

**At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 19<sup>th</sup> MARCH, 2012 at 5.30p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Emerson in the Chair

Councillors Dixon, Errington, Forbes, E. Gibson, Kay, McClennan, Maddison, T. Martin, Mordey, Scanlan and Wood

**Also Present:-**

Andrew Carton	-	Connexions/East Locality Manager, Sunderland City Council
Hazel Clark	-	VCS Representative
Alan Duffy	-	Head of Operations, Gentoo
Ged Fairclough	-	Acting Inspector, Northumbria Police
Paula Hunt	-	VCS Representative
Jen McKevitt	-	VCS Representative
Chris Marshall	-	Head of Operations, Gentoo
Vivienne Metcalfe	-	Area Community Co-ordinator, Sunderland City Council
Helen Peverley	-	Area Response Manager, Sunderland City Council
Neil Revely	-	Area Lead Executive, Sunderland City Council
Nicol Trueman	-	Area Officer, Sunderland City Council
Ian Warne	-	Station Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

**Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillor Ball along with Nonnie Crawford, Nicky Rowland, James Third and Jeremy Wicking

**Declarations of Interest**

Healthy City Investment Fund

Councillor Errington declared a personal interest as a family member was employed by the Primary Care Trust.

Councillor E. Gibson declared a personal interest as a family member was employed by the Primary Care Trust.

### **Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2012**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **Community Action in East Sunderland: Identifying New Issues and Agreeing Actions (2010/11 Work Plan)**

#### Process for the Review of Local Area Plans and Priorities 2012

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with the details of the proposed approach and timeline for the review of the Committees' Local Area Plans and Priorities for 2012.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, presented the report and advised that the Committees role was to lead on the development and implementation of the LAP and to monitor the quality of services in the area. The timeline for the refresh of the LAP was detailed in the report; the Area Needs Assessment had already started.

The state of the area debate would be held on 11<sup>th</sup> June at 5:30 p.m. at Ryhope Community Association. This would be an opportunity to showcase the good work that had been done in the area in addition to collecting information from residents to help develop the Area Committees priorities. The information from this debate could then be fed into the state of the city debate in September.

Councillor Dixon welcomed the proposal; he did however feel that there would be different issues in the different wards and he was concerned that Millfield residents would not be able to attend the event with it being held in Ryhope.

Councillor Wood commented that it always seemed to be difficult for the Committees to engage with the public. The Chairman added that there was a need for the event to be publicised.

Councillor T. Martin stated that the area forum meetings were always well attended by the public; it seemed that they felt more welcome at the forum meetings than at the Area Committee.

Councillor Errington asked whether there would be an opportunity for Members to put forward any concerns prior to the event. He also referred to the previous attempt to get the public to submit questions to the Committee. In addition he queried what age groups would be targeted. A lot of SIB funding

had been spent on youth provision in the area so it could be useful to hear from the young people in the area.

Paula Hunt advised that the area network were working to try and get the voluntary and community sector organisations in the area to take part.

Ms Trueman stated that the concerns about the location had been taken on board however it was impossible to find a venue that would be perfect. This was an area event and was to develop priorities for the whole area; in the future it could be possible to break down the priorities more to a ward basis. There was a need for engagement with the VCS organisations, area forums and with the residents associations to ensure that as many people as possible attended the event. It would be possible for Members to have an informal meeting prior to the event.

2. RESOLVED that:-
  - a. Consideration be given to the information provided.
  - b. The proposed approach and timeline detailed in section 4 be agreed.
  - c. The delivery of actions against the current work plan continues until the approval of the 2012 priorities.

#### Healthy City Investment Fund

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed the Committee of the proposals from the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust's Healthy City Delivery Group to change the way in which the Healthy City Investment Fund was administered and asked the Committee to give consideration to allocating and administering the fund from March 2012.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, presented the report and advised that it had been recognised that the fund worked best on an area level and as such the Healthy City Delivery and Improvement Group were proposing that the Area Committees be given control over the allocations of the funding. The funding had been made available to provide small grants to the voluntary and community sector to support activities which were likely to have a positive impact on health.

Councillor T. Martin commented that the industrial heritage of the area was a contributory factor for a number of illnesses such as asbestosis which were now causing a problem.

Councillor Errington queried whether all areas had been approached; Ms Trueman confirmed that all of the Area Committees had been approached in relation to this.

Councillor Mordey asked for confirmation that the Area Committee would be given the power to decide how this funding was spent. Ms Trueman advised that this was the case; the Committee would be able to agree the spending as long as it met the criteria for the allocation of the funds.

3. RESOLVED that:-
  - a. The Committee take on the allocation and administration of £31,413 Healthy City Investment fund for 2012/13
  - b. The Area Officer be requested to develop and implement the approach to working with the Area VCS Network to develop initiatives in support of male cancer mortality

### Empty Commercial Properties in the City Centre

The East Sunderland VCS Network submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed the Committee of the issue of empty commercial properties in the City Centre which had been identified at the VCS Network meeting.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman introduced the report. He advised that he was co-chair of the East VCS Network and that this report had been submitted to the committee as a result of discussions which had taken place at the VCS Network meeting around the condition of the city centre and the number of empty properties. There were VCS groups who would be willing to use the empty properties as city centre bases. The Council had a Business Development Officer who had access to a database of all the empty commercial properties and was happy to work with the agents to try and bring the properties into use.

Councillor E. Gibson welcomed this work; Councillor Wood agreed and added that there was a real need to address the problem.

Councillor Kay stated that this was a challenging issue; properties in the city centre were becoming tired looking and this was affecting the value of the properties and making them less desirable for businesses to move into.

Councillor Mordey commented that there was a policy review being undertaken into the various commercial centres in the city; the committees could feed information into each others work.

4. RESOLVED that the report be noted and further updates be received.

## **Community Action: Reviewing Progress and Agreeing Next Steps**

### Tackling Crime

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress against the agreed actions in the Work Plan for 2011/12, on behalf of the Crime Task and Finish Group.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Acting Inspector Ged Fairclough presented the crime figures for the Area. He presented the figures for the Central Area, Millfield, St. Michael's and the City Centre first.

Within the central area there had been a reduction in all crime of 8 percent, a reduction of 295 crimes.

There had been increases in Theft from Motor Vehicles of 12 percent; Burglary other than dwellings had increased from 156 last year to 198 crimes. Drug crime had also increased although this was due to a proactive approach being taken in the city centre which had seen the number of arrests increase.

The other crimes within the area had all reduced. Violent crime had reduced by 15 percent to 858 offences while there had been a reduction of 2 crimes for robberies, resulting in a total of 37 crimes. Burglary from dwellings had reduced by 22 percent. Incidents of anti social behaviour had reduced by 22 percent.

In the East Area, Hendon, Ryhope and Doxford wards, the total number of crimes had increased from 1562 to 1675.

Violent Crimes had reduced from 258 to 216. Theft from motor vehicles had increased from 98 to 111, most of the additional incidents had been concentrated on the area around Mowbray Road and there was an operation ongoing to tackle this. Theft of motor vehicles had reduced by 40 percent. Burglary other than dwellings had increased from 120 to 148 crimes while burglary of dwellings had reduced.

Shoplifting had increased by 2 crimes to 149; there was a problem around the self checkout machines in supermarkets where people were failing to scan items or were taking cash left by previous customers.

Theft of pedal cycles had increased from 18 to 31 crimes; this was mostly young people's cycles being stolen from outside of shops.

There had been a reduction in anti social behaviour incidents of 27 percent with 163 incidents recorded compared with 182 last year. There were issues in the area with large groups of youths congregating. The youth providers in the area were working to provide activities for the young people to encourage them not to congregate on the streets.

Councillor T. Martin commented that when the self service checkouts had been introduced in Asda there had been a member of staff monitoring the checkouts at all times. He also stated that it was easy for mistakes to be made and people could end up being criminalised for making a genuine mistake.

Councillor Errington asked whether stolen cycles were returned to their owners; he also queried whether bikes were still stamped with the owners post code. Acting Inspector Fairclough advised that there were hundreds of recovered bikes at Gill Bridge Police Station, they were returned to the owner if a positive identification of the bike could be made. Bikes were no longer stamped with postcodes but instead marked with a UV reactive ink.

Councillor E. Gibson stated that there were often groups of young people around the top of Tunstall Bank Estate; these groups were intimidating for residents and often left litter lying around. It was not possible to solve the problem completely, moving the groups away from an area would just result in them moving on to another area.

Councillor McClennan referred to an incident she had been informed about in the Churchill Street area where there had been a group of hundreds of young people in the street which had caused the residents to feel very intimidated.

Acting Inspector Fairclough stated that he was not aware of this incident; the largest group he was aware of was a group of 60 or 70 people who had congregated on top of Tunstall Hill and when the police had arrived the group had run away onto Leechmere Road.

Councillor Scanlan asked whether there was a reason for the reduction in anti social behaviour.

Acting Inspector Fairclough advised that there had not been a specific operation carried out however there had been work undertaken to address alcohol related crime. There had been a reduction in the amount of alcohol seized from under 18s.

Councillor Forbes commented that Tunstall Hill was a nature conservation area. She queried whether there had been any surveying of any damage caused to the natural habitats by the groups of youths. Nicol Trueman advised that Groundworks had been working with the limestone partnerships to protect the natural habitats. Acting Inspector Fairclough added that the area was blighted by off road motorcyclists; a number of these motorbikes had been seized by the police.

Acting Inspector Fairclough then advised Members of the work done around Operation X which was detailed in Annex 2. He advised that there were also ongoing operations relating to car crime and anti social behaviour in the Tunstall area.

Ian Warne, Station Manager, presented the update from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service. He advised that there had been a reduction in the number of deliberate fires in the area however there had been a spate of vehicle fires where number plates and bumpers had been set alight. These were being investigated and a suspect had been identified. Most deliberate fires had occurred on the evenings.

Councillor Errington queried whether the property fires in Doxford Ward were related to the empty properties awaiting demolition.

Mr Warne confirmed that this was the case and that there was work being done with gentoo to get the services to the properties disconnected to reduce the potential for fires. The gentoo representative, Alan Duffy, advised that there had been assurances from Northern Gas Networks that the backlog of work would be up to date within the next couple of weeks; there was work being done to speed up the process for the disconnection of services.

Councillor E. Gibson added that there were still properties occupied and this was delaying the disconnection of the services and demolition of the properties.

In response to a query from Councillor Maddison, Mr Warne advised that work was done to try and catch offenders however it was difficult as they needed to be caught in the act to guarantee a conviction.

5. RESOLVED that the update be noted.

#### Cleaner and Greener Streets – Walk and Talk Programme

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on progress made against the agreed actions within the Work Plan for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Helen Peverley, Area Response Manager, presented the report and advised that work had been done with licensed premises in the city centre to tackle the issue of stickers being placed on street furniture; the existing stickers had been removed or painted over and if there were any new stickers posted then the premises responsible could face being charged for the removal.

The owners of buildings in the city centre which had moss, grass and other weeds growing on the building had been approached with regard to cleaning of the building; the majority of these people had been happy to carry out works to tidy their properties up with only two businesses being unhappy with the council approaching them on this matter. This work would enhance the city centre by making the buildings look more attractive.

There had also been painting works carried out to cover graffiti and stickers on property in the city centre; this work had been well received by shoppers, traders and residents.

Planting works had been done and bespoke plant pots had been installed in preparation for the Northumbria in Bloom and Britain in Bloom judging visits which would be taking place in April, July and August. The Council had worked alongside the independent city centre traders and also The Bridges management.

As part of the Love Where You Live campaign there had been a spring clean launched which had seen litter picking and other work carried out with the support of staff from The Bridges. The Sunderland Echo was supporting the campaign and information was available on the Council website.

The Chairman welcomed the work to remove moss from buildings in the city centre. He advised that in Ryhope there was a derelict building which had trees growing out of it. Ms Peverley agreed to look into this.

Councillor Wood commented that the works in the city centre to improve the environment were very welcome.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that there were some beautiful old buildings in the city centre and the removal of moss and weeds from them would make a huge difference to their appearance; there were also health and safety benefits as the plant matter in guttering could lead to the gutters coming away from the building and falling onto people below.

The Chairman then commented that it was disappointing that there had been such a small level of public participation in the work; there was a need to publicise the activities more.

Councillor Mordey then queried what could be done to tackle the seagull problem in the city. Ms Peverley advised that she had spoken with the Assistant Head of Streetscene, Norma Johnston with regard to this matter. A specialist had been engaged who was looking into the previous actions which had been taken to identify which would be the most appropriate course of action and then draw up a set of recommendations. It was not possible for a cull of seagulls to be carried out however pigeons could be culled if required.

Councillor McClennan stated that she appreciated that there was a need for specialists to be involved in the tackling of the seagull problem; she was however concerned that there were a number of events which would be taking place in the city and that these would be plagued by seagulls if action was not taken soon.

It was then:-

6. RESOLVED that the updates on the Cleaner and Greener priority be noted.



## Work Plan 2011/12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the work plan for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, presented the work plan and advised that there was nothing to report further than had been presented in the update reports; all of the actions were progressing and there were no actions with red indicators.

Councillor Forbes referred to the action relating to the opening of school facilities to the wider community on evenings and weekends and the progress that had been made on this action. Andrew Carton, East Locality Manager, agreed to look into this. Ms Trueman added that she was aware that there had been a slight delay in the work; she was in talks with Paul Power, Sports Development Delivery Manager, with regard to this matter.

7. RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

## Community Chest and Strategic Initiative Budget (SIB) – Financial Statement and Proposals for Further Allocation of Resources

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the allocation of SIB and Community Chest funding to support initiatives which would deliver activities against the priorities for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer presented the report, taking Members through each application and answering questions from Members upon them.

Ms Trueman advised that there were 8 Community Chest proposals which were recommended to be supported. There was 1 application for SIB funding.

8. RESOLVED that:-
  - a. the financial statements as set out in annex 1 and 3 of the report be noted;
  - b. approval be given to the 8 proposals for funding from the Community Chest totalling £4,174 from the 2011/2012 budget as set out in annex 2 of the report;
  - c. The 1 application for SIB funding as set out in annex 4 of the report be approved.

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

(Signed) A. EMERSON,  
Chairman.