

West Area Committee

Photo

Cllr Peter Gibson

Chair of West Area Committee

2014/2015 has been an exceptionally busy year for the West Area Committee – they have been working hard to support local communities, including the establishment of local trader groups to enable and empower them to become more resilient during these difficult times. Enabling communities who are struggling to survive each day takes initiative and fresh ideas – and to gather these ideas and understand what the real priorities are for the Area has been the key. Using the broad outcomes of Improving Health & Wellbeing, Enhancing Skills & Creating Job Prospects and Maximising Green Spaces, the Committee has worked alongside the Voluntary and Community Sector and Partners to deliver some fantastic results which have not only improved lives for communities but which have also created a momentum to develop mainstream delivery pathways – therefore the ripple effect has in fact been city-wide improvement in some instances.

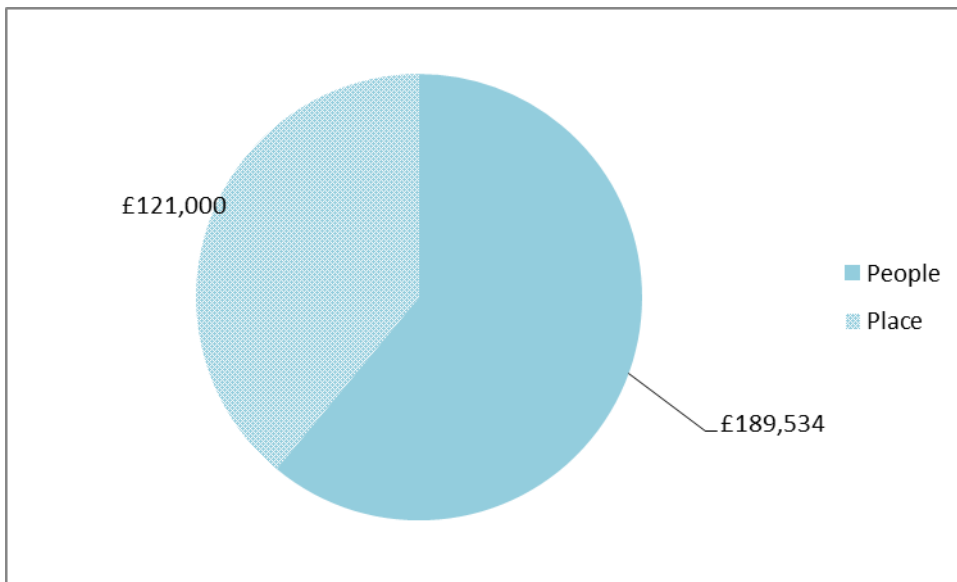


Pallion Traders Association – working hard to ensure our local high streets thrive

The Area Committee has continued to influence core service delivery too – enabling services to improve using their local intelligence. The Place and People Boards have continued to be pivotal, providing an opportunity for focussed discussion with officers and partners, to support the Committee to make the right decisions for the communities within the West.

Resources

Through the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) we have funded a range of projects to support delivery of our priorities achieving positive outcomes for local people. A snapshot of the projects that funding has been allocated to is below.



Breakdown of how SIB has been allocated in line with People, Place and Economy priorities during 2014/15

Projects

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Healthy Lifestyle Programme | 60,000.00 |
| Purchase a Community Vehicle | 28,197.00 |
| Maximising Greenspaces to Improve Health plus derelict land surveys | 46,000.00 |
| Apprenticeships in the West | 20,000.00 |
| West Intensive Recruitment Employment Support (WIREs) | 31,837.00 |
| West Community Work Clubs Additional Funding Training & Support | 4,500.00 |
| West Area Heritage Event | 40,000.00 |
| Development of West Health Programmes | 80,000.00 |

In addition to larger scale projects a range of smaller scale support has been provided to community groups. 65 Community Chest grants have been awarded totalling £49,820, the average value being £800. The benefits for local communities' have ranged from local events to the creation of a community shop!

The Area Committee has influenced core 'People, Place and Economy' service delivery, considering how services are delivered across the locality and has directly influenced the development of services for the city working across multiple strategic partnerships. Some key achievements include:

Community Work Clubs & Empowering Volunteers

A gap was identified in support for those residents who are actively seeking work but not receiving support from the 'Work Programme'. A local 'work club' programme, was developed and delivered locally through all 6 wards within the West Area by three of our VCS organisations as a consortium. The programme has been incredibly successful and the lessons learned have influenced the creation and development of a new approach to supporting people into work, working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Council Welfare Service.

Now instead of community work clubs being restricted to a physical base, support can be delivered to smaller community groups with volunteers trained to help more people in a wider range of locations.

Another successful new approach in helping job seekers in the community is the West Area Committee funded 'West Intensive Recruitment Employment Support' (WIREs) project. This works closely with employers such as UNIPRES and Housing 21 to identify possible new jobs, and the type of skills and training which people will need to take them. The project provides intensive coaching to prepare job seekers to apply for posts including interview techniques, making sure they have all the up-to-date qualifications and training certificates necessary to apply, and setting up a

daily programme of activities at times which reflect the normal working day so that people are fully prepared to start work immediately.

During 2014/2015 West Area Committee funded community employment and skills initiatives have;

- Provided help and practical support to 851 unemployed job seekers through the job clubs
- Helped 177 local people find work
- Provided training for 129 to increase their employability
- Supported nine local people to set up their own businesses

Health

During 2014 West Area Committee developed and approved a West Health Plan, in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the VCS, supported by Public Health

The plan aligned the outcomes of the Health and Wellbeing Board, CCG, and Public Health with the West local area priority to improve the Health of residents. It also identified all of the partners with whom Committee could work to encourage and improve communication, engagement and delivery.

West Area Committee has worked hard over the last year to work towards achieving the outcomes on the plan. As well as working with partners to improve pathways and communication, they have financially supported projects to improve health and wellbeing, advocating the Health Champion Programme; Dementia Awareness; Healthy Eating; Increasing Physical activity – the list goes on. They have also attracted match funding from the CCG and Public Health to support delivery to address health priorities.

More recently, as an outcome of both the Health Champion Programme and also the Community Work Club project, it was clear that mental health is a real issue for people within the West (and in fact nationwide). However even more concerning is the lack of engagement by those individuals who are most in need of support. This lack of engagement it appeared, from the feedback received during the Community Work Club lessons learnt feedback, was either fear of the repercussions or lack of awareness. However these communities are opening up to trusted networks – such as their local CA or support groups.

The Area Committee took radical action – they are currently supporting several groups to deliver alternative therapy activities to enable our communities to engage with those who are most vulnerable, in confidence and as part of a trusted relationship, to enable the Area Committee to understand the barriers to engagement and fundamentally onto the road to recovery, lessons learnt from the projects will be used to influence improvements to health pathways – using robust evidence and analysis.

Maximising Green Spaces – Neglected green and open spaces across the community are being brought back into use for local people with funding from the West Committee. Voluntary groups, schools, community partners and local groups were asked to identify sites to clean-up; create recreational space, heritage walks, growing or play spaces for everyone to enjoy. The Committee also toured the area and highlighted key sites that they knew their communities would benefit from improvement. The Place Board now reviews the plan every month to ensure good progress is being made.

Empowering Communities - As Chair of the West Area Committee, it is also a great privilege to chair the West Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Network meetings. These meetings support the sector allowing information to be shared and opportunities to be offered. The VCS Network plays a vital role in the life of the community and they form a key part of the West Area Committee as a partner, alongside the Police and Fire Services. During 2014-2015 the network has gone from strength to strength and we are working closely in partnership to address core issues within the city as well as working together to develop a large-scale community Heritage event to celebrate the heritage of the West, as we remember those who died and the families who suffered during WW1.



West Area Community Event held in Sainsbury's at Silksworth ahead of the West Area Committee meeting

Award-winning Volunteers – the voluntary sector within the West have scooped several prestigious awards during 2014/2015

Best of Wearside 2014 Awards went to:

- South Hylton Primary School – Green Champion
- South Hylton Tansy Centre Catering Team – Community Group
- The Youth Almighty Project – Community Project

Karen Wood from Pallion Action Group beat the Sunderland AFC Manager Gus Poyet to win the SUNFM Style Awards 2014 Icon Award.

The year ahead for the West - The Area Committee will continue to develop and strengthen their influencing role for the commissioning and delivery of services, particularly focusing upon the integration of services and the adoption of the 'All Together Sunderland' approach - working together to obtain maximum benefit from resources available to the community.

Our thanks go to the members of West Area Committee, our partners and officers, Voluntary and Community Sector and our communities – without their hard work and dedication we would not have achieved such positive outcomes. We look forward to working together throughout 2015-2016, building upon our strong foundations and continuing to create opportunities for communities to become more resilient and confident for the future. 1460