

At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 26th JULY, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor S. Watson in the Chair

Councillors Howe, Kay, Maddison, McClennan, Porthouse and Rolph

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor T. Foster and Wakefield

Chairman's Welcome

Councillor Watson welcomed Councillor Porthouse to his first meeting following his appointment by Council at the meeting held on 20th July, 2011.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 14th June, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th June, 2011 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Howe in the attendance.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity Policy Review 2011/12 : Draft Scoping Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which put forward proposals and sought agreement from members in relation to the forthcoming policy review into Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising the Committee Members of the overall aim of the policy review and the proposed terms of reference as set out. She asked that Members consider the potential areas of enquiry and sources of evidence and suggest any further areas they may wish to be considered.

Councillor Rolph asked if this was an opportunity to consider appointing co-opted Members to the Committee for the policy review from the Black Minority Ethnic Community and/or Disability Groups as their needs may be more individual and varied. Ms. Lancaster advised that this and other proposals had been discussed outside of the meeting with the Chair and it had been suggested that an informal meeting of the Committee be arranged in September to have more in depth discussions around them and agree a way forward.

Councillor McClennan reiterated Councillor Rolph's points and commented that she was aware of some Bangladeshi women who took advantage of the women only sessions in the city's swimming pools but was not sure how aware others may be of them. She suggested that the BME network may be a good starting point if looking for volunteers to be co-opted to the Committee.

Councillor Howe referred to the opportunities the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games could bring to the city and asked what role Officers saw the city playing in them. Ms. Julie Gray, Head of Community Services, advised that this issue would be covered in more detail during her presentation under the next item on the agenda, which should hopefully answer any questions Members had.

In response to comments from Councillor Kay regarding not being aware of any local individuals who were competing in the Olympics or Paralympics, Ms. Gray advised that this issue was covered as part of the presentation under the next item but also took the opportunity to advise the Committee that Elected Members could help Officers to gather intelligence around young individuals that they may be aware of in the city who needed assistance or support in an activity or sport that they were excelling in.

Councillor Porthouse referred to the Silksworth Sports Complex and Ski Slope and the fact that it had closed now for a number of weeks over concerns around Legionella on site. He felt that this was excessive and that the issue at the facility should have been rectified within a number of days and reopened and that this should be looked at individually. Ms. Gray advised that the complex had been closed due to the results of a water quality management test. Works were scheduled to take place over the next couple of weeks and it was expected that the facilities would be reopened within four weeks but she advised she would write to Committee Members to confirm the exact date. Councillor Porthouse requested that he be given more detail into why it had taken so long to rectify the situation.

Having considered the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the scope of the policy review for 2011-12 as set out in the report be agreed and Members comments be considered at the informal meeting of the Committee to be arranged for September, 2011.

Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity Policy Review 2011/12 : Scene Setting Report

The Chief Executive and Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided a background and overview to the Committee in relation to the policy review 'Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity'.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Julie Gray, Head of Community Services and Ms. Victoria French, Sport, Wellness and Partnership Manager attended the meeting and gave a presentation to the Committee which covered:-

- Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2005 – 2010;
- Progress in facilities and programmes being provided;
- Their performance to date;
- The Active Sunderland Board and Sub Groups;
- Sport England's Strategy 2011-2015;
- 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games;
- What they thought the issues were; and
- What they are aiming to achieve.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes)

Councillor Howe referred to the number of residents participating in sport and physical activity increasing from 19.5% in 2009 to 22.5% in 2010 and asked if this included those residents who may be members of private, non Council owned gyms. Ms. French advised that the survey was undertaken by Active Sunderland using a random selection of the population so the provision could be from any of those located in the city.

In response to comments from Councillor Kay regarding those sports that may be more likely to become more popular during the build up to the Olympics, like beach volley ball, and the world class facilities that were now available in the city, such as the Aquatic Centre, Ms. French advised that they had held beach volley ball competitions in the city before and could do so again in parks, etc by installing sandpits and organising interest in the community to partake in the activity. Ms. Gray referred to Councillor Kelly's comments regarding the facilities available in the city and making them viable for the future in difficult financial times and agreed that there would be challenging times ahead.

With regards to more non-traditional activities, and Councillor Kay advising that two of the top five fastest growing activities at this time were pole dancing and belly dancing, Ms. Gray advised that they had had some interest shown in these and other activities and the Council wanted to ensure they were meeting these needs.

Councilor McClennan suggested that the mapping exercise to establish what was being provided, by whom and where in the city was a huge on to complete and asked if a member of the SWITCH team had been considered as a suitable person to devote time to and undertake the task. There was also the opportunity to talk to

the community networks already in place to capture data from them on third sector provisions as part of the mapping task. Ms. Gray agreed that the Community Voluntary Sector could assist with the mapping exercise from the third sector provision and with regards to the SWITCH team, she understood that all members of the team were fully subscribed into other roles.

Councillor Maddison asked who were members on the Active Sunderland Board and was advised that there were representatives from the Council's Children's Services and Health, Housing and Adults Services Directorates, a Secondary School Headteacher, representatives from City of Sunderland Colleges and the University of Sunderland, and also from the SAFC Football Foundation, the Local Primary Care Trust, Gentoo and Tyne and Wear Sport.

Councillor Rolph commented that the Committee had to focus on what was needed to improve on what was already available in the city, for example with regards to the mapping exercise it was necessary to be able to understand the accuracy of the survey that had been undertaken and there was a need for further statistical information to be sought, such as how far were people willing to travel to partake in an activity. She explained that she was aware that neighbouring authorities had had to cut sports and leisure facilities severely and asked how those gaps were trying to be 'plugged' by the Council.

Ms. Gray advised that the service had a wealth of statistical information available to them around participation which had been gathered and commented that she would be more than happy to bring back a further report to a future meeting of the Committee setting out where the information had come from and their findings. With regards to the travel aspect, she was not aware that this information was available but that she supported that area being looked into as part of the review as it could help the service work towards overcoming and understanding any barriers that the findings highlighted.

Councillor Rolph went on to comment that she would also be interested in those facilities that were currently available within schools and what effect, if any, a current school requesting to become an academy would have on those facilities and how to prevent any adverse effect it may have. Ms. Gray suggested it may be beneficial to invite one of the Headteachers from the specialist secondary schools to attend a meeting of the Committee to give their perspective and views.

With regards to the Olympics and Paralympics, Councillor Rolph stated that she had recently read in The Times newspaper about 'talent spotters' that were placed around the country to locate and link individuals to sports they may excel in and asked if these were known to the Council and if they had visited/located in the city. Ms. French advised that she was aware that there had been a wheelchair basketball talent spotter in the city but that she was now aware of any other sports where they had visited. She would look further into this matter and report back her findings to the Committee.

Councillor Rolph shared her disappointment with the Committee that none of the literature that had been shown advertising activities showed any black, minority ethnic individuals and that this needed to be addressed to show harder to reach

groups that they were fully committed to being inclusive. Ms. Gray agreed 100% with regards to the literature and accepted that it was an area to work on.

With regards to evidence gathering as part of the policy review, Councillor Rolph referred to paragraph 3.7 of the report and the work of the Active Sunderland Board, and suggested that it may be beneficial for the Committee to question one of the Activators who were in place to help people overcome the barriers which are preventing them from being more active and signpost them to activities which they would like to try out. She also referred to the Active City Strategy that was referred to at paragraph 3.10 of the report and asked if all Members had seen a copy of this and if not, suggested that it be circulated to all Members of the Committee for their consideration and commented that it would be useful to invite a representative from Sport England to a future meeting of the Committee to gather evidence from them also.

Ms. Gray fully supported the Activators coming to a meeting of the Committee and suggested they attend when the statistical data was presented to offer some synergy between the two presentations and also agreed to circulate a copy of the Active City Strategy to all Members of the Committee.

Councillor Porthouse spoke of the Exercise and Weight Referral Programme which ran for twelve weeks in the city's leisure centres and commented that Members should actively work to encourage communities to get involved with these and similar programmes. He explained it had involved being referred from a health professional and then being assessed by a nurse and inducted to the gym equipment, with advice on diet and exercise the programme aimed to address issues with the individual in getting active and healthy.

Ms. French advised that the Wellness service had had over 10,000 referrals to date, for individuals showing risk factors to their health that could be address with the required support tailored to their needs through exercise and a healthy lifestyle. She explained that this programme was only for individuals who had been referred by a health professional and the same twin tracked programme was not yet available for all uses of the centres but that they did work with the PCT who helped to compliment the work the Council were undertaking.

Councillor Porthouse raised the issues that he felt it was excessive that every user of the Wellness Centres needed to be formally introduced to the equipment and individuals were not allowed to just turn up and start using it. Ms. French explained that staff needed to know that people were working at the right level and that those who needed additional support knew how to access it and therefore every user had to complete an induction.

Councillor Rolph referred to her personal experience of the Wellness Centres and explained how she had undertaken a very thorough induction over two sessions where they had talked over the purpose of her visiting the centre. A programme had then been designed for her by one of the trainers but now that she was unable to use the gym she asked how her programme could be modified. She also asked if with cut backs to services, etc this service would still be available to new users.

Ms. French advised that the service would be continuing as they had been commissioned to help deal with very chronic conditions but that it was preferred if support could be given to individuals at a lower level of need to help prevent cases getting worse and needing more support. She explained that Councillor Rolph was a perfect example of how the Wellness Centres could work in tailoring programmes specifically to an individual's needs and that should she contact her preferred centre her programme could be modified to meet her needs now.

Councillor Porthouse asked how people could be made aware of the programme and was informed that there was no need to market the referral programme as GP's, nurses and other health professionals were constantly referring individuals to centres. Once that individual was in the programme they could help in ensuring their needs were met. If there was a gap in the user attending they could help them get back into the programme or address any issues that may be stopping them attending. She explained that they had a very high retention of people in the programme and that staff have ongoing dialogue with those attending the centres but unfortunately at this time they did not have the resources to chase any members who stopped.

In response to comments from Councillor Kay regarding joining up services provided with others agencies, Ms. French advised that this was already the case, although it may not be clear, for example, the active bus was provided by the Council and worked very closely with colleagues so as not to duplicate work that is being undertaken by their agency. She explained that the Council got involved in events that were run by the Community Health Team and the PCT but that it was not always necessary for them to take over for their message to be heard and shared.

Councillor Watson commented that with the formation of the Area Networks a lot of information would be available from those individuals at the 'grass roots' level and asked what was being done to gather their findings. Ms. Gray advised that in collecting information on programmes being provided in communities the Area Networks would be a good source of information and agreed that they be contacted.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their informative presentation, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the presentation and report be received and noted, and information as set out be included towards the evidence gathering on the Committee's policy review topic for 2011/12.

Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal Team – Enforcement Activity Report 2010/2011

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which summarised the enforcement activity taken during 2010/2011 by the City Council in exercising the statutory powers at its disposal in dealing with unsafe, substandard or disused private sector housing and in tackling anti-social behaviour.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, presented the report, advising that it showed that a lot of work had been carried out to date but that the service were constantly looking at how to improve or do things in a different way to continue to get better. He explained that he was currently in the process of attending the Area Committees to discuss empty properties in their relevant areas before the Area Action Plans were submitted to Cabinet in October.

He advised that the information had been well received by the Area Committees he had attended so far but that most importantly was how well the plans were then implemented, with the primary focus going forward being looking at how information can be shared between Members working at a local level to gather an intelligence hub of key information and issues. If information was shared early enough this could only help in preventing bigger issues from developing in areas around the city.

Councillor Maddison referred to paragraph 3.1 of the report and the partnerships having been developed with the university and hospital to work to improve the quality of accommodation and asked what improvements needed to be made. Mr. Caddick explained that some properties were not in a generally good condition and that they were trying to work closely with the university to make sure that the experience students are having of living in Sunderland is a positive one. He advised that a lot of the university and hospital accommodations were privately rented and that Officers attend enrolment events to direct students towards reputable landlords.

Councillor Rolph referred to paragraph 3.11 of the report whereby it started that over the year 432 applications were received in relation to selective licensing with only 235 licences being granted and asked if this in turn meant that 197 applications had been refused. Mr. Caddick advised that inspections were made before any licences were granted so some properties would be going through that process and carrying out any works that had been requested. He commented that some landlords were not undertaking the required works and therefore were in default and would be moved on to the next stage towards prosecution if the works were not completed.

In response to a question from Councillor Rolph regarding the advantages of the Tenancy Harrassment Team moving from Legal Services to the Housing Service, Mr. Caddick commented that the Housing Service would now be involved in any cases a lot sooner than previously to investigate the issues from both the landlord and tenant, only involving Legal Services if and when required. He explained this would streamline the system and be the best use of everyone's expertise at the right stages to provide and all round improved service.

When asked if there were any other areas in the city that may benefit from Selective Licensing, Mr. Caddick advised that there probably wouldn't be as an area would need to have fit a number of criteria set out by a Government initiative that was no longer running. He explained that it would be more beneficial to see the principles that come out of the initiative and embed them into standard Council services. He commented that Selective Licensing was only used in extreme cases where issues had been ongoing for some time and that it could carry a stigma with it, showing that the Council had failed the area in the first instance. It was much more about getting into problem areas sooner to stop them developing into more serious areas of concern.

Councillor Rolph commented that the report contained information around harassment and anti social behaviour but did not include any statistics or detail on domestic violence. Mr. Caddick advised that this information was available from the Safer Communities Team and could be produced for the Committee. He went on to explain that they would not necessarily be involved in these cases unless requested and that the service would tend to be involved at earlier stages, through the LMAPS route, to prevent issues escalating where they are aware of them.

Councillor McClennan congratulated the service for their achievements as set out in the report and asked how this positive message was being communicated to the public, did the service liaise with the communications team to promote their work. Mr. Caddick explained that although communications had improved there was still work to be done to get more information out into the public domain. If it was a single issue with one resident then it was easier to keep them informed than if it was a broader issue affecting a number of individuals that needed to be kept advised of ongoing work. He commented that if the issue was one which would affect a whole community then they would aim to publicise it as widely as they could and stated that there was a need for the service to talk more with Members to get a more localised view.

With regards to a query from Councillor McClennan around future resources, Mr. Caddick advised that funding had been provided by Back On The Map toward the Selective Licensing Program over a period of time. The first year had involved Officers being funded to gather information. In March 2012 this funding would be reduced or cease completely. He advised that the service has planned in advance for this event.

Councillor Porthouse referred to private residents and issues around properties being kept in terrible conditions and sought advice on what control the Council had over these residents. Mr. Caddick informed Members that there were a number of things the service could help with to rectify such issues, e.g. planning enforcement for parked cars, overhanging trees, etc. Each case was looked at individually but if there were particular problems with properties the service could investigate these further. He asked that Councillor Porthouse email over any particular cases he may be referring to and he would ensure Officers dealt with the matter.

Councillor Kaye relayed the recent issues that had been raised as part of his Ward walk around that had been undertaken. Mr. Caddick stated that he would ensure that at the next round of Ward Walks an Officer would be present who could capture the issues as they were raised and reiterate them to the relevant areas for action. The Ward Walks were a good way for Members to build relationships with local communities, showing them that they were being listened to and where possible work was carried out to rectify issues. He commented that it was vital that Members and Officers were careful to ensure that residents had clear expectations of what could be done to help with problems within their areas.

With regard to empty properties in Wards, Mr. Caddick explained that there was the potential to use the new homes bonus on empty properties but each area had to be looked at to identify the key issues that needed addressing. He commented that housing was fundamental too all in the city so there was a need to be focussed and

look at each local area, being creative with solutions if needed to to get the right outcome.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Caddick for his informative report, and it was :-

4. RESOLVED that the report and Member's views on the enforcement activity for the year 2010/2011 be received and noted.

Work Programme 2011-12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which set out the work programme for the Committee's work during the 2011-12 Council year.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Helen Wardropper, Scrutiny and Area Support Officer, presented the report advising that any requests for future reports that had been raised at this meeting would be added to the Work Programme at the appropriate future meeting.

Councillor Porthouse mentioned the report due to come to a future meeting of the Committee meeting regarding Housing Reform, and asked whether a more in depth briefing session could be arranged outside of the Committee and extended to all Members. It was felt that this would give Members a better opportunity to really understand the changes that were forthcoming.

Ms. Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, commented that she would be meeting with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to discuss the balance of the Work Programme, making arrangements to move items if required.

5. RESOLVED that the information contained within the Work Programme be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st July, 2011 – 31st October, 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 July to 31st October, 2011 which related to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Members were provided with an updated Forward Plan for the period 1st August, 2011 to 30th November, 2011 which had been published since the publication of the agenda for this meeting.

Interest was shown in decision '01403 – To consider the outcome of Public Consultation in relation to the Accessible Bus Network Design Project' and Ms. Lancaster advised that this was being considered by the Environmental and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee. She was aware that nexus had been invited to

attend a future meeting of their Committee and she would speak with the relevant Chairmen around the possibility of making joint arrangements for Members of this Committee to be in attendance at that meeting.

6. RESOLVED that the contents of the Forward Plan be received and noted.

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

(Signed) S. WATSON,
Chairman.