EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE   **Item 2 (a)**

20th JANUARY 2014

REPORT OF THE EAST VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (VCS) AREA NETWORK VCS PROGRESS REPORT

1.   Purpose of the Report

1.1   The report provides an update with regard to the East Area Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Network.

2.   Background

2.1   To develop the capacity and influence of the VCS across the City, Area Networks have been established and delegates represent each Area Network at Area Committee taking forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in the area, reporting on area priority delivery by the VCS, and reporting back, providing a two-way flow of communication.

2.2   East Area VCS Network delegates will present a report to each Area Committee meeting informing Members of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.

3.   East Area VCS Network Progress Report

3.1   The East Area VCS Network has met twice since the last Area Committee in September 2013.

- VCS Organisation who expressed an interest in supporting the Area Committee deliver actions have been holding working group meetings on specific priorities / projects, to support the Area Committee / Boards in their work plans. This has involved:-
  - i)   Supporting the better than basic signage project for the coastal path,
  - ii)   Gateway I: Improving the visual appearance of the main roads leading into the City Centre.
  - iii) Gateway II: Improving the visual appearance of the shopping centres across the East area, and
  - iv)   Walk and Talk / Love Where You Live Programme.
- VCS Area Network, in partnership with the East Area Forum, received presentations:
  - o SITA funding,
  - o Benefit changes and the welfare reform,
  - o Health Watch,
  - o Blue Watch Youth Centre, and
  - o Sustainable Communities.
- Discussions are on-going between the East Area Forum and the East VCS Area Network on future working arrangements.
- Concerns were raised regarding the increase in accommodation units being establishing in the city centre, when there is an existing underused market on single type dwellings. The matter has been referred into the Hostel Strategy Working Group.
- The network raised the issue of enhancing access to procurement opportunities from the council. The Councils Corporate Procurement Team have agreed to attend a future Network meeting to discuss the matter further.

4.   Recommendation

4.1   Members are requested:-
        (a) To note the contents of the report and issues raised by the East Area VCS
            Network.

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