

At a meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber at City Hall, Sunderland on WEDNESDAY 13th DECEMBER, 2023 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Blackburn in the Chair

Councillors Burrell, Dodds, Heron (Vice Chair), K Johnston, Price, Scott and D. Snowdon, Speding and Thornton.

Also Present:-

Chris Binding	Local Democracy Reporter	
Jill Colbert	Chief Executive	Together for Children
Wendy Cook	Area Network Representative	Sunderland North Community Business Centre
Amy Swan	Area Network Representative	Sunderland North Community Business Centre
Scott Wilson	Station Manager	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Phil Baker	Inspector	Northumbria Police
Vicky Gamblin	Head of Neighbourhoods	Gentoo

Chairman’s Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Coalfield Area Committee meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mason-Gage and Rowntree. Apologies were also submitted from Hetton Town Councillor Bill Little and Eileen Bewick, Coalfield Area Network Representative.

Declarations of Interest

The following declaration was received:-

Item 4 – Area Budgets Report – Coalfields Pride

Councillor Thornton made an open declaration in respect of Coalfields Pride as Chair of the Coalfields LGBT+ Support Group.

Councillor Dodds made an open declaration in respect of Houghton Racecourse CA.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 27th September, 2023 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Neighbourhood and Community Board Report

The Chair of the Coalfield Neighbourhood and Community Board submitted a report (copy circulated), which provided an update on the progress against the Area Priorities associated with the Delivery Plan, which would be the focus for the Coalfield Area Committee during 2023-24.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chair of the Coalfield Neighbourhood and Community Board, Councillor Heron presented the report and highlighted the projects contained within the Coalfield Delivery Plan which provided an update on progress on the Area Committee's Area Plan.

Drawing the Committee's attention to the Dynamic Smart City priority, Councillor Heron referred to the 'Can Do' Project and reported that three groups of young people had attended the Neighbourhood and Community Board on 14 November and delivered amazing presentations on their proposals to Councillors. The RU Ready for UC project had been very successful.

Councillor Heron then turned to the Vibrant Smart City priority and advised that the switch on of the Newbottle Christmas Tree lights held on 1 December 2023 had been well attended. St Matthews Church had suggested hosting their Christmas Fayre on the switch on day in 2024 due to the success this year. Councillor Heron added that the children from Dubmire School had made decorations in school to place on the Christmas Tree at Newbottle.

Councillor Speding requested that his thanks be forwarded to Mrs Shields for arranging the excellent dance display which was performed by the children. He added that the event was well attended despite the awful weather.

Councillor Thornton commented on the Christmas Tree at Fence Houses which had been decorated by local children.

Full consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:
 - a) the progress and performance update regarding the Coalfield Area Committee Area Plan 2023/2026 be noted; and

- b) the progress update with regard to Sunderland City Council Service Plans - Area Priorities be noted.

Northumbria Police Update

Inspector Baker, Northumbria Police provided an update to the Committee (copy circulated), giving an overview of crime in the Coalfield area in relation to burglary, vehicle crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and an update on the Autumn Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Inspector Baker informed the Committee that crime numbers were tracking below data for the last 3 years however were slightly above data for 2022, which was related to a spike over a 24-hour period in mid-November, but was not of concern. The most significant crimes recorded in Coalfields in the period were violence against the person with no injury, criminal damage and violence against the person with injury. The area with the most crimes recorded was Houghton Town Centre, Shiney Row and then Hetton. It was pleasing to note that Easington Lane did not feature in the top three locations this reporting period.

Burglary Dwelling offences continued to track below the last three years and as such, the Coalfields area was performing very well. Focused efforts would continue in the area and teams were fully aware of target locations and offenders. There had been a spike recently however arrests had been made and custodial sentences were anticipated. The neighbourhood teams had commenced a bespoke operation to proactively target offenders. In addition, Sargeant Tom Scott had put together an innovative plan to work with offenders.

Vehicle Crime remained an issue and was still a key focus area for teams. Teams were working with partners and there were several operations underway. Several arrests had been made in the reporting period which had resulted in stolen vehicles being recovered. Force resources from other areas had also supported in the area.

ASB was tracking below reporting levels for the last three years and reports had reduced by 12 reports in the last period. The Committee's attention was drawn to the most prevalent reports of disorder which included: motorcycle disorder; neighbour disputes and nuisance. The ASB hot spots for the sector were Houghton Town Centre, Shiney Row followed by Easington Lane.

The National Op Sceptre week of action, which was based around knife crime, and Operation Impact saw the Deputy Chief Constable and one of the assistant Chief Constables spending the day in the Coalfields area. This was a very successful day which had highlighted the excellent results within the area.

The Committee having discussed the report, the Chairman thanked Inspector Baker for his attendance and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Update

Station Manager Scott Wilson, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) submitted a report (copy circulated), providing Performance Monitoring details in relation to the Local Indicators for the Coalfield Area Committee area from 22nd August 2023 to 28th November 2023 compared with the same period the previous year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Station Manager Scott Wilson drew Members' attention to the summer IGNITE programmes which had successfully been delivered apart from the Hetton Academy PHOENIX programme. Whilst the course had had a successful start in June 2023, due to a change in staff at the school and being unable to re-engage with the school, there were seven days for the programme outstanding. Ms Hopper reported that contact had now been made with the Academy and the programme would carry on as planned.

Councillor Price left the meeting at this juncture.

Councillor Speding enquired about a fatal fire in Maple Terrace which had been reported on facebook but which was not included in the report. Station Manager Wilson replied that it would have been in the report if it had been dealt with by the TWFRS.

Councillor Speding asked what Northumbria Police and the TWFRS were doing to secure fire damaged, derelict buildings. Station Manager Wilson advised that the owners had been instructed to visit and secure the site.

Full consideration having been given to the report, the Chairman thanked Mr Wilson for his attendance and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the content of the report be received and noted.

Coalfield Voluntary and Community Sector Network Update

The Coalfield Voluntary and Community Sector Network submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with an update on the work of the Sector to date.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Amy Swan, Area Network Representative presented the report and was on hand to answer Members queries.

Ms Swan advised that meetings had been held in October and November 2023 and the report detailed the presentations received at these meetings. An update was also provided on the Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance which included recruitment and Information was also received on the Social Value opportunities and the volunteering support offered.

In response to a query from Councillor Thornton regarding Macken Money, Ms Swan explained that £130,000 was available to be allocated to Coalfield Area Committee.

Councillor Snowdon noted an error in the report relating to Eileen Bewick's email address.

The Committee having discussed the report, the Chairman thanked Ms Swan for her attendance, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

Gentoo Update

Gentoo submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an update on their work from September 2023 to December 2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Vicky Gamblin, Head of Neighbourhoods, briefed the Committee on Neighbourhood Services and the proposed Investment Plan programme for Houghton and Hetton during 2022/23.

Councillor Snowdon enquired who would be responsible for re-banding existing customers. Ms Gamblin replied that this would be undertaken by Gentoo.

Councillor Thornton thanked Gentoo for housing a local person in a two bedroomed bungalow who was subject to Section 21.

Councillor Scott commented on the positive changing culture at Gentoo. He then referred to the Property Investment Programme 2023/24 and whether this was up to date. Ms Gamblin explained that it was a yearly plan which would be renewed next year.

Councillor Speding drew attention to the 30,519 applicants on the waiting list in Band 3 and wondered how many of the applicants were already living in a Gentoo property or in a Local Authority property. Ms Gamblin agreed to separate the data to identify the number of homeless on the waiting list.

The Committee having discussed the report and the Chairman having thanked Ms Gamblin for her attendance it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the above information be received and noted.

Inspector Baker left the meeting at this juncture.

Coalfield Area Budget Report

The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities submitted a report (copy circulated), providing a financial statement as an updated position on progress in relation to allocating Area Committee Neighbourhood Funding and Community Chest and presented proposals for further funding requests.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Pauline Hopper, Partnership and Community Resilience Manager, presented the report, drawing the Committee's attention to the current financial position of the Area Committee Neighbourhood Fund 2023/2024 as set out in paragraph 2.1 and 3.1, the Neighbourhood Fund proposals set out in 2.3 and Annex 1 and the Community Chest approvals supported from 2023/2024, as detailed in Annex 3.

Ms Hopper briefed the Committee on the applications for funding set out in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 and explained the budgetary implications set out in the report. She also referred Members to Application No. 1, Tackling Motorcycle Disorder and explained that the Specialist Motorcycle Disorder Team would provide a dedicated response across South Tyneside and Sunderland and co-located at Washington Police Station.

Ms Hopper provided an overview on Community Chest awards up to December 2023. She explained that some applications were still being process and not included in the report. All allocations and awards would be submitted to the March Committee meeting.

A discussion ensued regard the deadline for reports and it was noted that reports should be submitted by the end of February for processing in the middle of March. A reminder would be forwarded to Members.

Councillor Scott was delighted about the Specialist Motorcycle Disorder Team whilst acknowledging the cut backs to public services and Local Authorities.

Full consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-
 - a) the financial statements set out in sections 2.1 and 3.1 be noted;
 - b) the two Neighbourhood Fund proposals set out in 2.3 and **Annex 1**; and
 - c) the Community Chest approvals supported from 2023/2024, as detailed in **Annex 3**, be noted.

Before closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and participation at the meeting and wished everyone a very Happy Christmas.

(Signed) J. BLACKBURN,
Chairman.