

Coalfield Area Committee Annual Report 2012/13



**Cllr Dennis Richardson,
Chair of the Coalfield Area Committee**

At the beginning of this financial year Coalfield Area Committee set out its priorities for the year ahead. Key areas where Area Committee wanted to focus work and resources and bring real benefits to the local community included local shopping centres, additional activities for children and young people, improvements to allotments, neglected land and support for older people and vulnerable adults.

Partnership working has been key to ensuring we get value for money and maximum benefit from our resources. Funding was allocated to organisations who helped us deliver what we set out to do, and as a result of partnership working with our Voluntary and Community Sector Area Network, we have worked with more residents and community groups than ever before.

A lot of excellent work has taken place over 2012-2013. Some of the highlights are:

- Influencing local Street Scene services, such as street cleaning, winter maintenance and grass cutting to ensure they are delivered in line with local need. Dog Control Orders and a policy to deal with nuisance vehicle parking/advertising have been developed.
- Influencing services for children and young people and providing funding to make sure there are activities for young people of all ages.
- Working with partners and local groups to provide support for older people, vulnerable adults and their carers such as a 'shoppa bus' and social activities.
- Organising events in local shopping centres to encourage people to shop locally. We're supporting local traders and to date retail specialists have given 1-2-1 support to 14 businesses in Houghton, Hetton and Shiney Row.
- Improving allotment sites, including new management arrangements, clearing unlettable plots, adding new fencing and water provision on sites. At Burnside allotment site, three large unlettable plots have been cleared and made into 10 smaller, improved, plots for rent.
- Awarding funding to allow additional financial and welfare advice sessions to be delivered, recognising the impact of the changes to benefits.
- Planting 400 trees on four sites across the Coalfield area, as part of the Love Where You Live campaign. Local schools and community groups took part in the project.
- Working with owners of over 100 plots of land which have been identified as 'neglected'. 66 have now been brought back into meaningful use.

- Improving ten council owned areas of derelict land including a large site at Collingwood Drive, Shiney Row. Work has begun on a number of other sites, including three large scale projects.
- Supporting a successful community heritage project, delivered by local groups via the VCS Network. A total of 15 local people are involved in various activities.
- Supporting a men's health project which aims to address the main lifestyle causes of cancer and promote awareness of the early signs and symptoms of cancer. Twenty five community groups are participating.
- A local organisation has delivered a Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice to eight local people and training is underway with a further 10.
- Working with local schools in a competition to design a poster to raise awareness of the consequences of littering and fly tipping. The winning designs are displayed in 'ad bins' in local shopping centres.
- A local youth centre has been refurbished, providing a dedicated space for children and young people to enjoy positive activities.
- The Community Challenge project encourages local groups and residents to become involved in providing support to older people and healthy activities for children and young people. To date 12 groups are taking part and 18 new volunteers have been recruited.

As more services move to area based working, it is vital that local communities become involved, and have their say on how, where and when the City Council delivers its services in their area.

We're committed to improving on the successes we have seen this year and will continue to keep local communities at the heart of everything we do.

I would like to thank all members of the Coalfield Area Committee, and partners, officers and residents, for their hard work and support throughout the year in helping to achieve such positive results and better services for local people.