

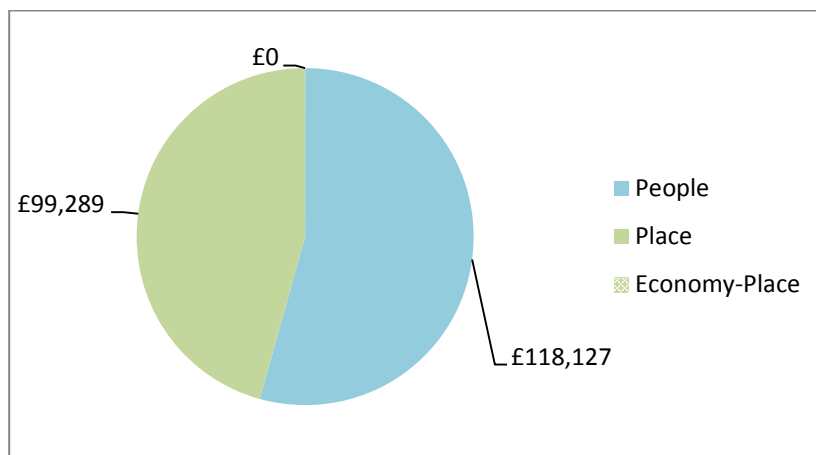
Coalfield Area Committee

Photo
Councillor John Scott
Chair of Coalfield Area Committee

During 2014/15 the Coalfield Area Committee has continued to support and deliver projects and activities to achieve the priorities set out at the beginning of the year. We wanted to focus our work on bringing real benefits to the community, so we chose areas such as local shopping centres, environmental improvements, healthy life choices, support for older and vulnerable adults and looking at ways to reduce the number of young people not in employment or education.

Working with partners has been crucial to ensuring we get the best possible services for our residents. We have worked closely with the Coalfield Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Network - a range of local organisations from the sector who come together to work in collaboration with Area Committee. This year, working with the Network has ensured that we have achieved more local delivery than ever and have addressed issues raised directly by the community.

By using our Strategic Initiative Budget (SIB) in a more targeted way, we have been able to focus resources on things that are important to local people. A total of £xxx has been awarded to delivering projects within the area, all of which help to achieve our goals and aspirations set at the beginning of the year. In addition to funding larger projects, we have awarded xxx small grants through our Community Chest fund, supporting projects such as xxxxx



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

A lot of excellent work has taken place over 2014-2015 with yet more in the planning stage. Some of the highlights are:

Place

Work with local shopping centres including a retail support package for traders, has shown positive results. Over the course of the last year, 47 businesses in Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row have received one to one advice and mentoring support, 41 businesses have taken part in workshops and 32 have received a small grant to help with things such as signage and marketing. In total, 90 local traders have received business support. Traders have reported positive outcomes as a result of the support given, including increased sales and improved profits. By working with Shiney Row traders, and local volunteers from ShARP, a Christmas event, including market stalls, was arranged. Trading at the market was exceptional with thousands of pounds being taken and traders selling out of stock. Traders have reported that the event created a feel good factor that continued into the New Year.

We recognise the importance of supporting the local community to take action in their own neighbourhood and build a sense of pride and ownership of their environment. By providing resources and equipment such as paint, protective clothing, tools, plants and bulbs we have supported almost 20 environmental improvement schemes during this year involving Eppleton, Burnside, Easington Lane and Kepier Schools, Houghton Blind Centre, ELCAP and the Flatts youth project. Each year more local people are becoming involved with improving the physical environment in their own neighbourhood and helping to get the 'Love Where You Live' message across to others.

Although the majority of the community is working to support a clean neighbourhood, issues such as littering, dog fouling and fly tipping are created by a minority. Environmental education and enforcement work is being carried out to reduce these incidents. The installation of small cameras located in areas of concern has resulted in a successful prosecution for fly tipping. This has been publicised and will be used to highlight how an individual's actions impacts on the community and the penalty such action incurs.

A Health and Greenspaces project is underway to encourage people to make better use of the wealth of outdoor space across the area. In the summer of 2014, four organisations took part in a 'picnic and play' project, which provided healthy food and encouraged participants to try new outdoor games. We plan to build on this throughout the coming year. Young people from a local education programme made a short video about some of the greenspace improvements carried out.

As a result of concerns about empty homes, we have supported the housing renewal team in progressing two Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) in the Hetton area. Under the Housing Act 2004 Local Authorities are given the power to take over the management of empty properties that meet the criteria. This improvement will make a significant difference to the residents and the area.

People

In addition to working with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health colleagues to support health improvements for residents, we have been supporting a range of initiatives;

- St Aidans Team Sport delivered exercise sessions, fishing courses and healthy eating classes during three school holiday periods, engaging with over 150 young people;
- YMCA delivered healthy cooking workshops to 14 families through the Family Health project.;
- ELCAP engaged 47 young people and their families on a Food and Ceramics project using art, making salad bowls & plates and developing healthy eating recipes;
- SAFC delivered Tackle It Health to over 90 primary school children and;
- Groundwork installed a trim trail in Elba Park consisting of 4 pieces of wooden climbing/balancing apparatus and 4 sets of thermoplastic markings. Feedback from park users has been very positive, especially about the Woodland Olympics event where family teams took part in a series of three activities against the clock.

We developed an 'opportunity fund' to encourage young people to design and deliver small projects themselves. The 'CAN DO' fund requires young people (11-19) to complete and submit an application form, then present their idea to the People Board who decide whether the project receives funding. To date xx successful awards have been made.

ShARP has recruited and trained volunteers to work alongside benefit advisers assisting people who are seeking debt and benefit advice. The advisers help to complete forms on line, access information on money management, savings and loans and join a credit union. The volunteers are learning new skills, gaining confidence and feel they are giving something back to the community by helping and supporting others,

In supporting vulnerable and older people we have worked with partners to deliver: 'IPad Engage' training to 24 older people, providing practical help in using iPads for activities. Anecdotal evidence and observations showed that the course increased social interaction and improved wellbeing. 'Sit n B Fit' activities, including therapeutic exercise, reminiscing & laughter therapy has been delivered to 38 people over the age of 65, the oldest being 93. These sessions took part in a number of sheltered accommodation venues in groups or with one to one support.

The ELCAP Coalfield Community Transport project continues to provide a valuable shopping service across the Coalfields to many older and vulnerable people. Some report it as their lifeline and is sometimes the only time they see other people within a week. The service has been further promoted through leaflets and visits to care homes and GP surgeries.

Houghton Traders Association, the local neighbourhood police team, Gentoo and St Michael's and All Angels parish church are participating in the Dementia Friendly Community pilot in Houghton le Spring shopping centre, which is supported by the Alzheimers Society. Businesses who sign up to the Dementia Friendly Shopping Centre scheme can display a sticker in their window to let customers know that people with dementia will get a warm welcome. A workshop for traders and other local organisations was attended by 27 people.

IMAGE HERE : Dementia Friendly Shopping Centre Project

Alongside the local Connexions service and other partners, we are working with a youth employment charity to deliver a work placement training programme to young people. The young people will be matched to a small business in their local community where they can learn valuable skills on-the-job for up to six months, during which they are guided by a mentor in the workplace and earn a weekly training allowance.

To support long standing historical events and new events and celebrations, miners banner parades in five localities across the Coalfield area have been supported, a WW1 project involving 32 local VCS Network groups has been delivered and remembrance parades in three neighbourhoods have taken place. We also gave support to the historic Houghton Feast, one of the most important events in the local calendar, when six schools and six community groups were involved in music and art workshops to prepare for the opening event. The local pipe, brass, youth and school bands, along with a school choir and dance school, also took part and a life size soldier was produced to form the 'centrepiece' of the opening ceremony.

IMAGE HERE : WW1 Soldier

Moving Forward

This report provides only a snapshot of the work carried out across the last year and the key highlights of what has been achieved. We're committed to building on the successes we have seen this year and will continue to keep local communities at the heart of everything we do. We are pleased to have worked extensively with our VCS partners and look forward to working further in the future. I would like to thank all members of Area Committee, partners, officers and residents, for their hard work and support throughout the year in helping to achieve such encouraging results and better services for local people. 1558 words