

At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 12th APRIL, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor M. Dixon in the Chair

Councillors Foster, Kay, Maddison, McClennan, Rolph and A. Wilson.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Essl, I Richardson and S. Watson

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 15th March, 2011

Councillor Rolph referred to page 2, paragraph 3 of the minutes and commented that the sentence that read 'It provided an educational resource for all ages providing both a museum like facility' appeared to have an example of a facility missing. Having clarified the minute with the Governance Support Officer who had serviced the meeting, the sentence should be amended to read 'It provided an education resource for all ages providing both a 'museum-like' facility', and it was:-

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March, 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Role of Culture in Supporting Sustainable Communities – Draft Final Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the draft final report of the Committee's policy review into the role of culture in supporting sustainable communities in Sunderland.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that this was the draft of the final report which incorporated Member's comments and would be

submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet to be held on 22 June, 2011 following its consideration by Members.

Councillor Dixon asked that all Members and Officers be thanked for their input into the work of the policy review, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the draft final report be received and noted, prior to its submission to Cabinet.

Performance Report Quarter 3 (April – December 2010)

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) advising that the purpose of the report was to provide Members with a performance update relating to the period April to December 2010. The quarter the report included:-

- Results of the annual budget consultation; and
- Progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Gillian Robinson, Corporate Performance Monitoring Manager, was in attendance at the meeting to present the report and answer any questions on the performance report Members may have.

In response to a query from Councillor MacKnight regarding the difference in the number of visitors to /usage of museums, Ms. Robinson advised that the first figure in the report was the total number of visits which included those in person, by schools, over the website etc. whereas the second number was purely visits in person.

Councillor MacKnight then referred to sports and leisure and the lower than projected swimming attendance and asked what, if any, implications this had on staffing and costs. Ms. Julie Grey, Head of Community Services, advised that within the leisure facilities, staff would be aligned to the more popular of activities on any day and therefore there should be no impact.

With regards to the section of the report on affordable decent housing, Councillor Rolph noted that people with disabilities were highlighted and asked if the views of the Black Minority Ethnic communities had been considered in the same vein as they would be significant and different to others. Ms. Robinson advised that in terms of the results of the consultation process the numbers involved had been so small that they were not statistically valid but went on to confirm that she could pull the actual figures out on the number of BME consulted and send them directly to Councillor Rolph for her information.

Councillor Rolph then referred to the key actions highlighted on page 40 of the agenda and was surprised to see that the introduction of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme had not been included. Ms. Robinson confirmed that this was merely an oversight and that it should be included as one of the examples.

Councillor Rolph commented that only having the one measure under the Culture heading and it being the usage of museums was useless and asked what was being done to develop and look at heritage assets in the city as a whole and how they were being used. Ms. Robinson agreed that it was right to raise this point as the set national indicators were not good measures. She went on to advise that they were currently establishing what measures were key to service areas and what Members and Officers would like to see fed in to performance monitoring.

Ms. Jane Hall, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism, also commented that the service did a lot of internal counting and collected other sets of data and including statistics around heritage and attendees at events held within the city and a full list was available for Members information if they wished to see it.

In relation to a comment from Councillor Dixon regarding overcrowding in housing, Mr. Paul Allen, Performance and Information Manager, stated that it was an issue which Officers took very seriously in the housing services and in Sunderland the issue was at a relatively low level. He explained that there tended to be 'hotspots' and it was more about how the service were effective in neighbourhoods in managing issues and having that impact at a local level.

Councillor Kay referred to the fact that only twenty-two respondents had raised issues around private landlords which may make it appear as a minor issue but that in certain localities within the city this was the biggest issue. Ms. Robinson explained that they could break down the information they have further to identify areas of interest and commented that they had the information already at area of regeneration levels. Mr. Allen also advised that the housing service were looking around hotspot areas and including geographical maps to indicate areas of issue and that this information could be provided to Members.

Councillor MacKnight referred to the continued development and implementation of council mortgages and commented that the arrangements in place needed to ensure they were offered equally to all, for example, some members of the BME community may be excluded as they were not allowed to pay interest due to their faith. Mr. Allen agreed to prepare a general note on the matter and circulate it to Committee Members.

3. RESOLVED that the continued good progress made by the Council and the Sunderland Partnership and that those areas that require further development to ensure performance is actively managed be received and noted.

Internal Waste Plan

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised the Committee that an Officer would be in attendance to provide a brief presentation and answer any questions on the aims and content of the Internal Waste Plan.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Dianne Pattison, Sustainability Officer (Waste), gave a presentation to Members which gave an overview of the Internal Waste Plan and set out the aims and

objectives of the service in both the short and long term as well as providing action plan projects that were underway and recognised areas for improvement.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes).

Councillor Rolph commented that this was a subject dear to her heart and referred to the composting pilot that was underway at Houghton Kepier School, as this was a Trust School and therefore their waste would not be included as part of the Council's. Ms. Pattison explained that this was one of the first schools being trialled with the composter and if it was a successful scheme they were hoping to roll out similar schemes in all school. She advised that she would be going out and meeting with all of the schools who were keen to take up a similar project and get equipment installed as soon as possible.

In response to a further question from Councillor Rolph around the school meals waste and looking at the prevention of it with portion control and amounts being ordered, Ms. Pattison advised that as part of the healthy schools project they were looking into portion sizes in school meals and trials were being taken around the country in schools with cooking meals to order, which had shown an improvement in getting children to attend for their meals on time as they were getting the meals they chose. One school was simply offering a jacket potato and salad to any children who were not on time for meals, to try and improve punctual attendance at meal times and other schools were also running grow your own foods in an attempt to reduce waste.

Councillor Rolph queried whether there were any plans in the future to work jointly with other neighbouring authorities, such as Gateshead, on our internal waste as we did with other waste through the Joint Waste Management Strategy and also asked how the Internal Waste Plan was monitored and was advised that the monitoring was undertaken by the Internal Waste Team and a weekly meeting would be set up with other specific colleagues such as members of the Ground Maintenance Team. The aim would be to produce an annual progress report, which could be submitted to this Committee for consideration, and would allow Members to see what impact on waste the plan was having and if projections were on target.

With regards to working with neighbouring authorities, the Committee were advised that they did share experiences of best practice and consulted each other on schemes that were being undertaken. Sunderland had carried out a lot of consultation on how best to roll out schemes for recycling, etc and now there was the need to speak with colleagues to find out what services were doing in line with the work the Team were doing and how they were attempting to recycle within their own service area. She explained that waste management had been one of the areas that had scored poorly through the Audit Commissions and it was imperative to ensure that a consistent approach was being taken throughout the Council to ensure targets were met and savings were being made.

Councillor Foster referred back to the scheme at Houghton Kepier School and asked how or if the academies were monitored to ensure they were getting involved and Ms. Pattison advised that she had met with schools on an individual basis and conducted a survey as to what they wanted to do and if there were any barriers to being able to put schemes in place. They now had collated this information and how

any issues could be overcome and they were currently in the process of taking the results back to them.

Councillor Foster went on to comment that it would be great if the academies and independent schools got involved but asked if they were to use an external firm for their recycling, etc. how these could then be monitored to ensure their work was of the same standard as that being provided by Council services. Ms. Pattison advised that there was legislation which set the onus onto the school itself and any company employed by a school would be legally bound to comply in the correct manner, information on which was available through the DEFRA website.

Ms. Warrington also advised that if schools did decide to go to private contractors they would be provided with all of the information including targets, etc. and that it was about how to work best with the academies to ensure that all parties were working towards what was relevant for the Council and city.

In response to comments from Councillor McClennan regarding encouraging staff within the Council to save resources through printing, copying, colour prints etc. Ms. Pattison advised that at present all individual printers had been removed and replaced with Multi-Function Devices (MFD's) on floors which were set at default to print double sided. These devices were located centrally around the Civic Centre and required individuals to enter their own pass code before the print is carried out which has made people stop to think if a print out is needed.

Paper recycle bins are located on every floor of the Civic Centre and the third floor had recently completed a pilot scheme whereby they now had recycling facilities in communal areas for plastic, cans, waste, paper and glass. They promoted the use of reusing envelopes by using labels over addresses and minor stationery was being recycled between offices.

With regards to computing and ICT equipment, the Council's ICT service were contracted to take away equipment that was not needed anymore and remove all information from it before it was contracted to Remploy for reuse.

Councillor Kaye commented that it was not often an item involved Elected Members as much as Council Officers and referred to the push for Members to go paperless in meetings with the use of tablets, which was only one of the ways in which Members could help drive the process forward and how the only way the plan was going to work was if it was bought in to from the highest level.

In response to a further question around purchasing and procurement within the Council, Ms. Pattison advised that they worked closely with the procurement team and there had been a veto place on the ordering of furniture, whereby she would check with anyone wanting to purchase furniture as it was only as an exception as a result of an assessment being carried out that new furniture be ordered. A recycle scheme was set up for furniture in the Civic Centre and it was always recommended that stores be checked to see if something was fit for purpose from there first.

With regard to a query from Councillor Rolph around flexible working and working from home Ms. Warrington commented that with so many changes being undertaken around the Council at the moment staff were working from a number of different

outlets and the impact on the waste figures would not be known until everyone had been relocated and the final figures were produced. She also went on to comment that when working from home the carbon print of the individual would remain the same as if they were office based and although it would reduce waste within the Council it would inevitably increase waste in the home so it was something that needed to be considered.

Councillor Wilson referred to the targets and asked how confident the service was in being able to hit them and was advised that they were absolutely certain they would achieve the 50% rate for recycling and composting by 2015. The target for 2020 to avoid sending any internal waste to landfill was adopted last year and they were positive in meeting it. Property rationalisation would help in reducing Council properties to four main locations and projects were underway to help in diverting waste away from landfill sites.

The Chairman having thanked the Officers for their thoroughness in answering the Members questions, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st April, 2011 – 31st July, 2011

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st April to 31st July, 2011 which related to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

5. RESOLVED that the contents of the Forward Plan be noted.

Work Programme 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which attached for Members' information the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2010-11 council year.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Members having noted that they would receive reports on Access to Housing Project Allocations and the Core and Cluster Scheme – Redcar Road as part of the Work Programme for the next municipal year', it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the Committee's Work Programme for 2010-11 be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance and input throughout the municipal year 2010/2011.

(Signed) M. DIXON,
Chairman.