

# SUNDERLAND EAST AREA COMMITTEE

28 MARCH 2011

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

### COMMUNITY ACTION IN SUNDERLAND EAST: IDENTIFYING NEW ISSUES AND AGREEING ACTIONS (2010/11 WORK PLAN)

#### 1. Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1 To enable the future development of area based working, the Area Committee requires detailed information to be freely available from a number of different sources. An "intelligence hub" has been established that will act as a repository for information available. Officers will have access to relevant up-to-date information required to make effective decision making at an area level, and provide Area Committees with the detailed analysis required to identify key priorities and future waves of Responsive Local Services activity.
- 1.2 Information has been sourced from other Committee meetings, Community Leadership Programme, Responsive Local Services, which includes the Customer Service Network, the Area Co-ordination Team, Members Query Management System, Questions to Area Committee, Safer Communities Team and the Consultation Team, including resident surveys. Additional links have also been made with the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving groups (LMAPs), in particular the Data Analyst Team from Northumbria Police.

#### 2 New Issue: Empty Property Team

- 2.1 The Empty Property Team has been recently expanded. The team now consists of five officers where previously there were two officers dealing with Citywide requests for service. The new team consists of five officers each with a dedicated patch. Contact details as follows:

Lisa Ketley, Sunderland East	0191 561 1636
Ami Snowdon, Hendon, Sunderland East	0191 568 9315
Lucy Smith, Sunderland North	0191 561 1628
Michael Horsburgh, Sunderland West and Washington	0191 561 2035
Julie Wilkie, Coalfield	0191 561 1627

- 2.2 Officers are undertaking an induction period at the moment. Requests for service will be responded to as normal by the appropriate officer, but more proactive work will be undertaken to help tackle the owners of long term problematic empty properties. All owners will be contacted to establish what their intentions are for the empty property. Officers will work in partnership with the owner until it is reoccupied.
- 2.3 The Selective Licensing and Neighbourhood Management Project which went live in July 2010 has been successful in the first year in bringing back to use 45 empty properties within the Back on the Map Area of Hendon.
- 2.4 The Team's target is to bring empty properties back into use. For 2010-11 it was set at 355, and 316 has been achieved to date. Officers have been liaising with owners and the properties have been reoccupied with their intervention. The expanded team will continue the success of previous officers in achieving a reduction in empty properties Citywide.

2.5 An Empty Property Action Plan is currently being drafted which will include an action plan and targets for tackling empty properties in the East. This will be circulated to Area Committee for comments as part of the consultation process.

### **3. New Issues: Sunderland East VCS Area Network**

3.1 The following issues were raised via the Sunderland East VCS Area Network:

i) Railway embankment inbetween Hunter Street and Percy Street, Hendon:

It is believed that the railway embankment land between Hunter Street and Percy Street was historically used by local people for gardening. Over the years the land has declined in terms of state and activity. The East VCS Area Network would like to investigate the feasibility of re-opening the allotments considering land ownership, demand needs, costings, etc.

ii) Mental health and welfare advice:

A local charity identified that within the current economic climate they are experiencing a rise in clients accessing their centre with mental health issues, in addition, to providing advice on benefits and employment to people who have English as their second language. The East VCS Area Network would like this to be considered when East Area Committee are developing their priorities for 2011-12, in addition, Health, Housing and Adult Services to provide information on current support available to people with mental health issues, and advice available to people who have English as their second language on benefits and employment to East VCS Area Network.

#### **Recommendations**

Committee are requested to:

Hunter Street and Percy Street

- Appoint the East VCS Area Network to investigate the feasibility of developing the land for future public use and report back to Area Committee their findings.

Mental health and welfare advice

- To refer information relating to an increase in mental health issues and problems with minority groups accessing advice into the Developing Priorities for 2011-12 Task and Finish group for consideration.
- Sunderland City Council, Health, Housing and Adult Services Directorate to provide information on current support available to people with mental health issues, and advice available to people who have English as their second language on benefits and employment to East VCS Area Network to share with local community groups and charities.

### **4. New Issues: East meets West**

For a period, areas in Eden Vale (West) and Thornhill (East) have been experiencing difficulties. There are a number of initiatives being funded and delivered to alleviate the difficulties being faced by residents and provide meaningful activities for young people. These include the West Area Committee funded Operation Freedom (joint police, youth and ASB project), work by the Barnes' and St Michael's commissioned youth providers, Young Asian Voices, the Council's Neighbourhood and Renewal Team and other work.

4.2 In order to maximise the impact of interventions and ensure clear prioritisation, there has been a proposal to host a conference with key stakeholders involved in delivering services or interventions in the area for the purpose of delivering two aims:

1. Agree a cohesive East meets West Area Action Plan.

2. Establish an East meets West Task and Finish Group to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the services and improvements made, reporting directly back to both Area Committee's.
  
- 4.3 It is proposed that a Task and Finish group be established to co-ordinate interventions in the area. This Group should consist of the Chair and/or Vice Chair (or other nominated councillor) and a small number of appropriate officers and partners. The Committee are asked to nominate one Councillor, in addition to the Chair and Vice Chair to join the group.

**Recommendations**

Committee are requested to:

- Note the information relating to 'East meets West' and agree to hold a stakeholders conference during April 2011.
- Committee to nominate one Councillor, in addition to the Chair and Vice Chair to join the group.

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