

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 FEBRUARY 2011

SUNDERLAND 'THE PLACE' POLICY REVIEW 2010/11: PROGRESS REPORT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Strategic Priority: SP5 - Attractive and Inclusive City

**Corporate Priorities: CIO1 – Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO4
– Improving Partnership Working To Deliver 'One City'**

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report informs members of progress on the Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review for 2010/11 into Sunderland 'the Place'

2. Background

2.1 Following the initial scoping of the Policy Review on 12 July 2010, members have commenced evidence gathering in relation to Sunderland 'the Place'.

3. Current Position

3.1 The aim and terms of reference for the Policy Review can be found at **Appendix 1**.

Project Plan

3.2 At the Committee meeting of 18 October 2010 members agreed the approach to be taken in regard to gathering the evidence for the Policy Review. Attached for members information is an updated illustration (**Appendix 2**) which outlines the various activities and evidence gathering that will be undertaken throughout the review process. The plan seeks to finalise the evidence gathering arrangements in the coming months. Throughout the review process members will be provided with an up-to-date plan reflecting confirmed dates and additional information.

Evidence Gathering To Date

3.3 This is the fourth and final report to Committee detailing the progress of the policy review, further detail regarding evidence gathering as listed below can be found in previous Policy Review Progress Reports;

- Scene Setting Presentation (Policy Review Progress Report, 15 November 2010)
- Legible City Report (Policy Review Progress Report, 15 November 2010)
- Findings of the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review 09/10: Tourism and Marketing (Policy Review Progress Report, 15 November 2010)
- Economic Masterplan (Policy Review Progress Report, 13 December 2010)

- Visit to Sunderland University (Policy Review Progress Report, 13 December 2010)
- Partnership Approach to Sunderland the Place (Policy Review Progress Report, 17 January 2011)
- International Profile event (Policy Review Progress Report, 17 January 2011)

Reputation and Influencing Programme

3.4 At the Committee meeting held on 17 January 2011, members received a presentation from the Director of Communications about the council's Reputation and Influencing Programme. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference A, B, C, D and G.

3.5 The main points from this presentation and discussion were;

- The Reputation and Influencing Programme is one of the 'Sunderland Way of Working' Corporate Improvement Programmes, sitting alongside the Business Transformation Programme, Community Leadership Programme and the Economic Development Programme;
- The Programme is about raising the economic profile of the city to attract further investment and concentrates on the list of priorities potential investors would have. Tourism is not part of the initial phase of the programme, it aims to find out what factors attract businesses to a city and to work at delivering those things in order to attract investment. That being said it is acknowledged that a business looking to relocate staff here would eventually look at what the city has to offer;
- The Programme will support the future development of the city by raising the profile of Sunderland; increasing reach and influence; and encouraging business and investors to "do business" in the city.
- There are three major strands of work being undertaken; public affairs, investment marketing and international economic relations;
- The council has carried out significant work with Government (Westminster and Whitehall); opinion formers; influencers; think tanks; investors, developers; and businesses (UK and overseas) to raise the profile of the city. This is vitally important in terms of keeping the city in those policy makers minds and also to open up opportunities for funding in the future in light of the difficult economic period being faced by the city;
- As a result of the amount of work undertaken in this area there is evidence to suggest Sunderland is being talked about more in Whitehall than ever before;
- The raised profile of the city is further supported through the Financial Times supplement focused entirely on Sunderland, the first time an edition has been specifically dedicated to one city.
- It is essential that Sunderland is seen to be business friendly. It is accepted that Sunderland has been the best at attracting inward investment regionally. In the past the city has been very good at working with investors once they are here and is very strong on securing and growing business. Members queried why this had not been done until now. It was felt that the city is operating in a much more global context now than it was 5-10 years ago;
- There now needs to be a much more outward focus on ensuring that the city is on the long and short list businesses will prepare when considering where to invest;

- The city will sell itself on the basis that it is a cohesive city, willing to make the best use of all of its assets and with a strong public sector to support;
- Members felt very strongly that success stories should be well publicised, companies such as Nissan and Leibherr. Members felt that they had a key role to play in promoting Sunderland to overseas countries it has connections with;
- Members felt that it was important that Ambassadors for the city are used more effectively. Currently the city has individual ambassadors rather than business ambassadors and this role needs to be developed further. Going forward there would be an opportunity to formalise these roles and extend to also having Community Ambassadors;
- The city is now operating in an increasingly competitive global economy and it is vital that Sunderland has an economic identity. This is a shift in thinking to concentrate on a global profile rather than just a national profile. In the Economic Masterplan, the city aims to be a Software City and other cities such as Copenhagen in Denmark all have a strong digital profile that Sunderland needs to aspire to.

The Role of the Media

- 3.6 At the Committee meeting held on 17 January 2011, members also received a presentation from the Editor of the Sunderland Echo about the role the local media has to play in portraying Sunderland as a place. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference G.
- 3.7 The main points from this presentation and discussion were;
- The Sunderland Echo was first published in 1873 and belongs to Johnson press which is the 2nd biggest press in the UK. The Echo are a major employer in the city, employing 410 people, most of whom are from Sunderland. The Echo is also a member of Sunderland Partnership and the City Marketing Board. They see themselves as an institution and an integral part of the city;
 - Members were informed that the newspaper endeavours to keep a balance of good and bad news stories. The Editor is autonomous and very much sees the role the paper has in the city is one of great importance and responsibility. It is imperative that the newspaper understands what its readership wants and it has an obligation to the people of the city to share bad news as well as good news;
 - The Echo supports lots of citywide campaigns such as the recent World Cup Bid and the Christmas toy appeal and works with partners across the city;
 - The Echo has retained its local government reporter and wants to expand this role at a time when other local newspapers have reduced theirs;
 - The Editor uses his regional and national contacts to promote Sunderland. For example, alongside the council the Echo produced a Summer of Fun supplement, advertising events in the city. This was placed as an advert in sister papers in Edinburgh, Leeds and Yorkshire. The success of this had not been measured and members felt this would be a useful way of measuring what impact that had;
 - Members were keen to understand why there often appeared to be a lack of stories in their particular areas and sometimes a focus on areas outside of the city. It was explained that this was due to the rationalisation of what was previously five daily editions of the Sunderland Echo (three locally based editions and an early and late version of the 'city' edition). Only one edition of the Echo is produced and it has to

include stories appropriate to readers in all areas. Based on the comments of members, the Editor agreed to speak to the news desk to ensure a proportionate balance;

- Members felt that the Echo could encourage the use of Grand Central rail as part of the mini-breaks it sells, so that travellers would be encouraged to visit Sunderland;
- In terms of how readers see the council, there is a view that it is doing the basic things very well, such as emptying bins, street-lighting etc but is less convinced about the ambition of the city. The mentality of 'It will do' must be replaced with 'we want the best'. The newspaper recognises that the aspirations of the city are vitally important for the future;
- Members commented that it was extremely important that the city promotes its business success stories so that residents are aware of the positive things happening in the city. This would also help raise the profile of Sunderland and attract people to the city
- Members would also like the Sunderland Echo to be a major ambassador for the city; and
- Members were keen to find out how the city could be publicised through other newspapers and whilst the obvious answer would be to pay for it, it was also felt very strongly that the events in Sunderland, particularly the concerts, are a huge selling point for Sunderland are raising the city's profile.

3.8 As part of the Policy Review, one of the questions members were particularly interested in having answered was the process for the selection of towns and cities to be included on the national weather map. A request for evidence was sent to the BBC on 25 November 2010, with several key questions about the presence of Sunderland on the weather map. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference G.

3.9 The Scrutiny Committee received an interim response via email which made the following points;

- A range of 12 different zoomed in 'tours' around the UK are used in national broadcasts, which have different start and end points and follow different paths;
- Different towns and cities are featured on these maps, which are interchanged from time to time;
- On the UK map, it is essential that the actual weather can be seen clearly, and for this reason only a selection of towns are used on this view, otherwise the map becomes too 'cluttered';
- The choice of cities is based on different factors, including the size of the city or town, its geographical position as a focal point (ie where it will 'sit' on the map, and if icons such as temperature discs or wind arrows can be placed around it), and proximity to other towns or cities which are already on the map;
- Regional broadcasts from BBC Weather are able to change towns and cities more easily on their maps in order to ensure that there is fair coverage, and they are encouraged to do this on a daily basis. Sunderland is featured regularly on BBC broadcasts in the North East and Cumbria;
- Further information will be provided to the Committee regarding how many tours feature Sunderland; and
- Following the Scrutiny Committee's request for evidence the BBC will now consider whether Sunderland should be featured more often on the weather map tours.

Request for evidence from Area Committee's

- 3.10 On 24 January 2011, Area Chairs, on behalf of the Area Committees, gave evidence to the policy review. Their contribution was made through a facilitated discussion group with members of the Scrutiny Committee. The main points raised at the discussion group can be found in **Appendix 3**. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference D and E.

Marketing and Promotion of Sunderland

- 3.11 The Chair of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee was invited to contribute to an event for marketing and promotion of the city on 27 January 2011 at the Stadium of Light. This was the second of two events, the previous one being held in November 2010.
- 3.12 The event was well attended by partners from both the public and private sector and two discussion groups were held, the first around investing in Sunderland and the second around visiting Sunderland. Some of the discussion at the event echoed many of the comments and findings of members of the Scrutiny Committee made throughout the evidence gathering review and included;
- At the moment Sunderland has a general brand but this has to be tailored and applied to specific audiences or it won't be effective. Clearly visitors to the city have very different wants and needs to those looking to invest;
 - The council and partners must ensure everything is being done to make Sunderland more economically viable, however it is also crucial that there is full collaboration with other local authorities in the region as a prosperous North East region brings huge benefits to Sunderland;
 - In light of the economic climate existing assets must be maximised and improved in the most cost effective way;
 - Sunderland as a city needs to ensure people understand all of the fantastic things it has to offer, but equally important is managing people's expectations by being clear about what it doesn't have;
 - It is important Sunderland does not aim just to compete with neighbouring cities but has its own unique selling points that activities, events and festivals can be marketed under;
 - Sunderland's residents are crucially important in marketing the city. There is a general lack of confidence and identity in the city. This could be the result of the decline of the heavy industry so prevalent in the city in the 1980's. The long term vision set out in the Economic Masterplan gives the city that identity, and this now needs to be communicated to residents to give them an understanding of what the city is and where it fits with other places, regionally, nationally and internationally;
 - There is a need to inspire the city's residents, equip them with the information about all of the things happening in the city in a way that will encourage them to promote and be proud of Sunderland and all of the things it has to offer. Residents play a key role in attracting friends and family visitors and promoting Sunderland when they are outside the city. In order to give residents a feeling of pride and the tools they need to be good city ambassadors there is a need to 'sell Sunderland to Sunderland' with a tight and clearly defined offer; and

- The lack of accommodation continues to be a key issue for the city, with a 'chicken and egg' effect. It is important that potential investors get all of the evidence they need that a hotel established in the city would be successful.

Partner Activity and Profile

- 3.13 On 2 February 2011, members of the Committee visited the Stadium of Light and were given a presentation about SAFC as a far-reaching brand for the city and the benefits to partnership working. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference B, C and D. The main points from this presentation and discussion were that;
- Many people associate Sunderland with football and the city is widely known for its club, therefore using the SAFC brand is a powerful medium to raising the profile of the city regionally, nationally and internationally;
 - The reach of the Football Club amongst its supporters is wide. The Premier League is shown in more than 210 countries. The Football Club has Supporters Groups in London and Norway and Australia as well as more locally in, for example, Chester Le Street and Jarrow;
 - There are 1000's of references to SAFC on a monthly basis, that translates to the word 'Sunderland' being seen and heard many times over. This provides a unique platform for the city;
 - Football means a lot to the people of Sunderland and with the club developing a strengthening position in the Premier League people tend to listen to the Football Club. This is a good way of getting positive messages about the city out to its residents as well as supporters beyond;
 - The Football Club were particularly keen to demonstrate the importance of partnership working and the outcomes that can be achieved by this. A collection of voices in the city is stronger than one single voice and so much more can be achieved when working together;
 - Partnership working was illustrated to members in two specific ways, the 2018 World Cup Bid and the concerts at the Stadium of Light;
 - The World Cup Bid 2018 had demonstrated partnership working in the truest sense between the Football Club and City Council, as well as wider partnership working with partners in the city, wider region and Cumbria. The City Marketing Group, which includes a range of organisations such as Nexus, Sunderland University and the Echo, were very much focused on maximising the benefits Host City Status would bring to the city;
 - The Bid was very much seen as an opportunity to change perceptions of the city on a regional, national and international level and the opportunity to give the people of Sunderland something to be proud of and support. It was noted that at the beginning of the process there was a strong feeling among some people of 'why bother', however by the end this attitude had completely transformed, with over 50,000 people signed up in the city and wider region to back the bid;
 - Despite England not being awarded the World Cup in 2018, Sunderland achieved everything that it set out to do and was awarded Candidate Host City status. Not only did it achieve this but the Bid submitted by Sunderland was held up as an example of best practice;

- The media coverage for Sunderland at this time was vast and raised the profile of the city as a place which could hold its own next to large cities such as London and Manchester;
- Members were shown a DVD for the World Cup Bid which showcased Sunderland and the wider region. Members were very impressed by the DVD and the way in which it showed the city;
- Concerts at the Stadium of Light were first held in 2009 and once again a high level of partnership working is associated with persuading promoters to come to Sunderland. Key groups in the City are already established to deal with elements of the concerts such as Transport and the promoters of the concerts have been very impressed by the 'one stop shop' approach. This approach is not echoed in many other places, demonstrating the strength of Sunderland's approach to partnerships;
- 275,000 people will attend the concerts in 2011, with between 11% and 31% of people coming to the city from outside the region;
- For those coming from within the North East region, this may be their first visit to Sunderland;
- The overall economic benefit to the city is expected to be approximately £18 million;
- There is a need to ensure maximum economic benefits for the city, both on the days of the concerts and also for returning visitors. A programme of activity has been planned within the city around the concerts to foster that sense of place and pride in the city and this extends not only to those attending the concerts but also those residents that aren't attending;
- A Marketing Group has been established to ensure maximum benefits are achieved for the city, this includes;
 - Production of 150,000 ticket inserts – giving information about the Stadium of Light and the City Centre, but also things to do and see in the wider city.
 - Information about the city on www.safconcerts.com, which promotes city centre venues (places to eat and drink).
 - Promotion of a wider programme of activity
- The opening night and one week of rehearsals for Take That is expected to generate extensive media interest, regionally, nationally and internationally for the city;
- Members recognised the excellent work being undertaken through partnership working. They felt that the lack of hotels in the city continues to limit the potential impact of getting people into the city, and for those visitors to spend money. It was emphasised that the overnight visitor spend is significantly more than a day visitor spend;
- Business is also impacted, the Stadium of Light is often unable to host national conferences due to the lack of bed spaces within the city;
- Hotel investors need to be assured that their beds will be full. At present Sunderland does attract visitors to the city during the year for its events etc, but this needs to be a steady market throughout the year. There is a question as to whether people would use the hotels on business during the week. Investors will want this evidence before they will commit to opening a hotel in the city. A clear business case is needed to give hotel investors confidence;
- The hotel market continues to face economic challenges at present, making them cautious about investing. That being said the council and its partners continue to

take an incremental approach, building on the offer Sunderland has for investors;
and

- It was strongly felt by members that the council and partners should consider every means available to them to support potential hotel developers.

Consultation with Community Spirit Panel Members

- 3.14 In the week beginning 7 February 2011, five workshops were held in each of the five areas with the council's Community Spirit panel. Panel members were asked to prepare for the workshops by bringing along something that makes them proud of the Sunderland area and something that they dislike about the Sunderland area. In groups, they were asked to discuss these and feed the main point back at the end of the session to the wider group.
- 3.15 The findings and analysis from these workshops are now being produced and will be circulated to members of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee in due course. Once received, members will be asked to provide any comment directly to Helen Lancaster, Acting Scrutiny Officer.

Evidence from Sharon Hodgson MP

- 3.16 Members of the Scrutiny Committee were due to meet Sharon Hodgson MP on 11 February 2011, unfortunately this is now postponed due to unexpected parliamentary commitments. A further date for the meeting is now to be established and members will be informed once this is confirmed.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 This is the fourth and final Sunderland 'the Place' Policy Review Progress Report. The draft final report detailing the findings of the Policy Review, along with possible recommendations will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14 March 2011.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That members of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the information provided.

6. Background Papers

- Minutes of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee; 12 July 2010; 20 September 2010, 18 October 2010, 15 November 2010, 13 December 2010 and 17 January 2011; and
- Policy Review Progress Reports; 15 November 2010, 13 December 2010 and 17 January 2011.

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Appendix 1

Sunderland 'the Place' Policy Review: 2010/11

Aim of the Review

The aim of the review is;

To understand the concept of Sunderland 'the Place' and the associated issues around its identity and image, as well as the perceptions people have of Sunderland.

Terms of Reference

The review will consider the following issues related to Sunderland 'the Place':

- (a) To explore what it means to have a strong sense of place, how important this is for Sunderland, and what benefits this may bring;
- (b) To gain an understanding of the current activity being undertaken within the City Council and across partner organisations with regard to developing a sense of place;
- (c) To examine the role and responsibilities of the City Council and partners in developing and implementing a strong sense of place for the city;
- (d) To understand Sunderland's 'story', where the city is positioned now and the image and identity the City Council and partners are aspiring to and working towards;
- (e) To investigate how people who live, work and study in the city view Sunderland, the place;
- (f) To investigate the approaches taken by other local authorities where there is evidence of success and progress; and
- (g) To gain an understanding of Sunderland's position both regionally and nationally, and ensure that the city is being represented appropriately by external bodies including the media

Appendix 2

Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee: Policy Review 10/11: Sunderland 'the Place'

Evidence Gathering Approach

People

Task and Finish Activity 1: Residents perceptions of Sunderland

Chair: Cllr Kelly*

Objective: To understand Sunderland's 'story' and how people who live in the city view Sunderland as a place

24 January 2011, 2pm-4pm: Feedback from Area Chairs

7 – 11 February 2011:

Community Spirit Focus Groups – understanding Sunderland's 'story'

Additional Activity:

18 October 2010:

Members to receive copies of the 'Sunderland Book' and the Economic Masterplan

27 January 2011: Marketing and Promotion of Sunderland

February 2011: Written response from Royal Mail regarding the differing postcodes across the city

Date TBC: Evidence from Sharon Hodgson MP

Scrutiny Committee Meeting:

Chair: Cllr Miller

20 September 2010:

- Scene Setting Report
- Legible City

18 October 2010:

- Approach to the Review
- Chair of Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee: Tourism and Marketing in Sunderland

15 November 2010:

- Progress Report
- Economic Masterplan in the context of Sunderland 'the Place'

13 December 2010:

- Progress Report
- Partnership Approach to Sunderland 'the Place'

17 January 2011:

- Progress Report
- Reputation and Influencing Programme
- Evidence from the Media

14 February 2011:

- Progress Report

14 March 2011:

- Draft Policy Review report

11 April 2011:

- Final Policy Review report

Place/Economy

Task and Finish Activity 2: Partner Activity and Profile

Chair: Cllr E Gibson*

Objective: To understand the role and responsibilities of partner organisations in developing the image and sense of place of the city and understand Sunderland's position nationally and internationally

26 November 2010, 9.30am – 11.30am:
University of Sunderland

12 January 2011, 1.30pm-4.15pm: International Profile

2 February 2011, 10.00-11.30am:
SAFC

***task and finish activities open to all members of the Scrutiny Committee**

Appendix 3

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: POLICY REVIEW 2010/2011

SUNDERLAND 'THE PLACE'

Area Chairs Contribution - 24 January 2011

In attendance;

Cllrs Miller (Chair), A Wright, Ball, Bonallie, Kelly, Padgett, D. Richardson, E. Gibson, P Gibson, Wakefield.

Members split into two groups and had a facilitated discussion based around the following:

- What is Sunderland's 'story'?
- What makes residents passionate about their area?
- What are the unique elements of each area and how does each area contribute to the city?

The following points were made during the discussions;

- There is a need to create a bond between all areas, heritage plays a vital part in this, all communities in Sunderland are linked in their shared heritage of the heavy industries. The heritage of the city plays a vital role in who we are now, how we see ourselves and the values of the people within the city. Members felt the slogan - 'What makes us who we are is who we were' was particularly apt in describing this;
- It was acknowledged that some residents in the Sunderland area identify more with Durham and Tyneside more than with Sunderland, however it was felt this can be changed by making people proud of the city. There was also agreement that as time goes this issue will become less apparent. There will be an amalgamation of the city through generations;
- Members felt that whilst the physical barriers such as the A19 can't be removed, progress can be made in the emotional links people have with Sunderland, such as a sense of belonging, pride and passion for where they live;
- The city is a collection of villages and there is a strong sense of community in those places. Many communities are welcoming and able to embrace change. Members were particularly keen that the council should communicate exactly what city villages would mean to the people living in them and more work could be done with heritage and other community groups to support this;
- The city is unique and has many faces, the city could be marketed as the diamond of the north. It has much more to offer than is known about, for example the industrial sites in Washington, the corporate office space at Doxford and at Rainton Bridge (members felt there has been lots of investment in the city's business parks which has been successful), plus the coast, green spaces and the vast amount of heritage are all things we should be proud of and tell people about;
- Transport continues to be a key issue in connecting the areas of Sunderland to the city centre;

- Sunderland has a different offer to regional neighbours and it is important that the city markets itself differently. The city has its own unique strengths. Whilst Sunderland may not have the same retail offer as a city such as Newcastle, its existing retail offer is used well;
- As has been mentioned many times by members there is a real lack of hotels and caravan parks in the city. This puts a limit on Sunderland's offer. It was suggested capturing how many times per year hotels in Sunderland are sold out and sharing this information with hotel providers to attract them to invest in the city and talking to the Sunderland Tennis Centre (and other similar venues) to determine which hotels their overnight visitors choose to stay at currently;
- There is a great passion for football in the city and the events at the Stadium of Light have given Sunderland a buzz in recent times. Those two elements are a strong selling point for the city;
- In terms of selling Sunderland in the media, it is a lot easier to sell the whole city than individual parts. There is recognition that the whole brand is stronger than the different parts, but it is important they retain their individual identity;
- Area Committees play a vital role in supporting the local areas through grants to important community organisations, thus enabling them to deliver work to residents that meet those communities' specific needs. In addition they provide support to maintaining the heritage of the city. These are all important in increasing people's sense of pride and satisfaction with Sunderland;
- Due to the breadth of factors and issues around Sunderland as a place, the council and its partners need to have a common understanding and a clear direction of travel in order to develop Sunderland 'the Place';
- There was discussion around the name 'Coalfields' and how it might be off-putting to potential visitors. It was noted by officers that this name is used only internally within the council and the individual names of each of the areas are used externally;
- Sunderland is a major shareholder in Newcastle airport however it was felt it has very little promotion of Sunderland. Although there are adverts within the airport about Sunderland it was felt there was a missed opportunity with regards to the metro link from the airport to Sunderland;
- Some of the main arterial routes to the coast are slightly run down and in need of some attention;
- Members felt that signage could be improved on a small scale including signage from Park Lane metro station to The Bridges, the University and other key places; and
- Members felt that often people don't realise just how great the city is until you actually look.