

At a meeting of the NORTH SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the BUNNY HILL CENTRE, HYLTON LANE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 11th JULY, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Bonallie, Charlton, Copeland, Curran, S. Foster, T. Foster, Francis, Howe, Shattock, Stewart, Walton and Wiper

Also in Attendance:-

Mr. Alan Caddick	- Head of Strategic Housing, Sunderland City Council
Ms. Zoe Channing	- Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism, Sunderland City Council
Mr. Les Clark	- Head of Streetscene, Sunderland City Council
Ms. Julie Foster	- SNYP
M. Mike Foster	- Deputy Executive Director Children's Services – Sunderland City Council
Ms. Gillian Gibson	- Primary Care Trust
Mr. Clive Greenwood	- Senior Policy Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mr. Matthew Jackson	- Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
Ms. Julie Lynn	- Area Officer (North), Sunderland City Council
Ms. Ailsa Martin	- Senior Manager, Sunderland Carers Centre
Ms. Liz McEvoy	- Area Renewal Co-ordinator, Sunderland City Council
Insp. Lisa Musgrove	- Northumbria Police
Mr. Ron Odunaiya	- Executive Director City Services, ALE (Area Lead Executive), Sunderland City Council
Mr. Andy Old	- North Area Response Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mr. Gary Roll	- Public
Ms. Dawn Rugman	- Policy Officer (Diversity), Sunderland City Council
Ms. Joan Reed	- Strategic Change Manager, Health, Housing and Adult Services, Sunderland City Council
Ms. Liz St. Louis	- Head of Customer Service, Sunderland City Council
Mr. James Third	- NEXUS
Ms. Janet Traynor	- Scrutiny and Area Support Officer, Sunderland City Council

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman invited introductions around the room and opened the meeting. He also thanked Amanda Cantle for her hard work in supporting the Committee and wished her good luck in her new employment.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors MacKnight and N. Wright and also from Ms Amanda Cattle

Declarations of Interest

Item 2b – Heritage

The Chairman declared personal interests as Vice Chairman of Beamish Museum Limited and as a SAFC Season Ticket holder.

Item 2d – Activities for Young People

Councillor Charlton declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a trust member of Redhouse Academy

Councillor T. Foster declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a trust member of Castleview Academy

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 6th June, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 6th June, 2011 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Community Action in the North – Progress Review

Attractive and Cared for Environment

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the Empty Property Strategy.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Alan Caddick, Head of Strategic Housing, presented the report and advised that there was a citywide approach to tackling the issue of empty properties. The plan would look at combating the issue of properties which had been empty for six months or longer. The table at paragraph 3.1 of the report should have stated for 2010/11 that there had been 248 properties reoccupied and 28 demolished which meant that the target for the year had been exceeded.

Mr Caddick also advised Members of the New Homes Bonus which would see the government provide match funding of the additional council tax raised by bringing long term empty properties back into use. For the purposes of this the number of empty properties would be measured in October each year and

long term empty properties were those which had been empty for at least 2 years.

Councillor Copeland referred to a property within Southwick which had been empty for a number of years; it was not known who owned this property and she queried whether it would be possible to find this out. Mr Caddick requested that Councillor Copeland provide him with the details of the property and he would investigate it.

Councillor T. Foster queried the work at the Castletown Saint Catherine's development and was informed by Mr Caddick that phase 1 of the development had been completed. Phase 2 was not yet underway and there were ways to develop the site being examined; the phase 2 development was reliant on funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and it was hoped that there would be an announcement made on the funding by 19th July, 2011.

Councillor S. Foster referred to the Empty Property Action Plan, especially the items relating to Castletown.

Mr Caddick advised that there was a Castletown Masterplan in place and advised that there would be works undertaken to improve the shopping centre at Ethel Terrace. Liz McEvoy added that there was research being undertaken currently and the Masterplan would set out the direction for the area and the works would help to increase the value of the streets.

Councillor Copeland queried what types of properties were empty in Southwick; Mr Caddick advised that he would provide the information. Currently there was a breakdown of housing types across the North Area but it would be possible to break this down to a Ward level.

Councillor Copeland then advised that there were flats above the shops on Southwick Green and these were rundown, looked empty and were a blight on the area.

Councillor Francis asked whether it would be possible for the Fulwell Councillors to be provided with a breakdown of the properties in Fulwell. Mr Caddick advised that he could provide maps to Members showing the locations of the empty properties across the areas.

The Chairman commented that Redhill Ward had the same issues; there were a number of rental properties which were left empty; there were also police concerns about antisocial behaviour from tenants of privately rented properties. Private Landlords were an issue as there were some who did not care about what tenants they had and the problems they caused as long as the rent was paid.

Councillor Copeland referred to the conversion of houses to bedsits. This was a concern and would be a problem for at least the next decade. Mr Caddick advised that under 25s were only able to receive housing benefit to cover a

single room let, however this was going to be changing to affect anyone under 35 who was claiming housing benefits. As a result of this change it was possible that more houses would be converted to single room lets or bedsits as there would be an increase in demand for these properties. This would be a challenge and there was a need to ensure that the correct approach to the situation was used.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- a. The content of the report and draft action plan be noted.
- b. Information regarding empty properties be provided to Mr Caddick for investigation.
- c. The action plan be reviewed after one year.

Heritage

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the Heritage Priority and the project which was to be delivered as part of this priority.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Julie Lynn, Area Officer, presented the report and advised that the task and finish group had met recently and there was to be work delivered through the primary schools in the Area. All of the primary schools in the Area had signed up to the project which would allow children to see that their area was like in the past. There would be a lot of activities taking place which were detailed in the report and it would culminate in displays at Beamish and SAFC and a football match being played at the Stadium of Light in period costume. It was proposed that SIB funding of £25,000 be allocated to the priority to fund a Heritage Community Development Worker and also £15,000 for works at Roker Park Lodge.

Councillor T. Foster stated that the Heritage worker would be a specialist post; he suggested that there might be suitable people within the SWITCH team.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- a. The report be noted.
- b. The allocation of £20,000 SIB funding for the delivery of a heritage project within primary schools in the area be agreed subject to full application, consultation and appraisal.
- c. £25,000 of SIB funding be allocated for the recruitment of a Heritage Community Development Worker through a call for projects.
- d. £15,000 of SIB funding be allocated for the completion of a feasibility study and the development of plans for the refurbishment and extension of Roker Park Lodge.

Review of Greenspace Strategy

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with information on the progress against the actions which had been agreed as part of the Review of Greenspace Strategy.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Clive Greenwood, Senior Policy Officer, presented the report and advised of the workshop which had taken place for North Area Members which had explained the progress on the Greenspace Audit and demonstrated the improvements made since the first consultation in October 2010. The outcomes of the workshop were detailed at Annex 2 to the report.

There was an online survey which would be running until the end of July 2011 and was available on the council website. Over 300 responses had been received and the results would feed into the Greenspace and Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Councillor Copeland referring to the survey results stated that it was excellent to see that The Green in Southwick had been recognised as the most important green space and it was good to see that there were 3 sites in Southwick which were listed as being in the most important sites. There was however still improvements that could be made at these sites.

Councillor S. Foster queried where Cornthwaite Park was and was informed that it was at the University.

Councillor Copeland then commented that there was space at Thompson Park which could be used for sports however there was a need for better crossing facilities on Southwick Road to encourage more people to use the park. Mr Odunaiya advised that access would be looked into.

Councillor Howe referred to the Seaburn Masterplan and queried what development would be done at the former sports field and Seaburn Camp.

Mr Greenwood advised that these sites were outside of the Masterplan area. Councillor Charlton added that the strategy was not a development plan but was instead designed to encourage developers to become interested in the area.

Councillor Howe then queried whether there would be houses built on these open spaces. Councillor Charlton responded stating that any potential development and its impact on the whole area would be looked into.

The Chairman advised that the Masterplan had been considered by scrutiny and it was intended that there would be some housing development within the area in order to provide funding for the development of the rest of the area. Mr Greenwood added that the Greenspace Audit would examine each site and identify what benefits it would provide for the area.

Councillor Francis expressed concerns that the green areas on Station Road had not been included. Mr Greenwood stated that they would be on the greenspace audit and this report was purely a summary of what had been raised at the consultation meeting. He also stated that there was information regarding green spaces on the internet.

4. RESOLVED that the information from the workshop be received and noted and that further updates be received.

Activities for Young People

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of the work that had been undertaken in relation to the activities for young people priority.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Julie Lynn, Area Officer, presented the report and advised that the task and finish group had agreed that SIB funding of £27,000 should be provided to the priority for the delivery of youth provision during the school holidays, this was to match the £27,000 which was to be provided by Children's Services. The group had also identified all of the planned activities for the summer holidays. It was proposed that up to £35,000; £7,000 per ward; be allocated to provide activities during the summer holiday period.

5. RESOLVED that:-
 - a. The report be noted.
 - b. The allocation of £27,000 of SIB funding be agreed subject to full application, consultation and appraisal to provide holiday activities for young people.
 - c. Up to £35,000 be allocated for the provision of activities for young people during the summer holiday period.
 - d. The funding and proposed holiday activities detailed in Annex 4 be agreed.

North Area Committee 2011/12 Work Plan

Julie Lynn, Area Officer, presented the work plan which was set out at Annex 1 to the progress report. She advised that if Members had any queries they could either raise them at the meeting or get in contact with her outside of the meeting.

Councillor Copeland commented that there was still an issue with illegal use of motorbikes at the Quarry; she queried when the work in conjunction with South Tyneside Council to tackle the issue would be taking place.

Ms Lynn advised that there had been a meeting had taken place and it was intended that work would be commencing as soon as possible and ideally before the start of the summer holidays. There had been information in the Community Newsletter with regard to where off road motorbikes could be used legally.

Councillor Walton advised that she had needed to phone the police due to antisocial behaviour in Roker Park. Late at night there had been older youths drinking, causing a disturbance and being destructive. A constant presence within the park would help to prevent these problems from occurring. There had also been two groups of people on the beach who were drinking and creating a mess, these groups had been intimidating for other people wanting to use the beach.

Inspector Musgrove advised that there was an issue with antisocial behaviour in the area and it was hoped that there would be extra resources made available to tackle this issue. She encouraged anyone with any issues to phone the police immediately.

Councillor Shattock queried whether there had been a response from young people regarding antisocial use of motorbikes.

Ms Lynn advised that there had not yet been a response however the young people were aware of the impact motorbikes had on residents.

The Chairman commented that off road motorbikes were an issue across the whole area.

In response to a query from Councillor Copeland regarding Hylton Castle, Inspector Musgrove advised that there were regular patrols around the castle and there were regularly XL Youth Villages in the area in order to prevent incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Councillor S. Foster referred to the Wardens who worked in Castletown. They had been a success and it would be disappointing if they were lost; there was however a need to secure funding in order to keep them. Councillor Charlton added that they had originally been funded by a grant and the last year had been funded by the Area Committee. Councillor S. Foster then commented that there would be an increase in costs for the authorities due to the increase in problems which would be encountered in the area once the wardens were no longer present.

The Chairman commented that there had been discussions in Redhill Ward; it would be good to see the wardens working in other areas as well however funding was a major issue.

6. RESOLVED that the Work Plan for 2011/12 be noted.

Community Chest, Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) and Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) – Financial Statement and Proposals for Further Allocation of Resources

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which requested Members to give consideration to requests for funding from Strategic Initiatives Budget, Strategic Investment Plan and Community Chest to support initiatives which would benefit the area.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Julie Lynn, Area Officer, presented the report and advised Members of the applications for funding which were set out at Annexes 5 and 6 to the report and also answered questions from Members.

7. RESOLVED that:-

- a. The financial statement as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report be noted.
- b. Approval be given to the allocation of SIB funding from the 2011/12 budget of £10,000 as a contribution towards the Carers Centre
- c. Approval be given to the allocation of SIB funding from the 2011/12 budget of £6,000 as a contribution towards the Grange Road Speed Limit Project
- d. Approval be given to the allocation of SIB funding from the 2011/12 budget of £3,000 as a contribution towards Houghton Feast.
- e. Approval be given to the allocation of SIB funding from the 2011/12 budget of £7,000 as a contribution towards the Sunderland Recreation Park project.
- f. Approval be given to the allocation of SIP funding from the Fulwell Ward budget of £230 as a contribution towards the Dene Lane bulb planting scheme
- g. Approval be given to the allocation of SIP funding from the Southwick Ward budget of £3,553.76 as a contribution towards the Southwick environmental improvements project.
- h. Approval be given to the allocation of SIP funding from the Southwick Ward budget of £3,600 as a contribution towards the Southwick Christmas Tree
- i. Approval be given to the allocation of SIP funding from the Southwick ward budget of £500 as a contribution towards the St Peter's Environmental Improvements project.
- j. Approval be given to the 12 proposals for support from the 2011/12 Community Chest as set out in Annex 6 to the report.

Influencing Practice, Policy and Strategy

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which offered Members the opportunity to be informed of the review of the Information, Advice and Guidance services which were offered to customers.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Liz St. Louis, Head of Customer Service & Development, presented the report and advised Members that the review was currently underway. There was a high proportion of customers accessed the Council's services by telephone and there was an increasing number of people were using the internet to access information regarding services.

Earlier in the year the web site had been updated to include the amended schedules for domestic waste collection during the bank holiday periods. There had been 14,000 residents had accessed this information on the web site.

There was currently a programme of investment in information technology and within the customer service centres there were customer access computers which allowed members of the public to access the council website which helped to engage people who did not have internet access at home.

The consultation was still ongoing and there was work being done with partner organisations to identify the needs of each area.

Councillor Copeland commented that this would be a good way to get people to use the local libraries. All across the country libraries were closing and it was important to develop new ways of encouraging people to use the libraries.

Joan Reed, Strategic Change Manager, advised that the opportunity to use the internet as an additional source of information was welcomed. The Council website had already been updated to make it easier for people to access information regarding welfare rights which would allow people to find background information before phoning the Council.

8. RESOLVED that the update on the review of the Information, Advice and Guidance services be received and noted.

(Signed) R. BELL,
Chairman.