

At a meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held in EASINGTON LANE COMMUNITY ACCESS POINT on WEDNESDAY, 30TH MARCH, 2011 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. Richardson in the Chair

Councillors F. Anderson, Blackburn, Ellis, A. Hall, Heron, Rolph, J. Scott, Speding, Tate and Wakefield

Also in Attendance:-

Ron Barrass	Member of the Public	
Susan Brown	Area Community Co-ordinator	Sunderland Council
John Chapman	Head of Neighbourhoods	Gentoo
David Ellison	Area Response Manager	Sunderland Council
Graham Finlay	Inspector	Northumbria Police
Clive Greenwood	Senior Planner	Sunderland Council
Cllr Juliana Heron	Member	Hetton Town Council
Pauline Hopper	Area Officer	Sunderland Council
Matthew Jackson	Governance Services Officer	Sunderland Council
Vicky Medhurst	Principal Librarian	Sunderland Council
Annette Parr	School Improvement Officer	Sunderland Council
Alison Paterson	Area Lead Executive	Sunderland Council
Ian Richardson	Assistant Head of Street Scene	Sunderland Council
Beverley Scanlon	Head of Service	Sunderland Council
Liz St. Louis	Head of Customer Service & Development	Sunderland Council
James Third	Community Relation Officer	Nexus
Lee Wardle	VCS Network	

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor D. Smith along with Nonnie Crawford (South of Tyne and Wear NHS Primary Care Trust) and Andrew Perkin

Declarations of Interest

Item 2 – 2011/12 Priorities and Workplan

Councillors Ellis, Rolph and Wakefield declared a personal interest as Members of Friends of Rectory Park.

Councillors Blackburn, A. Hall and J. Scott declared a personal interest as a Member of the Integrated Transport Authority.

Councillor A. Hall declared personal interests as an Employee of Anchor Trust and as a Board Member of Gentoo Living.

Councillor Tate declared a personal interest as a Member of the Integrated Transport Authority Scrutiny Advisory Committee

Community Chest

Councillor Heron declared a personal interest as a Member of Houghton Racecourse Community Action Point and as a Governor of Eppleton Primary School.

Change in the Order of Business

The Chairman stated that the Review of Greenspace Strategy would be discussed at this time to enable the presenting officer to leave to attend another commitment.

Community Action in Coalfield – Progress Review Progress Report on 2010/11 Priority – Review of Green Space Strategy

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress made on the Review of Green Space Strategy.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Clive Greenwood, Senior Planner, presented the report and informed the Committee that green space audits had been carried out and work was progressing well. It was expected that the work would be completed by December 2011.

Councillor Rolph stated that there was excellent work being undertaken. The team had a difficult job to do with assessing the value of the green space provision. Scarcity of green space affected the value; where there was little provision the green space available was more valuable. People's desires depended on what they already had.

Mr Greenwood stated that the team needed help from Members and residents to find out what green space meant to people and what value spaces had. There would be a survey undertaken to identify the value of the green spaces.

Councillor Heron stated that he had attended the session at Crowtree Leisure Centre and had raised the issue of former industrial sites. These sites were part of the city's industrial heritage and were often forgotten about, there was a need to include them in the green space strategy.

Mr Greenwood agreed with this and stated that there was a need to identify the defining characters of the areas.

1. RESOLVED that the update be noted and further progress updates be received.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 5th January, 2011

The Chairman advised that Julie Wilkie had incorrectly been referred to as Julie Wardle in the attendance.

With regard to the Responsive Local Services Councillor Rolph advised that there had been a change from the black boxes to blue bins rather than the recorded green bins.

2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 5th January, 2011 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the above amendments.

Community Action in Coalfield – 2011/12 Priorities and Workplan

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the progress made on the development of the 2011/12 workplan and the priorities which had been identified for the Coalfield Area.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, presented the report and advised Members that a meeting had taken place with Members where discussion had taken place regarding the issues within the area. Initial priorities for the workplan had been provisionally agreed as:

- Activities for young people
- Support for Older People
- Empty properties
- Public transport
- Neglected land

It was also agreed that the following priorities be carried over from the existing work plan:

- Heritage
- Local Shopping Centres
- Youth disorder
- Allotments and gardens
- Child poverty
- Unadopted roads
- Play provision
- Speeding and dangerous traffic

The Chairman asked that if any Members had an interest in joining any of the task and finish groups Task and result groups that they inform Ms Hopper.

Councillor Rolph queried whether it was wise to set up the task and finish groups now considering that in May the composition of the Committee could change following the elections. The Chairman stated that he thought it was appropriate as it would allow for progress to be made on the Committee's work.

Councillor Anderson commented that a lot of the areas had looked at Child poverty and a pilot scheme was now in place in Southwick which had all of the agencies involved working together and was making good progress.

With regard to empty properties Councillor A. Hall stated that there had been a low level of consultation, she had done a survey with Councillor Speding in the Shiney Row ward and had identified a large number of empty properties which had not previously been identified.

Councillor Speding added that some empty properties were a major issue; run down properties resulted in the surrounding area being affected and there was a need to address this.

Ms Hopper agreed to inform Graham Wilson of the information collected by Councillors A. Hall and Speding.

Councillor Heron stated that there needed to be something done about empty properties; even on some new estates there were empty houses.

Councillor Rolph commented that there was a lot of work to do on public transport. The Coalfield area was affected by decisions which were made in County Durham as well as decisions made within Sunderland. There had been subsidies cut for services which were operating within County Durham and this had put pressure on the services which served the Coalfield.

Councillor Blackburn advised that he had met with the Integrated Transport Authority and had questioned the Director General of Nexus about the provision within the area.

Councillor Anderson stated that Councillor Blackburn had done some excellent work on improving the bus services. The X1 was a very good service. There were however still problems with getting into Durham and it seemed that that timetable

was an issue in South Hetton. There was also a problem with getting into Sunderland; while the 35 operated frequently it took over an hour to reach Sunderland as it followed a convoluted route visiting a large number of areas.

Councillor Blackburn informed Members that the 61 had been replaced by the 261 and was now operated by Go-North East. It was pleasing to see services which had previously been subsidised being taken over as commercial services. He had asked for a bus stop to be installed opposite the Manor Public House in High Street and there was going to be a new express service to Sunderland introduced. Older residents were most likely to be satisfied with the level of service however there was still a lot of work needed to be done. The bus operators had reported that 89 percent of services were punctual to within half a minute.

James Third, Nexus Community Relation Officer, agreed to provide the Committee with a list of the changes which had been made to the bus services.

Councillor Anderson commented that the frequency of the timetable changes was a barrier to getting people onto the buses as the changes made it more difficult for people to access the services. This would lead to people using the car in preference to the bus.

Ms Hopper drew Members attention to the proposal for Neglected Land to be included as a priority. It was proposed that a task and finish group be set up and that Dave Ellison, Area Response Manager, take the lead on this priority.

Mr Ellison directed Members to the departmental structure he had circulated to the Committee. He asked that if Members had any issues to contact him so that he could arrange for the issues to be resolved. Telephone numbers for all of the people involved in the Responsive Local Services team would be circulated in due course.

Mr Ellison then advised Members of the latest service request figures; there had been 43 requests raised for grounds maintenance, 13 for graffiti and 151 for rubbish and litter. The grounds maintenance figure was high due to the aftermath of the high winds while the rubbish and litter figure was a legacy of the grit from the snowy conditions during the winter.

There had been enforcement action, especially around dog fouling and fly tipping. The Strategic Land Management system would help with tracing owners of neglected land and would be going to Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Ellis commented that there had been a reduction in the levels of dog fouling however there had now been an increase again. Sunderland was an example of good practice for other areas; the city was much better than some of the neighbouring authorities. Mr Ellison agreed that there was still a problem, the service reacted to complaints however there was a desire to make the service more proactive.

Inspector Finlay advised that the police were working with enforcement officers to tackle scrap metal dealers; fixed penalty notices were being issued to unlicensed

carriers. The police attended the LMAPS meetings to find out what issues there were in the area.

Councillor Anderson stated that recently there had not been an issue with fly tipping however last year there had been a regular problem at Hetton Lyons Boys Club where there was a new development, which was costing a lot of money to clean up. She queried what the current situation was with areas where there was persistent fly tipping.

Mr Ellison advised that it was the Council's role to remove fly tipping from public space; there was a need to trace land owners where there was fly tipping on private property as the Council could not enter the land to clean up without permission from the land owner. He would liaise with the owners of the land to encourage them to secure the property to prevent the problem from reoccurring. Where fly tipping caused a health and safety risk the Council had the power to remove it without first seeking permission from the land owner.

Ian Richardson, Assistant Head of Streetscene – Responsive Local Services, advised that with fly tipping on private property there was a requirement for judgement to be used as to whether to access the property to remove the waste; dumped waste attracted more fly tippers to the site. There was legislation in place to stop access to sites which were a persistent problem, this was an expensive course of action and could only be used where there was frequent dumping on a larger scale.

Councillor Anderson stated that it was appreciated that there were cost implications; however residents just wanted waste cleaning up quickly and did not understand the issues surrounding land ownership.

Councillor Heron stated that he wanted to see more action taken to catch offenders; he felt that the CCTV camera network could be used to assist in identifying offenders. The Responsive Local Services team was a welcome replacement for the Clean Team as it was good to see that enforcement had been brought into the same team as cleansing.

Councillor Rolph stated that it would be useful to know how many fixed penalties had been issued as the information would reassure residents that work was taking place. There was a problem with people driving on green spaces, especially in the Dairy Lane area where people were parking on verges.

Mr Ellison agreed to provide the statistics on fixed penalty notices at a future meeting of the Committee; he was surprised at the amount of problems with parking on grass verges, it was an ongoing problem and cost a lot for repairs.

3. RESOLVED that the update on the development of the 2011/12 work plan be noted and the final plan be presented to the June Committee Meeting for approval.

Community Action in Coalfield – Progress Review

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which enabled Members to consider the progress reviews on the priorities included in the 2010/11 work plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

- **Progress Report on Regeneration at Rectory Park**

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, presented the progress report on the work done at Rectory Park and advised Members that Keith Hamilton was the lead agent for the works.

Councillor Ellis stated that there was excellent work had been done and the work on the Tithe Barn was very pleasing, however it was disappointing that some of the funds had needed to be used on maintenance rather than improvements.

Councillor A. Hall congratulated the Friends of Rectory Park for their hard work and commented that it did not appear that any outside funding had been sought for the works with all of the funds being provided by the Area Committee. She felt that residents had a right to know that the funding had come from the Area Committee and there should be advertising.

Councillor J. Scott agreed that adverts would be a good idea; they would put the Council in a good light and show residents that the Area Committee was providing funding to improve the area, especially given that there had been no funding from other sources for the improvements at the park.

Councillor Blackburn stated that he and Councillor Tate had been campaigning for recognition of the Area Committee's funding of projects.

Councillor Ellis commented that money from the Area Committee was needing to be spent on Maintenance due to the park not being maintained for years and being in a poor condition. It was a shame that the park had been allowed to decline. The Friends of the Park had sought funding from other sources including the Heritage Lottery however the applications had not been successful; further applications for funding would be submitted with the hope that they would be successful. The park was at the heart of the old Medieval village of Houghton.

Councillor Heron stated that SIB funding was intended to be a catalyst to encourage funding from other sources into the area.

Councillor Anderson commented that residents assumed that it was the Council carrying out the works whenever there was any work on public buildings and parks; when Houghton had been part of County Durham there were often signs erected to advertise the work done by the Council. Friends of Parks groups were excellent; it was good to see residents supporting their local parks.

Councillor Rolph requested that figures be provided on how the funds were spent on the park.

4. RESOLVED that the update be noted and a further update be received at the June Meeting as part of the Annual Report.

- **Heritage**

Vicky Medhurst, Principal Librarian, presented the update and advised Members of the work that had been carried out by North of England Civic Trust (NECT) including public consultation events and the completion of questionnaires. NECT would be producing a final report which would then be submitted to the Area Committee for approval.

Councillor Anderson stated that she had attended a meeting at the Hetton Centre to discuss the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the disaster at Eppleton pit; it was felt that it was important to include this as part of the area's heritage.

Councillor J. Heron, Hetton Town Council, stated that there had been discussions around the possibility of creating a permanent memorial to miners lost in pit disasters.

In response to a comment from Councillor Speding, Ms Medhurst advised that the draft report would be circulated to Members.

Councillor A. Hall commented that the event in Shiney Row had initially not been successful due to the lack of publicity and queried who had been responsible for publicising the event and also whether there had been any charge levied for the use of the venue. Ms Medhurst advised that NECT had been responsible for publicising the event and the researchers had gone out into the street to gather opinions which had resulted in people being interviewed who normally would not have been engaged with. The fee for the use of the venue had been waived for this event.

With regard to a miner's memorial, Councillor Rolph stated that there had been numerous disasters within the area dating back to 1769 and as such there was a lot to focus on should it be decided that a memorial be created.

Councillor Ellis stated that there was a lack of general awareness of the area's coalmining heritage and it would be a good thing to celebrate; there was a need to increase people's knowledge of the area's heritage.

Councillor Speding referred to the Miner's Memorial Service, the Area Committee had played a large part in setting up this service and there had been very little support from the Local Authority; this service had grown significantly over the years.

Councillor Anderson added that there had been a group of school children had visited the Civic Centre, they had been interested by the pit banner in the Council

Chamber but had not known what it was; there was a need to educate the city's young people about the coal mining heritage of the city to ensure that the heritage was kept alive.

5. RESOLVED that the report be noted and consideration be given to the outcomes of the final report.

- **Local Shopping Centres (Coalfield Shopping Initiative)**

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, presented the report and advised that work had progressed on the three elements of the scoping exercise; a survey was to be taking place in conjunction with retail consultancy BSupplied however this survey had been delayed until the completion of the Census. There would be a task and finish group meeting held on 13th April, 2011 and the details of this would be circulated to Members prior to this meeting taking place.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

- **Youth Disorder**

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, presented the report and informed Members of the areas which were hotspots for disorder; these were Easington Lane (particularly around the High Street), Houghton Racecourse Estate and Penshaw. Ms Hopper then introduced Inspector Finlay who updated the Committee on the progress made on reducing youth disorder. Since the 3G camera had been installed in Penshaw the number of incidents had reduced and there were plans to now move the camera to the Racecourse Estate. The XL Youth Village had reduced the number of issues within Easington Lane and there were discussions ongoing as to what would be done after the Youth Village left the area.

Councillor Tate advised that there were a number of young people congregated at Hetton Bus Station on evenings and this lead to fear for people using the bus station.

Councillor Anderson added that the young people at the Bus Station were not intending to cause trouble, a lot of them were playing football; however it was very intimidating when walking through the bus station, especially for older residents of the area. The CCTV cameras in the bus station did not help to provide a feeling of safety even though it was known that they could help with solving crimes after they had occurred.

Inspector Finlay advised that the cameras had been successful, there had been a lady whose purse had been stolen and thanks to the camera the offender had been caught and was now in prison. There were attempts to provide other places such as youth centres for the young people to go to; they needed to go somewhere and it was best if they were in a place where they could be monitored.

Lee Wardle, VCS Network representative, advised that there had been work with the Princes Trust at Hetton Flats however it was not safe for the young people as they were being pelted with bricks by children who should have been in school. He was shocked when he had heard about this and queried what could be done as people were scared to go there. Inspector Finlay stated that the police should be phoned immediately if there were any issues.

Ms Hopper advised Members that there was an application for SIB funding to provide a responsive project to reduce youth disorder and antisocial behaviour which was set out under item 3g annex 1a.

7. RESOLVED that the report be noted and consideration be given to the application for SIB funding as part of item 3g on the Agenda.

- **Allotments**

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, presented the report and advised Members of the expressions of interest for membership of the task and finish group which was detailed at paragraph 2 of the report and advised that it was also proposed that Dave Ellison join the group.

Councillor Blackburn stated that there had been no Members from Hetton assigned to the group and volunteered to join the group. Ms Hopper stated that the proposed Membership set out in the report had been based on the Members who had previously expressed an interest in joining the group.

Councillor Tate suggested that Ward Members could be invited along to meetings of the group where sites within their Ward were involved.

The Chairman moved that himself along with Councillors Blackburn, J. Scott and D. Smith be assigned to the group in addition to the officers and partners identified in the report; he also advised that Members could attend if they wished if issues within their Ward were being discussed.

8. RESOLVED that the report be noted and the Membership of the task and finish group be agreed as: Councillors Blackburn, D. Richardson, J. Scott and D. Smith along with Dave Ellison, Gerry Roll, Ethel Wilson, Susan Brown, Nichola Hesselwood, and Melanie Caldwell.

- **Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB), Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and Community Chest – Financial Statement and Proposals for Further Allocation of Resources**

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, presented the report and introduced Susan Brown who provided an update on the Coalfield in Bloom Project which had previously received funding from the Committee.

Ms Brown circulated photographs showing the work which had been done as a result of the funding being provided; the project overlapped a number of the committee's priorities and there had also been funding provided by Gentoo for Heritage works.

With regard to the SIP funding, Ms Hopper advised that there would still be funds remaining following the sample work on Houghton War Memorial and asked whether Members had any other projects they felt would benefit from the funding.

Councillor Rolph suggested that the funds could be used on the Fence Houses gateway; there had been work done and it had originally been planned that there would be a floral element to the gateway however this had not been included due to delays. The Chairman agreed with this suggestion.

Councillor Blackburn expressed concerns that the previously approved traffic calming scheme had fallen behind schedule and queried whether the funds would be safe despite this. Ms Hopper advised that this was the case as long as the funding was allocated and the project had started.

Ms Hopper then drew Members attention to the proposals set out in the report and appendices and advised the Committee of the recommendations.

9. RESOLVED that:-

- a. The financial statement be noted.
- b. The SIB proposals detailed in Annex 1a be approved.
- c. A nominal budget of £5,665 of SIB funding be allocated to delivering improvements at allotments.
- d. The remaining SIP funding be used to carry out sample work on Houghton War Memorial and for providing a floral element to the Fence Houses gateway.
- e. The 13 proposals for support from the 2010/11 Community Chest set out in Annex 1b be approved.

(Signed) D. RICHARDSON,
Chairman.