

At a meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held at the HETTON CENTRE, WELFARE ROAD, HETTON-LE-HOLE on THURSDAY, 6TH MARCH, 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Heron in the Chair

Councillors Anderson, Blackburn, Carthy, A. Hall, Lawson, Richardson, Rolph, Speding, Tate and Wakefield.

Apology for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor J. Scott.

Variation in the Order of Business

The Chairman proposed that the application for Strategic Initiatives Budget funding from the Hetton Lyons Youth Centre project included in item 9 on the agenda be considered following the receipt of declarations of interest as the contact from the project had another engagement that evening and needed to leave the meeting.

1. RESOLVED that the agenda be varied accordingly.

Declarations of Interest

Item 8 - Regeneration Issues Report : Feedback on Projects Previously Funded Through Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB)

Councillor Carthy declared a personal interest in the above report as Chairman of the Coalfield Forum.

Councillor Richardson declared a personal interest as a Member of the Management Committee of the Coalfield Forum.

Item 9 - Strategic Initiatives Budget : Regeneration Issues Report

Dubmire Environmental Community/Out of School/CAMHS Project

Councillor Richardson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application as a Council appointed Governor of the school and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

Monument View Extension Project

Councillors A. Hall and Speding declared personal interests in the above application as Members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Hetton School Security Improvements Project

Councillor Tate declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application as a Council appointed Governor of the school and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

EL-Gap Transport Project

Councillor Heron declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application as a volunteer on the project and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application. Councillor Tate took the Chair for this item of business.

Councillor Carthy declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Coalfield Forum.

Hetton Lyons Youth Centre Project

Councillor Heron declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application as Chairman of the Management Board of the Centre and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application. Councillor Tate took the Chair for this item of business.

Item 10 - Strategic Initiatives Budget : 2007/08 Ward Based Community Chest

Councillor Carthy declared a personal and prejudicial interest as Chairman of the Coalfield Forum.

Councillor Rolph declared a personal interest as a Council appointed Governor of Newbottle Primary School.

Councillors A. Hall and Speding declared personal interests as Members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Councillor Blackburn declared a personal interest as a Council appointed Governor of Easington Lane Primary School.

Councillor Tate declared a personal and prejudicial interest as his wife works as a lunch time supervisor at Easington Lane Primary school and he withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

Councillor Wakefield declared a personal interest as his grandson attends Newbottle Primary school.

Appointment of Chairman

The Chairman having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the next item of business it was necessary to appoint a Chairman and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that Councillor Tate be appointed Chairman for the following application for Strategic Initiatives Budget funding.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) : Regeneration Issues Report

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) outlining proposals for the allocation of SIB funding to support initiatives of benefit to the area.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Bill Blackett, former Area Regeneration Officer and recently appointed Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy Manager outlined the budgetary position to the Committee as detailed in paragraph 4 of the report. He introduced Ms. Nicol Trueman who had recently been appointed to the post of Area Regeneration Officer to the Committee. Mr. Blackett outlined the project and then proceeded to introduce Mr. Alan Watson an adviser from the Trustees who was in attendance to answer any questions Members might have.

Councillor Rolph commented that she felt that £15,000 for a feasibility study was relatively high and questioned whether it was appropriate to consider the application in this financial year as the funding was requested from the 2008/09 budget. Councillor Rolph drew attention to paragraph 1.3 of the SIB criteria concerning the need for exceptional circumstances to be established where applications were not for the current year.

Mr. Blackett advised that there were examples of SIB funding being awarded at a similar level and quoted a study in respect of Moorsley C.A. which was awarded £12,000 several years ago. He pointed out that the original application for the Hetton Lyons Youth Centre project had been submitted in January and was for £18,000 to carry out a feasibility study, however this had been reviewed and re-submitted for £15,000 which it felt would be sufficient to attract good consultants. The application had been submitted for the Committee to consider as to delay it until the next meeting in June would mean that the project had waited 6 months for a decision which he felt was unfair. He confirmed that if the SIB application had been submitted to the January meeting it would have been seeking an application for

funding from the 2007/2008 budget. He added that any unused SIB would be returned to budget.

Councillor Anderson referred to the condition of the current Hetton Lyons Youth Centre and stated that she had received complaints from residents.

Mr. Watson confirmed that the current Club building was not fit for youth provision and was to be demolished. It was intended that the feasibility study would look at alternative or new provision and the capital receipt from the sale of the land would be reinvested in youth provision in the area.

Mr. Blackett referred the Committee to the objectives of the feasibility study detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the application for SIB funding.

Full consideration having been given to the application; it was:-

3. RESOLVED that approval be given to the allocation of SIB funding from the 2008/09 budget of £15,000 to support the Hetton Lyons Youth Centre project.

Leader's Ward Visits – Feedback

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Symonds, gave a verbal presentation to the Committee on the findings of a programme of ward visits which he had undertaken with Ward Members.

He took Members through each of the four ward visits in turn, taking the opportunity to go through some of the issues that were discussed and providing further feedback for Members where possible.

Councillor Symonds thanked Ward Members for their invaluable input on the visits and hoped that they had found the visits and feedback informative and useful. Officers involved in the arranging and facilitating of the visits were also thanked for their involvement.

He hoped that the update demonstrated that Members' comments had been taken on board on the ward visits and reiterated that he felt real improvements to the quality of life in communities could be made by working together to identify and resolve issues of importance at a local level, adding that there were still a number of problems to resolve.

Councillor Anderson highlighted the problem of both the volume of and the speed of traffic using the B1284 road in Hetton where action was needed to push for a Hetton bypass.

The Leader commented that the Council needed to keep building the case for this.

Members of the Committee commented that the ward visits had proved to be a valuable exercise.

The Chairman, having thanked the Leader for attending the meeting and providing feedback, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the verbal feedback report be received and noted for information.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

(i) Northumbria Police Crime Statistics Relating to the Coalfield Area

Councillor Rolph advised she had undertaken a walkabout of the Houghton Ward which had been thorough and very useful.

Councillor Carthy commented that she had not undertaken a walkabout of her Ward and reiterated that she would like arrangements for this to be made.

(ii) Services to Help People Living at Home – December 2007

Councillor Rolph advised that a reply had not been received in relation to the enquiry she made to Ms. Pauline Blyth, Assistant Head of Service concerning services for those with a temporary disability and the shortest period of temporary disability to enable someone to qualify for assistance.

Mr. John Fisher, Head of Service (Adult Services) agreed to ensure a written response to the above enquiry was prepared and circulated to all Members of the Committee.

5. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 9th January, 2008 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Coalfield Forum – Executive Summary of the Meeting held on 30th October, 2007

An executive summary of the meeting of the Coalfield Forum held on 30th October, 2007 (copy circulated) was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the contents of the executive summary be received and noted.

Northumbria Police Crime Statistics Relating to the Coalfield Area

A copy of the crime statistics produced by Northumbria Police (copy circulated) showing all crime in the Coalfield Area from 2003 to date was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Community Inspector Dent advised Members that this would be his last Area Committee meeting. He referred Members to the statistics showing crime levels in the four years he had been working in the area and stated that he was proud of the success achieved to date in reducing crime in the area.

Community Inspector Dent highlighted to the Committee the significant initiatives undertaken during the four year period he had been there as follows:-

- the 4 Site CCTV scheme;
- the reduction in violent crime;
- the significant impact on tackling the supply of drugs as a result of operations where major recoveries had been made in the Easington Lane and Hetton areas in particular, which in turn had an impact on all crime;
- the introduction of E-Newsletters;
- the introduction of new Anti-Social Behaviour Orders;
- the introduction of Community Safety days; and
- the joint working with Durham Police Authority and other neighbouring Police forces.

Community Inspector Dent thanked everyone connected with the Area Committee for their support and commented that he would be sad to leave.

Councillor Lawson expressed his disappointment that Community Inspector Dent was leaving the Area Command adding that he went with such a testimony and that the reduction in crime in the area was a credit to him and his team. He had enjoyed working with Community Inspector Dent and on behalf of the Members of the Committee and the communities they serve thanked him for his work and wished him well for the future.

Community Inspector Dent advised that Sergeant Lisa Theaker who was already part of the Area Command, would be Acting Head for the time being and a full time replacement would be appointed in April/May 2008.

The Chairman expressed his best wishes to Community Inspector Dent and it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the crime statistics for the Coalfield Area 2003 to date be received and noted.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving Group held on 27th November, 2007 and 8th January, 2008

A copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) Group held on 27th November, 2007 and 8th January, 2008 (copies circulated), were submitted.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

Community Inspector Dent highlighted the action taken including costing for improved for CCTV to address issues with youths setting off fire alarms at the Sports Centre.

Councillor Tate referred to page 12 of the minutes of 27th November commenting that it had been proposed to remove seating to deter adults congregating in a certain area, whereas Hetton Town Council were looking at replacing seating. He suggested that the Police liaise with the Town Council on the issue.

Community Inspector Dent advised that it had been agreed not to remove the seating.

Councillor Hall commented that she found the notes useful however clarity as to what was related to each of the Wards would be of assistance.

Mr. Blackett, Anti Social Behaviour Strategy Manager advised that Officers were looking at providing an improved format for the information in order to meet Members' needs better.

Councillor Hall referred to page 6 of the minutes of the meeting on 27th November and suggested that the ward walkabout needed to be more inclusive and involve all Members.

Community Inspector Dent advised that he had suggested one walkabout per ward per year with himself, however walkabouts with the local Sergeant or Beat Manager could be arranged at any time.

Councillor Rolph commented on the need to have as up to date information as possible to the Area Committee meeting and referred to the LMAPS meeting held on 5th February.

Mr. Blackett advised that there was a delay in submitting the LMAPS minutes as each area had LMAPS meetings and the administrative staff needed time to produce the minutes. It was difficult to produce the minutes in the time available between the meeting and the agenda being produced for the Area Committee.

8. RESOLVED that the minutes of the LMAPS Group meetings held on 27th November, 2007 and 8th January, 2008 be received and noted.

Regeneration Issues Report : Feedback on Projects Previously Funded Through Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB)

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with information on the Coalfield Forum – Sustaining the Standard project which the Committee had previously funded through its SIB allocation.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Carthy as Chairman of the Forum provided the Committee with feedback on the project.

In response to Councillor Rolph, Councillor Carthy confirmed that there was an underspend on the project.

Mr. Blackett advised that any request to roll forward remaining funds due to end in September 2008 to the financial year 2008-2009 would need to be formally submitted to a future meeting for consideration by the Area Committee.

9. RESOLVED that the feedback on the Coalfield Forum – Sustaining the Standard project be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) : Regeneration Issues Report

The Committee proceeded to consider the remaining SIB applications namely:-

- (i) Dubmire Environmental Community/Out of School/CAMHs project;
- (ii) Monument View Extension project;
- (iii) Hetton School Security Improvements project;
- (iv) Connecting the Coalfield ILM Project2 Extension;
- (v) EL-Gap Transport project.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Connecting the Coalfield ILM Project2 Extension

Mr. Bill Stafford, Development Executive Into Work Community Projects Limited was present at the meeting. In response to Members' questions, he confirmed that the project recruited from Jobcentre Plus and that residents need to be living in the Hetton and Copthill Wards, that is, the wards that lie within the Urban II area.

Councillor Speding commented that he hoped the potential to roll out the project and recruit from the whole of the Coalfield could be investigated for the future.

Mr. Blackett commented that the area profile might help to identify other areas of deprivation where the money could be used.

Mr. Stafford confirmed that the three sites identified were guaranteed for improvement during the course of this project whereas focus had had to be given to a single site i.e. Hetton Lyons Country Park in the first project to match funding Urban II work which had improved the environment of the Park. He advised that this scheme was due to finish in March 2008.

Mr. Stafford added that whereas work had focused on one site others had benefited also. The Group was seeking an extension to the existing overall project as if they tried to develop a new scheme it would be out of time.

Councillor Rolph proposed that regular reports be submitted to the Area Committee to keep Members informed of where the work was being done and how it was progressing.

Councillor Hall endorsed the concerns expressed by Councillor Rolph in relation to the project and the need to receive regular information on where the improvement works were being carried out.

Mr. Blackett suggested that a progress report be submitted to the Area Committee at the October meeting in order to give the project sufficient time to undertake some environmental works in the areas identified.

The Chairman proposed that an interim report be submitted to the Committee in June which Members felt was appropriate.

EL-Gap Transport Project

Ms. Susan Brown, Project Manager was in attendance and in response to Councillor Rolph advised that future funding was being sought from other organisations such as Lloyds TSB, Nexus and Gentoo Housing Ltd. to ensure the project was able to continue.

Full consideration having been given to the projects, it was:-

10. RESOLVED that approval be given to:-

- (i) the allocation of SIB funding from the 2007/08 budget of £8,437 and £16,563 from the 2008/09 budget to support the Dubmire Environmental Community/Out of School/CAMHS project;
- (ii) the allocation of SIB funding from the 2007/08 budget of £13,000 and £4,816 from the 2008/09 budget to support the Monument View Extension project;
- (iii) the allocation of SIB funding from the 2007/08 budget of £6,000 and £16,983 from the 2008/09 budget to support the Hetton School Security Improvements project;
- (iv) the allocation of SIB funding of £8,005 from the 2008/09 budget to support the Connecting the Coalfield ILM Project2 Extension; and
- (v) the allocation of SIB funding of £14,033 from the 2008/09 budget to support the EL-Gap Transport project.

Strategic Initiatives Budget : 2007/08 Ward Based Community Chest

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report together with an annex to the report (copies circulated) bringing forward 30 proposals relating to the 2007/08 Community Chest scheme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members of the Committee requested that their thanks and appreciation be recorded to Mrs. Cath Morrow, Policy Support Officer (Community Chest) for the work undertaken in turning around applications for Community Chest for inclusion in the reports for consideration by the Area Committee that evening.

11. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 30 proposals recommended for support from the 2007/08 Community Chest with a total value of £16,256 as detailed in Annexes 1 and 1A to the report.

Sunderland's 15 Year Commissioning Framework for Adult Social Care

Mr. John Fisher, Head of Service (Adult Services) provided the Committee with a comprehensive presentation on Sunderland's draft 15 Year Commissioning Framework for Adult Social Care, detailing the case for change, the challenges to be faced and future delivery arrangements.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Fisher advised the Committee that the Strategy set out a comprehensive vision and approach to deliver services to meet the projected changing needs of Sunderland's population over the next 15 years. He highlighted the key aims of the framework as follows:-

- to empower people to identify, choose and control the support or care they need to live as they want;
- for every person to have the support to live independently in their own home and community;
- to work with partners to improve access to services and opportunities for all sections of the community, in order that people lead fulfilling lives;
- to enable people to access a range of early and preventative interventions that prevent or delay decreasing independence; and
- to deliver outcome-based commissioning that provides people with the services they value most, alongside ensuring that they are cost effective.

The 15 year vision into reality would be achieved through the development of a series of 3 year delivery plans, setting out projects that would meet the aims and linking the framework to the Local Area Agreement planning cycle. With regard to the identification of resources, Mr. Fisher advised that funding had now been secured for the extra care housing scheme in Hetton. The first scheme at Leonard House was underway and the third scheme was to be located at Woodlands in Washington.

Mr. Fisher advised the Committee that Sunderland was now one of only two Authorities in England that continued to provide services to all assessed individuals throughout the Fair Access to Care Services (FACS), reflecting Members' commitment to support the needs of as many vulnerable people as possible. This contained four bands and what's more it was anticipated that the other Council, which was Calderdale would be making an announcement in the near future that it was moving to three bands also.

Members' welcomed the report and the news that Sunderland was able to continue to support four bands and that it was likely that it would be the only Authority in the near future to be doing so. They were pleased to hear of the progress of the extra care housing programme. In relation to the Direct Payments Scheme, Members' were keen to have full details of how this worked and Mr. Fisher undertook to circulate information on the scheme to all Members of the Committee.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Blackburn, Mr. Fisher advised that properties in the extra care housing schemes were available to rent, were for sale or part sale on a 50%, 25% and 25% basis respectively to be balanced over the network of the three developments.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Fisher for the presentation; it was:-

12. RESOLVED that the contents of the presentation and the information brought out in the discussion be noted. Further that a copy of the presentation and information on the Direct Payments Scheme be circulated to all Members of the Committee as requested.

Community Legal Advice

Mr. Chris Purvis, Customer Supervisor gave a verbal presentation on the work of the Commission and was accompanied by Ms. Sarah Lane also from the Legal Services Commission (LSC).

Mr. Purvis advised that Community Legal Advice was a free and confidential advice service paid for by legal aid. Through Ward Councillors it was hoped that information, advice and legal help could reach those people who were primarily vulnerable and socially excluded and connect with community groups providing specialist legal advice on debt, education, employment, housing and welfare benefits/tax credits law. Specialist legal advice was available on a Community Legal Advice Helpline Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. Any caller that was found not to be financially eligible to use the service was offered other forms of help

by the operator service. Advice had been provided to 50,000 calls to the Service. The LSC also had a website and received in excess of 250,000 hits on this per month.

In response to Councillor Tate, Mr. Purvis advised that the LSC was working with the Council and advice services were aware of the service they provided.

Mr. Purvis advised that Community Legal Advice provided a series of 24 free leaflets providing advice on key areas of law and copies of the leaflets were available for Members to take at the conclusion of the meeting. There was also an opportunity for Members to speak with himself and Ms. Lane in relation to any questions they might have.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Purvis and Ms. Lane for their attendance and it was:-

13. RESOLVED that the information on the work of the Legal Services Commission be received and noted.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit Progress Report

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing of the performance of the Benefits Section in the processing of new claims in accordance with the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI78a) for Housing and Council Tax Benefit covering the period 1st April, 2007 to 31st January, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Steve Atkinson, Benefits Manager briefed the Committee on the report. He advised that the annual Council Tax billing was underway at the moment and benefit publicity was being included with the bills. He referred the Area Committee to the further publicity being undertaken detailed at paragraph 3.2 of the report.

Mr. Atkinson highlighted the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the major changes associated with it. He felt that the rates of benefit were likely to go up which was good news for those needing help with their rent. The implementation date for the LHA was 7th April, 2008.

Councillor Hall referred to LHA Regulations which stipulate that the benefit entitlement would be paid to the tenant and not the landlord. She enquired what safeguards were in place to protect tenants being bullied by landlords to get the benefit entitlement paid directly to them. She stated that she was concerned as most vulnerable people had problems with rent etc.

Mr. Atkinson advised that the Government had recognised there was a problem re. absent landlords. He advised that from a pilot of 18 Authorities 84% of tenants were successfully managing the LHA. The City Treasurer had given Officers direction on how to deal with vulnerable cases and evidence was being asked for as to why the allowance should be paid direct to the landlord. It was therefore to be paid to the tenant unless there was a real good reason not to do so.

14. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Development of Local Area Plans

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an update on the development of Local Area Plans.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Bill Blackett introduced the report and emphasised that the Local Area Plans were to be used in conjunction with the Sunderland Strategy and Local Area Agreement. The profiles had been aligned to the five key themes in the Sunderland Strategy i.e. prosperous, learning, safe, healthy and attractive and inclusive. The profiles were subject to further change based on additional information becoming available from partners etc.

Mr. Blackett added that wider consultation was planned to occur in the community with residents and community groups to provide the City with a community context in relation to the overall City priorities.

The Local Area Plans would impact on the allocations of SIB ensuring that resources were allocated based on the local area priorities identified for action. The ultimate ambition was to address community priorities, at the same time as effectively engaging with partners. To ensure that Members were kept up to date with developments, it was proposed to have this as a regular item on the Area Committee agenda.

Mr. Blackett pointed out that information such as, the Coalfield Area was the only area without a hospital or primary care centre, would be included in the area profile, together with information as to the number of unadopted roads and he invited Members to submit any further suggestions for inclusion or amendments to Ms. Nichol Trueman, Area Regeneration Officer for the Coalfield Area.

The Chairman on behalf of the Members, both past and present of the Area Committee, thanked Mr. Blackett for the five years of service he had given and the commitment he had shown to the regeneration of the Coalfield Area.

15. RESOLVED that the report and area profile be received and noted.

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

(Signed) R. HERON,
Chairman.

R.D. TATE,
Chairman.