

At a meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held at WASHINGTON FIRE STATION, MAIN HEADQUARTERS on TUESDAY 9TH DECEMBER, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Scaplehorn in the Chair

Councillors Farthing, Kelly, Lauchlan, F. Miller, G. Miller, David Snowdon, Thompson, D. Trueman, H. Trueman, Walker and Williams.

Karon Purvis	-	Chief Executives
Louise Butler	-	Chief Executives
David Hardy	-	City Services
Paul Wood	-	Commercial and Corporate Services
Jacqui Reeves	-	VCS Representative
Colin McCartney	-	Gentoo
Jackie Pitt	-	Gentoo
Bryan Beverley	-	Washington Trust
Ev Ripley – Day	-	Foundation of Light
Michael Armstrong	-	DWP
Berni Topham	-	DWP
Sgt Ron Hyde	-	Northumbria Police
E. Maguire	-	Northumbria Police
Sharann Smith	-	TWFRS
Tony Semley	-	Sunderland Young People’s Bike Project
Sharon Semley	-	Sunderland Young People’s Bike Project

Members of the Washington Community.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Fletcher and D.E. Snowdon. Neil Revely, John Chapman, John Rostron and Kasia Kurowska

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 16th October, 2014

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 16th October, 2014 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Partner Agency Reports

(a) Report of the Washington Area Community Voluntary Sector Network

The Washington Area Community Voluntary Sector Network submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform the Committee of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jacqui Reeves, VCS Representative, presented the report and advised the Committee that they were keen to be involved in the Annual Report and informed of the leaflet produced by the VCS Network, a copy of which was included in the papers.

Ms Reeves also advised that Kasia Kurowska was moving on, and they were in the process of looking for a replacement. The Committee would be informed when a replacement had been obtained.

2. RESOLVED that Members noted the contents of the report and considered the opportunities and issues raised by the Washington ACVSN.

(b) Report of Northumbria Police

Northumbria Police submitted a report (copy circulated) on the Washington Crime and ASB Performance Summary from 1st April 2014 to 20th November 2014.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Sergeant Ron Hyde presented the report and was on hand to answer Members queries.

Councillor G. Miller enquired how the Total Incidents reported figures were up yet Crime figures were down and how the Police viewed incidents, were more incidents being reported than being logged.

Councillor G. Miller commented that he was delighted to see the Youth Related ASB had reduced but queried why all other incidents of ASB were labelled as Non Youth Related and not Adult related ASB.

Councillor G. Miller also queried the Statistics for incidents of Sexual offences as he believed there had been a number of incidents.

Sgt Hyde replied that there had been sexual offences and that these figures being omitted had been an oversight which he would look into and send the info to Mrs Purvis to disseminate to Members.

In relation to crimes reported/incidents statistics, Sgt Hyde advised that the total incidents reported includes every instance where someone rings 999, incomplete calls, etc. So these were incidents but would not necessarily have a crime attributed to them.

With regards to ASB, Sgt Hyde advised that this was just the way that the Police categorise their statistics.

Councillor H. Trueman commented that he felt the 48% increase in Domestic Violence was due to more incidents being reported and this figure could increase further and enquired what pressures this was putting on Police resources.

Sgt Hyde advised that there was a dedicated push for people to report instances of domestic violence and it was just a question of managing Police time to deal with the increased reports.

Councillor Kelly referred to the lack of Police Officers on the ground and wished to stress that he did not want to appear critical as he was aware of the situation the Police were currently in due to budget constraints, but enquired if it would be possible to receive an update on staffing and numbers in a future report.

Sgt Hyde advised that this would be possible and he would feed Councillor Kelly's request back. A review was underway which would be implemented from April next year so the figures could change again and there would be the six Police authorities merging into 3 areas also.

Councillor Thompson commented that historically, Domestic Violence had been hugely under reported and these current statistics highlighted the good work being carried out in order to get people to report such incidents. This work was carried out by the Police and Partners and Councillor Thompson felt they should be congratulated on this.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Report of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

The Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service submitted a report (copy circulated) with the statistics for the period 1st September 2014 to 20th November 2014.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman advised that due to Industrial action, Steve Graham, Station Manager, could not be present at the meeting but if Members had any queries, these could be fed back for a response at a later date.

Councillor Kelly wished to stress his disappointment that this meeting was being held in a building where industrial action was taking place and requested it be noted that Members were fully in support of the Fire Fighters and their course of action.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Place Board – Progress Report

The Chair of the Place Board submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with an update of progress against the current years (2014/15) Place Board Work Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Fiona Miller, Chair of the Place Board presented the report and requested Members agreement to amend the Core Membership, with Councillor David Snowdon to attend in place of Councillor Padgett on the Board. The Committee agreed to the change in Membership.

Councillor F. Miller advised the Committee that all Members were invited to the February meeting of the Place Board in order to discuss the Highways Maintenance Programme.

Councillor F. Miller introduced Mr David Hardy, Area Response Manager, who gave an update on the Neighbourhood Improvement Project and the work of the Responsive Local Services.

In relation to the Washington Working for You Event, Mrs Purvis gave an update and in response to Councillor G. Miller's enquiry over the delay regarding the full evaluation, advised that it was being produced via the lead agent and would be tabled on receipt. In addition she had a meeting in the diary with Jill Rose with regards to corporate sponsorship planning and draft protocols would be coming to the February Place Board as part of the work attributed to the Events 2015 working Group.

With regards to Flood Management, Mrs Purvis advised that the Emergency Packs promised to Members some time ago, would be getting distributed imminently.

Councillor Kelly informed the Committee that progress was being made in relation to the new operator for Bowes Railway and hopefully it would become a much more interactive venue.

In relation to 2.3 of the WorkPlan (Managing plantations and Woodlands), Councillor Farthing enquired if we were in discussions with the Woodland Trust as there were a number of trees not being managed in the area along the Riverside.

Mr Hardy commented that a number of conversations had taken place and the advice he had been given was that if the trees were not dead, dying or diseased then nothing would be done with them.

Councillor Thompson commented that the Forestry Commission had in fact started work in other areas and he did not know how long this would take but it was happening.

In relation to the SIB Project Performance for the Place Board – Retail Support Project update, Councillor Kelly commented that if the project had sustainability, then the money left over should come back to the Area Committee and questioned extending the project if it was indeed sustainable itself.

Councillor G. Miller agreed with Councillor Kelly's logic but felt that there would be little the Area Committee could do with the funding if it was returned due to the limited timescales available, therefore felt it was more beneficial to allow the project to continue carrying out their good work.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee

- i) Considered the progress and performance update with regard to the Washington Place Board's Work Plan for 2013/14 as detailed in Annex 1 and paragraph 4 of the report
- ii) Noted the performance report for SIB projects as detailed in Annex 2.

People Board – Progress Report

The Chair of the People Board submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with an update of progress against the current years (2013/14) People Board Work Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Williams presented the report and introduced Bryan Beverley, Community & Volunteer Development Officer (Washington Trust) who gave an update on the work being carried out so far in relation to Community inclusion and the work with volunteers through January to get a strategic plan across the area.

Councillor Kelly commented that Mr Beverley had not only worked on this project, but in his own time had performed some fantastic work engaging with some of Washington's older residents and wished to congratulate him for this as the whole project was starting to come together nicely.

In relation to the 'Washington Working For You' Event, Councillor G. Miller commented that he had felt sorry for the young people who had attended, as they did not appear very enthused as though they had been 'railroaded' into attending. Councillor G. Miller felt there needed to be more of a partnership with the schools to sell the event to young people more but otherwise, he felt the event was very good and was something we needed to do more of.

Councillor D. Snowdon commented that he was disappointed the youths didn't engage during the event and that the employers there would've loved to have had a greater engagement.

Councillor Farthing commented that she felt we needed to encourage the schools provision for vocational training and not just academic skills.

Councillor Kelly commented that we needed to form much stronger partnerships as an Area Committee going forward so that it was not just us trying to deliver projects and there was a sustainability in place in the event of issues arising in the future with Area Committee funding.

Louise Butler, Area Co-ordinator advised that Austin McNamara, Associate Director-Education would be coming to a future Board meeting, and discussions have been had on NEETS already so the issue of the emerging roles of schools and the Council could be looked at.

Councillor Williams advised of the success of recent engagement with youngsters from Oxclose Academy and the Responsive Local Services Team as part of the Children's Takeover Day. Mr Hardy commented that another session was going to be arranged in the future due to the success of the last one.

Councillor H. Trueman commented on the need to find out the role of the Combined Authority as they had government funding to tackle the issue of NEETS.

Welfare Reform

Councillor Williams introduced Michael Armstrong and Berni Topping, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to give a brief update on the work they carried out and the role of Job Centre Plus.

Mr Armstrong advised that the delivery model had changed over the years and that support was given to those who already had good job skills and work ethic, those that didn't, received intensive support and there had been a 30% reduction in jobless statistics.

Councillor Kelly commented that he felt the sanctions imposed were barbaric and were hurting people. The Voluntary Sector had been coming under additional pressures due to increased numbers of people needing to use IT equipment and the quality of jobs being offered to claimants such as Agency work or zero hours contracts were poor.

Councillor Kelly also believed that no physical support had been offered from DWP in relation to the projects Area Committee has had to carry out to counter the issues.

Ms Topping advised that before the Digital Job Centres had gone live, a great deal of claimants had been signposted to the Voluntary Community Sector who had stepped up to the mark brilliantly and there had been excellent feedback from them. Now that the resources were up and running with a Digital Job Centre in Washington, they were looking to see the footfall of people using the VCS services to decrease but it

was something they needed to keep an eye on and if clients needed intensive support, this could be provided.

Ms Topping also stressed on the need for greater communication between the DWP, VCS and the Council to liaise on issues and advised that the DWP did not have any funding, this was all sub contracted through the skills agency, which the VCS were successful with applying for historically but there did need to be more communication between the organisations to think about sustainability.

Councillor G. Miller thanked the Officers for attending the meeting and raised the concern in relation to the funding request for USB sticks that claimants required and that he would have expected the DWP to have provided a linked up approach with the VCS on the matter.

Ms Topping agreed and commented that this was the DWP's responsibility to equip claimants with the required tools.

Mr Armstrong advised that they were looking at how to provide the USB sticks and they had only just received permission to purchase them, the issue was being tackled but he admitted that the DWP were guilty of not moving quickly enough but they were trying to rectify this.

Councillor Farthing referred to the Universal Credit and if a claimant was sanctioned, would the DWP cease to have any involvement with them. Ms Topping advised that the DWP would have involvement and that Social Justice Coaches would work with them on a one to one level to try and identify what was causing the sanctions and rectify them.

In response to Councillor D. Snowdon's enquiry as to how many people were claiming employee support allowance, Ms Topping advised that in Sunderland there were 16,500 claiming plus incapacity allowance and that she would provide Washington specific based figures. In terms of Job Seekers Allowance there were 16,135 claimants in Sunderland.

Councillor D. Snowdon enquired if the work contracts would be even more strict when the Universal Credit was rolled out. Mr Armstrong advised that it would be, as the claimant needs to show that they are trying to obtain work, but this wouldn't be the case for everyone and would depend on the individuals circumstances.

The Chairman commented that the people coming to Councillors for help, had already been sanctioned and it was in this role they helped to support the person by negotiating with landlords, arranging food parcels and such like, but enquired if there was anything DWP could do to help the Councillors with this support.

Mr Armstrong advised that there were a lot of workshops arranged with Councillors and Partners to try and work together to stop people from being sanctioned. Mr Armstrong also advised some claimants signed up for unrealistic aims, which they were not able to carry out, this then led to issues occurring, therefore the DWP needed to challenge this and work with the claimant, but at some stage they did expect the person to show progress.

Councillor Thompson referred to the recent cutbacks seen by the Police and Fire Brigade and the loss of stations and enquired how safe the Job Centre was in Washington and if there were any plans to centralise services.

Mr Armstrong advised that there were no plans to centralise the Job Centres that he was aware of.

Councillor Kelly enquired how many zero hour contracts and agency jobs there were. Mr Armstrong advised that he did not have the figures at hand but they did rely upon employers placing jobs on the site but did acknowledge that zero hour contracts were not very attractive.

Ms Topping advised that she would check if claimants would be sanctioned should they not take a zero hour contract that was offered. Mr Armstrong advised that this would change upon the introduction of the Universal Credit also.

Councillor G. Miller commented that he really appreciated Officers attending the Area Committee and felt they needed to hear from them regularly as it was beneficial especially with the Universal Credit to be rolled out shortly.

Councillor G. Miller also referred to issues where claimants had been sanctioned for missing appointments despite having legitimate reasons which had placed them in a real bind.

Mr Armstrong advised that sanctions should only occur within the legislation, based on evidence and they needed to work with the Council and other organisations on this. Should a claimant forget to attend an appointment, this is not acceptable, however a domestic emergency would be taken into account.

Ms Topping also advised that there was a reconsideration process for sanctions and she could send out the procedure involved to Members for their information.

Mrs Purvis commented that a lot of information and statistics had been requested so it may be beneficial for a pack to be produced with all the relevant information requested. Ms Topping agreed to provide this.

Mr Armstrong commented that they would be keen to be involved in any working groups arranged also.

Councillor D. Snowdon enquired how long it took to process a claim when an individual lost their job. Mr Armstrong advised that it would take nine working days to process a claim.

Mr Armstrong advised of the Flexible Support Fund and the possibility of the VCS utilising it on helping to tackle DWP objectives in getting people back into work and would love to discuss further.

Mrs Purvis advised that this could be considered at the next Board Meeting, in which all Members were invited to attend.

6. RESOLVED that the Committee
- (i) Considered the progress and performance update with regards to the Washington People Board Work Plan for 2014/2015, as detailed in Annex 1 and Paragraph 4 of the report
 - (ii) Noted the performance report for SIB projects as detailed in Annex 2 of the report
 - (iii) Noted the action plan for developing employability support services as detailed in Annex 3 of the report.

Financial Statement and Proposals for further allocation of Resources

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to request the Committee's consideration of proposals for the allocation of the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) that would benefit the area and to note the Community Chest initiatives that would benefit the area.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Purvis presented the report and advised that there were four options to consider for the Call for Projects (Washington Way to Well Being) applications as detailed in Paragraph 2.7 of the report.

Councillor Kelly proposed that Option 4 be taken to decline both applications and reissue the Call for Projects to send out for a new consultation as neither of the applications met the Committees criteria needed. Councillor Walker seconded the proposal.

Councillor Kelly also requested that Members be given the opportunity to feed in views.

The Chairman suggested that a partnership approach between the two agencies that had applied be worked on for the new Call for Projects.

Therefore the Committee unanimously agreed to Option 4: Decline both applications and reissue the Call for Projects.

7. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- i) Noted the financial statements set out in the report.
- ii) Considered the approval of SIB 2014/15 for the Washington Way to Well Being Charter Mark and Physical Hub as detailed in the report and Annex

1. Option 4 was agreed to Decline both applications and reissue the Call for Projects.
- iii) Considered if additional SIB was required to assist with the implementation of the Washington Way to Well Being Charter Mark and Physical Hub
- iv) Considered the alignment of £20,000 SIB 2014/15 for the development of Employability Support Services Project as detailed in paragraph 2.9 of the report and in Item 4 – People Board Progress Report
- v) Noted the 21 Community Chest approvals supported from 2014/15 Community Chest as set out in Annex 2 of the report.

Planning Applications – For Information Only

Current Planning Applications relating to the Washington Area for the period 1st October to 20th November 2014 were submitted for Members information only (copy circulated).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting

(Signed) B. SCAPLEHORN,
Chairman.