

At a Meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held at EASINGTON LANE COMMUNITY ACCESS POINT, THE BRICKGARTH, EASINGTON LANE on WEDNESDAY 14TH APRIL, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor J. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Anderson, Blackburn, Ellis, A. Hall, Heron, D. Richardson, Rolph, Tate, D. Smith, Speding and Wakefield.

Also in Attendance:-

Susan Brown	-	Area Community Co-ordinator, Sunderland Council
John Chapman	-	Head of Neighbourhoods, Gentoo
Jim Daly	-	Senior Planner, Sunderland Council
Steve Dodds	-	District Bus Manager, Nexus
Graham Finlay	-	Inspector, Northumbria Police
Julie Heathcote	-	Communications Officer, Sunderland Council
Cllr. Juliana Heron	-	Hetton Town Council
Emma Hindmarsh	-	Democratic Services Officer, Sunderland Council
Pauline Hopper	-	Area Officer, Sunderland Council
Jill Laverick	-	Communications Officer, Sunderland Council
Pam Lee	-	Public Health Specialist, Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust
Liz St.Louis	-	Head of Customer Service & Development, Sunderland Council
Helen Paterson	-	Strategic Director of Transformation and Area Lead Executive, Sunderland Council
Lee Wardle	-	Area Voluntary Community Services Representative
Jeff Wilkinson	-	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Juliette Johnson (Voluntary and Community Representative), Ann Owen (Voluntary and Community Representative) and Mike Shepherd, Houghton Kepier School.

Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked all those present to introduce themselves.

Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March, 2010

- i) With regard to the 3G camera system, Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, advised that following discussions with LMAPS a proposed review of the current system had been taken to the CCTV Steering Group with the proposal for the Coalfield Area to have the use of an additional camera. This would result in 4 fixed cameras and 1 floating camera if the Committee were agreeable to receive an application for £5,500 from SIB for a three year maintenance programme.
- ii) The Chairman advised that he had written to the Environment Agency with regard to the quality of the water supply pertaining to the landfill site at Houghton. The Chairman had received a response from the Environment Agency that day and proceeded to read an extract from the letter to the Committee which stated:-

“The BIFFA Annual Report, to which you refer, rightly makes reference to a localised water pollution issue at Houghton Quarry Landfill Site. Whilst we have some evidence that groundwater immediately adjacent to the site has become contaminated we are still in the process of investigating the possible sources and extent of this contamination. Until we have this additional information it would be inappropriate for us to comment further at this stage.

Meanwhile, action is being taken to remove the pollution and additional monitoring is in place to check that this is effective.

I appreciate the concerns being expressed in respect of potential risks to the local aquifer. I see that you have received direct reassurance from Northumbrian Water about the continuing high quality of their water supply to the public. We agree with their position that the water supply to homes in the area is not at risk from the site.

We would be pleased to update your committee on this matter and will be in touch again shortly to agree an appropriate time.”

The Chairman advised that he intended to invite the Environment Agency to a future committee meeting to provide an update on progress.

- (iii) Referring to the fifth paragraph on page 4 of the minutes, Councillor Rolph advised that she had specifically referred to the 71 and 35 bus services and not all early and late buses as was implied.

- (iv) Councillor J. Heron, Hetton Town Council advised that the minutes state that Hetton Downs would not be provided with a bus service, on the contrary Hetton Downs was well served, but the rest of Hetton was not.
 - (v) Ms. Hopper advised that she had met with Andrew Perkin to progress the support for local shopping areas priority.
 - (vi) With regard to Councillor Rolph's request for an update on plans for unadopted roads, Ms. Hopper advised that she had passed the Committee's concerns on to Dave Smith, Chief Executive and was awaiting a response from Mr. Odunaiya, Executive Director of City Services.
 - (vii) Ms. Hopper would contact Simon Smart, Restorative Justice Manager for a progress update on Herrington Burn litter removal. It was her understanding that the site was currently undergoing a health and safety risk assessment.
 - (viii) Councillor Speding congratulated the members of staff for the expediency with which the work had been carried out with regard to the improvement works in Shiney Row funded from SIP money.
1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 4th March, 2010 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the above amendments.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Coalfield Annual Report 2009/10

The Chief Executive submitted the Committee's annual report (copy circulated) providing for Members a focussed summary outlining the achievements delivered and influenced by the Area Committee under each of the thematic headings, as well as details of the meetings and governance of the Committee and a breakdown of how finances had been allocated throughout the year.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Co-ordinator, presented the report, reminding Members that this was the seventh and final meeting of the Committee this municipal year and that this report had been produced to allow the committee to reflect upon the work they had undertaken.

Councillor Ellis stated that Houghton was a town not a village. She advised that she would forward further comments on the report directly to Ms. Hopper.

Councillor A. Hall stated that the report revealed the amount of work the Committee had undertaken during the year. She was disappointed that the Committee had not fulfilled the commitment to hold the meetings in venues across the entire Coalfield area.

The Chairman advised that every effort would be made to hold meetings in venues across the area however some community venues had proved difficult to book in the past due to neighbourhood events taking place on an evening.

Councillor Rolph stated that the size of the Coalfields Area should be outlined on the introductory page and services should be considered on a geographical and not a population basis. She also advised that there was no mention of unadopted roads and the Prosperous theme did not mention support for local shopping areas.

Councillor Speding reiterated comments he had made at previous meetings that the report did not acknowledge that some children crossed ward boundaries to attend schools, for example, Houghton Kepier and Biddick and there needed to a way of gauging how these statistics could be broken down accordingly. It would be useful to ascertain how well Coalfield children were performing in one school compared to the other.

Ms. Hopper reminded the committee that Linda Brown had sent Members statistics relating to the above, however it was acknowledged that the information could be 'cut' differently to compare different pathways. Dr. Paterson, Area Executive Lead advised that this information could be provided in future.

Ms. Hopper also informed the Committee that it would be beneficial if Members could decide the type of statistics they would want to be presented with from the outset. She advised that it was difficult to obtain statistics from some departments.

Councillor Anderson queried the disappointing figures in Hetton for burglary dwelling contained within the report as it was her understanding that the figures had improved recently.

Inspector Finlay commented that he thought the figures made available to Ms. Hopper may be out of date as there had been a reduction in burglary this year.

Referring to the statistics in the report relating to attainment levels of 11 and 16 year olds across the wards, Councillor Rolph commented that the gender gap was hidden within them.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Hopper for her report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the Annual Report be received and noted and that the information be used to analyse and reflect on the work that has taken place throughout the past year and help to inform the June meeting as the Committee moves towards a new work plan.

Coalfield: Towards a New Work Plan

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which would begin the process of identifying work streams for the 2010/2011 year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Hopper advised that the workstreams identified by the Committee would be finalised into a new work plan for the coming year. She explained that the June meeting of the Committee would run as a workshop to decide on the work plan for the year and allow more focussed priorities to be set with very clear outcomes and objectives identified.

Councillor Rolph requested that heritage is included in the refreshed Local Area Plans.

In response to a question from Councillor Rolph regarding who had suggested 'Drugs Education and Enforcement' as a priority, Ms. Hopper advised that it was a result of consultation with partner organisations. Inspector Finlay informed the Committee that drugs were a significant problem in the Coalfield area and as such it may be an issue the committee choose to focus on.

Councillor Rolph felt that caution needed to be exercised in the use of Task and Finish Groups as people could end up being excluded from important pieces of work if they were unable to attend.

Members expressed concerns regarding paragraph 6.2 of the report which stated 'Recommendations in reports will be replaced with a list of options, along with key strengths and weaknesses against each option. Committee will be asked to discuss options, with all members (including partners and officers) asking questions, informing debate and agreeing the preferred option to implement.' This appeared to infer that elected members decision making authority would be diluted.

Ms. Hopper advised that the intention was to encourage discussion and not affect decision making powers.

Councillor Ellis advised that she had submitted a Councillor Call for Action request thirteen months ago which still had not been considered by the Committee.

Councillor Ellis stated that the effects of the Landfill site on health was an important consideration and the PCT should be invited to a future committee to speak on this issue.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Hopper for her report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the Committee agree to:-
 - Examine the Local Area Plan priorities and focus the efforts of the Committee on areas where they can make a real difference;
 - The principle of a limited number of priorities (suggest up to six), to include Responsive Local Services, to form the 2010/2011 work plan, which will be agreed at the June work plan meeting; and
 - Examine the governance processes to ensure they can deliver the Committee's programme and priorities.

Financial Statement and Funding Requests

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) in respect of the above matter which sought Committee approval for the following recommendations:-

- i) to reject SIB funding for Hylton Castle Battle Re-enactment;
- ii) to note the financial statement for Area Committee funding for 2009/10;

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Hopper presented the report and advised that the Hylton Castle Battle Re-enactment proposal had been recommended for rejection purely because it did not fit the Coalfield priorities.

Discussion ensued in relation to the application.

Councillor Anderson felt that the project was excellent and it afforded the Coalfield area the opportunity to have a stake in an event celebrating the history of the City.

Councillor Rolph stated that citywide projects needed to explain the benefits to all areas. The Hylton Castle project needed a broader scope and should describe a wider event programme based on heritage that would directly impact on other areas in the City. Accordingly she did not feel that the project fulfilled the agreed criteria.

Councillor Hall endorsed the recommendation to reject.

It was moved by Councillor Anderson and duly seconded to approve the application contrary to the recommendation as set out in the report.

With 9 Members voting in favour and 3 against, the motion was carried.

Ms. Hopper then proceeded to read out a letter from St. Aidan's Community Group who had previously been awarded £500 Community Chest funding as a contribution towards the lease agreement. With the agreement of the Committee, the Group were now requesting that the money is used as a contribution towards a planning permission application.

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the financial statement for 2009/10 be received and noted;
- ii) The following proposal for SIB funding is approved:-
 - Hylton Castle Battle Re-enactment, £3,000 with the condition that the Coalfield Area is considered as a location if the re-enactment is held next year.
- iii) Community Chest funding of £500 awarded to St Aidan's Community Group in November 2009 is now used as a contribution towards planning permission application.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) J. Scott,
Chairman.