

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 13TH DECEMBER, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Bonallie, E. Gibson, Padgett, Wakefield, Wood and A. Wright

Also Present:-

Councillor Tate - Chair of Management Scrutiny Committee

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Kelly, Tye and L. Walton.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee held on 15th November, 2010

Councillor Ball asked that her apologies be recorded for the meeting.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 15th November, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Ball's apologies.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Sunderland 'The Place' Policy Review 2010/11: Progress Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of the progress on the Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review for 2010/11 into Sunderland 'the Place'.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Helen Lancaster, Acting Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised Members of the evidence gathering activities which would be taking place and provided feedback from the previous activities.

The Chairman commented that the meeting with Sharon Hodgson MP was an excellent opportunity and he asked Members to confirm whether they would be attending.

Councillors Ball, Bonallie, E. Gibson, Padgett, A. Wright and Wood all indicated their intent to attend this meeting.

Councillor A. Wright commented on the visit to the university; he was impressed by the students he had met on this visit. They had provided good, insightful responses to the questions asked. The students had felt that a lack of signposting prevented the city from being a 'University City', improved signage would help to improve the university's presence in the city in addition to making it easier for people to get to the university.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that the university was developing a public space which would be accessible by all; she hoped that members of the public would use these public facilities.

The Chairman thanked the Members who had attended the visit to the University for their attendance; especially considering the extreme weather conditions which had made travelling difficult.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that the dates of the forthcoming evidence gathering activities be noted.

Sunderland 'The Place' Policy Review 2010/11: The Partnership Approach to Sunderland 'The Place'

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to receive a presentation on the work of the Attractive and Inclusive City Delivery Partnership.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Sam Palombella, Chair of the Attractive and Inclusive City Delivery Partnership, and Sal Buckler, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, presented the report. Mr Palombella delivered the presentation and advised Members of the membership of the partnership, which included local organisations and Council departments. The group had a broad remit which brought together a number of areas including: Street Scene; Housing; Heritage; Community; Environment; and Transport.

He referred to the work of the partnership to improve the identity of the city and resident's sense of place by using the 'Legible City' approach and by working to improve green spaces and the green infrastructure.

Mr Palombella also advised that the broad remit of the place shaping agenda could lead to problems as there was no single representative who could take the lead for the whole agenda.

The Chairman asked for examples of the benefits of information sharing and joined up working.

Mr Palombella stated that there was a better understanding of what different organisations do and it has allowed the different agencies to work together.

Ms Buckler added that in Pennywell there had been value added to the existing community facilities such as those at Academy 360 and there had been a reduction in the duplication of services.

There had been funding awarded to help people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) as a result of this partnership approach.

The Chairman then queried the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Mr Palombella stated that the strategy would identify green routes such as bridleways and footpaths and would give people the opportunity to travel without needing to use the car. The strategy would look at the wider picture when planning routes so that the rights of way would lead to destinations which people wanted to access. Street trees helped to improve the appearance of areas and increased the amount of time and money people were willing to spend within the area.

The Chairman asked whether a copy of this strategy could be provided.

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, advised that the strategy would be submitted to Cabinet in February, and would be presented to the Committee.

Councillor A. Wright queried how the recognition of Sunderland outside of the city would be affected by the partnership.

Mr Palombella advised that the partnership included Nexus who operated across the wider region and the college and university attracted students from outside of the city. Student experiences were important; there was a need to encourage people stay in the city or leave with good memories which would lead to them returning to the city. The Delivery Partnership had also received a presentation from Dr Gillian Cookson, an expert on the Heritage Quarter centred on the Docks and she had visited the city. There was a need to look at peoples perceptions of the city.

Ms Buckler added that members of the partnership had been invited to regional and national meetings and conferences.

Ms Buckler also advised of the Community Philosophy Project in Moorsley Peat Carr, one of the outlying villages within the city. Following this piece of work the neighbouring village, Pitington in County Durham had wanted to become involved with the project.

The Chairman thanked Mr Palombella and Ms Buckler for their presentation and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the presentation be given consideration as part of the Policy Review for 2010/11.

Committee Expenditure in Support of Policy Review, Sunderland 'the Place'

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed the committee to consider expenditure in support of the Policy Review for 2010/11 into Sunderland 'the Place'.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Helen Lancaster, Acting Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised that the Community Spirit Consultation would cost approximately £2156 and that cost would include 1600 letters being sent along with focus groups being held.

There would also be an International Profile Event and a donation of £30 had been requested to hire the new Community Cohesion Building in Sunnyside.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and the proposed expenditure be given consideration.

Performance Report Quarter 2 (April – September 2010)

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with the performance update relating to the period April to September, 2010. The report included:-

- Progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators
- Progress in relation to the Traffic Issues Policy Review, 20mph zones Policy Review and Allotment Provisions Policy Review
Recommendations
- Results of the annual MORI residents survey which took place during May to July 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mike Lowe, Assistant Head of Performance Improvement, presented the report and advised Members that this was the first time the results of the MORI survey had been included on the performance report.

There had been an increase in satisfaction with recycling which was linked to the introduction of the new blue recycling bins across the city.

There had been an increase in dissatisfaction levels with regard to road maintenance which was linked to the harsh winter conditions which had been experienced last year; the result had been an increase in the number of potholes and other defects on the city's roads.

Councillor Padgett queried how many people had been surveyed as part of the MORI survey.

Mr Lowe confirmed that there had been 1215 residents surveyed and the residents surveyed were of a geographic and demographic spread which was representative of the whole city.

Councillor A. Wright commented that there had been a significant problem with potholes before last winter; recently there had been significant expenditure to tackle the problem however it was still a longstanding issue.

Councillor Wood queried the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. The figures provided seemed to be contradictory. He also commented on the number of bus passenger journeys, the target seemed to be extremely low compared with the actual figures.

Councillor Wood then expressed concerns over the increase in the number of children travelling to school by car; there were school travel plans in place to encourage the use of other forms of transport to get to school and it was disappointing to see that the figures were still so far away from the target. He also expressed concerns over how large a reduction there had been in children using public transport to get to school.

Mr Lowes advised that there had been an increase in the number of children killed or seriously injured from 11 last year to 15; this was more than the target of 13 and as such the target for the year had not been achieved. He did not have the information available to respond to Councillor Wood's other queries and agreed to provide the information directly to Councillor Wood outside of the meeting.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that the severe winter conditions had caused problems with regards to road maintenance. There had been additional budget provided to fund the repairs however with another harsh winter expected this year there were concerns that there would not be any money available for extra funding to be provided for road maintenance.

Les Clark, Head of Street Scene, advised that the budget for road maintenance came from the Revenue and Capital Budgets along with additional funding of £400,000 which had been secured by this committee. At present the detail of the repairs required and the budget available for these repairs was not known.

Councillor Wakefield expressed his concerns over the condition of some of the roads in the city, the main road in Newbottle was in a poor condition however when the road had been surveyed it had been classified as being in an acceptable condition; he felt that it was not cost effective to leave these cheaper repairs until more damage was done and major, expensive repairs were then needed.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lowe for his report and accordingly it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the good progress made be noted and consideration be given to the areas requiring further development.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 December 2010 – 31 March 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 December 2010 – 31 March 2011 which related to the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Sarah Abernethy, Acting Assistant Scrutiny Officer presented the Forward Plan.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Abernethy 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.

Sarah Abernethy, Acting Assistant Scrutiny Officer presented the work programme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

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.