

**At a meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held at DUBMIRE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL on WEDNESDAY, 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2011 at 6.00 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Scott in the Chair

Councillors Anderson, Blackburn, Ellis, D. Richardson, Rolph, D. Smith, Speding  
and Tate.

**Also in Attendance:-**

Ron Barrass	Member of the Public	
Susan Brown	Area Community Co-ordinator	Sunderland Council
John Chapman	Head of Neighbourhoods	Gentoo
Les Clark	Head of Streetscene	Sunderland Council
Dave Ellison	Area Response Manager	Sunderland Council
Graham Finlay	Inspector	Northumbria Police
Victoria French	Sport, Wellness and Partnership Manager	Sunderland Council
Cllr Juliana Heron	Member	Hetton Town Council
Pauline Hopper	Area Officer	Sunderland Council
Matthew Jackson	Governance Services Officer	Sunderland Council
Amelia Laverick	Member of the Public	
Vicki Medhurst	Cultural Heritage Manager	Sunderland Council
Sandra Mitchell	Head of Early Intervention and Locality	Sunderland Council
Lisa Musgrove	Inspector	Northumbria Police
Ann Owen	VCS Representative	
Malcolm Page	Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services and Area Lead Executive	Sunderland Council
Julie Parker	Public Health Practitioner	Sunderland TPCT
Andrew Perkin	Lead Policy Officer: Economy	Sunderland Council
John Rushworth	Head of Headways Sixth Form	Sunderland College
Gerry Roll	Parks Manager	Sunderland Council
Janet Snaith	Head of Business Investment	Sunderland Council
James Third	Community Relation Officer	Nexus
David Thompson	Solicitor	Sunderland Council
Pauline Tsentas	Youth Development Group Manager	Sunderland Council
Lee Wardle	VCS Representative	

## **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hall, Heron and Wakefield

## **Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Inspector Lisa Musgrove who would be taking over from Inspector Graham Finlay as Neighbourhood Inspector for the Area. He thanked Inspector Finlay for all of his hard work over the years.

## **Declarations of Interest**

David Thompson, Solicitor, on behalf of the Head of Law and Governance, delivered a presentation which reminded Members of the rules around the declaration of interests and when a personal interest should also be prejudicial.

Councillor Anderson stated that the normal practice was that if a Member was a Local Authority appointed Member of a group a personal interest should be declared, the advice that it was only necessary if the Member wished to speak seemed to be at odds with this. Mr Thompson stated that this was what was detailed in the code and Mr Page agreed to clarify the situation.

In response to a query regarding the code of conduct from Councillor J. Heron Mr Page advised that there were formal requirements set out by the Standards board and the Council's arrangements followed these requirements.

## Private Streets

Councillors Anderson and Scott declared personal interests in the item as residents of private streets.

## **Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2011**

On the Allotments and Community Gardens, Councillor J. Heron advised that Gillas Lane Primary School did not have their own allotment as was recorded in the Minutes but instead visited an allotment.

As a matter arising Vicky Medhurst, Cultural Heritage Manager, updated the Committee on the progress that had been made on the work around the appointment of a Heritage Community Development Worker. The North Area Committee was also developing Heritage as a priority and it was proposed that the committees work together on this subject. There had been some issues around the use of the SWITCH team to provide the worker however these had now been resolved.

Sandra Mitchell, Head of Early Intervention and Locality, advised that Mr Keith Moore, Executive Director of Children's Services would have attended to provide an update however the West Sunderland Area Committee, of which he was Area Lead Executive, was taking place at the same time as the Coalfield Area Committee, he would therefore attend a future meeting when there was not a clash with the West Sunderland Area Committee. Ms Mitchell then provided Members with a brief update on the restructure of the Children's Services department and how this would affect the Early Intervention and Locality Services. There had been a lot of work done around needs analysis and identifying what was currently delivered and there would be consultation taking place in September and October to develop a number of possible options and as part of this drop in sessions would be held for Members. It was intended that there would be a report delivered to the November meeting of the Cabinet.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2011 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the above amendment.

## **Community Action in Coalfield – Progress Review**

### Allotments and Community Gardens

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress made against the agreed actions in the current year's work plan on the Allotments and Community Gardens priority.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Gerry Roll, Parks Manager, presented the report and advised that the condition survey had been carried out. Strimming and weeding had been carried out and there were talks with the Community Payback Scheme to carry out maintenance works.

The Chairman stated that the task and result group worked closely with Mr Roll and Ms Hopper and the work was starting to move more quickly.

Councillor Rolph queried whether the proposed site visit had been undertaken yet. Mr Roll advised that it had not yet taken place and the details were in the process of being finalised.

Councillor J. Heron referred to the community garden at Seaham Road and stated that this had been voted the best community access point.

The Chairman commented that he had noticed a lot of signs around the area from Lambton Estates regarding sales of land. He stated that Newbottle Allotments were a cause for concern and he wondered whether they were Council owned or not.

2. RESOLVED that the report and update from the task and result group be noted.

### Private Streets Review

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised Members of the updated estimated costs for the making up and adoption of the private streets within the Coalfield Area and also allowed Members the opportunity to review the appropriateness of the Council's existing policy.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Les Clark, Head of Streetscene, presented the report and advised Members that the Coalfield area had a large number of unadopted streets. The cost of making up these streets had increased since the last survey in 2006 with the estimated cost now standing at £13.25million to bring the 113 private streets in the area up to adoptable standard.

The Council would carry out the works however the residents of the private street would need to contribute to the cost of the works; the Council were responsible for making the connection of the street to the public highway. Developers were encouraged to upgrade unadopted streets to adoptable standard during the development works.

In response to a query from Councillor Richardson Mr Clark advised that the Council worked with the communities affected to ensure that any costs were split evenly among the residents.

Councillor Ellis stated that it was interesting to hear that the council wanted residents of private streets to come together to fund maintenance works while on adopted streets the council was not doing required maintenance due to a lack of available funds. She also queried what happened when the Council owned property on private streets.

Mr Clark advised that there were contingency funds in place for when works were required on private streets where the Council owned property.

Councillor Rolph stated that this was a subject she had been interested in for a long time and it was pleasing to see that the issue had finally been quantified. There were however factors that she hoped would have been covered that had not been included such as ways in which communities could have got together to raise the required funds; Council loans could be a way of helping people to get their streets up to an adoptable standard. The making up of unadopted streets was as much about the general environmental improvement as it was about the highway improvement, some of the unadopted streets were in a condition which could be likened to those experienced in third world countries. There was a Community Infrastructure Levy which was being introduced and she suggested that in areas where there were a lot of unadopted streets this could be used to cover the cost of

bringing the streets up to an adoptable standard; another option could be Section 106 planning obligations.

Mr Clark stated that he could not comment on Section 106 agreements as this was a planning matter and he would find out about the feasibility of using the Community Infrastructure Levy to fund works. There had been alternatives considered which included the possibility of land charges against properties.

Mr Page stated that the Community Infrastructure Levy had not yet been fully implemented however it could potentially be used as a funding source.

Councillor Anderson stated that this was an issue which had been ongoing for at least the last 20 years. She lived on an unadopted road and the residents of her street had spent £500 each to get a good quality road, although it was not up to adoptable standards; some unadopted streets were in an appalling condition with large craters in the road surface. People who lived on unadopted streets needed to take responsibility for the condition of the street, when they bought the houses they knew that the property was on an unadopted street and that they would be responsible for the upkeep of the road.

Councillor Speding queried whether streets needed to be gated to be classed as private. The Chairman confirmed that this was the case and that streets without gates but which were not adopted were still classed as public streets even though they were unadopted.

Councillor Tate stated that a lot of streets in the area had been owned by the Coal Board and when the houses had been sold the roads had been included with the properties. When the Coal Board had owned the streets they had not spent anything on maintaining the roads; there had been gas pipes replaced and the Coal Board had been given funds to resurface following the works, residents had been willing to contribute to ensure that the roads had been made up to adoptable standard however the Coal Board had been unwilling to invest in carrying out the required works.

The Chairman thanked Mr Clark for his report and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### Neglected Land

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update against the agreed actions in the current year's work plan on the Neglected Land priority.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Dave Ellison, Area Response Manager, presented the report and advised that there was a large amount of neglected land in the Coalfield area. There were checks being carried out with the Land Registry to try to establish who owned the

land and a matrix assessing the sites against a set of relevant criteria would be produced. The smaller sites could be tackled as 'quick wins'. A task and result group had been set up to examine this issue and the first meeting had taken place on 28<sup>th</sup> July with a further meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> August. There was currently no funding allocated to this priority however it was suggested that the task and result group look at whether SIB could be used to develop individual projects once the audit was completed.

Councillor Tate expressed concerns over what would happen if the council claimed the neglected sites; there would be a need to find funding to pay for the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of the sites. Mr Ellison agreed that any project needed to be sustainable and advised that there would be consultation carried out to ensure the sustainability of any projects.

Mr Ellison then went on to advise Members of the 'love where you live' campaign which was taking place; there were a lot of people taking part including schools and members of the voluntary and community sector. He would provide a copy of the programme of activities to anyone who wanted one.

Councillor Anderson commented that preventing the problems from occurring was better than trying to cure the problems after they occurred and also referred to the amount of litter that was dumped into people's gardens. She objected to young children being used to litter pick as she did not think that it was appropriate or safe.

Mr Ellison advised that risk assessments were carried out to ensure that all participants were safe when carrying out activities.

4. RESOLVED that:-
  - a. The report be noted
  - b. The escalation of the issue of influencing Section 106 allocations and agreements using the relevant referral protocol be agreed
  - c. The actions set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report be endorsed and agreed to be taken forward
  - d. The principle of the allocation of SIB funding for the improvements of neglected land be agreed.

### Work Plan

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which enabled Members to consider the Committee's work plan for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Hopper presented the work plan and drew Members attention to the Local Shopping Centres priority. She advised that the three main local centres had now been identified and these were Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row. She then introduced Andrew Perkin, Lead Policy Officer, who would be presenting an update on the progress made against this priority.

Mr Perkin advised that a survey had been carried out in all of the shopping areas and the feedback had been used to determine the attractiveness of each of the areas. He had spoken to the town centre managers from across the region and a customer survey had been developed and was due to be carried out. There were plans for events to be held in the centres to attract people to the area.

Janet Snaith, Head of Business Investment, added that working with retailers and looking at examples of best practice had the potential to help with developing a clear sense of direction. The Christmas period was the best time of year for retailers, with some making 50 percent of their annual sales during this period, there was a need to look at potential interventions which could be implemented to assist with attracting people into the area during this time.

In response from a query from Councillor Richardson, Ms Hopper advised that there had been £80,000 of SIB funding ringfenced for this priority. It was recommended that the Members agreed now to allocate some of this funding to providing improvements for the Christmas period, if there was a delay until the next Committee Meeting in November then it would be too late for anything to be implemented in time for Christmas.

In response to this the Chairman moved that SIB funding of £15,000; £5,000 for each centre; be allocated and this was unanimously agreed by the Members.

Ms Snaith asked what sort of timescale would be involved and was advised by Ms Hopper that the task and result group would be meeting in October and they would be deciding how the money should be spent.

Councillor Richardson then queried whether there was a Member from each of the wards on this task and result group, Ms Hopper advised that the only ward which was not represented was Hetton.

The Chairman then suggested that Councillor Blackburn join the group as he would be able to represent Hetton and his experience and knowledge would be of benefit to the group.

Ms Hopper then referred Members to the Dangerous and Speeding Traffic priority and asked Mr Clark to provide an update.

Mr Clark delivered a presentation detailing the work that had been done around this priority.

Councillor Blackburn stated that it was pleasing to see a map detailing the locations of accidents. He referred to the B1284 which had an accident rate 25 percent higher than other roads; however it was not shown on the map which was a concern.

Councillor Anderson agreed that the B1284 was a concern; this was a busy road and it was difficult for people to get across safely. While she had not heard of any fatal accidents occurring along the road there were a large number of serious

injuries which had occurred. It was little more than a country lane and was expected to carry motorway traffic; it had previously been described as the missing link in the East Durham link road and had been described by a senior police officer as a 'horrible' road due to the number of accidents which occurred. She appreciated that there were financial constraints however there had been promises that there would be improvements to the road done in phases. There were three schools along the road and this was a major concern as there were accidents involving school children. Thanks to the hard work of Councillor Blackburn there was now a puffin crossing on the road however this regularly was not operational. She felt that the B1284 needed to be made a high priority for improvements.

The Chairman stated that the lack of reporting of accidents along this road could be due to the accidents being relatively minor in nature.

Councillor Rolph stated that the B1284 continued on to Fence Houses and there were issues there due to the large increase in the volume of traffic following the construction of the new housing estate. She then referred to the football facility which had been built at Newbottle which caused serious parking issues. She also advised that the records did not tell the whole story as not all accidents were reported.

Mr Clark advised that when using statistics it was only possible to use the statistics which were available. However the criteria did not solely use statistics but also looked at the potential for accidents which included factors such as the proximity of schools.

Inspector Finlay advised that there were regular patrols to tackle speeding and dangerous driving and within the city there were 2,000 people a year who were issued with speeding tickets.

Councillor Speding stated that there were a number of areas where it was necessary to look at ways to reduce the traffic flow through the area. Roads where there were frequent speed limit changes were often a problem, there were roads which changed from a 30 mph limit to national speed limit and then back down to 30 or 40 mph within a short distance and some drivers did not reduce their speed when entering the lower limits. There had been speeds of up to 75 mph recorded by cameras located in 30 mph zones. He also expressed concerns over the roundabout at Herrington Burn which was too small for the volume of traffic it carried; there was also a lack of crossing provision, 4 bus stops were in close proximity to the roundabout however people could not safely cross the road to access these stops.

Councillor Blackburn advised that there were proposals for development of a site next to the roundabout and should this development take place then the roundabout would be rebuilt by the developers as part of the works.

Councillor Ellis endorsed the comments made by the other Members and stated that she found the number of near misses on the roads to be very frustrating.



5. RESOLVED that the work plan, and the updates on the actions contained therein, be noted.

Community Chest and Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) – Financial Update and Proposals for Further Allocation of Resources

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which requested Members to consider proposals for the allocation of SIB and Community Chest to support initiatives which would deliver activity against priorities for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, presented the report and advised Members of the six proposals for SIB funding which were detailed in paragraph 2.1 and Annex 2 of the report and the 15 requests for Community Chest funding which were outlined at paragraph 2.2 of the report and detailed in full at Annex 3 of the report.

Ms Hopper advised that on the Community Chest the application for the Remembrance Day Parade for Copt Hill, the parade would be at the Broadway not Easington Lane High Street as stated in Annex 3.

Ms Hopper also asked Members to approve the £15,000 from the previously ringfenced £80,000 SIB funding for shopping centres as discussed earlier in the meeting to provide improvements to the three main shopping centres for the Christmas period.

Following discussion of the applications it was:-

6. RESOLVED that:-
  - a. The financial information set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 be noted
  - b. The SIB applications totalling £81,200 be approved.
  - c. The 15 proposals for Community Chest funding be approved.
  - d. £15,000 be allocated to the provision of improvements to the three main shopping centres for the Christmas period, from the previously ringfenced budget.

The Chairman then closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) J. SCOTT,  
Chairman.