

**At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 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 Maddison

**Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2011**

Councillor Rolph referred to the declarations of interest she had made at the meeting and advised of the following amendments:-

- Tyne and Wear Archives be amended to Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Joint Committee; and
- Durham City Council be amended to Durham County Council, and it was:-

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendments as outlined.

**Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Errington declared a personal interest in Item 4 0 Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity Policy Review 2011/12 : Active Sunderland Board.

**Change to Order of Business**

At this juncture, the Chairman proposed that Item 5 – Empire Theatre Annual Report be heard first on the agenda as Mr. Ben Phillips, Empire Theatre Manager, needed to attend another meeting.

## **Empire Theatre Annual Report**

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which was an annual update on the work ongoing within the Sunderland Empire Theatre and the monitoring systems that were currently in place to ensure the highest quality of service if achieved within the Theatre.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Vicki Medhurst, Cultural Heritage Manager, introduced Mr. Ben Phillips, Empire Theatre Manager, to the Committee advising that he had been in post now for around three months but that this was his first attendance at the Scrutiny Committee.

Ms. Medhurst then presented the report to Members outlining the performances and attendance at them for the year 2010/11, advising of future productions that were forthcoming at the Theatre and explaining processes that had been undertaken with regard to education and outreach, service quality and building maintenance of the Theatre.

Councillor McClennan sought clarity on the mosaic profiling study ATG had invested in and was advised that it looked at customers and catchment areas and was used to help target more effectively future productions and marketing strategies to the most suitable demographic.

She then referred to the difference between Paid Admits and Total Admits in the table appended to the report and was advised that for some shows, such as the Michael McIntyre performance all of the audience were non paying guests and therefore there would have been no paid admits. He also advised that if take up of tickets was poor, companies would sometimes paper the house with free guests to fill the audience.

When asked how the theatre would gain income on these occasions, Mr. Phillips explained that they would still receive the theatrical rent and the spend per head of how much customers spent on their visit.

Councillor Rolph commented on the Stage Experience project cost of £175 per participant and asked if the mosaic profiling was able to give information on where the young people who attended the project lived in the city. Mr. Phillips advised that there was a wide cohort of young people from around the city, Washington and the Coalfields areas that attended the project and advised that there were also free places for participants who lived in areas of deprivation.

With regards to complaints around booking fees when buying tickets, particularly by Ticketmaster, Mr. Phillips could advise that since 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2011, the theatre had moved away from using Ticketmaster and now ran their own ticketing system. Booking fees would still apply but they were now more locally sensitive than they used to be. Councillor Rolph commented that she would be interested to see the same report next year to see what difference, if any, the new system made to the complaints.

Councillor Rolph then referred to paragraph 3.4.3 of the report, regarding the in house questionnaire and the maximising of sales and was informed that it would generally ask if they had been offered a drink for the interval, programme or refreshments.

Councillor Porthouse commented that he was surprised not to see the price of refreshments as one of the complaints and was informed that the complaints listed were those that were logged physically either by email or letter. With regards to the price of drinks he explained that the theatre had a retail opportunity time of around one hour and twenty minutes and they needed to use this to extract as much spend per head as possible. The theatre had much lower prices than other theatres in the same group and prices were always displayed for the public to view.

He then referred to the theatre's Memorandum of Association and was informed that it had been set out some time ago and now needed reviewing to fit in with the future role and aspiration of the theatre.

Councillor Howe asked how much the agreed maintenance and management fee was that was paid to ATGV and was advised that it was an annual contribution of £114,000.

In response to a query from Councillor Kay as to how the theatre benchmarks itself against others, Mr. Philips advised that they were ranked in the top five in the northern division. With regards to attendance, it was recorded at 43.2% which put the theatre 6<sup>th</sup> in the division. He explained that they did not benchmark against theatres supported by the Arts Council as these received funding from government which the Empire did not. Overall he felt the theatre was performing well and if Member required any further detail he could provide this outside of the meeting.

When asked by Councillor McClennan if the theatre undertook any age profiling as part of the mosaic profiling, Mr. Philips informed the Committee that they did and they found that each performance was very age specific so there was no general trend for attendees.

Having considered the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the content of the report be received and noted and a further update on the Empire Theatre be submitted on an annual basis.

### **Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity Policy Review 2011/12 : Active Sunderland Board**

The Chief Executive and Executive Director of City Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided background to the Committee in relation to the Active Sunderland Board and would contribute towards the evidence for the policy review for 2011/12; Building a Sustainable and Lasting Legacy in Sport and Physical Activity.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Victoria French, Sport, Wellness and Partnership Manager attended the meeting and gave a presentation to the Committee which gave Members background information on the Active Sunderland Board and the work that they undertook. She introduced the Committee to Mr. Ivan Whitfield, Director of Sport with University of Sunderland, Mr. Graham Robinson, Football Development Director at SAFC Football Foundation and two of the five Activators, Tracey and Lindsey, who were in attendance to answer questions from Members.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes)

Councillor Howe referred to the list of participants and queried the inclusion of the Marine Activity Centre (MAC) and the Sunderland Adventure Site which he felt were currently underused and was advised by Ms. French that they were working closely with the MAC to develop opportunities for aquatic activities beyond swimming and helping support people to access these activities. She commented that they had worked with a number of clubs throughout the Active Sunderland project, encouraging them to promote taster sessions to inform people of what was on offer within the city.

Councillor Rolph asked if the 2,700 adults that have been worked with through the Activators were profiled in any way and if so if further information could be given on them. Ms. French advised that they do already use the mosaic profiling system and there was a lot of data to be collated. The data would then be measured using the system to allow them to drill down to specific details and profiles of those involved and help in the future to specifically target activities and resources to the most relevant audience.

Councillor Rolph went on to ask if there were any particular groups that were hard to reach and falling behind or if there were any that were especially successful and was informed by one of the Activators that they tried to work with as many different groups as they possibly could on a daily basis so didn't feel like there was any specific group lacking the offer of support. She explained that they found when they worked with one group it would open pathways to other groups where they could plan taster sessions around what they would like to participate in and word of mouth between the groups was key to them being successful.

When asked if the Committee could see a copy of the monthly newsletter that was sent from the Active Sunderland Website, Ms. French agreed to forward a copy to Members.

Councillor Rolph commented that she was pleased to see a representative from the University present at the meeting as the transition from school to further education was important and she queried how the University were trying to tackle the issue. Mr. Whitfield advised that sport played a major part in the University with a wide range of different activities at different levels being on offer. He advised that a recent survey of the academic programme had revealed that there were 1,100 sports related programmes on offer, with a large proportion of the student body taking part in activities in some way. He also advised that a number of volunteer groups were working alongside the Council and partner agencies to encourage using the University spaces which was never normally encouraged previously.

Councillor Errington referred to the Cricket Development Network in paragraph 3.6 of the report and asked if this was tied into the work of existing clubs so as to ensure they weren't reinventing something that was already in place. Ms. French advised that this work was not led by the Council but by the formed sub group and she was aware that they were currently trying to connect with existing clubs in a number of sports to help in driving the individual sport forward.

With regards to funding streams, Councillor Errington asked how clubs were advised funding may be available and was informed that Officers try to promote funding streams where available and communicate with groups in the city but through a formed network group they would be able to provide access to any funding opportunities more centrally for clubs. She advised that the starting point for this work would be contacting Members with a proforma of what they know is currently available in their Ward. They would then ask Members to include any groups or clubs that may have been missed that they are aware of to help build an overall directory.

Councillor Foster referred to the FA Charter Standard and the advantages of signing up to it and asked if anyone was picking up a similar project for cricket in the city. Mr. Robinson explained that clubs had to meet certain criteria if they were wanting to reach charter standard but that once they had achieved this there were further funding streams and training opportunities available to them. He also advised that the charter standard had to be continually upgraded every year.

Ms. French commented that the English Cricket Board (ECB) did not have access to the funding pot that the FA did but there was a working group and sub group trying to pull together to achieve the same success with out the funding stream. Mr. Robinson confirmed that a lot of work had been undertaken with the Durham Cricket Club to create a foundation and hopefully support them in going into communities giving residents more opportunities.

Councillor Porthouse commented that it was interesting to see the various networks that were proposed but raised concerns that golf was never included and young people may be missing an opportunity to get involved in the sport. Ms. French advised that they were undertaking a consultation exercise in the near future, asking residents what activities they take part in, what they would like to be able to participate in, where and when and if golf was a popular sport they could then look at working with venues to help provide it but up until now golf had never been a popular sport with Sunderland residents.

Councillor McClennan commented on the membership of the Board and the lack of any voluntary organisations and was advised that although the Board was first established in 2008 and it had taken up until recently to get it to the membership it was at. Ms. French recognised that the third sector were not represented and this was an issue that needed addressing, although they were included and contacted via the sub group so did have some involvement in the Board.

Councillor Kay reiterated Councillor Porthouse's comments regarding golf and stated that the same could be said for other sports which were omitted such as swimming, bowls and gymnastics. Ms. French advised that there were currently working groups established looking at gymnastics and swimming, and it had been found that

swimming had a board in place that was working well. She explained that from the consultation they would be able to find what are deemed as priority sports and what residents wish to focus on in Sunderland.

Mr. Whitfield explained that they would map sports provision across the city so that moving forward the Board could provide information on where sports could be played and this was a real opportunity for the Board to get a full understanding of what was available within the city. Mr. Robinson also added that in schools coaches and teachers worked well at signposting young people towards the right clubs for them if they excelled in or enjoyed a particular sport to get them involved from a young age.

Councillor Rolph commented that the sport of boxing was not included and asked if there was an issue. Ms. French advised that historically it had been difficult to engage with those clubs, however they would continue to try and contact boxing clubs in the city to help support them in the fantastic work they currently do at engaging with young people.

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

3. RESOLVED that the presentation and report be received and noted, and information as set out be included towards the evidence gathering on the Committee's policy review topic for 2011/12.

### **Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment (NRA) for Maudlin Street, Hetton Downs**

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed the Committee on the NRA for Maudlin Street, Hetton Downs, prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 2 November, 2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, presented the report, advising the Committee of the current position with regards to the NRA for Maudlin Street, Hetton Downs, namely that Cabinet would be asked to note and approve the outcomes of the NRA and the proposed actions described, authorise the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services to continue with the programme of acquisition and assembly of land at Maudlin Street and the demolition of the street.

In response to comments from Councillor Rolph regarding the length of time it had taken to deal with the issues in the area and the blight of properties owned by private landlords, Mr. Caddick advised that they had been acquiring and clearing sites in the area and were now working with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) at how the land should be developed. He explained that there was a lot of funding involved and they needed to look at what the area needed for the future, and provide a report on these discussions to a future meeting of the Committee.

When asked what would happen with Springboard, as it was a valuable community asset, Mr. Caddick advised that they were working with them to relocate in nearby premises if they wished but this was a business decision they would make themselves.

Councillor Porthouse referred to paragraph 4.1 of the Cabinet report and asked how long the Officer felt it would take to acquire the remaining 23 properties and was advised that there was only one block of houses remaining and the acquisition of these would not stop work being undertaken elsewhere. He advised that they had performed well in acquiring the sites, using no compulsory purchase orders and having moved many people into better accommodation.

Councillor Kay referred to Option Four within the consultants assessment and the increased property value of £80,000 each and was informed that the property values on the development would usually be of a mixed variety and premium, with new developments also raising property values in the area. Councillor Rolph asked if the £80,000 would be in addition to the £40,000 the properties were currently valued at and was advised that it would be, therefore creating a total value of approximately £120,000.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Caddick for his informative report, and it was :-

4. RESOLVED that the report on the NRA for Maudlin Street, Hetton Downs, in advance of its submission to Cabinet on 2 November, 2011, be received and noted.

### **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Project – Low Carbon Social Housing Pilot**

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed the Committee on the ERDF Low Carbon Social Housing Pilot prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 7 December, 2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Rolph referred to the hard to treat social housing properties and asked if it was correct that single skin housing, which these may be some of, couldn't have cavity wall insulation. Mr. Caddick confirmed that they could not treat houses which were poorly insulated. He explained that with energy providers such as EDF they were looking at alternative ways, as well as looking at solution of a regional approach to combat that issue.

Councillor Rolph commented that there was a lot of potential for the project and would welcome more information on the properties that fall into the relevant category. Mr. Caddick informed her there were around 8,000 properties in the city and he could provide that information outside of the meeting.

Councillor Porthouse commended the report and asked when the project would start. Mr. Caddick advised that it needed to be finished by March, 2014 so it would need to get started imminently. He advised he was the Chairman of the Steering Group that would be driving the project forward and he would be monitoring progress closely and keep the Committee informed.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Caddick for his informative report, and it was :-

5. RESOLVED that the report on the Low Carbon Social Housing Pilot, in advance of its submission to Cabinet on 7 December, 2011, be received and noted.

### **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.

Ms. Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer, referred to the Pilot: VCS Network Representative Co-option item on the Work Programme and explained that this would be postponed to a future meeting, to allow her to address Members concerns which had been raised at the informal meeting.

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

### **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2011 – 29<sup>th</sup> February, 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 1<sup>st</sup> November, to 29<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 which related to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

7. 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.