

Washington Area Committee

9th September 2010.

Report of the Chief Executive.

Community Action in Washington – Identifying New Issues and Agreeing Actions.

1. Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1 To enable the future development of area based working, Area Committees require detailed information to be freely available from a number of different sources. To ensure that Area Committee is kept up to date with current events and developments affecting their neighbourhoods, an intelligence hub has been established that acts as a repository for information available. Officers will have access to relevant up-to-date information required to make effective decision making at an area level, and provide Area Committees with the detailed analysis required to identify key priorities and future waves of Responsive Local Services activity.
- 1.2 Information is sourced from other Committee meetings, the Community Leadership Programme, Responsive Local Services (which includes the Customer Service Network), the Area Co-ordination Team, Members Query Management System, Questions to Area Committee, Safer Communities Team and the Consultation Team, including resident surveys. Additional links have been made with the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS), in particular the Data Analyst Team from Northumbria Police.

2. New issues identified

- 2.1 Forward Planning.
To ensure that the Area Committee is kept up to date with current events and developments in their neighbourhoods, the Area Officer will monitor the key decisions made by other Council Committees, for example Cabinet, via the Forward Plan publication, and consider if future decisions affect Washington's work plan. When this occurs information will be highlighted in the issues log, see **Annex 1**, along with recommendations for next steps or circulated to Committee members via the ward bulletin service. In addition to monitoring the Forward Plan the Area Officer will systematically monitor the decisions made under Delegated Powers, again to consider and update Area Councillors on developments relating to their wards, via the ward bulletin.
- 2.2 LDF Green Spaces: Planning for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation.
The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a suite of documents which provides guidance and policies to meet the community's economic, environmental and social aims for the development of land in Sunderland for the next 15 years. Included within the suite of documents is the Green Space Topic Paper which provides an analysis of the City's green space by combining a wide variety of information available from various sources including Sunderland City Council, Office of National Statistics, 2001 Census, the Council's Consultation Database and key internet resources.

The Council's Planning Policy Team, within Office of the Chief Executive, would like the Area Committee to consider the opportunity for Councillors, officers, partners and

residents to work collectively to refresh the green space survey from 2002. It is proposed that the refresh of the survey would be completed in two stages:

1. Workshop style events to engage the community in an interactive format, involving key stakeholders from across the area indicating and identifying new open spaces not shown on the survey/large detailed maps of their communities. This stage will raise awareness, identify new open spaces, as detailed above, and build a sense of community ownership in the planning process.
2. Stakeholders to complete a participatory appraisal for each open space assessing the 'value of area/land to the community'. Support and guidance would be provided by Planning Policy Team. This technique has already been used with some success by the Council. It is highly flexible for both small groups and whole communities where a cycle of data collection, reflection and learning and action planning is desired.

Information gained from both the workshop and appraisal process will be included in the Green Space Topic Paper which will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

2.3. A Thriving Voluntary and Community Sector

The Washington Area Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Network has raised an issue with regard to the lack of co-ordination and support available to volunteers in Washington. At the Washington Area VCS Network meeting on the 10th May 2010, the group reviewed the Local Area Plan to see which issues were priorities for the voluntary and community sector. Several organisations raised issues regarding support for volunteers, an example being Bridge had previously been able to employ a Volunteer Co-ordinator but were no longer able to and this had resulted in fewer volunteers being support to be deployed across the various projects. The Volunteer Centre advised that they were having difficulties coping with the demand for volunteer placements and most groups said that supporting volunteers with training was also proving challenging in the current climate.

There are a number of developments underway which will determine a Corporate approach to supporting a thriving voluntary and community sector and introducing a Sunderland Partnership Volunteering Strategy:

- Community Services is currently undertaking work with regard to developing and supporting 'A Thriving Voluntary and Community Sector'.
- The consultation of the draft Sunderland Partnership Volunteering Strategy is underway. This exercise will identify a basis for partners and organisations to work together to raise the profile of volunteering and increase the number and diversity of volunteers in the City.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Members are requested to:

- Note the 'next steps' as included in **Annex 1**, i.e. referring key decisions made at Cabinet to the relevant Task and Finish Groups for consideration.
- Consider leading a two stage approach to refresh the Local Development Framework (LDF) Green Space Topic Paper 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'.
- Recommend Area Committee be consulted with regard to the Sunderland Partnership Volunteering Strategy. (See Item 4: Influencing Plans, Policy and Strategy.

4. Background papers

- 4.1 Annex 1: Community Action: New Issue
- 4.2 Washington Local Area Plan
- 4.3 Forward Plan - Key decisions
- 4.4 LDF Core Strategy Topic Paper 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'.
- 4.5 Draft Sunderland Partnership Volunteering Strategy

5. Contact Officer: Karon Purvis, Area Officer for Washington.
Tel: 0191 561 2449
Karon.purvis@sunderland.gov.uk