

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 11TH APRIL, 2011 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors Bonallie, E. Gibson, Padgett, Tye, Wakefield and A. Wright

Also Present:-

Councillor Tate - Chair of Management Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Snowdon

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ball, Kelly, L. Walton and Wood

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee held on 14th March, 2011

Councillor Wakefield stated that with regard to the Draft Final Report he had not raised the Low Carbon City Villages as an issue; he had referred to his concerns regarding the chairmanship of the Attractive and Inclusive Delivery Partnership and that the Scrutiny Committee had not known where the information behind the Low Carbon City Villages had come from.

Councillor Bonallie asked that his apologies be included.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 14th March, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Bonallie's apologies and subject to the above amendment from Councillor Wakefield.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Sunderland 'the Place' Policy Review 2010/11: Final Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented to the Committee the final report for the Policy Review for 2010/11 into Sunderland 'the Place'.

(For Copy report – see original minutes)

Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised the Committee that this was the final draft copy of the report which would be forwarded to Cabinet should the Members agree the report.

The Chairman commented that this was an excellent report.

2. RESOLVED that the final report be agreed and be presented to Cabinet for approval.

Performance Report Quarter 3 (April – December 2010)

The Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of City Services presented a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with a performance update relating to the period April to December 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mike Lowe, Assistant Head of Performance Improvement, presented the performance report and advised that overall there had been a positive response from residents. Consultation was undertaken with the Community Spirit Panel and the top priorities identified were recycling and refuse collection; roads and footways; and clean streets. The performance report also covered planning and transport and road safety.

Councillor Wakefield commented that it was disappointing that there had been such a small number of respondents; he doubted the value of the report given the low response. Mr Lowe advised that the panel was made up of 1700 volunteers from around the city.

The Chairman stated that he felt the Community Spirit volunteers did excellent work. It was pleasing to see that residents felt that the Council was performing so well in a variety of areas. That 67 percent of people felt that waste services were improving was a fantastic response. It was good to see that the condition of the city's roads had been identified as a problem; the government had awarded £600,000 for repairs however at this stage it was not known whether further investment would be required. It was also highly pleasing to see that the number of people Killed or Seriously Injured on the roads had reduced.

3. RESOLVED that consideration be given to the performance report for quarter 3 of 2010/11.

Project Update: Street Lighting and Highway Signs PFI Contract

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the progress made on the Street Lighting and Highway Signs PFI and introduced the report of Aurora (Sunderland Streetlighting Limited), the Council's PFI partner.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Michael Curry, Assistant Contract Monitoring Officer, presented the report and introduced Phillip Jordan, Aurora General Manager, who would be presenting the report from Aurora.

Mr Curry advised that the contract was for 25 years and had moved from the initial phase which saw large investment in the replacement of lighting into the second phase which was focused on maintenance. He also advised the Committee of the six Performance Standards which were set out in the report. There were deductions made if any of the standards were not met, these deductions had been reducing and were at the lowest level they had ever been.

Councillor E. Gibson advised that there had been a lot of problems in Doxford where the regeneration work was being undertaken; issues had been rectified more quickly this year than in previous years.

Councillor Wakefield advised that there were a significant number of the lamps along the A690 at Houghton which were not operational. Mr Curry advised that on high speed roads there was a twice yearly programme of repair works and any repairs to street lighting was left until this time unless there was a serious or dangerous fault. If an entire section of lighting had failed then the programme of works would be rescheduled to enable the repairs to be completed quickly.

Councillor Wakefield then referred to the lamps which had been installed in Newbottle Conservation Area. Modern lighting columns had been installed outside of Grade 2 listed buildings and he felt that it would have been more appropriate to have installed period style lights which would have been more in keeping with the area. Mr Jordan agreed to look into this.

The Chairman commented that it was good to see that the issues with vandalism had reduced. The map contained in the report showed a hotspot for vandalism in Washington; this was an underpass at The Galleries which was known to have consistent issues. There should be a strategy implemented to deal with repeat problem sites; there were regular complaints regarding issues at this underpass. It was obvious that Aurora were doing good work as the deductions had been reducing significantly, a sign that they were meeting more of the required targets.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Waste Management and Recycling Update

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed the Committee of the position reached in the procurement of a PFI supported contract for the treatment of residual waste.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Peter High, Strategic Waste Project Director, presented the report and advised Members of the significant increase in recycling by residents. There had been 71.62 percent of municipal waste was consigned to landfill in 2009/10. The introduction of the new blue recycling bins had lead to increased recycling. There had also been a reduction in the amount of waste produced. There had not been any complaints from residents regarding the change to the new blue bins.

Councillor Wakefield commented that he felt that the blue bins had been a success. The waste disposal contract with Alex Smiles Ltd had resulted in a reduction in the amount of waste being sent to the landfill site at Houghton Quarry as the majority of the waste they handled was being sent to Gateshead to be autoclaved. He was however concerned about the reduction in the re-use of packaging materials; for example beer bottles which previously had been available in crates and were able to be reused while now they were destroyed after use.

Mr High stated that the decline in the pub trade and the overall reduction in the consumption of alcohol had lead to a reduction in the amount of bottles being recycled. The majority of the waste handled by Alex Smiles Ltd would not find its way to landfill however the recovery of waste in other ways was still in the early stages.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that there had been excellent reports from residents regarding the blue bins; there was less paper being recycled as a result of the reduction in the sales of newspapers. The information leaflet which was circulated to residents informing them of the introduction of the blue bins was excellent; it had been easy to understand and had educated residents as to what they could put in the blue bins.

The Chairman referred to the number of 'bring sites' throughout the city and asked whether there were any plans to review this.

Mr High stated that a number of the sites were at locations such as high-rise apartment blocks and schools and as such had restricted access. There was a need to review the number of containers available at each site to enable an increase in the recycling facilities available.

The Chairman then stated that there was a bring site located within his Ward which was regularly used and was well maintained. He felt that the sites needed to be reviewed as it was possible that there would be some sites which were underused and possibly not fit for purpose.

5. RESOLVED that consideration be given to the update on the measures being taken to improve recycling levels and the position reached with the PFI supported procurement of a strategic residual waste facility.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 April 2011 – 31 July 2011

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 April 2011 – 31 July 2011 which related to the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, presented the Forward Plan.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Lancaster for her report it was:

6. RESOLVED that the contents of the Forward Plan be noted.

Work Programme 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which attached for Members' information, the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2010-11 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, presented the work programme.

The Chairman commented that there had been a huge amount of work carried out by the Committee over the year. He thanked Members for all of their hard work over the course of the year and stated that he felt that spreading the workload over the course of the year had helped the Committee to achieve more.

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.