

**At a meeting of the NORTH SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held at the BUNNY HILL CENTRE, NORTH HYLTON ROAD, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 2<sup>nd</sup> MARCH, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Copeland, Foster, Francis, Shattock, Stewart, Symonds J. Walton and D. Wilson

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Charlton, G. Hall, Howe, Leadbitter, L. Walton and N. Wright.

**Minutes of the last Meeting**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest**

The respective Councillors declared interests in the under mentioned items of business as follows:-

Item 6 - Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) Regeneration Issues Report

Councillor Shattock declared a personal interest in the application relating to Southwick Health and Community Forum Development Co-ordinator as she had opened the new premises and had previously met the Forum Development Co-ordinator for an information meeting.

**Presentation from Northumbria Police on Crime Rates Relating to the North Sunderland Area and Minutes of the Meetings of the Local Multi - Agency Problem Solving Group**

A copy of the crime statistics produced by Northumbria Police (copy circulated) detailing the figures for the North Area from April 2007 to March 2008 compared with March 2008 to 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Community Inspector Lisa Musgrove was present at the meeting and updated Members in relation to the various crime categories. Community Inspector Musgrove stated that the main areas of concern were increases in burglary/dwelling and burglary/ other than dwellings, she asked councillors to remind people in their respective wards to secure their homes, garages and sheds against opportunity thieves.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Inspector Musgrove advised that there had been a very good response to the questionnaire that had been circulated in relation to the Workforce Modernisation Programme.

Members welcomed the above information, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the crime statistics for the North Area be received and noted.

A copy of the minutes of the meetings of the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) Group held on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 (copies circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

3. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the LMAPS Group held on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 be noted.

### **Strategic Initiatives Budget Update**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an update on live projects for which the Area Committee has previously approved funding through its Strategic Initiatives Budget.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Regeneration Officer, presented the report.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) Regeneration Issues Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) outlining proposals for the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) to support the following new initiatives to benefit the area:-

- i) Wearside Smallholders environmental and internal footpaths and roadways improvements.

- ii) Southwick Health and Community Forum Development Co-ordinator

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Michael Havelock presented the application in respect of Wearside Smallholders' environmental and internal footpaths and roadways improvements.

The representative having answered Members' questions, the application was welcomed.

Mr Keith Brazier, Forum Development Co-ordinator presented the application in respect of Southwick Health and Community Forum. In response to questions from Members, Mr. Brazier clarified that the Forum was seeking gap funding towards 6 months salary/ rent and utility costs to give the organisation management/ staff additional time to secure future funds for the work of the Forum to continue. Funding applications from the Big Lottery, Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Bridging the Gap had also been submitted and the Forum was working in partnership with C.V.S to source future funding opportunities to secure the sustainability of the organisation. The outcome of the Big Lottery Fund and Bridging the Gap could take up to 6 months.

Councillor Symonds reminded the Committee that the organisation had previously secured gap funding from SIB in 2006 for £6,478. He proposed that a proportion of the SIB request (£8,250) be approved initially for a period of three months only.

Mr Brazier advised that funding was available for sessional workers but they required additional funding for a line manager to oversee the day to day running of Forum services. The organisation provided invaluable community support to local families in need.

Councillor Copeland stated that she was opposed to SIB money being used continually as a stop gap to fall back on.

Councillor Stewart also expressed concerns that it was not the first time the organisation had come to the Committee for gap funding. As the Forum would have been aware that the funding was due to end in 12 months he queried what had been done to actively look for funding. Councillor Stewart stated that it was vital that future bids for gap funding were considered very carefully and that original business plans needed to be scrutinised in greater detail to mitigate the need for projects to have to apply for gap funding.

Mr Brazier advised that the Forum were permanently looking for funding which was exacerbated by the fact that all grants stop and start at different times.

The Chairman queried whether the Forum could request financial input from the Health Trust. Councillor Copeland advised that she had recently attended a Health Communities engagement day at which possible financial help was discussed.

Mr Brazier advised that the Forum had received next to no support from the Teaching Primary Care Trust but had bid for Healthy Cities funding. A joined up approach did exist between the organisation and other community groups in coordinating various clubs etc. Mr. Brazier informed the Committee that the Forum had been successful in attracting small pots of money but there was a requirement for them all to be managed within the remit of an overall co-ordinator.

Councillor Shattock advised that she had been given the opportunity to visit the Forum's premises and felt strongly that the service was much needed by the people of Southwick where it had proved its worth in increasing employment opportunities and raising expectations and aspirations. If the project folded this could potentially have a significant impact on struggling families in the area.

Councillor Francis also applauded the initiative and queried whether the organisation could optimize its earned income stream.

Mr Brazier advised that it had been hoped the community shop in Southwick would make a profit but at present it was simply breaking even. Currently affordable holidays were provided for local residents with two caravans at Butlins, Skegness which were provided at cost. Very little profit could be made on this scheme and an increase in costs to residents would exclude the residents they were there to assist.

Councillor Shattock queried with Mr. Brazier what the implications for the organisation would be if the committee were to award half the funding for a three month period.

Mr. Brazier advised that the outcome decision of some of the additional funding they had applied for could take up to six months. Bridging the Gap funding could not be applied for until 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009. It was felt that a six month time period would give the organisation adequate time to submit the large bids.

In response to a question from Councillor J. Walton regarding funding sought, Mr. Brazier confirmed that half the money would be used to fund staff salaries and half for running costs.

Councillor Foster expressed reservations about reducing the funding as that could mean the organisation may be lost altogether.

Members agreed that the funding links with the teaching Primary Care Trust should be pursued and accordingly it was:-

5. RESOLVED that
- i) approval be given to the allocation of SIB funding of £10,000 from the 2008/9 budget as a contribution to Wearside Smallholders environmental and internal footpaths and roadways improvements
  - ii) approval be given to the allocation of SIB funding of £16,500 from the 2008/09 budget as gap funding for Southwick Health and Community Forum Development Co-ordinator.

### **Strategic Initiatives Budget: 2008/09 Ward Based Community Chest**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to bring forward 7 proposals recommended for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest Scheme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 7 proposals recommended for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest with a total value of £4,463 as detailed in Annex 1 of the report.

### **Housing and Council Tax Benefit Progress Report**

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the performance of the Benefits Section in the processing of new claims for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Steve Atkinson, Benefits Manager presented the report stating that the performance of the section was good in relation to the speed of processing. However, the statistics which were being produced by the ICT system in relation to NI 181 were still to be treated as an interim position as there were further changes being made to the reporting software by the ICT system provider.

In order to receive various views, comments and suggestions on areas of take-up and improvements to service delivery generally the Section was consulting with its Customer Group. The group had endorsed the take-up action plan and local Benefit Fraud campaign to support the national Benefit Fraud campaign (launched 5 January 2009) and had agreed to develop a joint calendar of events to promote all services involved. Given the current economic climate, Mr. Atkinson stated that it was essential that the Council ensured those people who were entitled to benefit actually received it. Therefore, the publicity work on take-up was extremely important.

Councillor Francis stated that he had reservations about the performance statistics being provided solely on an 'average' basis as there could be significant differences in time taken to process claims. Councillor Francis advised that it may be more helpful to provide the Committee with a spread of the days taken to work out a claim.

Mr Atkinson advised that the Government asked for the statistics to be provided as an average; however he agreed to ascertain whether the information could be broken down into shortest and longest times taken to process claims.

The Chairman stated that it may be helpful for Mr. Atkinson to provide Members with an overview presentation on the work of the Benefits Section in order for them to gain a clearer insight into what the process entails. Mr. Atkinson advised that the section did have plans to hold a briefing session for Members and they would be advised of this in due course.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Atkinson for his report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

### **Fly Tipping and Cycle Path Interventions**

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the North Area Committee with information relating to research undertaken across Sunderland and advise of the planned expenditure to address Fly Tipping and Improve Cycle paths as part of the Council's Strategic Investment Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Brian Hutchinson, Environmental Services was in attendance to present the report and provided the committee with a background to the Strategic Investment Plan and area working and provision in North Sunderland.

Councillor Foster referred to the cycle path from North Hylton to Southwick which was in need of improvement and was not on the list.

Mr Hutchinson advised that part of the cycle routes were owned by English partnerships/ One North East and work would need to be carried out in conjunction with them.

Paul Dobson, Director of Community and Cultural Services stated that the outline programme had been brought to the Committee so that any such omissions could be identified and to recognise the priorities for ongoing maintenance.

Councillor Shattock expressed her thanks to officers for clearing up the fly tipping along the Southwick Riverside Walk and requested that the area be continually monitored for future problems.

In response to a question from Councillor J. Walton in relation to the CCTV cameras, Mr Dobson advised that the cameras would be a mixture of permanent fixtures and posts for four mobile cameras. Some of the cameras used 3G technology. The camera images would link back to a central control centre.

Councillor Copeland referred to Council enforcement action in relation to fly tipping. She advised that the Council needed to let perpetrators know that their actions would not go unpunished and wherever possible offenders needed to be successfully prosecuted.

Mr. Dobson advised that a balance needed to be struck between enforcement, including prosecution of anyone found fly tipping in the City and educating people, showing the real costs of fly tipping to the community, the environment and Council Tax payers. The hole in the resource for taking forward prosecutions had been recognised and as long as there was a suitable evidence base, prosecution would be carried out.

The Chairman congratulated officers on the work they had carried out to resolve the land ownership issues on the Sunderland river corridor.

8. RESOLVED that the proposed programme of works in the North Area be approved with the inclusion of Members additions outlined above.

The Chairman then thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) R. BELL,  
Chairman.