

At a meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held at SPRINGWELL VILLAGE COMMUNITY VENUE on THURSDAY, 4TH MARCH, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Kelly in the Chair

Councillors Chamberlin, Cuthbert, Fletcher, I. Richardson, Snowdon, Trueman, Wake, P. Walker and Whalen.

Neil Revely	-	Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services (Area Lead Executive)
Mike Poulter	-	City Services
Carol Lewis	-	City Services
Rachel Cowley	-	City Services
Richard Hood	-	City Services
John Rostron	-	City Services
Colin Curtis	-	City Services
Janet Snaith	-	Chief Executives
Nicol Trueman	-	Chief Executives
Louise Darby	-	Chief Executives
Sue Bartlett	-	Chief Executives
Marion Marshall	-	Office of the Chief Executive
Paul Wood	-	Office of the Chief Executive
Jacqui Reeves	-	Washington Mind
Helen Matthews	-	Nexus
Stephen Dodds	-	Nexus

Members of the Washington Community.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Barkess, Miller, Scaplehorn, J. Stephenson, Timmins and Wake. Amanda Healy, Victoria French and David Pollington.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 4th February, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 4th February, 2010 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:-

- i) Councillor Cuthbert proposed that the Miners' Memorial Project application be strongly rejected as it was a piece of artwork for the Civic Centre and was of no benefit to the Washington area;
- ii) Councillor Cuthbert commented that he appreciated that the seafront was an asset to the City but it had little, if any, benefit to the Washington area.

Declarations of Interest

Item 7 – Financial Statement and Funding Requests

The Chairman, Councillor Trueman, Councillor Walker, Councillor Whalen and Councillor Fletcher, declared personal and prejudicial interests in the item as the applicant for EBC was standing for the political party.

Councillor Snowdon declared personal and prejudicial interests in the item in relation to the Albany Family Centre Project as a Trustee of the Bridge Project and also a Business Ambassador for EBC.

Councillor Snowdon declared a personal interest in the Pit Stop Youth Project application as a member of the Management Committee.

Councillor Cuthbert declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item as his daughter attended Fatfield Primary School.

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item as her husband was employed by one of the applicants.

Councillor Walker declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item as an employee of Gentoo.

Questions to Area Committee

Paul Wood, Democratic Services Officer, advised that no questions to Area Committee had been received and that the review of the process would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

- 2. RESOLVED that the update be noted.

Washington – A Prosperous Area Summary

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for the Committee to consider and discuss the priority of a Prosperous Area, as agreed in the work plan for the 2009/10 municipal year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to the Local Development Framework and the work to secure the release of 60 acres of land at Nissan for the production of battery operated cars, Councillor Walker commented that he appreciated Nissan's needs, but he would also like to see other developments incorporated into the plans, such as museums and so on.

Janet Snaith, Head of City Business and Investment Team, commented that as she understood it, those developments would not be lost and the battery plant would be sited within Nissan's existing boundaries, so no more land would be taken up.

Ms. Snaith also advised that consideration may be given in the future for suppliers of Nissan to use the surrounding land.

Councillor Walker commented on the need to reassure the other organisations in that area, they would be safeguarded in any future plans.

In relation to the 60 acres of land, Councillor Cuthbert commented that he was concerned at the possible loss of green belt land and that the Council needed to start looking at developing green fields elsewhere.

Councillor Trueman commented on the issue of the empty trading estates in Washington and suggested the number of take away establishments in Concord for example that could utilise such facilities.

Councillor Trueman also informed the Committee that he had requested improved signage particularly indicating the B & Q Retail Park.

Ms. Snaith advised that signage in Washington had been identified as a major issue and a report would be provided at a future meeting of the Committee.

In relation to the Radial 64 site, Councillor Cuthbert raised concerns that it was taking away, rather than creating employment, and he would like to see new businesses rather than the relocation of existing companies.

Ms. Snaith advised that certain companies could have gone out of business if they had not relocated and the issue had been that of sustainability. Ms. Snaith shared Councillor Cuthbert's point and the Council wanted to develop jobs but they also had to preserve the jobs already in place.

Councillor Cuthbert also commented on the difficulty to encourage people to use public transport when the service was poor.

The Chairman commented that he was not in favour of green fields being developed upon and that the trading estates had slipped from industrial to retail use and these issues needed to be addressed.

The Chairman also raised concerns over the job statistics and stated the wish to see a greater incentive for local people to work in the area. Also, a great deal of the report related to Nissan, which there appeared an over- reliance upon.

Ms. Snaith agreed that greater diversity needed to be achieved and this was being looked at through the Economic Masterplan.

Councillor Snowdon commented that she was still not seeing any progress on the incubator units and that support for starter businesses could help rejuvenate Washington.

Ms. Snaith advised that the funding package was now in place and they were looking for a suitable workplace to proceed.

3. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

(i) note the 7 actions identified in Annex 1;

(ii) consider the issues outlined in Section 3 and Annex 1 of the report and to agree the following options to be developed:-

- Review of Services: to work smarter, streamline services, to be focused and targeted.
- Call for Project: identify a project to deliver ring fence an amount of SIB funding to allocate, call for applicants to submit proposals to deliver project and allocate funding to address gap.
- Escalate issue to LSP or Scrutiny: Issue or problem affects more than the Washington area of the City, therefore there is a need to escalate problem to LSP or Scrutiny.

Washington Area Action Plans

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to update Members on the key actions from the Safe, Learning, Healthy and Attractive and Inclusive themes which were discussed at the previous Area Committee meetings.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to the demolition of Barmston Village Centre Flats and the delay of 7 years, Councillor Trueman enquired as to why this had taken so long.

Councillor I. Richardson informed the Committee that the property had stood empty for 5 years and that the legal process had been completed, it was now down to negotiations with the Council and the shopkeeper by which it was hoped to be resolved.

Councillor Cuthbert advised that the true delay had been closer to 3-4 years.

In relation to the action regarding strengthening relationships between Area Committee and young people, the Chairman requested that the secondary schools be approached, as he was keen to progress the issue.

4. RESOLVED that the Committee -
- (i) Considered the Safe report (Annex 1) and noted the future reports and updates requested through the Safe Area Action Plan;
 - (ii) Considered the Learning report (Annex 2) and noted the progress and actions identified in the Learning Area Action Plan;
 - (iii) Considered the Healthy report (Annex 3) and noted the progress and actions identified in the Healthy Area Action Plan;
 - (iv) Considered the Attractive and Inclusive report (Annex 4) and noted the progress and actions identified in the Attractive and Inclusive Area Action Plan.
 - (v) note the progress and actions identified in the Prosperous Area Action Plan.

Financial Statements and Funding Request

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to outline current expenditure from the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB), Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and Community Chest and applications for funding from these budgets in order to support new initiatives, which would benefit the area and the delivery of the Local Area Plans.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to Officers' recommendation for Option 2 in Section 7 (where Citywide applications would be considered at the final meeting of each municipal year), Councillor Cuthbert requested clarification that any Community Chest funds remaining could still be carried over to the next municipal year.

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, advised that it would still be for the discretion of the Members to decide the appropriate action.

In relation to the funding application for the River Wear Trail Project, Tim Ducker, Cycle Network/Public Rights of Way Officer, was present and gave a short brief on the proposal.

Councillor Cuthbert commented that he could personally testify on the popularity of the route and also wished to place on record his thanks to Mr. Ducker for his efforts on the project.

Due to the personal and prejudicial interests submitted by Members on the Education Business Connections Project, consideration could not be given to the application as the meeting was inquorate.

The Chairman advised that the initial money approved for the Marlborough Park Residents' Association Project was £3,000 and not the £3,750 noted in the report. The Chairman asked for Members' approval on the new amount of funding.

Councillor Walker commented that as long as it did not hold up the project he would be happy to agree the change in funding.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- (i) note the ongoing review of SIB and SIP governance and procedures (see 4.5 and 4.6 of the report);
- (ii) agree to Option 2 in Section 7, where Citywide applications would be considered at the final meeting of each municipal year;
- (iii) approve the 16 proposals for support from the 2009/10 Community Chest as detailed in Annex 1;
- (iv) approve £16,000 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIB budget for the Kickz SAFC Foundation project;
- (v) approve £26,500 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIB budget for the River Wear Trail project;
- (vi) approve £7,411 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIP budget for the Albany Family Centre project;
- (vii) approve £1,000 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIP budget for the Lambton Village Centre project;
- (viii) approve £3,000 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIP budget for the Marlborough Park Residents Association project;
- (ix) note the financial statement for Area Committee funding for 2009/10 in Annex 3 of the report.

Accessible Bus Network Design Consultation (Local Bus Links)

The Director of Strategy, Nexus, submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with the details of the proposals for the Bus Network in Washington and to request Members' comments and feedback to confirm or improve the proposed design.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Matthews and Stephen Dodds of Nexus presented the report and were on hand to answer Members' queries.

Councillor Cuthbert commented that the report appeared to focus largely on what was already in place rather than strategically moving forward. With projects such as Project Orpheus, the extension to the Metro, and opening of Leamside Line all stalling, there was a need for a more strategic view.

The Chairman agreed and advised that he had requested Nexus contact Network Rail and look at the issue.

Ms. Matthews advised that the main purpose of the report was to focus on the services already in place and how they could be bettered. There was also work being undertaken where Nexus were to discuss the Metro Strategy with One North East and Network Rail.

Councillor Walker commented that he hoped the public consultation event at the Washington Leisure Centre would be successful but if Nexus wished to catch the wider audience they needed to be at the source. Councillor Walker suggested they consult at Concord Bus Station, which had been used successfully in the past.

Ms. Matthews advised that Nexus were happy to take Members' suggestions on suitable locations and work with the Council to provide the best consultation possible to get the message out.

Councillor Trueman commented that one of the difficulties residents of Washington had was being able to access Sunderland and if people were to be encouraged to use the services he would love to see a good bus service which provided value for money.

The Chairman agreed and commented this needed to be fed into the Economic Masterplan.

The Chairman also commented on the differing fares in travelling from Washington to Newcastle, which was cheaper than travelling to Sunderland.

Mr. Dodds advised that he had researched the issue and the fares were exactly the same to both cities.

Councillor Snowden however commented that she was aware of numerous routes which required travelling through 3 zones, making the journey more expensive.

Mr. Dodds advised he would recheck the costs involved.

Mr. Thompson commented that he was aware of children travelling from Rickleton to The Galleries that required to go through three zones and tended to walk half a mile to Harraton instead.

Councillor I. Richardson suggested that as Washington was part of the City of Sunderland, the travelling costs should be cheaper than travelling to Newcastle.

The Chairman requested further investigation into the zonal pricing and thanked the representatives of Nexus for their attendance.

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) information about public events be cascaded to organisations and individuals;
- ii) that Members' comments on the proposals be noted.

Feedback report regarding gritting routes

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) informing the Committee of the Council's policy regarding road gritting routes.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mike Poulter, Head of Project and Service Development, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries.

In response to Councillor Walker's enquiry, Mr. Poulter advised that there was a criteria and process in place to assess the viability of locations for grit bins and he would circulate the criteria to Members.

Councillor Cuthbert commented that he had requested grit bins a number of months ago and still had received no acknowledgement.

Mr. Poulter advised he would investigate the matter further.

Councillor Chamberlin enquired if any of the shopping centres in private ownership could be encouraged to clear the disabled parking bays after periods of snowfall.

Mr. Poulter advised that the circumstances during the winter had been very unusual and that the Council would take stock and learn from the experience.

Councillor Whalen commented that he had received a number of phone calls in relation to the roads and when he had contacted the directorate, officers had dealt with the matter speedily.

Ms. Atkinson praised the directorate and officers of the Council for the work and help that they had offered her personally and the community during the difficult winter period.

In relation to the bulk dumping of salt, Mr. Poulter clarified that there were designated priority routes and criteria in place for the use of salt.

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Consultation on Football, Play and Wellness

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to consult with the Area Committee on the Football Investment Strategy (FIS) and the proposed priorities for investment, the Play and Urban Games Strategy for identification of priorities for future investment and also to provide an overview of Wellness programmes.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Cuthbert commented that it was fantastic that the Council was looking to invest in football, but cautioned following the same route as Pathfinder, with the priority being football but not to ignore the other works that were needed.

Carol Lewis, Play Pathfinder Programme Manager, commented that in terms of football and the City, consideration needed to be given to the strategies for provision and the appropriate investment.

In response to Councillor Chamberlin's query Ms. Lewis advised that within the investment strategy there would be some support for other areas but it would primarily be for football.

Councillor Chamberlin enquired if the facilities would be promoted as multi-use.

Ms. Lewis advised there would be a mix across the City which would be done on a needs analysis to accommodate the different levels but would initially be used for football.

Councillor I. Richardson commented that he would like to see a survey done on what other sports residents of Washington wanted, as we were striving to be an area of diversity, there should be a diversity of activities too.

In relation to the request for Members to provide feedback on locations they considered would benefit from future investment in play provision, Councillor Cuthbert commented that he had notified the directorate of a number of areas which had fallen into disrepair and hoped that these would already be on the list.

Ms. Lewis advised that when it came to reviewing the action plan, they had a list of Members' and residents' suggestions and also their own assessment to look at all factors to devise a new action plan.

Councillor Walker requested that the play parks be updated with rides that were suitable for disabled children as he could not think of any such provision in the Washington area.

Councillor Chamberlin commented that she had requested the refurbishment of a number of existing sites and was told they were not in the Play and Urban Games Strategy.

Ms. Lewis advised that Ayton Park had recently been painted as part of a planned maintenance schedule.

The Chairman requested that an update on the maintenance of parks in Washington be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

Richard Hood, Physical Activity Officer, briefed the Committee on the latest wellness initiatives, including 'It's a walk in the Park' programme and the Active Sunderland Project.

The Chairman commented that he had requested the directorate engage with Prudential on opening up Princess Anne Park and that this issue needed to be progressed.

Mr. Hood requested if Members could email any suggestions on possible locations for the Active Sunderland Bus to attend.

In response to Councillor Chamberlin's query, the Chairman advised that he had been assured once the Pathfinder Project was completed, attention would turn to a number of issues outstanding in relation to SIP funding.

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and Members' comments on the proposals be noted.

Responsive Local Services

The Executive Director of City Services and the Chief Executive submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with the Responsive Local Services project update for the period of November 2009 to January 2010.

(For copy report and PowerPoint presentation – see original minutes).

Mr. Poulter advised that the information systems were very labour intensive at present and the directorate was striving to get them up to speed in the hope of providing more in-depth reports.

In response to Councillor Chamberlin's query, Mr. Poulter advised that the purchase of the GIS mapping system was well advanced with procurement, but would not like to estimate as to a specific date for implementation.

Councillor Cuthbert queried the low figures on littering as the parks had appeared to have been the subject of a great deal of littering recently.

Mr. Poulter advised that the figures included all reported littering and it may be any such issues with the parks had not been reported.

In response to Councillor Cuthbert's query, Mr. Poulter advised that enforcement measures on fly tipping were only used as a last resort and an Enforcement Manager would be present at a future meeting of the Committee to provide further detail .

9. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) J. KELLY,
Chairman.