

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 DECEMBER 2010

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 At the Committee meeting of 20 September 2010, members received a presentation to set the scene for the policy review. At the same meeting, members received a report on the progress being made with regard to the Legible City agenda. These items of evidence principally contribute to Terms of Reference A, B and C.

3.4 At the Committee meeting held on 18 October 2010, the Chair of the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee presented some of the findings and recommendations of that Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review for 2009/10 into Tourism and Marketing in Sunderland. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference B and C, with the additional purpose of reducing duplication

of effort, maximising the value of the Policy Review and encouraging joint ways of working with Scrutiny Committees.

3.5 At the Committee meeting held on 15 November 2010, members received a presentation from the Head of Strategic Economic Development about the Economic Masterplan in the context of the policy review. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference A, B, C and D.

3.6 The main points from this presentation and discussion were:

- The Economic Masterplan was developed in recognition that the city needs to be clear about its future, maximising its strengths and overcoming challenges, particularly in the current economic climate;
- An important element of a city's identity is that it should be clear to both visitors to Sunderland, and its residents, how the city makes its living;
- Future city centre improvements will enable the city to express outwardly its identity and pride through effective place shaping, for example the former Vaux site can be viewed on approach to the Wearmouth bridge;
- Attracting investment to the city is essential to its success. Businesses looking to locate in Sunderland are looking for a good labour supply of suitably skilled workforce first and foremost. Loyalty is also extremely important and the workforce in Sunderland are very good at giving the longer term commitment that business needs. Good transport links (including public transport) and a high capacity broadband link are also major factors in the decision;
- Whilst lack of hotel accommodation continues to be an issue, work is ongoing to attract investors in this area. There should come a point whereby once one hotel is opened within the city, more will follow;
- The University of Sunderland is an integral part of the city's future achievements, in order to develop a city-wide presence it works within schools across the city so that young people feel they are part of the university and go on to study there. In addition work is currently ongoing to open up the Chester Road campus and make it more attractive and accessible to members of the public;
- Sunderland already has a strong sense of community identity. This will be further strengthened through the Low Carbon City Villages model, the criteria for which looks at successful neighbourhoods, what these look like and what residents want them to have; and
- A strong sense of place will be an essential component in the successful delivery of this very important plan for Sunderland, and in turn, successful delivery of the plan will lead to further strengthening of the city's identity and sense of place.

3.7 The first evidence gathering activity for Task and Finish Strand 2; Partner Activity and Profile, took place on 26 November 2010. Members visited the University of Sunderland, Chester Road campus and were given a tour of the campus as well as meeting staff and local, national and international students, to find out their experiences of the city. This item of evidence principally contributes to Terms of Reference B and C.

3.8 The main points from this task and finish activity were:

- The University has developed a strong working relationship with the council through the development of the Economic Masterplan;

- The Chester Road campus is a 'gateway' to the city, emphasised by the level of activity taking place on and around the buildings, lights are on at night and it feels welcoming. Ongoing discussions regarding traffic management are taking place with the council;
- The campus has undergone extensive refurbishment to improve the student experience and work is now ongoing to open up the spaces between the buildings in order to make them accessible and welcoming to members of the public;
- Campus facilities are open to residents of the city. Campus facilities are open to residents of the city. As part of the LASH (Libraries Access Sunderland Scheme) in association with public libraries and the City of Sunderland College, University Libraries allow members of the general public to use the facilities. PCs can be used during staff working hours and all books are available for reference. In addition local businesses can hold their meetings in The Gateway, encouraging the use of space by non-students;
- The University recently won the prestigious Times Higher Educational award for most improved student experience;
- A lack of hotel facilities make it difficult for the University to promote itself as a conference centre, which would attract lots of people into the city;
- There is a lack of appropriate signage to the University from the main arterial routes, and the train and metro stations;
- International students come from over 80 countries, of those students from the UK 75% come from within the region. The University wants to increase the number of students coming from outside of the region;
- Word of mouth is a vital tool in promoting the University and the city, often students base a decision to come here on the experiences others have had before them;
- Many prospective students do not know where Sunderland is or what it is like, therefore the city itself is promoted by staff alongside the University. The nightlife, ski slope, cinema, The Bridges and the Empire Theatre are part of the package of entertainment activities promoted to prospective students and parents, as well as the transport links to London and the fact that Sunderland has a coastline;
- The UK student experience of Sunderland is very positive. A key quality of Sunderland is the friendliness of its people, the very beautiful scenery and heritage it has as well as the reputation the University itself has. There are issues with private accommodation, however this appears to be reflected nationally;
- The International student experience of Sunderland is also very positive, parents are reassured that the city is safe and convenient. The low cost of living in the city is also a deciding factor. International students access local websites to gain more of an understanding about the city. Students do sometimes face problems with anti-social behaviour which can make them feel less safe and they have difficulty getting part time work in the city to help support themselves; and
- International students also expressed an interest in attending more cultural events

Further Evidence Gathering

3.8 Further evidence gathering activities confirmed for December 2010 and January 2011 are as follows;

Method	Activity	Location	Date and Time	Terms of Reference (Appendix 1)	Additional Information
Formal Committee Meeting – 13 December 2010	The Partnership Approach to Sunderland ‘the Place’ (Sam Palombella, Chair of the Attractive and Inclusive City Delivery Partnership)	Committee Room 1, Civic Centre	17 January 2011, 6pm	B, C	
Informal meeting	Meeting with Sharon Hodgson MP to gain her views on Sunderland’s position nationally	Committee Room 5, Civic Centre	17 December 2010, 9.30am – 11.00am	A, G	
Task and Finish Activity 2: Place	Sunderland’s International Profile – to understand the work the local authority, in partnership with the business community is doing to raise the city’s profile at an international level, as well as the ongoing work within schools in the city.	Creative Cohesion Building, Sunnyside	12 January 2011, 1.30pm – 4.15pm	D, E, G	Draft programme attached at Appendix 3
Formal Committee Meeting – 17 January 2011	Reputation and Influencing Programme (Deborah Lewin, Director of Communications and Marketing)	Committee Room 1, Civic Centre	17 January 2011, 6pm	A, B, C, D, G	
Formal Committee Meeting – 17 January 2011	Evidence from the Media (Rob Lawson, Editor of Sunderland Echo)	Committee Room 1, Civic Centre	17 January 2011, 6pm	G	

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 That members of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the information provided.
- 4.2 That members note the dates of the forthcoming task and finish activities and indicate whether they are able to attend.

5. Background Papers

- Minutes of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee; 12 July 2010; 20 September 2010, 18 October 2010 and 15 November 2010.

Contact Officer: Helen Lancaster (0191 561 1233)

Helen.lancaster@sunderland.gov.uk

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

January 2011 (Date to be confirmed):
Feedback from Area Chairs

24 – 28 January 2010:
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

November 2010: Royal Mail invited to make a contribution to the review in terms of the differing postcodes across the city

17 December 2010, 9.30-11.00am: Evidence from Sharon Hodgson MP

Evidence from Portfolio Holder(s) (date to be confirmed)

February/March (date to be confirmed):
Informal meeting to discuss conclusions and recommendations

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 (including analysis of the Community Spirit findings)

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

January 2011 (date to be confirmed):
SAFC and SAFC Foundation

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

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

Appendix 3

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE; SUNDERLAND 'THE PLACE' POLICY REVIEW

SUNDERLAND'S INTERNATIONAL PROFILE: 12 JANUARY 2011

Creative Cohesion building, Coronation Street, Sunnyside, **Sunderland**, SR1 1EY

1.30pm	Arrival
1.45pm	Welcome and Introduction to the work of the International Team (Catherine Auld, International Manager)
2.00pm	Software City
2.45pm	Break
3.00pm	Creative Cohesion (to include tour of the building)
3.30pm	International Education in Sunderland
4.15pm	Close