunities, it was agreed, that where possible details on these specific elements of the contract will be circulated to Members.

It was also suggested that where Members had specific concerns around lighting columns in their respective wards or any specific questions around the smart street lighting project that they contact the officers directly.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress of the Smart Street Lighting project be acknowledged and that this Area Committee welcomes the annual updates.**
- (2) That the project be endorsed as a positive investment across the Bradford District bringing significant benefits overall.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Place

Overview and Scrutiny Area: Regeneration and Economy

20. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE NON-CLASSIFIED ROADS AND SURFACE DRESSING ALLOCATION FOR BRADFORD SOUTH - 2021/22

The Strategic Director Place submitted a report (**Document “G”**) which provided information on Capital Highway Maintenance funding and made recommendations on the allocation for Non-Classified road resurfacing schemes and Surface Dressing sites.

During the discussion it was suggested that in relation to the Wilson Road, Wyke scheme that the scheme should be suitably delayed until near completion of the sports village development. In response it was stated that where possible, the work will be appropriately timed.

In response to a question regarding the use of local labour/companies in undertaking the contract, it was explained that the Council did not carry out any of these major works in house, and that inevitably larger national contractors did the work on behalf of the Council through a tendering process, and therefore there was no stipulation on the use of local labour.

Resolved –

That the proposed programme of works as shown in Appendix 1 and 2 to Document “G” be approved.

ACTION: Strategic Director Place

Overview and Scrutiny Area: Regeneration & Economy

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Bradford South Area Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER