

Coalfield Area Committee



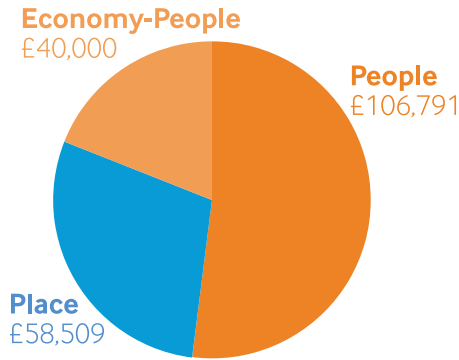
Cllr Dennis Richardson
Chair of the Coalfield Area Committee

At the beginning of this financial year, the Coalfield Area Committee set out its priorities for the year ahead. We wanted our work and resources to focus on bringing real benefits to the local community, so we chose key areas that included local shopping centres, additional activities for children and young people, neglected land, improvements to allotments and support for older people and vulnerable adults. Delivering these local priorities, along with carrying out its strategic influencing role, has been the focus for Area Committee and its Place and People Boards throughout 2013/14.

Working with partners has been crucial to ensure we get value for money and maximum benefit from our resources to deliver better services to our residents. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Network is made up of a wide range of local organisations from the sector who come together to work in collaboration with Area Committee to address local need. Working with the Network has ensured that we have worked with more residents and community groups than ever before.

Strategic Initiative Budget (SIB) is allocated to each Area Committee on an annual basis to support initiatives which help achieve the delivery of area priorities. During 2013/14 Coalfield Area Committee has focused resources on key areas which are important to local people. A total of £205,300 has been awarded to delivering projects within the area, all of which help to achieve our goals and aspirations set at the beginning of the year. In addition to funding larger projects, we have awarded 62 small grants through our Community Chest

fund, supporting projects such as a gardening club for young people, social events for older people and equipment for a craft club. The average Community Chest grant is around £550.



A lot of excellent work has taken place over 2013-2014 with yet more in the planning stage. Some of the highlights are:

People

To provide additional support for older and vulnerable adults, the People Board has developed and supported a range of initiatives. We have supported local partners to provide two new lunch clubs, set up a befriending service, promote books at home, provide a shopping bus which runs three times a week, and provide dementia awareness workshops to anyone living, working or volunteering in the area.

During the summer of 2013 a dementia friendly community room/café was built at Bernard Gilpin School in Houghton-le-Spring. Area Committee provided financial assistance to buy equipment for the centre which was officially opened on 10th December by the Mayor of Sunderland, Cllr Bob Heron. The new facility 'The Living Room' aims to reach out to the community and support needs of local residents. The room is used by local groups, individuals and their carers who can enjoy such activities as 'Singing for the Brain', Intergenerational Choir, a dementia café and dancing. The school is the only dementia friendly school in the North of England, which is a great achievement for the area.

Working in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group we have jointly funded 10 new activities to help improve the sexual and mental health our young people and promote healthy weight for children. The activities were designed, and are being delivered, by local organisations in partnership with Area Committee. Health and wellbeing is something the People Board want to focus on in the longer term and will continue to work in partnership with our health partners to achieve better outcomes for local people.

The impact of Welfare Reform is something the People Board are working to address, and to date has provided additional funding to allow more financial and welfare advice sessions to be delivered. This work will continue to be developed throughout the next year in partnership with Gentoo and other local partners.

Place

The past year has seen a greater role for the Place Board in influencing local street scene services to ensure the unique needs of the area are considered during street cleaning and maintenance. The residents within the Coalfield area are proud of the visual and environmental improvements carried out and have shown their willingness to become involved in activities to keep their neighbourhood tidy by being involved in a vast number of 'Love Where You Live' (LWYL) projects.

The LWYL campaign continues to enhance our communities, with work being undertaken by our VCS partners, schools, Sunderland college and residents groups in partnership with City Council resources.

A large scale clean up at Primrose Hill supported by RLS Street Scene Operatives, in partnership with Groundwork and Gentoo has been carried out. Students from Kepier Academy and New Penshaw Primary assisted with tree pruning, litter picking, railing painting and stream clearing in

addition to taking part in environmental education activities with the Park Ranger from Elba Park. A number of other schools are developing ideas to be included in the programme, which will help reduce the consequences of negative behaviour on the environment.

The Neglected Land project has seen 66 plots of neglected land brought back into use and sites at Eppleton School, Old Dubmire School and Collingwood Drive given a makeover, with local schools involved in scrub clearance, tree planting, path laying, and bulb planting. Allotment sites have also been improved, the greatest improvements carried out at Burnside allotments and Britannia terrace involved new fencing, large scale clearance and remodelling of plots. Tenants are being supported to form allotment associations and more community gardens are being encouraged.

The Place Board has continued to provide on-going support to local shopping centres and has now engaged with 63 independent traders across the three areas (Hetton, Houghton, Shiney Row). Area Committee has funded a retail specialist to work with businesses on a 1 to 1 or group basis with the aim of improving trade and productivity. Small grants have been awarded to over 20 businesses to make small improvements



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such as new signage, decorating and producing marketing information.

Moving Forward

This report provides only a snapshot of the work carried out across the last year and gives the key highlights of what has been achieved. As more services move to area based working, it is vital that local communities become involved and have their say on how, where and when the City Council delivers services in their area. We're committed to improving on the

successes we have seen this year and will continue to keep local communities at the heart of everything we do. We are pleased to have worked extensively with our VCS partners and further work will be developed. I would like to thank all members of Area Committee, and partners, officers and residents, for their hard work and support throughout the year in helping to achieve such encouraging results and better services for local people.



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