

**18 September 2013**

**REPORT OF CHAIR OF AREA COMMITTEE**

**Love Where You Live Progress Report**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an update of progress on the Love Where You Live project which cuts across the work of both the Place and People Boards and also the VCS Network.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 As an ongoing commitment to support all residents and groups who work, live and visit the Coalfields, Area Committee agreed that the Love Where You Live project would continue throughout 2013/14 with funding from SIB.
- 2.2 Area Committee approved £10,000 in April 2013 to buy equipment and materials and offer support to volunteers and partners to deliver environmental improvements. To date small hand shovels, spades, tree pruners, loppers, paint, paint brushes etc have been purchased to ensure all essential equipment required is available to carry out the work.
- 2.3 The Area Community Officer is lead agent on the project, being responsible for budgets, monitoring progress and working with the community to support the programme. The Area Response Manager is responsible for the operational delivery of the improvements. This was agreed by Area Committee in April 2013.
- 2.4 The work carried out by the project is in partnership with, and complements, the RLS Street Scene services. The project adds value to the work the Council carries out as part of its day to day activity and does not replace or duplicate mainstream services.

**3. Work Placements**

- 3.1 The main achievement during the period from 1 April 2013, to date, is the partnership working with SNCBC/Community Opportunities, giving clients claiming job seekers allowance the chance to gain work experience. During this period 17 clients (11 of who live within the Coalfield area) have gained a range of skills and experience by working alongside the Coalfield Area Response Team at Market Place Depot, Houghton le Spring, contributing to the Love Where you Live project and delivering improvements to the area.
- 3.2 8 of these clients were sent by the Job Centre to participate in Mandatory Work Activity. MWA is a 4 week programme to help clients develop work ethic skills such as attendance, punctuality, communication, team work, as well as any work experience skills they may pick up along the way. Of the 8 clients sent on MWA, 5 successfully completed the four week placement, 2 lasted 3 weeks and 3 days and only left due to changes in circumstances with their benefit, 1 lasted 1 day due and was exited from the programme due to illness. Of the 5 completers, all can update their CV's to include the duties they have performed whilst on their placement and be provided with a reference by Community Opportunities to confirm their attendance, punctuality and participation in duties. 1 client has since gone into full time employment.
- 3.3 The others are Work Programme clients who are sent to SNCBC/Community Opportunities by the Job Centre on a 2 year programme. During those 2 years they are supported by an advisor who assists them with job search, job applications, training support such as offering interview techniques, confidence building and by gaining work

experience skills gained from the benefits of a work placement. If the client is successful in finding a job they are also supported to help sustain that employment.

- 3.4 All have successfully completed 4 weeks placement, and can now use the experience to update their CV's. The work placement officer at SNCBC/Community Opportunities is in regular contact with these clients who all thoroughly enjoyed their 4 weeks at Market Place. Four of them often ask her to send them back for another 4 weeks. Staff working with the clients have seen a huge change in confidence in the clients since first meeting with them and feel this is definitely as a result of them being in the working environment at Market Place Depot.
- 3.5 A great deal of work has been carried out by the work placement clients who have been mentored and supported by RLS Street Scene Ward Team Leaders and members of their teams. The opportunity has been mutually beneficial to the team and the clients and has enabled the achievement of improvements such as:
- Shiney Row town centre improvements - barriers, fence around cenotaph and planters.
  - Leyburn grove - perimeter fence and fence around pitch 'A' as well as planters and parts of the building, assist with general spring clean of dressing rooms.
  - Houghton Cemetery - water taps ,seats and various other improvements
  - Herrington Colliery welfare - various schemes such as dressing rooms, general maintenance
  - Houghton bowling green - painting of borders around green, planters and the building
  - Painting works at Redburn Row, Houghton le Spring
  - Environmental improvement works at the Flatts Youth Centre and surrounding area at Easington Lane
  - Working in areas assisting with litter picks and daily works in order to free up operatives to tackle some outstanding specialist works such as cycle ways and hedge trimming
- 3.6 The work placement officer is in regular contact with the Area Response Manager to monitor progress and ensure the work is compliant with all protocols and procedures (for all parties involved). Recent correspondence has highlighted that the partnership as described above is being recognised as successful and is showing results for the individuals involved. The programme provider has asked for a report to promote the work as good practice.

#### **4 Work with Schools**

- 4.1 From April 2013 to date the Love Where You Live project has been supported by Kepier Academy, New Penshaw Primary School and Burnside Primary School. City of Sunderland College has also been involved as part of their Citizenship programme.
- 4.2 A large scale clean up at Primrose Hill, adjacent Elba Park at Lambton Lane was carried out in June 2013, in partnership with Groundwork and Gentoo. Twelve pupils from Kepier and over 20 from New Penshaw carried out duties such as tree pruning, litter picking, railing painting and stream clearing, in addition to undertaking environmental education activities with the Park Ranger from Elba Park. All works were carried out alongside Sunderland City Council RLS Street Scene operatives.
- 4.3 Pupils from Kepier Academy worked together with Parks Staff to plant out displays, cut grass and pick litter in Rectory Park as part of the Northumbria in Bloom preparations.
- 4.4 Visits have been carried out with a further five primary schools who are developing their own ideas on how to become involved in the project and encouraging young people to consider the consequences of negative behaviour on the environment. The Area

Response Manager and Environmental Enforcement Officer will deliver educational sessions and activities as part of the curriculum and out of school environmental clubs. The programme will commence at the end of September 2013.

## **5 Working with the wider Community**

- 5.1 The project is beginning to develop relationships and forge stronger links within the community. Working with the lead agent on the Shop Local project, the Area Response Manager and Area Community Officer have begun to engage the recently formed Houghton Traders' Association to make improvements in the surrounding area.
- 5.2 Community Groups including the Friends of Rectory Park, Friends of Herrington Country Park and Herrington Burn YMCA carry out regular environmental improvement works in areas in need of attention. Further work will be developed with the VCS Network throughout the rest of the year to build upon successful partnership working to date.

## **6 Recommendations**

Members are requested to:

- 6.1 Continue to support and become involved in the project in their own ward and across the wider area
- 6.2 Discuss and agree to write formally to work placement clients to offer thanks and recognition for the work carried out
- 6.3 Agree to receive further reports on the progress of the project

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