

**1<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY 2012**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**COMMUNITY ACTION: REVIEWING PROGRESS AND AGREEING NEXT STEPS**

**EDEN VALE AND THORNHILL PROJECT GROUP**

**1.0 Why has it come to Committee?**

- 1.1 The report provides an update of progress against agreed actions in the Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Groups Action Plan (2011/12); see Annex 3.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In March 2011, both Sunderland West and East Area Committees recognised that for a period, areas in Eden Vale (West) and Thornhill (East) have been experiencing difficulties ranging from ASB, a perceived lack of co-ordinated youth provision, community tensions and a general unhappiness about the state of the environment. A number of initiatives were being delivered by numerous organisations within the area to tackle the problems, however it was recognised that they lacked co-ordination.
- 2.2 In May 2011, in order to move forward and maximise the impact of interventions and ensure clear prioritisation, a conference with key stakeholders involved in delivering services in the area was held. From this a draft action plan was produced.
- 2.3 In July 2011, both Area Committees agreed the action plan, and nominated representatives from both Committees to establish a new cross boundary working group: the 'Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group'. The Project group would monitor the quality and effectiveness of the services and improvements made, reporting directly back to both Area Committees.

**3.0 Progress Update: Action 4: Youth Task Group**

- 3.1 In December 2011, the Project Group agreed that a Youth Task Group would meet, consisting of elected members, youth providers and officers. An audit of commissioned youth provision was undertaken, along with what buildings and resources are located in the neighbourhoods.
- 3.2 In January 2012, the Youth Task Group met to identify any duplication, resources needed and any potential risks based on the audit provided. After a discussion a youth programme was agreed. It was recognised that some buildings were not suitable to deliver activities from and, as an alternative, the youth bus or elements of the XL Youth Villages should be considered as an option to fill any future gaps.
- 3.3 It was agreed to approach a local secondary school within the area to encourage them to become a member of the Project Group, in addition, to seeking their views on opening up the school on an evening and weekends.
- 3.4 Concerns were expressed on sessions currently being delivered mid week during a lunch time, as the funding is due to expire in March 2012. Officers, the Youth Provider and the

School are meeting to investigate options, which will be fed back into a future Project Group.

#### **4.0 Project Update: Action 6: Environment Works**

- 4.1 A key problem identified by the Project Group is the raised pathway overlooking residential properties. This former mineral line, which is unlit, is a major gathering point for large groups of young people, which can result in disturbance and disorder for residents.
- 4.2 The Project Group has agreed that action to reduce the attraction of this area as a gathering point is a vital element to alleviating community tensions and improving the conditions for local residents.
- 4.3 To achieve this, the Project Group is asking committee to agree the allocation of £42,000 of its Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), subject to full application, appraisal and consultation, on a capital project to lower the raised pathway. Attached at Annex 4 is a report from the Executive Director of City Services, which contains the detailed proposals for this project.

#### **5.0 Action 9: Anti Social Behaviour**

- 5.1 As mentioned in the main Progress Review report, 'Operation Freedom' ended in September 2011. The project under spent on budget by £9,750; its original allocation was £42,006.
- 5.2 At the last meeting of the Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group, it was noted that further additional Police interventions would have a positive impact on the work in the area, particularly as one of a number of coordinated proposed interventions.
- 5.3 The Police were asked to develop a proposal, detailed in the Progress Review, to deliver a further phase of Operation Freedom and the committee are asked to agree this.

#### **6.0 Action 15: Communication Plan**

- 6.1 In October 2011, the Project Group acknowledged that a challenge had been communicating information across areas between key people delivering services. It was proposed to develop a suitable Communication Plan, which would set out:
  - Purpose of the group
  - Governance infrastructure, including roles and responsibilities
  - Key people, including roles and responsibilities
  - Methods of communication
- 6.2 The Plan should be seen to allow the Project Group to assess the most successful methods in engaging partners and residents throughout the life time of the Project Group. By delivering an effective approach to both external and internal communications, this plan will support the engagement work needed to ensure people and groups have a vested interest in contributing to developing the future of both neighbourhoods of Eden Vale and Thornhill. Further information is available in Annex 5.
- 6.3 Area Committee are asked to endorse the Communication Plan.

#### **7.0 Recommendation(s)**

Committee is requested to:

- i) To endorse the Communication Plan.
- ii) Note the progress updates provided in Annex 3.
- iii) Approve the allocation of £42,000 of SIP, subject to full application, appraisal and consultation, for the environmental improvement works, identified in Annex 4.
- iv) Note the proposal to use the under spend from Operation Freedom to develop a further phase in Eden Vale, as detailed in the Progress Review report.

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Annex 3: Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group: Action Plan  
Annex 4: Eden Vale Environmental Improvement Works  
Annex 5: Eden Vale and Thornhill Communication Plan