

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES) - CONSULTATIVE MEETING

THURSDAY, 1ST DECEMBER, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors E Carlisle, L Cunningham,
P Grahame, S Lay, A Maloney, T Smith,
E Thomson, J Tudor and N Walshaw

1 **Declarations of Interests**

Although members did not raise any interests, Councillor L Cunningham made the Board aware that in relation to Agenda Item 4: Tackling Inequality and Disadvantage in Communities – Locality Working, she is part of the volunteer front for the Armley Action Group and other associated organisations. Minute No. 21 refers.

2 **Introductions and Apologies**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Akhtar, Brooks, Khan and Finnigan. Councillor E Thomson attended on behalf of Councillor K Brooks.

3 **Ensuring the Resilience of the Third Sector**

The report of the Director of Communities, Housing & Environment outlined the new challenges faced by the third sector due to the current Cost-of-Living crisis, and the work taking place to establish shared principles which have emerged over the years in the developing relationships between the third sector and statutory partners to navigate the current financial challenge presented by pressures on statutory funding and the Cost-of-Living crisis. It also outlined the collaborative approaches taken forward by the public and third sector which enabled a city response to local communities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Appended to the report included:

- Appendix 1: Ensuring Resilience of the Third Sector
- Appendix 2: Leeds Third Sector Ambition Statement
- Appendix 3: Response to the cost of living Crisis: Third Sector Leeds September 2022
- Appendix 4: Third Sector Leeds position statement: cost of living and third sector resilience

The following were in attendance for this item:

Leeds City Council

- Councillor Harland, Executive Member for Communities
- Paul Money, Chief Officer, Safer Stronger Communities
- Nadeem Saddique, Head of Community Relations, and Cohesion
- Samantha Powell, Third Sector & Migration Partner Manager

External Guests

- Hannah Bailey, Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Leeds
- Chris Hollins, Chair of Third Sector Leeds
- Francesca Wood, Forum Central

The Executive Member for Communities introduced the item by highlighting the importance of Third Sector partnerships in Leeds and their valued work during the Covid-19 pandemic, and ultimately the cost-of-living crisis.

The Chief Officer (Safer Stronger Communities) explained that for Leeds to be a thriving city, we require a thriving Third Sector. There are exciting opportunities to work with individuals and facilities, particularly around communications in the city and working more closely with Third Sector organisations in the city through established links. The report details how the service intend to move forward in increasing their collaboration with the Third Sector, public & private sector.

The Chief Officer (VAL) commended the city's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the role VAL had in supporting arrangements for communities, due to already established partnerships in Leeds. It was noted that the cost-of-living crisis highlights a period of uncertainty for VAL, due to rising levels of demand on communities and the impact of organisations less resilient from the pandemic. Recent third sector workshops have established valuable principles to build upon and there is a recognition that longer-term work will be required to secure the on-going resilience of VAL. Moving forward, a Third Sector Strategy is being established to articulate the value of the Third Sector and how it contributes to the city.

The Chair of the Third Sector Leeds reiterated the importance of growing relationships between Local Authorities and the Third Sector and acknowledged the difficult times ahead in terms of the cost-of-living crisis.

The representative from Forum Central explained that established partnerships in the city will enable a collective response to the difficult times ahead. The need to minimise duplication between statutory partners was highlighted and the need to make best use of the Third Sector. Forum Central are involved in the city's health partnership and are undertaking work to improve health outcomes for the most vulnerable people across communities.

Further to questions from Board members, the following information was confirmed:

- It was noted that there are approximately 3,500 groups across Leeds, ranging from large organisations to volunteer groups. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased collaboration across Third Sector organisations. The Leeds Community Anchor Network was established as a result of the pandemic with an aim of avoiding duplication of work and to bring together partners.
- Third Sector Leeds has also organised locality meetings to bring together interested groups to discuss issues they're facing in the locality. It was identified that often a barrier for smaller organisations is

knowing which meetings to attend and with whom to make connections.

- The Third Sector Strategy aims to articulate the value of the sector and identify where work different work needs to take place. Part of the strategy looks at further where resources should be directed to deliver most value. The strategy will seek to set out an investment strategy for the Third Sector.
- Forum Central led on work to produce the 'State of the Sector' report and there are plans to refresh this over the coming months.
- Further to a question regarding geographical boundaries, Forum Central (in liaison with the council) have established a community interest network to ensure that vulnerable people such as those who are homeless do not see a disruption in support on the basis of geographical boundaries.
- A number of funding fairs and training sessions have been set up for organisations to attend.
- In terms of help from the council to help assist Third Sector organisations, it was noted that funding from grant aid is more beneficial than contracts, particularly for smaller organisations. It was agreed it is important to consider longer term funding in order to enable organisations to leverage further investment.
- Silos will be attempted to be mitigated by continuation of collaboration between organisations and the public sector. It was noted that the Third Sector Partnership group that the Executive Member for Communities Chairs, is an important forum for established partnerships and a means of communication. Concern was raised regarding the West Yorkshire Combined Authority not utilising already existing partnerships.
- The Third Sector support opportunities for the council to be 'bolder' and 'braver' as Third Sector capacity provides an opportunity to mitigate some of the risks associated with taking risks.

The Chief Officer (Safer Stronger Communities) and Executive Member for Communities summarised by recognising the significant challenge for the Local Authority and Third Sector due to the cost-of-living crisis. The importance of supporting communities and families across the city was reiterated, and all parties acknowledged the vital work of the Third Sector, particularly in engaging harder to reach groups in the community.

The Chair thanked those in attendance and highlighted the importance of discussions.

RESOLVED – To:

- a) Note the contents of the report and updates providing during the meeting.
- b) Support the series of actions detailed under 4 headings in appendix 4 (**from page 20**), which emerged from a Third Sector Leeds Leadership Group workshop on 31 October.

4 Tackling Inequality and Disadvantage in Communities: Locality Working

The report of the Director of Environment, Housing and Communities provided the Scrutiny Board with an update on the work that has taken place so far on expanding the city's Locality Working model and the next stage of its implementation.

Appended to the report included:

- Appendix 1 – Locality Working – Priority Ward Activation and Prevailing Issues
- Appendix 2 – Development of Community Committees
- Appendix 3 – Examples of Locality Working Activity

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Harland, Executive Member for Communities
 - Paul Money, Chief Officer, Safer Stronger Communities
 - Liz Jarmin, Head of Locality Partnerships
- Localities Programme Managers
- Andrew Birkbeck
 - Taj Virdee
 - Rachel Marshall
 - Jane Pattison

The Head of Locality Partnerships introduced the annual update report and provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation on the following key issues:

- An overview of progress (since 2017) in terms of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Leeds (1%); the number has decreased from 16 areas in 1% to 12 areas.
- The development of a more focused approach across the 6 most disadvantaged wards where these neighbourhoods reside, to tackle inequality and poverty and build more thriving and resilient communities.
- LGA Corporate Peer Review Feedback which highlights the councils Locality Working as a model of good practice but highlighted the need to accelerate progress.
- An overview of the three strands of the Locality Working Framework: Citywide, Seasonal and Responsive and Priority Neighbourhood and Ward.
- There is a particular focus on several priorities for Locality Working including the cost of living, life expectancy, crime & anti-social behaviour, skills & employment, and housing & environment.
- Development of Community Committees and reviewing the role of Community Committee Champions that better outlines what the role and its responsibilities entail.
- Locality Working governance and accountability structure were discussed.
- Timetable of implementation in terms of team structure and finalising the Local Area Plans.

- The establishment of a Locality Working Development Group involving anchor organisations and the Third Sector.

Prior to discussion of this item, Councillor L Cunningham made the Board aware that she supports work undertaken by Armley Action Team and associated working groups on a volunteer front.

Board members raised the following points:

- The Board would welcome more information about volunteers. It was noted a number of issues with volunteer groups have been identified with regards to funding received.
- Opportunities identified for closer working collaboration between members in each ward to provide better outcomes.
- It was acknowledged that there are pockets of deprivation across all wards, and clarity was sought on scope to expand on priority neighbourhoods. Officers confirmed that the current scope is to focus on the 1% areas assigned in the city and where issues are identified in other parts of the city, officers will examine those to identify a suitable response. The approach to Locality Working is reviewed on a regular basis.
- Local issues in terms of community centre funding. Officers will work with members outside of the meeting to discuss local issues.
- Acknowledgement that social media isn't often the best way to reach various groups in the community and sometimes leaflet dropping is a better way of engaging. Officers provided an example in the Holbeck ward of work undertaken on leaflet dropping and it was noted that colleagues will confirm how engagement will be moved forward more broadly.

The Localities Managers in attendance provided an overview of the positive work that has been undertaken in their areas, and examples of positive long-term partnerships that have been established in various wards.

The Head of Locality Partnerships and Executive Member summarised by highlighting the positive relationship and support received from the Scrutiny Board, as well as requesting that the Scrutiny Board establish a working group on the review of Community Committees.

The Chair thanked those in attendance.

RESOLVED – To:

- a) Note the contents of the report and presentation provided during the meeting.
- b) Note the progress and comment on the delivery of the new locality ways of working.
- c) Note and comment on the development of the new Local Area Plans.
- d) Consider the request to establish a working group on the review of Community Committees and in particular, the Champion Roles.

5 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services provided the Board with the work schedule for the 2022/23 municipal year.

The Board were informed of dates for upcoming remote working groups relating to:

- Initial Budget Proposals – Monday, 12th December 2022 at 3.15 p.m.
- Social Progress Index as part of the Best City Ambition update and performance monitoring – Wednesday, 14th December 2022 at 11:30 a.m.
- Air Quality Action Plan – Monday, 27th February 2023 at 2 p.m.

RESOLVED – To note the appended work schedule for the 2022/23 municipal year.

6 Date and Time of the Next Meeting

To note the date and time of the next formal meeting as Thursday, 5th January 2023 at 10.30 am (pre-meeting for Board members at 10:00 am)