

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING REVIEW COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT OF THE CITY SOLICITOR

1 Why has the report come to the Committee

- 1.1 To provide Council with the opportunity to review a summary of the operation and achievements of the Committee over the last year.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Review Committee agreed an annual work programme at its first meeting of the municipal year. The work programme set out on a month by month basis, the agenda of the Committee for the year ahead. Its contents seek to reflect the remit of the Committee and also balance its role in terms of policy review, policy development, information awareness and scrutiny of the executive.

- 2.2 In drawing up the work programme, it was considered important to retain a degree of flexibility in order to allow the Committee to deal with issues of immediate concern.

- 2.3 The work of the Committee was divided into a number of categories:-

◆ Performance Management	(items)
◆ Monitoring and Evaluation	(items)
◆ Awareness Raising	(items)
◆ Policy Review and Development	(items)
◆ Members Items	(items)
◆ Call Ins	(item)

3 Performance Management and Monitoring

Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports

- 3.1 The quarterly performance monitoring reports are an integral part of the Committees work programme. The reports allow the Committee to monitor the Council's performance across a range of key performance indicators and highlight any areas of risk or underperformance at an early stage. The reports set out performance against a number of key indicators, any areas of key risk, the reasons behind any variations and the remedial action being taken.
- 3.2 The Performance Monitoring report for April to September 2007/08 highlighted that there had been an increase in the number of people killed or seriously injured during this period though the overall long term trend was down. In response, the Committee asked for a further report from the Directorate to

analyse in detail the issues behind this change and the engineering, enforcement and educational initiatives going on to reduce the number accidents and improve road safety. The Committee also invited Mr Jeremy Forsberg from the Northumbria Road Safety Initiative and Ms Helen Middleton from the Sunderland Institute of Advanced Motorists to contribute to their views on the ways in which road accidents can be reduced.

- 3.3 The Committee agreed to closely monitor the situation and receive a further report early in the next municipal year.

Quality of Public Transport and Local Bus Services

- 3.4 Last year, the Committee looked into public concern regarding reductions in local bus services and improving partnership working by speaking to Martin Harris, Commercial Director of GO North East.

- 3.5 In January 2008, the Committee invited Bernard Garner NEXUS Director General to attend the Committee to answer questions on a range of public transport issues within the city. These included the:-

- operation of bus services within the City of Sunderland Council the future of public transport and the implications of the Local Transport Bill
- modernisation and reinvigoration of the metro
- Progress on the refurbishment of Sunderland Station
- measures for people who are suffering social exclusion
- operation of the concessionary fare scheme.

- 3.6 The Committee was satisfied with the progress being made by NEXUS in working to improve public transport across the city.

Recommendations of Previous Policy Reviews - Progress

- 3.7 The Review Committee consider that it is most important to receive update reports on the progress being made by the Executive in implementing the recommendations from its earlier policy reviews. During the year progress reports were received on the following studies:-

- Development of Cycling Within the City of Sunderland Council
- Carbon Management and Energy Efficiency
- Development of Road Safety and Child Pedestrian Accidents

Overall, there had been good progress made in implementing the recommendations. The Committee will continue to monitor progress into the future.

Decriminalised Parking Enforcement – Action Plan Update

- 3.5 During the year, the Committee has received reports on the progress being made in implementing the action plan developed from the post implementation

review of the Council's Decriminalised Parking Regime. This follows detailed consideration of this issue during 2006/07.

- 3.6 The Committee also received a report on the implications for the Council arising from the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement.

Streetscene

- 3.7 A progress reports was submitted on the range of measures being taken to improve the quality of the local environment across the city. Issues raised included measures being taken to improve grass cutting, tackling litter and fly tipping and addressing the problem of dog fouling.

Allocation of Additional Funds for Highway Maintenance

- 3.8 During the year, the Committee received a report on the additional funding of £400,000 that had been secured by the Review Committee for highway maintenance. This related to work carried out in 2006/07 and proposed works for 2007/08.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Value for Money Assessment

- 3.9 The Cabinet sought the views of the Committee on the ways the Council was securing value for money in the services under its remit. The Committee highlighted that spending levels reflected the priorities allocated to these services and the additional level of investment made by the Council.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 During the year, the Review Committee was consulted on a number of the major issues and priorities facing the Council.

Climate Change Action Plan

- 4.2 The Committee was consulted on the development of a city wide Climate Change Action Plan for Sunderland. The Plan will provide an opportunity to lead and coordinate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across the city from April 2008.
- 4.3 The Action Plan will have far reaching implications for the city. As part of its preparation, the Committee sponsored the Sunderland Energy Summit in March 2007 which gathered together stakeholders with an interest in energy and climate change issues.
- 4.4 The Summit discussed potential for low carbon developments, urban wind opportunities, combined heat and power networks. The ideas and initiatives generated at the event have been fed into the contents of the Action Plan as well as other documents such as the Local Development Framework.

Joint Municipal Waste Strategy

- 4.5 The Review Committee has received several reports seeking its views on the contents of the draft Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy as it has been developed in conjunction with Gateshead and South Tyneside Councils.
- 4.6 The strategy sets out three Councils strategic approach to tackling the increasingly important issue of waste management.
- 4.7 The Committee also received a report in relation to the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Outline Business Case.

Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Report

- 4.9 The Committee examined and commented on the progress being made in relation to the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Committee was also consulted on the LDF Core Strategy Preferred Options and the Housing Allocations Development Plan.

Hetton Downs Area Action Plan – Preferred Option

- 4.10 At the beginning of the year, the Cabinet sought the Committees views on the on the preferred option for the Hetton Downs Area Action Plan. This decision has major implications for the area setting out the planning framework for a programme of potential development over the next 15 to 20 years.

Other important planning documents on which the Committee was consulted includes:-

- Sunnyside Planning and Design Framework
- Farrington Row Development Framework
- Evening Economy Supplementary Planning Document
- Regional Spatial Strategy – Proposed Modifications Response
- Unitary Development Plan – Alteration No 2 – Adoption of Policies
- Urban Design Supplementary Planning Documents
- Doxford Park Renewal Area Masterplan – Responses to Consultation
- Whitburn Bents, Houghton and Cedars Conservation Character Studies

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.1 The Committee requested a report on the arrangements that have been implemented in response to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This provided the Committee with the opportunity to satisfy itself with the soundness of arrangements for dealing with an emergency in the city. The Committee was impressed with the structure and measures put in place in response to the Act.

- 5.2 The Committee also considered the details of the Sunderland Flood Risk Assessment and considered its implications as part of the Council's emergency planning functions.

6 Awareness Rising

Priorities and Key Issues

- 6.1 At the start of the year, the relevant Heads of Service were invited to provide a summary of key priorities and challenges for the year ahead. This was used to help shape the annual work programme of the Committee.
- 6.2 The Committee also received reports on several key issues facing the city in the coming the years:-
- Pilot Neighbourhood Agreement
 - Planning for a Sustainable Future – the Planning White Paper

Development of Scrutiny

- 6.3 Throughout the year, the Committee has monitored progress in the implementation of the Action Plan for scrutiny. The Action Plan was developed following a workshop facilitate by the Audit Commission in November 2006. y.

7 Policy Review and Development

- 7.1 In July 2007, the Committee agreed to undertake a study into the development of public realm and streetscene in the city.
- 7.2 The study has involved taking evidence from a range of experts from within and from outside the council.
- 7.3 As part of the study, the Committee commissioned Living Streets to undertake an audit of public realm in a number of locations within the city. This involved a number of member and community “walkabouts” where views where gathered on the condition of the local environment and any areas of improvement.
- 7.4 The recommendations of the Committee will be reported to cabinet for adoption.

8 Member Requests For Items

- 8.1 The Committee has received and agreed to two written requests from Members for the inclusion of an item on the agenda of the Review Committee.

Residents Parking Zones

- 8.2 The Committee agreed to receive a presentation at a future meeting on the progress of the Council's piloting of residents parking zones and the projected

timescales for their implementation. This item will be included in the work programme for next year.

Leamside Line

- 8.3 The Committee agreed to receive a report detailing the feasibility study into the reopening of the Leamside Line and the Council's response to the study.
- 8.4 The Committee also agreed to invite a representative from Nexus and Network Rail. Richard Thompson from Network Rail has agreed to attend the Committee but was unable to make the April meeting. Arrangements are being made to agree a mutually suitable date.

9 Call In

- 9.1 There have been no call ins during the year.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1 Council is asked to consider the operation, achievements and impact of the Committee during 2007/08.

11. Background Papers

CPA Action Plan
City of Sunderland Corporate Assessment