

SUNDERLAND NORTH AREA COMMITTEE

28 March 2011

Report of the Chief Executive

COMMUNITY ACTION IN SUNDERLAND NORTH – PROGRESS REVIEW Work Plan 2010/11: Community Philosophy

1. Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Committee with an update on the Creative Communities (Community Philosophy) project in the Southwick area.

2. Background

- 2.1 Members will recall the report to committee on 8 November last year which gave details of the Community Philosophy project that was running in Southwick. The project, which promotes conversations and develops relationships between different groups of people, has involved a number of key partners and is now moving towards its completion.
- 2.2 Funding for the project came from the North East Empowerment Partnership (NEEP) and has been facilitated by Groundwork North East in partnership with Sunderland City Council and Gentoo.

3. Current Activities

- 3.1 Since the last report partners have worked with members of the community, investigating local issues and interests in order to develop a framework to build capacity and encourage community action. More specifically, this has involved Groundwork North East working with voluntary organisations to develop projects using the community philosophy approach.
- 3.2 Two major projects that have come out of the work in this area are support for the Community Garden at St Andrew's Church and a Chainsaw Sculpture in Thompson's Park.
- 3.3 The Community Garden has involved supporting a project that had already been established. The garden aims to provide a community resource for learning about food, horticulture and local heritage but has required additional support to finish off the garden and to organise local people into a group that can regularly use, maintain and manage the garden. Groundwork has met numerous times with church representatives to further develop ideas and have bought equipment so that work can begin in earnest. The fruits of this should start to become apparent later in the spring and summer.
- 3.4 The Sculpture Project's aim is to increase engagement in the local community among young people aged 16-24. It has already held discussions with people in this age group and plans are now well advanced for the design and installation of 4 wooden chainsaw sculptures in Thompson's Park. An artist has been commissioned to work directly with the young people with regard to the design work, which will also involve a series of workshops prior to final installation later this spring.

3.5 These projects will help to address some of the intergenerational concerns in the area, tackle issues of self-esteem among young people and provide opportunities for local people to have a more direct say in matters that affect their neighbourhood.

4. **The Big Dinner**

4.1 On February 19th some of the people involved in the project got together at the Swan Street Centre with a group of community artists to consider the work they have so far achieved and to prepare materials for a communal meal on March 19th, due to be held at the Argent Centre, Sunnyside.

4.2 Entitled the 'Big Dinner', the meal will bring together people from similar projects in Pennywell and Hetton where they can share experiences of community philosophy, find out how others have approached community concerns in their own area, talk about their own projects and think about opportunities for further work in the future.

5. **Conclusion**

5.1 It is hoped that this will provide the springboard from which more local projects can take place and where such projects are 'owned' by the community. The ultimate aim is to create strong communities that do not rely on outside help to maintain that strength; however such an approach will rely on mechanisms being in place in communities where people can plan and deliver according to their own priorities.

6. **Recommendations**

- Members are requested to note the contents of the report.
- Receive further update reports on the Community Philosophy project.

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