

At a meeting of the NORTH SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held at the BUNNY HILL CENTRE, NORTH HYLTON ROAD, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 29th JUNE, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Charlton, Copeland, Foster, Francis, G. Hall, Leadbitter, Shattock, J. Walton, L. Walton, D. Wilson and N. Wright

Also in Attendance:-

Mr. Alan Caddick	- Health, Housing and Adult Services, Sunderland Council
Ms. Amanda Cattle	- Community and Cultural Services, Sunderland Council
Ms. Nonnie Crawford	- Director of Public Health, Sunderland Council
Mr. Graeme Farnworth	- Community and Cultural Services, Sunderland Council
Mr. Bill Forster	- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue
Mrs. Emma Hindmarsh	- Office of the Chief Executive, Sunderland Council
Mr. Dave Leonard	- Office of the Chief Executive, Sunderland Council
Insp. Lisa Musgrave	- Northumbria Police
Mr. Richard Parry	- Office of the Chief Executive, Sunderland Council

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Howe, Stewart and Symonds, together with Mr. Paul Dobson, Director of Community and Cultural Services and Area Lead Executive for the North Sunderland Area Committee.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 4th June, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 1th June, 2009 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Questions to Area Committee

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) on a proposal to introduce a Questions to the Area Committee Session at future meetings of the Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Richard Parry, Area Regeneration Officer, presented the report advising Members that a pilot would be undertaken at the next two meetings of the Committee in September and November 2009. A review would then be undertaken to assess the success of the pilot in terms of the process and practicalities.

Members raised concerns that requesting questions to be submitted no less than two clear days before a meeting could be perceived as exclusive and against the principles of Community Leadership. It was felt that members of the public should be permitted to turn up to the Committee that evening with any questions they may wish to ask.

The Chairman advised that it had been decided to request that questions be submitted in advance of the meeting to allow for a reply to be given at the meeting by the appropriate Member or Officer; it was not intended to be prohibitive. He reminded Members that the recommended procedure was a pilot and would be reviewed at the end of the year.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that the Questions to Area Committee be piloted at the Committee's meetings to be held in September and November 2009.

Sunderland North – Attractive and Inclusive Summary

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which asked Members to consider and identify their main proposals for further development and action in relation to their Attractive and Inclusive priority theme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

To compliment the report, Richard Parry, Area Regeneration Officer, provided Members with a Powerpoint presentation which detailed the local area delivery plan process and which highlighted the following 6 potential areas for action within the Attractive and Inclusive priority theme:-

- i) Overgrown and run down land;
- ii) Fly tipping and cycle paths;
- iii) Environmental issues (e.g. dog fouling, graffiti, litter);
- iv) Sea front and riverside;
- v) Housing and residential areas;
- vi) Heritage/culture/attractions.

Mr. Parry advised that the theme summary for the Attractive and Inclusive Priority attached at Annex 1 to the report was a living document which would be reviewed and updated at each Area Committee meeting to allow Members to respond to needs as they were identified.

Each priority issue detailed in Annex 1 was considered in turn and Mr. Parry updated members with regard to current activity for each.

Fly tipping and cycle paths were being addressed through the city wide Strategic Investment Plan. £100,000 was allocated to tackle identified problems in the North.

Racist and offensive graffiti would be removed within 24 hours. Gentoo's neighbourhood plans include tackling graffiti, fly tipping and grounds maintenance.

Councillor Charlton, as Chairman of the Seafront Steering Group, updated the Committee on improvements to the Seafront.

Councillor Charlton advised that the Council was bidding for £1 million of government funding to The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to help kick-start regeneration of the seafront at Seaburn and Roker. The Council had committed to finding £0.5 million of match funding if the bid to government was successful. However competition was likely to be stiff with 45 bids for a total pot of £3 million.

One of the issues identified during consultation was support for the heritage led regeneration of Roker seafront. As this most closely matched the criteria for the Sea Change Fund, Cabinet members agreed to put forward a bid based around Roker Marine Walk.

The Council was continuing to explore existing and other sources of finance to fund the regeneration of the seafront while it worked on its proposals for the seafront at Roker and Seaburn. Improving the toilets, providing more entertainment and events and improving efforts to tackle dog fouling, graffiti and litter were issues that needed to be addressed.

Members agreed that it was important to gain quick low cost wins, particularly in relation to the toilets and dog fouling which had been an issue for a considerable number of years.

Members requested that relevant officers be tasked with looking at the 'quick wins' issues highlighted with regard to the seafront and collate a report for the next Committee to advise how such issues could be developed within the Committee's budgetary allocation.

Mr. Alan Caddick, Head of Housing provided the Committee with an overview of current housing activity and delivery within the City. Empty properties had been mapped over the previous six months. There were 2,391 in total, with 431 being in the north area. The number of empty properties brought back into use across the City in 2008/09 was 387. The Council was developing an Empty Property Action Plan which will detail what will be done to bring empty properties back into use and will set targets for each local area. Mr. Caddick informed the Committee that he was alive to the housing issues in the City and there was the need to work with landlords and home owners to pull together an overall action plan.

Discussion ensued in relation to the following issues and Mr. Caddick responded accordingly:-

- With reference to the selective licensing scheme, the Housing Act 2004 gives local authorities the discretion to introduce selective licensing schemes to cover all privately rented property in areas which suffer, or are likely to suffer from, low housing demand and also to those that suffer from significant and persistent anti-social behaviour. The use of this discretionary power is subject to local consultation and the consent of Cabinet and ultimately the Secretary of State. All landlords in the area would be subject to the scheme which is an extremely intense and costly last resort approach. The scheme had been considered for Hendon; however it would be at an approximate cost of £1 million.
- The need to increase the supply of housing in Sunderland is recognised across a number of strategies. In order to maintain balanced communities there needed to be a variety of tenure options at both ends of the housing market. The Housing market assessment identifies the need for 445 more affordable homes over 5 years.
- Balance needed to be struck between landlords bringing empty properties back into use thereby encouraging people to invest in the area and ensuring this is carried out in a responsible and appropriate manner.
- Self build schemes would be supported, however there would need to be commitment and instigation by members of the local community.

Referring to the Hylton Castle Business Plan, members were advised that the consultant's interim report to the Project Group had suggested a range of five different options for the site. It was felt that it would be advantageous to look at each of the 5 options in greater detail; however, this would be at a cost of approximately £10,000. Mr Parry advised the Committee that they could call for a progress report on the business plan, gain an accurate figure for further work and if appropriate bring proposed additional funding for the further consultancy work back to the Committee for agreement.

Councillor D. Wilson reminded the Committee that the issue of an organised bonfire display for November 2009 had been raised some months ago with the support of the police. Inspector Musgrove stated that the support of the police remained, however it did not appear that the idea had progressed and given the amount of organisation involved it would be doubtful if a display could be organised for November coming. Hopefully a working committee could be established to organise an event for November 2010.

Discussion ensued in relation to improvements to overgrown and run down land with particular reference to green space. Mr. Parry advised that a green space audit was currently being undertaken to assess the quality and quantity of green space in individual areas. The Gentoo master plan for Southwick includes a tree lined boulevard in the area of Southwick Primary School.

Councillor N. Wright informed the Committee that she had recently attended a World Health Organisation event which advised new research had confirmed that green space and pleasant visual amenity had a positive influence on physical, mental and social health.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Parry and Mr. Caddick for the report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted; and
- ii) the following activities be adopted as potential areas for further development and action:-
 - Report on Seafront quick wins improvements
 - Progress report on Hylton Castle Business Plan
 - Empty housing statistics be forwarded to the Committee on a ward by ward basis
 - An update on the Green Space Audit be provided to the Committee when available

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) 2009/10 Ward-Based Community Chest

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) on 20 projects recommended for support from the 2009/10 Community Chest Scheme in respect of the Castle, Fulwell, Redhill, Southwick and St. Peter's wards as detailed in Annex 1 to the report.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman having advised that Annex 3 to the report had been withdrawn, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 20 projects recommended for support from the 2009/10 Community Chest budget with a total value of £5,165 as detailed in Annex 1 to the report.

Developing Community Communications to Support Area Committees 2009-10

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which should input from the Committee to help inform the development of a Community Communications action for the North Sunderland Area Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Deborah Lewin, Interim Head of Corporate Communications, together with Verity Dodd, Senior Corporate Communications Officer presented the report and invited Members to help identify different ways to communicate with local residents and make suggestions for communications materials to support promotions and information provision in the area.

Discussion ensued and the following suggestions were made with regard to the production of communications materials:-

- Greater use be made of local publications such as *The Colliery Chronicle* which was delivered to every household on the north side;
- Dedicated pages with a local context within Sunrise
- Monthly local news sheet which included Members' photographs for reference for local people
- Care be taken to ensure people have access to information via a variety of communication mediums; too much emphasis can be placed on assuming everyone has electronic access to information.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Lewin and Ms. Dodd for their report it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted; and
- ii) Members' comments be used to inform the development of a Community Communications Action Plan for the North Sunderland Area Committee.

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

(Signed) R. BELL,
Chairman.