

**At a meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held at the KEPIER HALL ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH, THE BROADWAY, HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING on WEDNESDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor J. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Ellis, A. Hall, Heron, Rolph, D. Smith, Speding, Tate and Wakefield.

**Also in Attendance:-**

|                    |                                       |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sal Buckler        | - Office of the Chief Executive       |
| Bill Blackett      | - Office of the Chief Executive       |
| Susan Brown        | - Coalfield Forum                     |
| Melanie Caldwell   | - Gentoo                              |
| John Chapman       | - Gentoo                              |
| Graham Carr        | - Development and Regeneration        |
| Stephen Dodds      | - Nexus                               |
| Graham Finlay      | - Northumbria Police                  |
| Sam Palombella     | - Groundwork North East               |
| Keith Lowes        | - Planning and Development            |
| Julie Heathcote    | - Office of the Chief Executive       |
| Cllr Juliana Heron | - Hetton Town Council                 |
| Pauline Hopper     | - Office of the Chief Executive       |
| Nicky Rowland      | - Community and Cultural Services     |
| Claire Rogers      | - Office of the Chief Executive       |
| Kath Butchert      | - Children's Services                 |
| Derek Welsh        | - Health Housing and Adult Services   |
| Angela Cousins     | - Community and Cultural Services     |
| Patricia Simmons   | - Secretary of Lambton Memorial Group |

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors F. Anderson and D. Richardson.

**Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked all those present to introduce themselves.

## **Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2009**

- i) Councillor F. Anderson was present at the meeting yet her apologies were also recorded.
- ii) Councillor Rolph requested that an amendment be made to page 3 and the word "compliment" be amended to "complement".
- iii) The first bullet point on page 5 is amended to read the "Seaham and Houghton Star"

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2009 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the above amendments.

### **Declarations of Interest**

#### **Item 9 – Financial Statements and Funding Request**

Councillor Heron declared a personal interest in relation to the Community Chest Project for Houghton Town FC as Chairman of the Club.

Councillor Tate declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Moorsley Care of the Aged Community Chest Project as a potential beneficiary of the grant and withdrew from the meeting prior to consideration of the item.

### **Questions to Area Committee**

There were no questions to the Area Committee received.

#### **Feedback on a project previously funded through Strategic Initiatives Budget – Lambton Miners Memorial Project**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide information to the Area committee on a previously funded Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) project and to request an extension to the expected completion date to March 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Patricia Simmons, Secretary to Lambton Memorial Group, was present at the meeting and provided Members with an explanation as to why there had been delays in completing the project. Mrs. Simmons explained the work in progress on the miners' banners and circulated preliminary artwork from the school children and photographs of the metal banners that were under construction.

In response to a query from Councillor Speding, Mrs. Simmons advised that Sunderland Council would own the banners.

Councillor A. Hall commented that the banners looked fantastic and queried what was being done to acknowledge that funding had been provided from the Council's Strategic Initiatives Budget.

Mrs. Simmons advised that she would like to make use of the Council's corporate communications facility to assist in promoting the funding source.

Councillor R. Heron thanked Mrs. Simmons for the obvious hard work that had gone into the Project which was a great tribute to the mining history and heritage of the area. He queried what education had been carried out with the children in relation to the mining history.

Mrs. Simmons stated that the children had researched their family history to find out whether their relatives had been involved in coal mining.

Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Officer suggested that Mrs. Simmons liaises with Julie Heathcote, Corporate Communications to help promote the work that had been carried out with funding from the Committee's Strategic Initiatives Budget.

Having thanked Mrs. Simmons for her report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:
  - i) the Committee note the report; and
  - ii) the Project is granted an extension until March 2010 to spend the £2,000 remaining budget.

### **Coalfield an Attractive and Inclusive Area Summary**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated), which asked Members to consider and identify their main proposals for further development and action in relation to their Attractive and Inclusive theme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mrs. Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, took Members through each of the eight priority issues, as detailed below. Each priority was considered in turn and Members were given an update with regard to current activity gaps and needs and actions taken for each.

- i) Reduce environmental crime (dog fouling, litter, and graffiti);
- ii) Improve local shopping centres;
- iii) Make landlords accountable for state of their property;
- iv) Reduce problems caused by unadopted roads;
- v) Bring empty properties back into use;
- vi) Address lack of parking provision in residential areas;
- vii) Make estates and residential areas more attractive;

viii) Address issues around lack of public transport in some areas.

Councillor Rolph advised that at the last meeting she had queried whether the Environment Agency had been invited to send a representative and noted that there was no one from the Agency in attendance.

Ms. Hopper advised that to date the Environment Agency had declined the offer to provide a representative at the Committee; however, a meeting with them had been arranged in October, which would provide the opportunity to discuss it further.

Graham Carr, Highway Maintenance Manager, gave background information to the Committee regarding the proposal to enable Cox Green to Fatfield Bridge wheeled pedestrian section of the River Wear trail to be more accessible for disabled users.

Councillor A. Hall advised that much of the area was no longer in the Coalfield and was now classed as Washington East. Although she had no objection to the proposal in principle it was important that this was borne in mind when looking at the funding split.

Ms. Hopper advised that Washington Councillors had requested further information on the site prior to agreeing funding.

The Chairman proposed that any decision on funding be postponed pending a scoping report for the area being brought back to a future Committee.

Referring to the proposal for joint education project between agencies in order to raise awareness and encourage local people to improve their area, Councillor Rolph advised that 18 months ago the Council had produced a DVD entitled "My City" which was sent to all schools with the aim of generating pride for the area young people lived in and enabling children and young people to explore the impact of their actions in relation to litter, graffiti and active citizenship. She suggested that the DVD be revisited to ascertain if it was still relevant.

Ms. Cousins, Community and Cultural Services advised that there were plans to distribute the DVD more widely.

In considering improvements to local shopping centres, Councillor J. Heron, Hetton Town Council, stated that it was important to give shops an incentive to occupy vacant units.

Councillor Rolph felt that shopping centres were defined too narrowly within the Retail Needs Assessment, and there was still a need to continue to maintain and develop the small centres such as Fence Houses.

Councillor Rolph advised that Dalton Park gave over empty retail premises to organisations such as social enterprises to allow them to take advantage and be innovative within the community. This approach needed to be given careful consideration to help to prevent retail areas declining and encourage people to visit them.

Mr. Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, advised that the Retail Needs Assessment was high level across the whole of the Sunderland area to meet the City's strategic needs. Its primary purpose was to provide an audit trail of the Local Development Framework adhering to government guidance. Following this there would be a neighbourhood level study.

Councillor Blackburn queried whether privately owned vacant retail premises could be utilised for other beneficial uses and was advised by Mr. Lowes that it would be possible with the permission of the owner.

Councillor Rolph advised that she felt Sunderland's retail needs assessment was irrelevant to small shops and she felt that all shopping areas in Sunderland should be considered regardless of their size.

Councillor Ellis queried where the specific proposals for Market Street originated.

Ms. Hopper advised that workshops had been held between June and August with a wide audience and had asked people where they felt improvements needed to be carried out. The Committee had also been invited to put forward further proposals.

Councillor Ellis stated that she had put forward a very specific proposal subsequent to the workshops regarding lack of toilet provision in Houghton-le-Spring.

Ms. Hopper advised that it was her understanding the toilets issue would be considered by Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee as part of its Work Programme. Ms. Hopper agreed to ascertain whether this was still the case.

Councillor Ellis advised it was extremely important to be kept in the loop regarding proposals she had made.

Councillor Wakefield advised that the Forestry Commission were removing a number of trees in Newbottle. He felt it would be extremely worthwhile to look into the possibility of transferring mature trees elsewhere. He suggested that Russell Foster from the Forestry Commission be requested to look into the feasibility of transferring a number of the trees to Market Street.

Mr. Derek Welsh, Housing Neighbourhood and Renewal Manager, updated the Committee regarding what was currently being done to make landlords more accountable for the state of their property. He advised that there was a slight revision to the proposal of funding the employment of an Empty Homes Officer. It was felt that it would be more worthwhile to fund 3 dedicated officers to deal with anti social behaviour for the whole City and 2 Empty Property Officers. However, this would be subject to the agreement of all Area Chairs.

Mr. Walsh agreed to provide a summary of legislation, Council policies and powers in respect of private landlords.

Discussion ensued on the problem of unadopted roads in the Coalfield area.

Councillor Ellis advised that Councils elsewhere in the country had solved the problem by adopting roads and placing a surcharge on individual houses when they were sold.

Councillor Blackburn advised that the Environmental and Planning Review Committee had looked into various options, including placing a surcharge on properties when they were sold.

In relation to the issue of making estates and residential areas more attractive, Councillor Rolph requested a list of outstanding issues.

Stephen Dodds from Nexus spoke about issues around lack of public transport in some areas and advised that there was a drive to link up services to core bus networks services in the Coalfield area. The taxi car scheme and community transport facilities were available and working well. He informed the Committee that legislation had changed in the last year, which meant that Nexus needed to be more accountable for public transport. He requested that Members provide input into areas where they felt there was a lack of service, which in turn would feed into the network design.

The Chairman advised that Mr. Dodds would be invited to bring regular updates to the Committee.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Hopper for the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted; and
- ii) the following proposals be developed:-
  - A scoping document be brought back to the Committee in relation to Cox Green to Fatfield Bridge wheeled pedestrian section of the River Wear trail to be more accessible for disabled and attractive and safe for all users;
  - Consideration be given to a joint education project between the relevant agencies in order to raise awareness and encourage local people to improve their area and the 'My City' DVD be considered as a tool to be included;
  - Russell Foster, Forestry Commission, to ascertain whether it would be possible to transfer trees from Newbottle to Market Street.
  - Derek Welsh to provide a summary of legislation, Council policies and powers in respect of private landlords and the feasibility of funding dedicated antisocial behaviour and empty properties officer be explored;
  - Committees receive regular updates on unadopted roads;

- A list of outstanding issues regarding making estates and residential areas more attractive is brought back to a future Committee.

### **Thematic Feedback Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with feedback from the established working groups for each of the five thematic priorities the Area Committee had agreed and considered as set out in the work plan for 2009/2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In July 2009, the Area Committee had agreed a number of actions and proposals relating to the Safe priorities which had been formulated into an action plan for Members to monitor.

Ms. Hopper took Members through the report highlighting any progress against the actions and identifying proposals which had come from them for Members consideration.

Members considered the funding applications for Phoenix Project (£13,118) (2 year project) and mobile youth provision (£38,000)

Kath Butchert, Integrated Youth Officer provided a brief overview of the application for mobile youth provision.

Councillor Rolph stated that the mobile provision was excellent but was concerned over the lack of people to run the facility. She was also concerned that the Coalfields area always appeared to be last in receiving such provision.

Ms. Butchert advised that a development plan was in place and interviews had taken place to recruit staff. She gave assurances that the Coalfield Area would not be last when implementing the provision.

Ms. Hopper advised that the Council's own Anti Social Behaviour Team would be included in the activity.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Hopper for her report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

i) the attached Annex 1 and 2 be noted; and

ii) the following proposals be agreed:-

- Request for a funding application for Phoenix Project (£13,118) (2 year project)
- Request for a funding application for mobile youth provision (£38,000)

## **Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated), which provided the Area Committee with details of the proposed SIP as a delivery mechanism for achieving the long term ambitions of the area in order to improve the quality of life for residents and communities as encapsulated within the Sunderland Strategy, the Local Area Agreement, CAA and Local Area Plans

(For copy report – see original minutes).

5. RESOLVED that Option 2 – SIP is split across the four identified wards of the area, totalling £59,285 per ward, with local ward councillors and service deliverers being responsible and accountable for its expenditure against the LAP priorities, with proposed projects being presented to Area Committee for a final decision be agreed.

## **Financial Statements and Funding Request**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with the current expenditure from the Strategic Initiatives Budget, protocols and emergency protocols for accessing SIB and SIP funding and 15 projects recommended for support from the 2009/2010 Community Chest Scheme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Hopper presented the report, asking Members to formally agree and adopt the application process for the SIB / SIP Governance, as well as the protocols for accessing funds in an emergency, subject to paragraph 4.8 of the report being amended to read 'The Deputy Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman'.

Discussion ensued in relation to the Community Chest with particular reference to Hetton Workingmen's Bowls Club and Houghton Town F.C. The respective Ward Councillors agreed that the two applications be deferred pending further discussion.

Councillor Ellis advised that she had not been informed about the Community Chest Panel Meeting and was therefore not aware of the applications for Houghton.

The Democratic Services Officer agreed to communicate Councillor Ellis's concerns to Cath Morrow, Community Chest Officer.

5. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the approved SIB budget for 2009/2010 is agreed;
- ii) the process for application and emergency protocols for accessing SIB and SIP funding be agreed and adopted, subject to the amendment of paragraph 4.8 of the emergency protocol as set out above;



- iii) that the Community Chest project for funding for Hetton Workingmen's Bowls Club and Houghton Town FC be deferred and that approval be given to the 13 remaining projects recommended for support from the 2009/2010 Community Chest budget with a total value of £12,501 as detailed in Annex 1 to the report.

### **Update on Community Communications to support Area Committees 2009-2010**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated), which provided Members with an update on the development of the Community Communications action plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Julie Heathcote, Communications Officer, presented the report to Members advising of the activities and actions that were either underway or planned for the near future.

Councillor Rolph expounded the importance of having a bespoke Newsletter for the area to engage public interest.

Councillor Ellis commented that it was important that any published material in relation to the Coalfields used authentic photography from the area and not general 'Sunderland' images.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Dodd for her report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the current community communications plan of work be received and noted.

### **Developing an Economic Masterplan for Sunderland**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated), which updated Members on the progress that had been made on developing an Economic Masterplan for Sunderland, and sought the views of the Members on the Economic vision that is emerging.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Claire Rogers, Policy Officer, gave a presentation (copy circulated), which set out the options and preferred direction for Sunderland as well as the key propositions and next steps in developing the Economic Masterplan.

(For copy presentation – see original minutes)

She advised that a consortium of consultants led by GENECON was appointed in April 2009 following a competitive procurement process. They proposed a pragmatic approach following four key principles:

- Realistic – ambitious but credible
- Outward-looking – collaborate to compete
- Demand-led – market shift through perceptual change
- Innovative – new models for delivery and economic governance.

Ms. Rogers explained the three scenarios developed, which were:

- Northern Gateway – building on the strength of the city's location in the region and positioning the city as a regional gateway
- Entrepreneurial Nimble City – Building on the city's strengths in manufacturing and associated services and positioning the city as a 'smart city' that is attractive to knowledge workers and has high levels of enterprise and innovation.
- Creative Park City – building on the strengths of the environmental assets and focusing on low carbon technologies and creative industries.

She advised that these scenarios were not designed as options where one should be picked; but more so they were designed to set out possible parameters for the city's development.

In response to a question from Councillor Blackburn, Ms. Rogers advised that the consultants for the Plan had tried to breakdown what needed to be delivered in the City.

Councillor Ellis expressed concerns that the City centre appeared to be mentioned a lot with little reference to the Coalfield area.

Ms. Rogers recognised the strong role the villages in the city could play within the Masterplan and referred to the relevance the Coalfield area would have in developing low carbon technology.

Councillor Heron stated that it was important to engage the University. Working in partnership with the University, talented young people graduating from the University should be encouraged to live and work in the city.

Councillor Rolph commented that Houghton and Hetton were not recognised as part of the urban core within the Regional Spatial Strategy. As the vast majority of future industry and business growth was anticipated to take place in the city centre it was vital that the villages did not become backwaters. To prevent this, transport links to the Coalfields needed to be excellent. Councillor Rolph felt that the label of the 'Coalfield Area' was unhelpful and the areas of Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row needed to be considered individually. She suggested that the Economic Masterplan be revisited when the Committee discuss the Prosperous theme.

Councillor Heron also suggested that the arc needed to be involved in the Masterplan particularly in relation to alternative forms of energy.

Ms. Rogers advised that the consultants were looking into this.

Mr. Lowes advised that the Core Strategy would run parallel to the Masterplan and would attempt to express ideas in a spatial sense. He stated that the Coalfield Area had great future housing potential.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Rogers for her presentation and report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received and noted.

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

(Signed) J. Scott,  
Chairman.