

At a meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held at the MILLENNIUM CENTRE, CONCORD on WEDNESDAY, 1ST APRIL, 2009 at 5.30 P.M.

Present:

Councillor Walker in the Chair

Councillors Chamberlin, Fletcher, Kelly, Miller, I. Richardson, Scaplehorn, Snowdon, Stephenson, Timmins, Trueman and Wake.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A. Cuthbert, I. Cuthbert and Whalen.

Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, 4th February, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 4th February, 2009 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the following addition.

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Millennium Centre Project and took no part in any discussion on the application.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Presentation from Northumbria Police on Crime Rates relating to the Washington Area and Minutes of the Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS)

A copy of the minutes of the meetings of the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) Group held on 14th January and 18th February, 2009 (copies circulated) were submitted.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

Sergeant Paul Whittle was in attendance and provided details of actual crime numbers committed in the Washington Area.

In relation to the specific crime categories Sergeant Whittle reported that there had been an increase/reduction as follows:-

| | Increase/Decrease | No. of crimes |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| All Crime | -10.1% | 436 |
| Violent Crime | +1.4% | 13 |
| Car Crime | -27.1% | 158 |
| Burglary | -25.5% | 49 |
| Burglary OTD | -0.5% | 1 |
| Damage | -13.9% | 166 |

Councillor Miller enquired if the Police had a strategy in place for the predicted rise in anti social behaviour with the good weather approaching.

Sergeant Miller said that there are a number of operations in progress, the Police are engaging with youths and the neighbourhood beat officer would be visiting the homes of those youths involved in anti social behaviour to try and crack down on the issue early.

The Police would also be working with the off licences to prevent the sale of alcohol to underage children.

At the request of a member of the public, Sergeant Whittle advised that the Northumbria Police website contained photographs of the officers covering the Washington area and would make a list available for distribution.

Councillor Wake enquired as to what was being done on the issue of youths riding mini motorbikes around Washington.

Sergeant Whittle advised that it was difficult for the neighbourhood beat officers to catch the youths as they are on foot, but they are looking at prevention with letter drops and source information to identify the youths responsible.

Once the youths have been identified they could be served notices/warnings and could have the bikes taken from them.

Councillor Wake informed the Committee that the Police had visited a youth he had reported in relation to the mini motorbikes but this had still not deterred him.

Sergeant Whittle advised he would look into the matter.

Councillor I. Richardson requested a breakdown of the crime figures by ward as he felt all Councillors would appreciate up-to-date statistics specific to their areas.

Sergeant Whittle advised that there were foot beats that covered, for example, Oxclose and Ayton, which could be provided statistically and the website was updated as and when the information came in. Sergeant Whittle agreed to look into the matter.

Councillor Kelly commented that if approached, many of the Police officers are more than happy to provide information on particular areas.

The Chairman advised that locations for the four 3G cameras had been selected, to be agreed upon by the Committee. The locations were Sedling Road, Spout Lane, Front Street and Vigo Lane.

Councillor Miller advised that the camera at Vigo Lane would be moved around different locations.

Sergeant Willett, having been thanked for his presentation, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the locations of the four 3G cameras be agreed; and
- (ii) the information be received and noted.

Sunderland in Bloom Competition

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update of the Sunderland in Bloom Competition 2008 in the Washington area.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ian Coburn, Parks Development Manager, presented the report, including a slideshow of winning applicants from the competition.

Mr. Coburn advised that leaflets would be printed shortly for the 2009 competition, to be distributed May/June and requested Members encourage people within the community to partake.

The Chairman commented that there were areas that had not entered the competition and it was worth encouraging participation as it benefited all.

Councillor Miller suggested the competition be promoted in Sunrise.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Northern Children's Book Festival 2008

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform the Committee of the 25th Northern Children's Book Festival which was held from 10th November, 2008 to 22nd November, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Youth Provision in Washington Update

The Chairman advised that the Item would be deferred to a later date to allow for further consultation with young people in the Washington area.

North Washington Youth Inclusion Project Update

Gareth Johnson, Project Manager of the North Washington Youth Inclusion Project (YIP) gave an update on their service.

Mr. Johnson informed the Committee that the Scheme was tailor made for children who were engaged in crime or are identified as being most at risk of offending, truancy or social exclusion. The YIP works with these young people to improve their behaviour and reduce youth crime and nuisance.

The Project works with the parents with interventions and look to develop the children's social skills, first aid and IT.

The children would tidy up and tend to areas in need of repair and receive rewards. The Project had a portable football cage with lights and generator.

Mr. Johnson also advised that the Project included 271 children with a strong focus on a core group of 50 of those 271.

95% of the top 50 are in full time education, training or employment and arrest rates among the children had fallen by 55%.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Johnson for his presentation.

5. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted.

Washington Wheeled Sports Park

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) outlining the findings of the technical assessment for the nominated sites for the proposed wheeled sports park and to seek endorsement on the proposed options for further development.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Julie Russell, Sport and Leisure Partnership Manager, presented the report and informed the Committee that the 16 different site nominations from residents had been amalgamated into 14 sites during the assessments.

Some of the sites included Princess Anne Park, Glebe Park, Albany Park, Northumbria Centre, Rickleton, and Holley Park.

Ms. Russell advised that they would be unable to construct on the land south of the village green at Princess Anne Park due to covenants on the land which would need to be looked at and would drive up the costs of development. The remoteness and poor accessibility for children also came into consideration.

The proposed site of Newstead Court, Glebe has a housing development in progress so would not be suitable for recommendation.

The Fallowfield Road site was close to very busy roads and Holley Park scored low for accessibility.

Members raised the following issues:-

- Councillor Wake commented that he believed the procedure would include a long list of nominations to be brought to the Committee and Councillors would decide on the shortlist. Councillor Wake expressed concern that the process was not being adhered to.
- Councillor I. Richardson enquired as to why one of the Glebe Park sites had not been shortlisted.

Ms. Russell advised that there had been poor feedback on the site from residents in the previous consultation.

- The Chairman of the Group 'Friends of Princess Anne Park' was in attendance and promised to endeavour to help raise funds for the costs it would take to develop on the Princess Anne Park site, if selected.
- A member of the public commented that they had nominated the indoor park as a possible site and enquired why it had been excluded.
- The Chairman commented that the indoor park site would have been excluded as the building is not in the Council's ownership and would drive the development of maintenance costs up.

Michele Deans, Regional Programme Manager for Play England, was in attendance and advised that the funding was for outdoor play, with 80% of children claiming they want to play outdoors.

As the funding is for free play, the indoor site could not be considered as the costs would have to be passed onto the children.

- A local resident referred to the Design for Play booklet which stated the Park should not be situated near dangerous roads. The resident commented that the Glebe Park site was near busy roads.

Ms. Deans advised that Play England would follow the advice of the local authority on such issues. Play Englands' role is to challenge the Authority to provide a safe and accessible site with the relevant road safety provision in place through the funding provided.

Ms. Russell advised that there were two sites proposed for Glebe Park at this stage. The consideration of road safety schemes would be included at the next stage.

- Councillor Kelly stressed that the process and feedback was still ongoing with no decision having been made yet. The other skate parks have had no trouble occur and the children of Washington need the provision.

Councillor I. Richardson commented that he believed all Councillors wanted to see the provision of the skate park but found the process questionable.

It was agreed that Members endorse the six nominated sites on the shortlist, upon which Ms. Russell informed the Committee on the next stages.

Ms. Russell advised that concept and context drawings would be provided to all Members. There would be further consultation and engagement with children, etc. on the preferred site and an email would be circulated to everyone that had input on the consultation.

There would also be a media release, which if allowed would also be displayed in primary schools and this should take us to the June Area Committee for the results and endorsement of the site.

Councillor Miller expressed concern that if headteachers would not allow the advertising of the press release, that this would exclude a large proportion of children on the consultation process.

Julie Gray, Head of Community Services, proposed that if challenges arose with the primary schools that the issue be taken back to Ward Councillors.

Councillor Kelly requested that the consultation and feedback be advertised in the free press, Washington Star, Sunrise for example.

Ms. Russell advised she would make sure that this happened.

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) Members agree to endorse the six sites nominated for the shortlist; and
- ii) the report be received and noted.

Community Leadership Programme: Review of Area Arrangements – Current Position and Next Steps.

Phil Spooner, Community Leadership Programme Manager, delivered a presentation relating to the Community Leadership Programme: Review of Area Arrangement – Current Position and Next Steps.

Mr. Spooner advised that the information was being provided to all of the Area Committees and that it was intended to provide an outline on the development of the Community Leadership Programme.

The Area Committees would have an increasingly strong influence and the Members' knowledge of the local area would be used to give flexibility to the delivery of front line services and also improve the focus of the Committee and how it looks at issues.

As the Washington Area Committee is already quite involved, the presentation on improvement might be more applicable to the other Committees.

As the Area Committee is right in the centre of the community it would be the first port of call for front line Members to identify and resolve an issue, or escalate it, if need be, as it could be a citywide issue.

The vision for the Area Committees is to lead communities, set priorities and follow them up. As there are many public agencies working in Washington, they could be called in, bringing partners together to work with the Committee on priorities.

This would provide new tools at the Committee's disposal so that issues can go through the process quickly and effectively. In the future the Committee would have the ability to put focus on a particular issue.

7. RESOLVED that the presentation be received and noted.

Area Committee Governance and Business Processes

Allison Patterson, Area Co-ordination and Special Programmes Manager, delivered the presentation relating to the Review of Area Arrangements Update.

The review was intended to introduce robust governance arrangements and business procedures for the delivery of responsive local services.

There had been changes to the Area Committee boundaries and there would be five areas rather than the existing six.

A new fit for purpose agenda is proposed to meet the requirements of Members and local area plans providing a clear picture to help shape and guide where to allocate resources and identify areas requiring further review/recommendation for action.

In relation to the allocation of resources it was proposed the Committee receive applications rather than unsolicited bids, in line with the Area Plans.

It was further proposed that there be two meetings take place, one where the applications are discussed and a closed session meeting where the budget allocations would take place.

Councillor Kelly expressed concern that if a competitive tender process was implemented, that the lesser organisations would suffer and enquired if there were any guarantees that the SIB budgets would not be hijacked.

Mr. Spooner advised that there would be no change to the Community Chest and that the hope is to support the lesser organisations with better processes.

Councillor Kelly acknowledged that funding had been allocated through Community Chest, but it had also been allocated through SIB and did not want to isolate the lesser organisations.

Councillor Miller commented that he had no problem with the number of Committees proposed but would need a more concise agenda and then raised concerns on the closed door aspect of the proposals as it had always been a public meeting for transparency.

The proposal of commissioning a procurement process would bring the risks that the bigger organisations would be better at the process than the smaller ones so the process needs to be looked at.

Councillor Miller also commented that putting partners on a Committee that would not have a vote would be pointless as there could be the possibility of non attendance which would impact on how the Committee works.

Councillor I. Richardson felt that the strength of the Washington Area Committee was that no political views were taken so would hate for the decision making to be held behind closed doors.

Councillor Wake agreed with Councillor Richardson and commented that he would strenuously resist closed door meetings.

Nicol Trueman, Area Regeneration Officer, advised that in relation to the proposals on procurement, currently the way funding is distributed is quite complicated and they are trying to make the process easier. It would also be a call for applications rather than a full bidding process.

The Chairman agreed with Councillors concerns and commented that some Members had raised the issue of feeling uncomfortable in turning applicants down for funding and that the issue needed to be addressed.

The Chairman suggested that an Extraordinary meeting be arranged to go over the proposals in more detail.

8. RESOLVED that an Extraordinary meeting of the Washington Area Committee be arranged to discuss the Area Committee Governance and Business Processes in more detail.

Local Area Plans – Analysis of Priorities

The Chief Executive submitted a report and Powerpoint presentations (copies circulated) to provide Members with an analysis of the draft Priorities for the Washington Area.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

Nicol Trueman, Area Regeneration Officer, delivered the presentation and advised the Committee that 47 priorities had been identified with consultation of local people, the top priorities were reduced to 22.

The priorities were able to be categorised into Direct or Indirect. Direct priorities made up 3 per cent of all priorities which were where immediate action could be taken using SIB or SIP funding. Indirect priorities made up the remaining 97 per cent and were ongoing priorities which were currently being delivered.

The list of recommendations could be changed and it was planned that Members would meet with partners in order to decide which priorities would be focussed on.

This would be an ongoing process with the priorities being updated regularly.

Councillor Timmins enquired as to the status of one of the priorities in relation to the community groups that were being moved from the Washington Art Centre from December 09.

Councillor Miller advised that many of the groups had been set up with alternative venues.

Councillor Chamberlin advised that the Yoga Club would remain at the Washington Arts Centre but had changed their hours.

The Chairman proposed that further discussion in the local area plans and priorities be deferred to the Extraordinary meeting.

9. RESOLVED that the item be deferred to an Extraordinary meeting to discuss the local area plan and priorities in further detail.

Strategic Initiatives Budget: 2008/09 Ward Based Community Chest

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) bringing forward a total of 5 recommendations relating to the 2008/09 Community Chest Scheme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

10. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 5 proposals for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest as detailed in Annex 1 to the report at a total value of £7,365.

(Signed) P. WALKER,
Chairman.