

At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL on MONDAY, 11TH DECEMBER, 2023 at 5.30p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Herron in the Chair

Councillors Curtis, Dixon, Fagan, Gibson, Hodson, Leonard, Morrissey, Potts, Scanlan and A. Wood.

Also Present:-

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| Lee Bell | - Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service |
| Matthew Jackson | - Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council |
| Fiona Kelly | - Partnership and Community Resilience Manager, Sunderland City Council |
| Gerry Taylor | - Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities and Area Lead Executive, Sunderland City Council |
| Kelly Patton | - Gentoo |

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillors Graham-King, Mordey and Reed together with Julie Maven, East VCS Representative, and Jamie Southwell, Neighbourhood Inspector Northumbria Police.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 19th September 2023

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th September 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

VCS Area Network Progress Report

The East Area VCS Network provided the Committee with a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the work of the East Area VCS Network.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Julie Maven having submitted her apologies for absence the Committee were advised that any questions would be forwarded to her for response.

It was requested that if the representative could not attend the meeting that a substitute from the VCS be invited to attend instead. Ms Kelly advised that this would normally happen however Ms Maven's apologies had been submitted last minute and it had not been possible to arrange for a substitute representative to attend on this occasion.

There being no questions from Members it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the update from the East Area VCS Network be noted.

Northumbria Police Update

Neighbourhood Inspector Jamie Southwell submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the crime statistics for the East area and of the work done by Northumbria Police.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Inspector Southwell not being in attendance the Chair advised that any questions would be forwarded to him for response.

Members stated that it was encouraging to see the figures show reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour in the area.

It was requested that if Inspector Southwell was unable to attend that a substitute be asked to attend instead and Ms Kelly agreed to speak to Inspector Southwell regarding this.

3. RESOLVED that the update from Northumbria Police be noted.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Update

Lee Bell, Station Manager Sunderland Central Fire Station, submitted a written report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the work of the fire service for the period 1st April to 15th Jun 2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Bell stated that good work had been done around bonfire night and that the severity of incidents and risk posed had been significantly reduced; there had been a lot of partnership working done with the police on this matter.

There had been a significant amount of prevention work undertaken with 333 safe and well visits undertaken and 37 rubbish uplift reports made.

The difference between primary and secondary fires was queried and Mr Bell advised that secondary fires were of property of low or limited value or of items which could not have a value applied to them such as trees. It was a classification that was set out by the government and he would provide a cover report attached to future Committee reports which would include the different descriptions and definitions.

Councillor Gibson queried the locations of the tree fires in Doxford Ward. Mr Bell advised that he would have to look into this further to establish the locations.

Councillor Dixon asked whether Mr Bell had attended meetings of the Thornholme residents group. Mr Bell advised that he had not attended this residents group and asked that details be provided.

4. RESOLVED that the report of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service be noted.

Gentoo Update

Kelly Patton, Gentoo Group presented a report, (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on current Gentoo developments, projects and priorities.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Patton presented the update and welcomed questions from Members.

Councillor Fagan queried how close to becoming homeless did people need to be before they were housed as band 1 applicants. Would people need to have been physically evicted from their property before being considered as a band 1 applicant. Ms Patton advised that it would depend on what level of need the housing options team had assessed them as having. Ms Taylor added that the housing team worked closely with gentoo to prevent homelessness.

Councillor Gibson expressed his thanks to Lucy Atkin for her hard work in tackling the litter problem in Doxford Ward.

5. RESOLVED that the report from Gentoo be noted.

East Sunderland Area Committee Delivery Plan 2023 - 2026

The Chair of the East Sunderland Neighbourhood and Community Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the East Sunderland Area Committee Area Plan for 2023/2026 for consideration and approval and provided an update on the Governance arrangements.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Dixon introduced the report as Chair of the Area Board and drew Members attention to the priorities set out in the delivery plan. He suggested that the Go Get Online Project and In Bloom be brought to the February meeting of the board.

With regard to the Cemetery improvements board, Councillor Scanlan advised that she was still attending meetings of this board and that all Councillors were welcome to attend. Councillor Fagan stated that there was no cemetery in Doxford ward and that she had spoken with Mark Morley about getting information from the board fed back to Doxford councillors.

Councillor Dixon then referred to the discussions which had taken place at the last board meeting relating to Walk and Talk; there had been discussion around the holding of a meeting with Graham Scanlon to discuss this however there were now to be meetings held between senior officers. The Chair added that the Leader had made it clear that he was unhappy with the decision to remove Walk and Talk budget and that Assistant Directors were to meet; the outcome of the discussion would be fed back.

Councillor Hodson stated that he had concerns about how the decision to remove Walk and Talk had been made; the Committee was a decision making body however the power to make this decision seemed to have been devolved to officers. Only the Chairs had been consulted on the matter, Vice-Chairs and the wider Membership had not been consulted. He hoped that the intervention of the Leader would see the Walk and Talk budget preserved. The Chairman advised that the Area Chairs had not been given a choice, it had been presented to them as a final decision, and that objections had been raised by them.

Councillor Scanlan stated that the Leader had been clear that this should be a Committee decision; she felt that waiting until the next meeting to make a decision would be too late and that she felt that there should be £25,000 per ward allocated to Walk and Talk at this meeting. Ms Kelly advised that the position had not changed since Members had been emailed on Friday and that there needed to be further discussions before a decision on the allocation of funding could be made. There were options for a decision to be taken to allocate funding before the next diared meeting. Councillor Morrissey then suggested that the funds be ringfenced to Walk and Talk at this meeting.

Gerry Taylor advised that several months ago the proposals for new arrangements for Area Committees had been presented to the groups and that following this a new way of working had been agreed and the associated changes to the constitution had been agreed. In light of the concerns raised there would be further discussions with senior officers.

Ms Kelly suggested that rather than approving funds at this meeting, by way of a compromise, an extraordinary meeting could be arranged for early in the new year in order to make a decision after the senior officers had their meeting.

Councillor Scanlan commented that a larger budget would allow for large projects to be funded rather than there being a number of smaller projects which would help to alleviate the issues caused for officer time that the number of small projects had caused. She also felt that the paperwork needed to be reviewed and simplified as this would assist in reducing officer workload.

Councillor Hodson, seconded by Councillor Scanlan, moved that a recommendation be added to the Budget report that £15,000 per ward be aligned to a future walk and talk project with further discussions to take place in January.

This motion was put to the vote and with:-

10 Members voting for the addition of the recommendation;

0 Members voting against; and

1 Abstention

It was agreed that the additional recommendation to align funds to a future walk and talk budget be added to the list of recommendations on the Area budget report.

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) consideration be given to the progress and performance update with regard to the East Area Committee Area Plan 2023-2026
- ii) consideration be given to the progress update with regard to Sunderland City Council Service Plans – Area Priorities, which were provided for information purposes only.

East Area Budget Report

The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided financial statements in respect of the Area Committee's delegated budgets and presented proposals for further funding requests.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Fiona Kelly, Partnership and Community Resilience Manager, presented the report highlighting the Committee's financial statement, the Neighbourhood Fund had a starting balance of £408,817 for the 2023/24 year. Following

approvals at the last meeting and underspends from previous projects being returned to the budget, as set out in table one at paragraph 2.1, there was a remaining balance of £235,787. There was one project recommended for approval at this meeting and two proposals for alignment of funds and should these be agreed then the remaining balance would be £165,787. With the additional alignment of funds to a future walk and talk programme of £15,000 per ward there would be a remaining balance of £90,787

Each ward had been allocated a Community Chest budget of £10,000; the approvals were set out in annex 2 with the remaining balances shown in the table at paragraph 3.2.

Councillor Dixon expressed his thanks to Ms Kelly for all of her hard work.

Members gave consideration to the applications and it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-
 - i) the financial statements set out in sections 2.1, and 3.2 of the report be noted;
 - ii) approval be given to Neighbourhood Funding of £15,000 to Sunderland City Council Motorcycle Disorder Task Force; as detailed in annex 1;
 - iii) approval be given to the alignment of Neighbourhood Funding of £45,000 to Extension to East Rangers;
 - iv) approval be given to the alignment of Neighbourhood Funding to Contribution to High Street Revolution, Back on the Map;
 - v) approval be given to the alignment of Neighbourhood Funding of £75,000 (£15,000 per ward) to a future Walk and Talk programme;
 - vi) the Community Chest approvals from the 2023/24 budget as detailed in annex 3 be noted.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the Meeting.

(Signed) M. HERRON,
Chairman.