

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY 18 OCTOBER 2010 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

POVERTY OF PLACE VISIT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP5 ATTRACTIVE AND INCLUSIVE CITY

**CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services,
CIO4: Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City'.**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide feedback to the Committee on a recent visit undertaken by this Committee, along with members from the Community and Safer City and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committees.

2. Background

- 2.1 Members of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee were invited to accompany the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee on a joint site visit to areas where poverty of place is evident, following reports that were presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the October 2009 and July 2010.

3. Feedback from visit

- 3.1 On 27 July 2010 members undertook the site visit. The purpose of the visit was to consider areas where poverty of place was currently having an adverse impact and an area where environmental work has had a positive impact upon community cohesion.
- 3.2 Members visited the Swan Street Centre, Southwick Health and Community Forum, Waterloo Court Flats and Peat Carr.
- 3.3 The Swan Street Centre is situated in between the areas of Southwick, Marley Potts, Fulwell and Seaburn. Members were informed that a range of community activities are provided by the centre and staff consult as often as possible with the community to identify residents needs and develop services they want. One of the biggest problems in the area is the level of apathy within the community which makes it difficult to engage. Staff from the centre feel that there is a need to talk to people in the community, to reinvigorate them and help to raise their self-esteem and aspirations.
- 3.4 Members met a group of volunteers from the Southwick Health and Community forum. The forum carries out a number of community based activities such as raising money through fun days and mother and toddler groups. The volunteers feel that the work they do engenders lots of community spirit in an area that they believe is sometimes neglected.

- 3.5 There are a number of shops in Southwick Road that are shuttered, due to being permanently closed or takeaway outlets which are open only at night, which can have a negative impact on the area. The Kwik Save supermarket closed down a number of years ago which residents feel was of great loss to the community. The group of volunteers felt that a supermarket would vastly improve the area.
- 3.6 The group informed Members that residents are proud of where they live and feel that some things (including housing provision) have greatly improved in a number of areas.
- 3.7 Members took a self-guided tour around the Waterloo Court Flats in Sulgrave, Washington. It was observed that some of the buildings were not well maintained externally, with many of the outer aesthetics in poor condition. Members talked to the occupiers of one of the flats about quality of life in the neighbourhood. There was a communal grassed area in the centre of the courtyard that was slightly untidy and not being used at all. Although the flats are part of a gated community, which often helps to make people feel safer, the gates were considered to be unattractive and depressing.
- 3.8 Members met representatives from Groundwork North East and Gentoo who have been working in partnership on a Community Philosophy project in the Peat Carr area, which aims to address the issue of the non-use of green spaces by local residents through philosophical enquiry. Members visited a large grassed area, rarely used by the community, adjacent to some residential streets.
- 3.9 A representative from Groundwork explained there were problems in engaging people with the project. An event had been organised one weekend to engage with the community however after advertising and door-to-door visits there was still very poor attendance.
- 3.10 Members talked to some local residents and discovered there was also an issue of anti-social behaviour from youths at night and the use of motorbikes across the grass.

4 Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are requested to note the report and those members who were in attendance are invited to share their views.

5. Background Papers

Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee Papers October 2009 and July 2010

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