



COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting: Wednesday, 14 June 2023 at 6.30 pm in Octagon Lounge, Pavilion Gardens, Buxton

Present: Councillor R Quinn (Chair)

Councillors J Benzer, J Collins, S De Pee, S Gardner, L Grooby, P Hacking, M Hall, Inman and D Lomax

In Attendance: Councillor(s) A Barrow, G Claff, D Greenhalgh, A McKeown and J Todd

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Mackie and K Sizeland

24/1 TO RECEIVE DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST ON ANY MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE
(Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations made.

24/2 ANY MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE UNDER THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE
(Agenda Item 3)

None.

24/3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING
(Agenda Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

24/4 BITE SIZE BRIEFING (PRESENTATION)
(Agenda Item 5)

The Executive Director (Governance and Commissioning) made a presentation to the committee which set out:

- The Council's Decision Making Process
- Forward Plan
- Overview and Scrutiny arrangements
- Review of Scrutiny
- Role of Corporate Select Committee
- The development of a work programme
- Task & Finish Groups

- The role of officers

Members were informed about the recent review of scrutiny undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, which made recommendations for further improvements including the establishment of a Select Committee Work Programming Group to oversee Work Programme prioritisation and Member Development. The Work Programme is to be developed using a prioritisation tool (PAPER) and will be developed further following the priority setting workshop.

Reference was made to recent areas of scrutiny for the committee which included the development of the leisure transformation plan, review of the parks strategy and disabled facilities grants for private sector housing.

The Chair added that other functions undertaken by the committee include responding to consultations and inviting external organisations to come and present issues of local concern / interest.

The Chair asked members to forward any matters for inclusion in the work programme for consideration by the Work Programme Planning Group. Issues suggested immediately, included:

- AES –no mow may
- AES - concerns regarding the use of the parks to site bonfires in light of the Climate Change declaration
- Private Sector Housing Update

Regarding leisure facilities, reference was made to the current pricing strategies and membership arrangements. The Executive Councillor commented that the creation of a council owned company would give the council more control over issues such as pricing.

The Chair made reference to access for facilities for young people and concern was expressed regarding notice being given to community sport groups that community bookings are terminated at St Thomas More School. Cllr Hall provided members with an update on the current position, and it was noted that it had been a recommendation on the planning permission and from Sports England that there should be strong community links. The matter was also being pursued with DCC by County Councillor Kemp. It was agreed that representatives of the Trust be invited to the next meeting to discuss the matter further.

RESOLVED:

1. That the presentation be noted;
2. That representatives of the Ralph Sherwin Trust be invited to the next meeting to discuss community use of the St Thomas More Sports Hall.

PCSO Supervisor Lee Baker, Sgt. Hayley Repton (Glossop, New Mills, Hadfield, Gamesley) and T/Sgt Patrick Haley (Buxton, Hope Valley, Chapel and Whaley Bridge)

were in attendance and provided an update for members around local issues including:

- Buxton Police station is open and has an enquiry desk
- Glossop Police station has no enquiry desk but police officers do work out of Glossop
- Officers can use New Mills Fire Station to catch up on mobile data
- Custody facilities are in Greater Manchester which is a good service and works well
- The numbers of officers is increasing
- 5 policing groups – 1 sergeant and 10 PCs on 3 shifts a day with access from other specialist departments
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) – police officers and PCSOs deal with problem solving, ASBs and neighbour disputes
- The number of PCSOs are low but recruitment is on-going
- Partnership approach has decreased but the force is keen to restart the multi agency approach in dealing with problems such as ASB

PCSOs Baker outlined the ways in which the force communicate with the public and agreed to provide specific contact details for members. It was anticipated that informal meetings would be arranged with members to discuss areas of local concerns. It was suggested that photographs of the SNT members be included on the website.

Regarding staffing, it was confirmed that the staffing levels were similar to other parts of Derbyshire and that the force does have access to other units within Derbyshire. In response to concerns regarding the call centre, it was confirmed that performance of the call handling service has improved. There is a dedicated youth engagement team (1 PC and 2 PCSOs) who undertake preventative work including talks with schools.

A specific concern regarding motorbikes and quad bikes in New Mills was raised. PCSOs Baker confirmed that a plan was being developed to address this issue and that any information should be passed to the police. A management plan is also in place to address issues around burglaries and to provide an enhanced service around crime prevention. Specific reference was made to a particular issue in an area of Buxton to which affected residents will be invited to meet with police direct.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted and the officers be thanked for their attendance.

(Agenda Item 7)

Question from Councillor Collins:

High Peak Borough Council has committed to improving the biodiversity of the High Peak, including on its own land, as in the Parks Strategy¹. It set up a Biodiversity Working Group, now incorporated into the climate change group, reflecting the fact that these environmental concerns are interrelated.

In the Council invited Plantlife², a national charity, to speak about encouraging biodiversity on road verges. Recommendations from Plantlife included changing mowing regimes along verges. This can be extended to Council-owned land. The Council held a pilot during which it reduced mowing on a patch of its own land, to see whether there were complaints. It was reported to the Biodiversity Working Group that there were no complaints. In some places, in contrast, mowing is too infrequent, allowing footpaths to become nearly impassable. Changing mowing regimes could potentially save money and reduce emissions through less use of machinery. On Council land, it would allow common, attractive wildflowers such as cuckoo flower to flourish and brighten up the amenity value of the land.

However, the Council has consistently argued against changing mowing regimes. With regard to verges, it states that verges are managed under contract to Derbyshire CC. This need not be a barrier to change. In Derbyshire Dales, verges are also maintained under contract to Derbyshire, yet the mowing regime has changed there to allow wildflowers to flourish.

In order to protect biodiversity, in line with Council strategy, what changes to mowing regimes will the Council put in place for next year?

Response:

We note the comments made which references the need to change mowing regimes on Council land in order to encourage biodiversity and help contribute to wider climate change aspirations.

Since the launch of the High Peak Parks Strategy, changes have been made to the way a number of sites which the Council own are maintained, such as in Serpentine Walks in Buxton where a new biodiversity plan has been agreed between the Council, local interest groups and Alliance Environmental Services (AES). The plan includes amended mowing schedules and the establishment of wildflower areas thus providing an extremely positive case study of our approach to the involvement of working with local community groups.

There are also projects complete or progressing at Temple Fields and Ashwood Park in Buxton, Whaley Bridge Memorial Park, Hare Hills Park, Glossop along with the Council supporting the No Mow May initiative at 3

¹ https://www.highpeak.gov.uk/media/6280/HPBC-Parks-Strategy-2021---2031/pdf/Parks_Strategy_v_2.pdf?m=1647415674867

² <https://roadverges.plantlife.org.uk/>

sites in High Peak with a view to exploring more permanent changes to mowing regimes in these areas too.

It is an aspiration to continue to expand this approach and use the principles within the Parks Strategy together with the experience of delivering the above projects to guide other areas. Whilst we are keen to progress more projects it is important that the selection and delivery of such projects are managed carefully and are considerate to the resources available, existing/future work priorities and the involvement of other parties, such as internal colleagues, service providers and for example DCC where verge mowing contracts are already in place.

These contractual arrangements are a material consideration and need to be factored in when approaching any projects that are agreed corporately to progress.

This year we have plans to continue to work with internal colleagues (such as Communities and Climate Change) to make further progress with some of the projects listed above and also with supporting other projects which have not been included in this response.

Our team would be happy to discuss these projects/plans in further detail and also consider suggestions for similar projects elsewhere in the Borough.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Collins around when will there be council wide changes to mowing regimes for next year, the Executive Councillor for Climate Change and the Environment advised that work was ongoing with AES and DCC to establish a comparison of costs as well as information from a DCC pilot. Work would also be undertaken with local groups to suggest areas that could be used as wildlife areas.

The meeting concluded at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN