

21 SEPTEMBER 2011

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS – PROGRESS UPDATE

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report provides an update of progress against agreed actions in the current year's (2011/12) Work Plan

2 Background

- 2.1 Information from the Scrutiny Policy Review and allotments and parks officers was been collected and reviewed and has formed the basis of developing improvement to the allotments in the Coalfield area.

3 Progress

- 3.1 The Allotment Task and Result Group met on 9 August 2011 and discussed the following:-
- Draft Allotment Strategy 2011 – 2020 which will be presented to the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee when finalised.
 - Audit of Sites
 - Issues relating to Seaham Road Allotments
 - Attendance by a City Solicitor who gave advice on allotments and tenancy agreements.
 - Switch resources have been used to audit all sites and accurate plans have been produced
 - The audit has identified unkempt gardens, type of livestock being kept and plots where flytipping has occurred.
 - Burnside Allotments, Houghton le Spring and Britannia Terrace Allotments, Fence Houses were identified as the two sites to focus on.
 - As a result tenancies on Burnside Allotments have been terminated and plots reallocated
 - Strimming and weed treatment has taken place outside of fencelines at Burnside Allotments and fencing has been erected making five plots more secure for tenants. However further fencing is required to improve the site.
 - An SIB application has been submitted for further fencing to secure a plot which was the subject of extensive fly tipping
 - Britannia Terrace Allotments, tenancies have been terminated and will be offered once remedial works have been carried out
 - Replacing fencing on two plots at Fletcher Crescent Allotments, New Herrington, has been carried out further improvements.
 - Unkempt garden letters have been sent out for breach of the tenancy agreement.
 - Work is still progressing with issues relating to horses.
 - Hutton Street Allotments, Hetton le Hole. Derelict plots have been cleared by Parks Staff in partnership with Springboard Adventure.
 - Springboard Adventure will section off plots with materials provided by Street Scene.
 - Springboard Adventure will be allocated plots which will be used for horticultural training to NVQ standard, the remaining plots allocated to those on the waiting list.
 - In conjunction with Community Payback, strimming works have been carried out at Burnside Allotments, Houghton le Spring, South View and Henry Street, Shiney Row. Also an overgrown derelict plot has been brought back into use.

4 Next Steps

- Purchase and erection of further fencing and access gate to Burnside Allotments, Houghton le Spring, purchased with SIB funding. An 'A' frame will be installed to deter vehicle access and to allow wheelchair and buggy access.
- A meeting was held between the Parks and Allotment Development Officer and Community Co-Ordinator to set up a programme of community projects in the Coalfield Area.
- The introduction of a self help programme providing materials to improve derelict plots.
- To meet with Community Payback to agree an ongoing programme of maintenance works.
- Costings have been produced to replace fencing and install water supplies. A programme of works to be agreed and prioritised. The cost of these works is substantial and will need to be carried out over a phased period of time.
- Investigate the possibility of including community challenges at a range of locations
- The Task and Result Group will meet to review progress of the audit and report to a future meeting of the Coalfield Area Committee

Recommendations:

Members are requested to note the report.

This update of the Task and Result Group be noted.

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21 SEPTEMBER 2011

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES**PRIVATE STREETS REVIEW****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Committee on the updated estimated costs for the making up and adoption of private streets in Coalfields and to review the appropriateness of the council's existing policy

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The statutory definition of a private or unadopted street is one not maintainable at public expense. Private streets generally fall within in the boundary of a property and are the responsibility of the property owner. Most private streets therefore have multiple owners and are accessible to multiple users.
- 2.2 The term used, to describe the works required to bring a private street up to adoptable standard acceptable to the Council as Highways Authority to maintain at public expense, is 'making up'. The Council does not pay for the cost of making up of private streets (except where the Council owns property in a private street where the Council would contribute its proportion of the costs).
- 2.3 A review of the condition assessment and costs of making up private streets was previously requested by Coalfield Area Committee and recently this has been completed by the council's Highway Asset Management team.
- 2.4 In 2006/7 it was estimated that there were 260 private streets in the City and the cost of making these up to adoptable standards was estimated as £26 million.. In Coalfields area there were 113 private streets at a cost of £11.3m.

3. LATEST CONDITION ASSESSMENT OF PRIVATE STREETS

- 3.1 Since the previous assessment advances in digital mapping and data integration have allowed a more accurate assessment of the number and condition of private streets to be made. The latest condition assessment of private streets carried out in 2011/12 indicates that there are 113 private streets in Coalfields Area which would cost £13.25m to make up to adoptable standard.
- 3.2 Changes to the number and condition of private streets can be expected as some of these streets may become part of new developments which are made up by the developer and adopted by the council as Highway Authority.

4. CURRENT PROCEDURE, FUNDING AND APPROVED POLICY

- 4.1 Cabinet agreed the current policy on private streets on 17th January 2007. The policy states:

"All owners of properties in a private street should be consulted regarding any proposal to make up the street. Should all owners be willing to contribute to the costs, consideration can be given to commencing the formal process as set out in the Private Streetworks Code contained in the Highways Act 1980 ." It was noted that a significant factor regarding whether to proceed would be the availability of Council funding, the liabilities which may fall upon the Council, together with the extent of external funding.

- 4.2 A capital provision of £50,000 was made from contingencies to allow the Council to fund its potential responsibilities and liabilities as landowner in private streets and to cover costs where newly made up streets join the adopted highway.
- 4.3 Additionally Council uses its powers under S38 of the Highways Act to reach agreement with developers to secure the adoption of private streets through the planning process.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The estimated cost of making up private streets in Coalfields to adoptable standards is £13,245,200 . This includes the Council's liabilities as landowners in these streets .as well as costs of design and implementation.
- 5.2 This can be considered a conservative estimate as it does not include the cost of protecting or diverting utilities which can only be known once detailed site investigations and scheme designs have been completed.
- 5.3 Both the council's capital and revenue highway maintenance budgets have been significantly reduced as a result of recent central government cuts. The table below highlights the revised Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital and Revenue maintenance budgets for 2010-2011 and for 2011-2012.

Year	LTP Capital	Revenue	Contingencies	Total
2010-2011	£1.98m	£2.93m	£400,000	£5.31m
2011-2012	£1.00m	£2.63m	£300,000	£3.93m

- 5.4 The council will continue to explore funding options through developer contribution and external funding agencies although both will be scarce in the current economic climate.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The estimated cost of making up private streets in Coalfields Area has increased to at least £13.25m at a time when available funding has significantly decreased.
- 6.2 The current policy is recent and robust and therefore it is considered that maintaining this existing policy is the most practicable and sustainable option for the council in the current circumstances.
- 6.3 However as the overall scale of costs have increased then the potential scale of the Council's liabilities have increased also. Practical experience has also indicated that the current £50k allocation may not be sufficient to cover Council contributions to practical schemes as they arise. It is therefore intended to propose an increase in this capital allocation to £150k as part of the capital programme review for 2012/13.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Project files – held in Streetscene office.
- 7.2 Cabinet Report - 17th January 2007.
- 7.3 Environmental and Planning Services Review Committee Report – 23rd January 2006.

8. APPENDIX

8.1 Appendix A – Number of private streets in Coalfields Area.

Unadopted Streets

Count

Count by Regeneration Area

Count of Total cost	Residential / Commercial / Other			
Regen area	Residential	Commercial	Other	Grand Total
Coalfield	107	4	2	113

Count by Ward

Count of Total cost	Residential / Commercial / Other			
Ward	Residential	Commercial	Other	Grand Total
Copt Hill	25	1		26
Hetton	38	1		39
Houghton	23			23
Shiney Row	21	2	2	25
	107	4	2	113

Summary of Adoption Costs

Costs By Regeneration Areas

Sum of Total inc design and legal	Residential / Commercial / Other			
Regen area	Residential	Commercial	Other	Grand Total
Coalfield	£11,453,700	£1,159,700	£631,800	£13,245,200

Costs by Ward

Sum of Total inc design and legal	Residential / Commercial / Other			
Ward	Residential	Commercial	Other	Grand Total
Copt Hill	£2,425,700	£413,700		£2,839,400
Hetton	£3,692,700	£81,500		£3,774,200
Houghton	£2,958,700			£2,958,700
Shiney Row	£2,376,600	£664,500	£631,800	£3,672,900
	£11,453,700	£1,159,700	£631,800	£13,245,200

21 SEPTEMBER 2011

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COMMUNITY ACTION IN COALFIELD – PROGRESS REVIEW

Progress Report on 2011/12 Workplan: Neglected Land Priority

1 Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1 The report provides an update of progress against the Neglected Land priority and agreed actions in the current year's (2011/12) Work Plan (**Annex 1**). The report is presented on behalf of the Task and Result group for this priority.

2 Background

- 2.1 It was identified by Area Committee, residents and partners that patches of unmanaged land (large and small) across the Coalfield area cause a problem and are visually unattractive. Land such as derelict garage and garden sites, industrial areas and unfinished developments need to be considered, along with patches of grassed and overgrown land.
- 2.2 It was agreed to add 'neglected land' to the key priorities for 2011/12 and the actions outlined in the attached Work Plan were developed as a result of meetings with Members and Partners throughout recent months. It was agreed to form a Task and Result group with Dave Ellison, Area Response Manager for the Coalfield area acting as lead agent. Membership of the group was agreed as Dave Ellison, Councillors Rolph (Chair), Wakefield, Blackburn and Speding, John Chapman from Gentoo, Susan Brown, Coalfield Community Co-ordinator and Pauline Hopper, Area Officer.

3 Progress

- 3.1 The first meeting of the Task and Result group was held on 28 July 2011. A number of sites had already been identified and a booklet produced by the lead agent with support from John Patterson, Area Response Officer. The booklet included photos and maps of areas of neglected land, by ward, and it was agreed that this would form the basis of developing a portfolio of identified sites to be built up as the project develops. It was agreed that neglected land covers a very wide range of issues and that the Head of Land and Property, Land Terriers, Planning Enforcement, Planning Policy, Empty Properties team and Asset Management team should be requested to attend future meetings when appropriate in order to fully discuss related issues. The group agreed the next step would be to compare the work to date with the work carried out as part of the greenspace audit.
- 3.2 A further meeting was held on 19 August 2011 where the group discussed, with Clive Greenwood, the greenspace audit values and issues on particular sites. It was agreed that a matrix would be developed to assess each site identified as neglected land against a set of relevant criteria.
- 3.2 The group discussed limited funding available to address some of the issues raised. The negotiation and allocation of Section 106 money needs to be explored further to ensure that the provision of funding under this planning condition meets community need. The group would like the support of Area Committee to further explore this and, via the appropriate referral mechanisms, ensure that Area Committee and members have more influence over allocations.
- 3.3 Other agreed actions were:
- A map of the Coalfield area be produced marking all areas of neglected land
 - The current list be refined, adding and removing sites where appropriate, in order to build a 'portfolio'

- Some of the areas identified as 'neglected land' fall under the category of allotments. These issues should be referred to the Allotments Task and Result group
- An information matrix to include ownership, community value, sustainability etc be developed and applied to each site
- Once the audit and maps are produced the group should consider 'prioritising' or 'ranking' issues to action

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The lead agent will begin to refine the 'portfolio' of areas of neglected land using the information available to date. A draft document will be produced to present at the next meeting of the Task and Result group to be arranged for October 2011.
- 4.2 Currently there is no identified SIB budget for the improvement of neglected land. Committee may wish to consider allocating a nominal amount of SIB which could then be utilised to develop individual projects identified by the group once the audit is complete. If Committee are agreeable to allocating a proportion of SIB, this will be further discussed at the next meeting of the Task and Result group and recommendations/options be presented to Area Committee in November 2011

Recommendations:

- This report, presented on behalf of the Neglected Land Task and Result group be noted
- Committee agree to escalate the issue of influencing Section 106 allocations and agreements using the relevant referral protocol
- The actions identified in 3.3 above be endorsed and agreed to take forward
- Committee agree in principle to the allocation of SIB funding for improvements of neglected land

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