

At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor S. Watson in the Chair

Councillors M. Dixon, Errington, Essl, Foster, Maddison, McClennan and A. Wilson.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Kay, I. Richardson and Rolph.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 18th January, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January, 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 5 – 'Role of Tourism and Events in Supporting Sustainable Communities'

Councillor S. Watson declared a personal interest as a Council appointed member of the Sunderland Empire Theatre Trust.

Item 6 – 'The Conservation of Historic Assets and Their Role in Supporting Sustainable Communities'

Councillor Errington declared a personal interest in the item as a family member was the owner of a listed building.

Cohesive Communities – Role of Culture in Supporting Sustainable Communities – Policy Review 2010/11

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager submitted a report (copy circulated) which apprised the Committee of the work being done using a cultural approach to address issues of community cohesion and integration as part of its review of the role of culture in supporting sustainable communities.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Sal Buckler, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, was in attendance to present the report and address any comments or questions from Members. In addition she advised that she would be more than happy to arrange a visit to any of the three projects mentioned in the report if Members so wished.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Maddison, Ms. Buckler advised that there were no immediate plans to provide additional projects. There was a need to consider the big society implications arising from the Localism Bill together with any available sources of funding.

Councillor Errington having advised Ms. Buckler of the potential for elderly residents to be made to feel uneasy if young people started to congregate having been attracted by the demolition of Hahnemann Court, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Role of Tourism and Events in Supporting Sustainable Communities – Policy Review 2010/11

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated the Committee on work ongoing within the Culture and Tourism Section with regard to the Tourism and Events offer across the City and to provide evidence as to how culture and tourism were used to support Sustainable Communities.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Julie McCann Principal Librarian presented the report highlighting the main visitor drivers for Sunderland together with key examples of Sunderland's tourism and events offer. In conclusion Members were informed that the work of the Tourism and Events service directly supported the development of Sustainable Communities through:-

- Creating places where people wanted to live and work;
- Creating employment opportunities;
- Creating quality environments;
- Creating a vibrant city where residents were informed about and able to participate in a wide range of cultural opportunities;
- Creating opportunities for individuals and groups to meet and participate in joint activities;
- Creating opportunities for individuals and groups from minority groups to highlight and celebrate their identities.
- Contributing to the wider education agenda, using activities as a link into the lifelong learning through engaging communities in the development and delivery of programmes.

Councillor McClennan referred to the £342.14 million total visitor spend as detailed in paragraph 3.3 and asked if there was a figure available for the percentage of that spend which stayed in the City as opposed to being subsumed into the profits of national organisations based in Sunderland. Ms. McCann replied that such a figure was not available, however, she would be able to provide a breakdown of the spend by sector.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Foster regarding the current position concerning the Marine Activity Centre, Jane Hall, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism, advised that she would provide Councillor Foster with an update.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Errington, Ms. Hall confirmed that the Arrivals Lounge would not now be progressed, however, there was perhaps an opportunity to relocate the Tourist Information Centre to the City Library and Arts Centre.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Dixon regarding general perceptions and trends in the Sunnyside Area, Councillor McClennan advised that Graeme Farnworth, Head of Regeneration Programmes, was the lead Officer in this regard.

In conclusion Councillor McClennan offered her congratulations to all concerned in providing the 'Visit Sunderland' website. As part of her research for the Certificate of Councillors course she was required to evaluate such sites and the Sunderland site was to be commended for its ease of access and user friendly nature.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Change in the Order of Business

At this juncture the Chairman advised that she would be taking item 9 on the Agenda (Enabling Independence Delivery Strategy – Long Term Housing Solutions with Care and Support) at this juncture to allow Mr. Caddick to leave the meeting thereafter.

Enabling Independence Delivery Strategy – Long Term Housing Solutions with Care and Support

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with a copy of the Enabling Independence Strategy which outlined:-

- Consultation carried out to date and relevant information which has been used to inform evidence of current and future housing need/aspirations.
- Robust evidence base of housing needs relating specifically to:-
 - Older people with support and/or housing needs;
 - People with learning disabilities;
 - People with mental health issues;
 - People with physical or sensory disabilities.

- Key facts and delivery information to enable the delivery of accommodation solutions to meet the identified need.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, presented the report and addressed questions and comments from Members in relation to the following issues:-

- Discussions with the PCT regarding GP Commissioning, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- Ethnicity – the importance of communications with and support for the BME communities in the City.
- The potential to work with the voluntary and private sectors with regard to provision.

Councillor Foster having commended Mr. Caddick on the ‘fantastic’ new housing development in Castletown, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Conservation of Historic Assets and their Role in Supporting Sustainable Communities

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented:-

- the situation regarding tangible heritage assets within the City such as scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas;
- the national planning policy context in which they were designated and subsequently regulated in terms of managing proposed developments so as to conserve and sustain their essential value and heritage significance to the community;
- Sunderland City Council’s ‘State of the Historic Environment Report’ which provided a ready reference to formally designated Heritage assets in the City together with those assets not formally recognised.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mike Lowe, Principal Planner, presented the report and addressed Members’ questions and comments in relation to:-

- the implications of the change in Government for the protection of Heritage assets and in particular the likely negative impact of the Localism Bill;

- the number of listed buildings in Sunderland and the percentage that were deemed to be at risk;
- action the Council could take to save buildings at risk;
- the financial implications of such action and the importance of partnership working with English Heritage, English Partnerships and the European Regional Development Fund.

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

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Change in the Order of Business

The Chairman advised that at this juncture she would ask the Committee to consider the reports in respect of items 7 and 8 on the Agenda as one item.

Sport, Wellness, Aquatics and Play

Sunderland Swimming Pathway

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report in respect of each of the above items.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Julie Gray, Head of Community Services, Alison O'Neill, Assistant Head of Community Services and Victoria French, Wellness Manager, presented the reports and addressed comments and questions from Members in relation to:-

- support for pre existing, long established organisations providing leisure activities in the City;
- take up of the young persons free leisure card;
- concern at the condition of facilities for cricket at Ryhope Park;
- the success of Silksworth and Hetton Community Pools in exceeding targets for visitor numbers;
- the importance of partnership working and the need for future reports to reflect the level of non Council provided sport and leisure activities in the City;
- the five tier approach to the Swimming Pathway;
- the impact of the demise of free swimming for children and OAPs and the closure of the University Pool.

Members having commended Ms. Gray and her team on the reports, the Chairman thanked them for their attendance and it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st January, 2011 – 31st May, 2011

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st January, 2011 – 31st May, 2011 which related to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, advised that it was envisaged that item 01400 'Access to Housing Project – Allocation Policy' would be submitted to the Committee's March meeting. A report in relation to item 01452 would also be submitted in due course.

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the Forward Plan be noted.

Work Programme 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which attached for Members' information the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2010-11 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, reminded Members of the visit being undertaken to Nyrex in Blyth the following day by Members of the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee. Given the cross cutting nature of the visit any Members of this Committee were more than welcome to attend and should contact him directly if they wished to do so.

8. RESOLVED that the Committee's Work Programme for 2010-11 be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance and wishing them a safe journey home.

(Signed) S. WATSON,
Chairman.