

At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 3RD JULY, 2006

Present:-

Councillor Wares in the Chair

Councillors Anderson, Bainbridge, Dixon, M. Forbes, Handy, Paul Maddison, T. Martin, Sidaway, M. Smith, Wares and Wood.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

At this juncture, the Chairman welcomed Councillor Paul Dixon, Ward Councillor for Millfield to the Committee.

Minutes

Subject to Councillor Handy and Councillor Forbes' apologies being submitted for the meeting and Councillor T. Martin being recorded as Governor at Valley Road Primary and Southmoor School.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 3rd April, 2006 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 7 - Presentation from Nexus

Councillor Wood declared a personal interest as a Member of the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority.

Item 9 - Strategic Initiatives Budget Live Projects Report

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in the item as a family member was employed by the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust.

Item 10 - Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB): Regeneration Issues Report

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in the item as a family member was employed by the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust.

The following Members declared personal and prejudicial interests in the item and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the relevant application: -

Councillor Anderson as he was Chair of the St Mark's Community Association.

Councillor Martin as he was a local authority representative of East C.A.

Councillor Sidaway as a member of the ECA Management Committee.

Item 11 - Strategic Initiatives Budget 2006/07 Ward Based Community Chest.

The following Members declared personal and prejudicial interests in the item and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the relevant application: -

Councillor Paul Maddison as a Friend of Backhouse and Barley Mow Parks.

Councillor T. Martin as he was involved with 307 Mess Fellowship Services.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit Progress Report

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of the Performance of the Benefits Section in processing new claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit in the East Area of Sunderland for the period 1st April, 2005 to 31st March, 2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Anderson commended the introduction of the Benefits Hotline.

Councillor Anderson enquired as to whether it would be possible for Members, relevant Council officers and visiting health professionals to be issued with credit style cards showing the Benefits Hotline number that they could distribute to members of the public.

The Benefits representative informed the Committee that she would look into this proposal.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Future Venues for Meetings of the East Sunderland Area Committee

The Chairman asked Members to consider possible venues for future meetings of the East Sunderland Area Committees. Councillor Wood commented that it was vital there was sufficient car parking at chosen establishments.

The Chairman stressed the importance of taking the meetings to local venues. This allows the local community more access to the people who make the decisions that affect them.

Presentation from Northumbria Police on Crime Rates Relating to the East Sunderland Area

Inspector Steve Flaxon briefed Members on crime rates and initiatives relating to the East Sunderland Area. Crime rates for the period 1st June, 2005 to 31st May, 2006, were as follows:-

- Hendon - Crimes of violence had increased by 15.02%.
Robbery had reduced slightly.
- St. Michael's - Crimes of violence were down by 14.69%.
Robbery had dropped significantly.
- Ryhope - Crimes of violence were down by 20%.
Robbery had increased to 7 incidents as opposed to 1.
- Millfield - Crimes of violence were up by 19.53%.
Robbery statistics remained constant.

Burglary from dwellings had significantly decreased in all wards.

Inspector Flaxon explained that the definition of violent crime had now been amended to include a wider range of offences. The new definition of violent crime now included all crimes within the categories of public order offences (where actual harm may not have occurred at all). This goes some way to explaining why, for the purpose of the statistics, violence appears to have increased in some wards.

In response to a question from Councillor Wood regarding a definition of violence, Inspector Flaxon explained that under Section 5 of the Public Order Act, violent disorder can relate to the threat of violence, disorderly conduct and the use of threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour.

In response to a question from Councillor Wood regarding an update on the taxi marshalling scheme, Inspector Flaxon reminded Members that this scheme had ran for 7 weeks and was funded from the Home Office as part of the Alcohol Misuse Campaign. Inspector Flaxon was currently in discussion with officers of the Council regarding what will happen with the initiative in the future. It must be decided whether there is still support for the scheme to continue; who will be employed to carry out marshalling duties (private security firms, Community Support Officers) and

where the funding will come from. It had been proposed that a slight increase in tariffs could aid the funding deficit. In the meantime, officers have been trying to find an interim funding stream.

Councillor Sidaway requested that future statistical reports from the Police include the levels of racially motivated crimes within the area.

A discussion about the problem of racial harassment in the area ensued.

Inspector Flaxon commented that he felt Thornhill School had been wrongly labelled by the press as a centre for racial tension and this issue needed to be addressed within the community. The police had worked closely with the school and ethnic community to resolve any issues. Thornhill School must play a huge role in addressing this issue within the education curriculum.

Councillors Anderson and Martin commented that negative press coverage had presented an opportunity for extreme groups and individuals to capitalise on reported incidents. The Police were commended for their proactive approach to the problems.

Inspector Flaxon informed the Committee that the press had been invited to the next multi-agency meeting, where they had agreed to report events fairly.

Councillor Forbes requested that detention rates be included in future reports.

Inspector Flaxon agreed to amend future reports accordingly.

Councillor Dixon queried the levels of knife related crime in the area. Inspector Flaxon informed the Committee that there had been a recent knife amnesty, however, knife crime is not a significant problem for Sunderland. The apparent increase in the number of knives being taken into schools by pupils was a cause for concern. Schools and Local Community Support Officers are being extremely vigilant regarding this problem.

Inspector Flaxon informed Members of the Committee that a joint operation between the Police, Nexus, Trading Standards, Environmental Services and the Probation Service would be targeting the Millfield Ward to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. 'Operation Titan' will commence on 17th July, 2006 for 5 days and will eventually be rolled out in other wards.

Councillor Martin commended the work of Trading Standards in tackling the distribution and sale of contraband goods that lead to crime. Councillor Martin emphasised the importance of multi-agency working.

The Chairman having thanked Inspector Flaxon for this update, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the presentation be received and noted.

Presentation from Nexus

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to receive a presentation from Nexus on two community based transport services, TaxiLink and LinkUp.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman introduced John Usher, Head of Transport Integration at Nexus and Vince Hills, District Bus Manager (Sunderland).

Mr. Usher informed Members that the Current 'Care Service' is receiving a major overhaul with a new service promising to deliver more personal, convenient and efficient travel to users. The change, taking place on 30th July, 2006, will see the service replaced by 'TaxiLink' – wheelchair-friendly taxis. At the same time demand responsive transport will be replaced by a new LinkUp network of 'buses you can book' filling the gaps in the existing transport network. Together with TaxiLink this will mean more vehicles, more hours of operation and more personalised travel journeys, with bookings handled by call centre staff.

In response to a question by the Chairman, Mr. Usher informed the Committee that taxis/buses would be available for booking just 45 minutes before a journey. With the old Care Services system, people had to book 24 hours prior. It was hoped that the introduction of a smart card would make the booking process even easier.

Councillor Martin suggested that the Customer Service Centre should be a targeted setting for the new transport services.

Councillor Handy highlighted that there were many elderly people in Ryhope who experienced accessibility problems to the local shops and health centre who would also benefit from these services.

In response to a question from Councillor Wood, Mr. Usher advised that within the revised eligibility criteria for TaxiLink, the independent health assessment would take approximately two days. However, in the first instance Nexus could receive evidence from an individual's G.P.

Referring to the type of people the service would target, Mr. Usher explained that there tends to be different people with different needs at certain times of the day. For example, early morning core users would tend to be people travelling to employment, whereas late mornings and afternoons tend to benefit elderly people who require shopping, or parents travelling with young children. In Sunderland there appeared to be a need for the safe transportation of students and women. Mr. Usher stated that the proposed operating times for the services were 7.00 a.m. – 11.00 p.m., however, if it was proved necessary there was a potential to extend the hours.

In response to a question from Councillor Sidaway regarding the costs for disabled peoples' helpers, Mr. Usher confirmed that there would be a £1 fixed charge for any person acting as an aide.

Councillor Sidaway commended the service and commented that it would make a tremendous difference to the people in the area.

Councillor Maddison requested that Members received an update report in 12 months time.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. John Usher and Mr. Vince Hills for the presentation, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the presentation be received and noted; and
- (ii) an update report be brought back to the Committee in 12 months time.

Regeneration Issues Report: Feedback on Projects previously Funded through Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB)

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide information to the Area Committee on expenditure from the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) on projects it had previously funded.

- Participatory Budgeting Project awarded £20,000 by the East Area Committee meeting of July 2005;
- East Area Eastwise Pilot Project, awarded £11,325 by the East Area Committee meeting of November, 2005.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The representatives provided Members with a commentary on their feedback reports.

Councillor T. Martin commented on the tremendous way the Back on the Map Partnership had created real changes, choices and opportunities for everyone living and working in the East End and Hendon. Councillor Martin hoped that the Back on the Map was still a resident-led Partnership with the community at the heart. Councillor Martin expressed his disappointment in the closure of the community facility in Commercial Road.

Councillor Sidaway expressed concerns over the current short-term and competitive funding regime the voluntary sector had to deal with given its vital role in the community. Area Committees have a responsibility in ensuring funding streams are available through them.

Members agreed that the 'Eastwise' magazine was an excellent publication providing local community and voluntary organisations with the opportunity to promote their services effectively to the whole population. The Chairman expressed his delight with the magazine, however he commented that Ryhope Community Association

had not been included amongst the voluntary organisations. Councillor Martin requested that details of ward surgeries be included in future issues.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget Live Projects Report

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an update on live projects for which the Area Committee has previously approved funding through its Strategic Initiatives Budget.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In response to a question from Councillor Wood as to when the Area Committee Marketing Project budget would be spent, Bill Blackett, Area Regeneration Officer informed Members that the funds are being drawn down from each area in turn, and it has not yet reached the East Area.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB): Regeneration Issues Report

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to outline current expenditure from the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) and applications for funding from this budget in order to support new initiatives which would benefit the area.

- (i) Ryhope Customer Service Centre Training Room Project;
- (ii) Sit 'n' 'b' Fit – 'Improving the health and independent living of Sunderland's older people' project;
- (iii) East CA Gap Funding Project; and
- (iv) Removal of conditions from £9,612 of SIB funding approved at the 3rd April, 2006 East Area Committee meeting to support the Sunderland Counselling Service led 'People Builders' project. Funding was approved subject to Cabinet endorsement of the Business Plan and project funding being secured.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Claire Harrison-Coe presented the application for Ryhope Customer Service Centre Training Room and Lynn Summerside in respect of sit 'n' 'b' Fit. The representatives addressed questions Members had in respect of the applications.

Full consideration having been given to the applications, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that approval be given to the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget funding of:-

- (i) £15,000 from the 2006/07 budget, and £16,345 from the 2007/08 budget (subject to budget approval), as a contribution towards the 'Ryhope Customer Service Centre Training Room' project;
- (ii) £3,120 from the 2006/07 budget as a contribution towards the City-wide, Sit 'n' 'b' Fit Limited, social enterprise led, 'Improving the health and independent living of Sunderland's older people' project;
- (iii) £4,138 from the 2006/07 budget as gap funding support for the 'East CA Gap Funding' project; and
- (iv) Removal of conditions from £9,612 of SIB funding approved at the 3rd April East Area Committee meeting to support the Sunderland Counselling Service led 'People Builders' project. Funding was approved subject to Cabinet endorsement of the Business Plan and project funding being secured.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) 2006/07 Ward Based Community Chest

The Director of Development and regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to bring forward 12 recommendations relating to the 2006/07 Community Chest Scheme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

8. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 12 projects recommended for support from the 2006/07 Community Chest with a total value of £4,837.00 as detailed in annex 1.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) D.R. WARES,
Chairman.