

At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 13th DECEMBER, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor S. Watson in the Chair

Councillors Errington, T. Foster, Howe, Kay, McClennan, Porthouse, Rolph and Smiles

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Wakefield

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 25th October, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th October, 2011 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendments as outlined.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity Policy Review 2011/12 : Progress Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of progress on the Committee's policy review for 2011/12 into building a sustainable and lasting legacy in sport and physical activity.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising Members of the progress to date in relation to the Committee's policy review for 2011/12 into building a sustainable and lasting legacy in sport and physical activity.

Having considered the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- the content of the information provided within the report be received and noted; and
- the approach to evidence gathering in order to meet the aims and terms of reference of the policy review be agreed.

Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity Policy Review 2011/12 : Use of Schools in the Provision of Sport and Physical Activity

The Chief Executive and Executive Director of City Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided information to the Committee in relation to the use of schools beyond the school day in the provision of sport and physical activity.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that Mr. Mike Foster, Deputy Executive Director Children's Services, Ms. Victoria French, Assistant Head of Community Services, Ms. Helen Elderkin and Ms. Vicki Smith, Communities Director Redhouse Academy and Ms. Trish Stoker, Head Teacher at Southwick Primary School had been invited to attend the Committee to give evidence and answer any questions in relation to community access to schools for the provision of sport and physical activity.

Ms. Elderkin informed the Committee that Redhouse Academy currently offered 35 different activities to the community out of the usual school hours and circulated a list outlining what was on offer, which age ranges they were aimed at and an approximate number of participants, which totalled over 400 participants. The Academy tried to offer sports and activities and link those in with support towards promoting healthier lifestyles for families.

Ms. Stoker referred to Southwick Primary School, advising Members that as a new build school a lot of planning had gone into the initial design of the building, which now housed a dance studio, sports hall, IT suite, etc. which were accessible by the community. She informed Members that the school was open every evening until 8:00pm offering different activities to help promote community activity but there was the potential to develop it further.

Ms. Stoker commented that it was around making a balance of the activities that were accessible to communities and the affordability of them. The possibility of linking schools and working in partnerships to look at the demands of residents in the city to see where they could be met would be key and schools could be the obvious solution in many cases.

Councillor McClennan referred to the circulated spreadsheet and commented that around nine activities were provided for participants who may not be pupils of the school such as Zumba and asked how these groups were funded and then charged for the use of the facilities. Ms. Smith took Zumba as an example and explained that it was self funded. Participants were charged a cost to take part and Sunderland Dance Group took the class. The fee paid by participants covered the cost of the

room hire and as the building was already staffed at the hours the classes took place there were no extra charges for caretakers, etc.

Councillor McClennan referred to the list of schools within the report that provided community access and commented that Valley Road Primary School was not included but that this may be due to it being funded by Back on the Map, Ms. Lancaster agreed to get further information on this for Members.

Councillor Foster also sought clarification with regards to the list as it included Castle View Primary and this would either be Castle View Academy or Hylton Castle or Castletown Primary Schools. Ms. French agreed to go back and correct this and advise Members of which school it was.

Councillor Rolph commented that you could hear the enthusiasm from the attendees and it was encouraging to hear but commented that she would have also liked to hear from those schools that weren't opening to the community and question if the barriers were so insurmountable. She asked if existing provision was adequate and how recently the list included in the report had been revisited and monitored.

Ms. French advised that they picked up on need for further provision through ongoing consultation to understand what activities residents would like to take part in, given the chance and where and when they would want to go. If it was felt that a school was the best facility to hold the activity then Officers could work with them to overcome any barriers for groups to gain access. Presently there was a lot of provision for communities to access activities through schools but other schools in the city needed to follow the trend and get on board with becoming community facilities, where possible.

Councillor Rolph referred to Academies and the worry that any new Academies may have a different approach to community facilities and create competition between local authority facilities and their own and asked if any thought had been put into how this could be addressed if it was an issue. Mr. Foster confirmed that new Academies would be untried territory and that consultations with them so far, for the small number of schools that had enquired about becoming academies, had shown that they recognised the essential need for continuing to develop community involvement and engagement. He did agree that they would be an organisation in its own right and therefore set their own charges which the local authority would have no control over.

With regards to the appendix Councillor Rolph also highlighted schools that were missed off the list, Newbottle Primary which had a community room and Burnside Primary which had received SIB funding towards building a community room. Ms. French advised that those schools may not be included due to the funding streams they have accessed but she would look into this further.

Councillor Kaye commented that trends changed over time and there was a need to ensure that provision was timely and current so communities could continue to make the best of what was available to them.

He also asked if a centralised database of what was on offer was available so Members could use it in to encourage communities to use them, he referred to the

list within the report stating that he found it highly unlikely that there were only two schools providing activities in the East Sunderland Area. Ms. French advised that the report was primarily looking at those activities who had received with community access and a further audit of provisions would help in capturing further information on what was available throughout the city.

Ms. French commented that the attention was now around finding better pathways for communities into what was available within schools. Ms. Elderkin commented that the Academy were always looking to consult with partners and attendees of activities to ensure they were offering activities that were wanted in the community. An example of this was a new Bokwa class that was being arranged which was the newest fitness craze about to hit the market.

Ms. Stoker agreed that her school also focussed on providing very local access to provide sustainable activities. She commented that it did take a lot of effort and if they were to take place after 6:00pm they could incur higher costs so it was looking at how to link other providers in the city with schools to ensure schools were not burdened and struggling to cope individually.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their informative presentation, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the presentation from representatives of Redhouse Academy and Southwick Primary School be received and noted and included towards the evidence gathering on the Committee's policy review topic for 2011/12.

Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity Policy Review 2011/12 : Sunderland in 2012

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update to the Committee in relation to Sunderland in 2012 and contributed towards the evidence for the policy review into building a sustainable and lasting legacy in sport and physical activity.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Victoria French, Assistant Head of Community Services, presented the report advising that a presentation had been given to each of the Area Committees inviting Members to help inform and shape the content of the Sunderland in 2012 programme to ensure opportunities and activities were relevant to the communities within each area.

Councillor Rolph asked if the Officers had found different approaches being offered from the different Area Committees and was informed that the discussions with each area had proved very useful. She explained that some funding had been allocated from the Committee's budgets as a contribution towards the programme in their area which would provide a mixture of opportunities for residents to engage with the programme, having taken on board Members comments and suggestions as to what would be most fitting for their area.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her report, and it was :-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and information set out in the report be included as evidence for the policy review into building a sustainable and lasting legacy in sport and physical activity.

Performance Report Quarters 1 & 2 (April – September 2011)

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with a performance update for the period April to September, 2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Mike Lowe, Head of Performance Improvement, presented the report advising that in October 2010 the Government announced that from April 2011 there would no longer be a requirement for Council's to produce an LAA. It was explained that for 2011/12 the Council's aim was that in future performance reporting would be focused on the key priorities for the people, place and economy of Sunderland and would continue to be a robust appraisal of the situation resulting in actions.

Councillor Porthouse sought clarification around the sport and leisure performance indicators asking if visits to leisure centres were at 1.1 million and the number of swims was down to 323,000, how was the population of the city volunteering in sport and active recreation for at least one hour per week was up from 4.94% to 7.20%. Mr. Lowe commented that he did not have this information available at the meeting but would ensure that it was provided to the Committee.

Councillor Rolph commented that the performance indicators with regards to Housing were disappointing but stated that it didn't include performance on empty properties being brought back into use, which was quite positive and felt that it would be interesting to measure and monitor these figures on a regular basis. Mr. Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, commented that the national trend was also disappointing and it was important for the Council to show what they were proposing to address the issues, and to look more outward to how to work with developers. He advised that the introduction of the Housing Developer's Forum allowed them to talk about the housing market and proposed and ongoing developments in the city but added that there was a need to facilitate things better.

With regards to Government initiatives, Mr. Caddick advised that they were laying the foundations for a national housing strategy with a number of initiatives coming forward from that and developments from them would help in getting the Council's relationship with housing developers on a positive footing. He explained that he would continue to meet with them and invited any Member of the Committee who may to attend to contact him directly.

In relation to the empty properties, Mr. Caddick confirmed that they were doing very well in bringing them back into use and advised that a separate report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee giving the overall picture.

Councillor Rolph thanked Mr. Caddick for his informative response and asked that the statistic on empty properties be included in future reports as it was a very high profile topic and should be monitored.

In response to comments from Councillor Rolph regarding Sunderland kicking the nation trend of a severe decline of 16-19 year olds being involved in sport and activities, Mr. Lowe advised that he did not have the level of knowledge to answer the question but was aware that Sunderland were going against the trend. He explained that the service were hopeful that the information gathered through Active Sunderland in quarter 3 would continue to confirm this.

Councillor Rolph referred to indicators under the Community Cohesion heading such as the percentage of local authority employees from minority ethnic communities and commented that it would also be appropriate to provide similar data for people with disabilities, and if this was not recorded at present then it should be in future. Mr. Lowe commented that he would forward the Councillor's comments on to the Human Resources to ensure it was reported in future reports.

Having answered Members questions, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the findings within the report, including areas of good progress made by the Council and areas that need further improvement, be received and noted.

Change in Order of Business

At this juncture, the Chairman proposed that Item 8 – The Conservation of Built Heritage Assets in the City and Item 9 – History and Heritage Update 2010/11 be considered together as they were so closely linked.

The Conservation of Built Heritage Assets in the City and History and Heritage Update 2010/11

The Chief Executive and Executive Director of City Services submitted reports (copies circulated) which provided an update on progress in respect of the work being undertaken by the Planning Service to protect and enhance the city's built heritage and also updated Members on the work ongoing within City Services with regard to the Heritage offer across the city.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Rolph commented that she understood the teams were under a structure review and was keen to know how the heritage roles would be reflected in future resources. Mr. Lowe advised that the Conservation Team would be leaving the planning service, with the further detail being set out in paragraph 3.2.1. of the report, but in short the team would be joining with the Countryside Team to form a Heritage Protection Team. Once the new structure for the planning service was in place a future work programme would be agreed.

Mr. Dan Hattle, Interim Deputy Manager, explained that the new structure would take in staff from planning and regeneration and urban design and would involve the team working more flexibly across all roles involved in the planning service, picking up capacity elsewhere and continuing to provide the services they already do. He advised that the focus would be on the statutory responsibilities of the service, including built heritage but there was scope available to address any issues or areas if needed.

Councillor Rolph commented that this was alarming news, particularly at a time when heritage was of a growing interest and concern to residents and asked if there was a heritage led regeneration project then would the opportunity to build up the resource if needed be available and she was advised it would be.

In response to a query regarding Heritage in Sunderland, Mr. Lowe advised that he did try to attend the meetings and feed into the forum, and coordination between the two departments on the area needed to continue. With regards to the Heritage Strategy development, Mr. Lowe advised that it was Ms. Medhurst's team that took the lead but he fed into it through the Heritage in Sunderland and regular informal meetings to ensure they could be confident that that coordinated citywide approach continued.

Councillor Rolph asked how additions could be made to the list of heritage sites within the city and if the community could propose additions to the national register for historic parks and gardens. Mr. Lowe advised that any party were able to suggest sites to English Heritage and the asset would then be considered. All information was downloadable from their website and the application form requested more information to justify the site's significance for being considered. He explained that ideally a statement from either residents or conservation groups should be included to allow English Heritage to then assess and appraise the site.

She also asked what the development vision for the heritage role of the Committee and Elected Members was intended to be for the future and was advised by Ms. Medhurst that a lot of work had been undertaken through each of the Area Committees to consult with Members around heritage in their areas. Both the North Sunderland and Coalfields Area Committees had agreed to form individual action plans to address heritage in their areas and initial discussions had been held as to how to take forward actions from these in conjunction with the Heritage in Sunderland group.

In response to a query from Councillor Rolph regarding the management of Fulwell Mill, Ms. Medhurst advised that they had been in negotiations with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums some years ago around their management of the site but that this had halted due to costs and a change in the portfolio holder. At present a review of culture and heritage was being undertaken which was looking at how best to continue to provide services and as developments were made she would inform Members.

Councillor Howe referred to the CAMS programme covering a large area and asked if the Fulwell Mill site was included as part of this. Mr. Lowe informed Members that the CAMS were concerned with conservation areas in built up areas such as Victorian suburbs or village gardens. He went on to say Fulwell Mill was a listed site

but the area surrounding it was not of built heritage significance and was more of a natural heritage site. He agreed to provide more detailed information to Members outside of the meeting.

The Chairman having thanked the Officers for their reports, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the information contained within reports be received and noted and further updates regarding Heritage in Sunderland be submitted to future meetings of the Committee as appropriate.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to brief the Committee on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in relation to Homelessness, Hostels, Rough Sleeping and Migration.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, presented the report advising that in response to a number of issues surrounding hostels within the city the Committee had requested a detailed report outlining the strategy for the city going forward in respect of this issue. He explained that the context and proposed approach to the hostels was now contained with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which forms part of a wider comprehensive JSNA covering a range of topic areas.

Councillor McClennan congratulated Mr. Caddick on the depth of the report and commented that she had a number of significant questions and concerns to be raised, she was aware that they may not all be able to answered at this meeting and listed them for further information as such, referring to the paragraphs as set out in the report:-

- 2.9, 2.10, 2.11 – rough sleeping, and in particular the incident in Mowbray Park whereby the lights were left on by organisers as part of the Christmas displays;
- 3.3 – significant concerns over hostel provision and support services and the implications for the ward;
- 4.2 – two additional hostels , one in the East Sunderland area, creating a 'Catch 22' situation and increasing concerns from residents in the area, any increase in hostels in the area is strongly opposed;
- 5.1-5.4 – Ex armed forces personnel are identified as an emerging significant issue with the threat of homelessness;
- 5.10 – 14 hostels/support housing units in Sunderland and it is a significant concern in protecting the City for investment from business, particularly in the Sunnside area;
- 5.21 – figure for asylum seekers in the city is 170, where are these populated and the impacts on the direction of the policy and strategy;
- 6.5 – only the country of origin for migration and asylum seekers families was recorded, what were the figures for single households and was there similarities between the two sets of data:

- 6.7 – failed asylum seekers, what was being done to capture statistics on where individuals were in the city and how many were there;
- 7.3 – 87% of the bed spaces for hostels and supported housing were in the Hendon ward which was a real concern for Ward Members;
- 12.5 – refers to the development of two further projects, would these be in addition to the need identified in paragraph 4.2 of the report and where was it proposed to place them.

In closing Councillor McClennan commented that she would be unable to totally approve the JSNA with insufficient detail and that she could not support future developments until further information on their location, etc could be considered.

The Chairman highlighted that a number of the issues raised by Councillor McClennan were obviously very Ward specific and asked that Mr. Caddick meet with her outside of the meeting to discuss all of those issues as raised.

Councillor Kay referred to paragraph 7.3 of the report and the total of 407 bed spaces in the city, asking if the reopened building at North Bridge Street was included in this. Mr. Caddick advised that the provision there was being rebadged as a different type of accommodation and was not included but informed Members that it would include around 20 further bed spaces.

Councillor Rolph referred to private sector provision, such as the excellent Salvation Army Hostel in comparison with others which were not as good and commented that standards needed to be raised within the provisions to ensure they were on par. Mr. Caddick commented that the issues raised by Councillor McClennan although ward specific covered issues which were across the board and advised of the following actions that were being undertaken to address them:-

- a record of what was currently available would form the basis of a policy addressing safeguarding and basic conditions issues;
- the service would work in a coordinated way to move people out of/into new provision where necessary;
- where individuals were moved, ensuring that the relevant support services are easily accessible from the new residence;
- reconnecting people who were not from the Sunderland area to their original residency as part of a regional approach, which was now starting to make an impact;
- relocating of support services into areas where there is a significant need due to movement will see them begin to dissipate;
- identifying and tackling the issues that cause homelessness on a citywide basis;
- identifying where funding cannot be found for new builds to improve provision that is available;
- recommendations from a regional scrutiny on ex-armed forces personnel were being worked on to provide support groups and help; and
- it was key to protect the investment in the Sunnyside area but it needed to be done in a coordinated way.

Mr. Caddick having been thanked for his informative report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the information contained within the report be received and noted and further information be submitted to the Committee as appropriate.

Work Programme 2011-12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which set out the work programme for the Committee's work during the 2011-12 Council year.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Sarah Abernethy, Scrutiny and Area Support Officer, presented the report advising that any requests for future reports that had been raised at this meeting would be added to the Work Programme at the appropriate future meeting.

8. RESOLVED that the information contained within the Work Programme be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st December, 2011 – 31st March, 2012

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 1st December, to 31st March, 2012 which related to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Members commented that the next Forward Plan would be published the next day and the Principal Governance Services Officer agreed to forward it to Members of the Committee for their consideration.

9. RESOLVED that the contents of the Forward Plan be received and noted.

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

(Signed) S. WATSON,
Chairman.