

**At a meeting of the PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on WEDNESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Arnott in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Rolph and A. Wright.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Cuthbert, Mordey, Old, J.B. Scott and Symonds.

**Declarations of Interest**

Item 5 – Future Jobs Fund

Councillor Rolph declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item as having been a Cabinet Member at the time it agreed to the Council's role in developing and managing the Future Jobs Fund.

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2010**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Third Sector Recession Survey**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced a presentation on the findings of a survey carried out by the Sunderland Centre for Voluntary Service (CVS) into the impact of the recession on voluntary and community groups in Sunderland.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes).

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Lisa Hanking of Sunderland CVS who together with Trish Cornish, presented the findings of the survey highlighting the following 5 main themes:-

- is the sector being affected and how?
- is the sector taking action?
- the future of VCS organisations;
- the VCS expectations of local government, funding bodies and partners;
- VCS expectations of Sunderland CVS.

In summary Members were advised that:-

- The recession is increasingly affecting the VCS in Sunderland and is expected to worsen.
- The VCS is generally taking measures to respond to the recession, but the combined result of an increased competition for funds, a reduction in funding amounts and a demand in resources is making it increasingly difficult for the sector to deliver services effectively.
- Organisations are increasingly reliant on the goodwill and commitment of dedicated volunteers.
- Comparatively, the sector in Sunderland seems to be at an advantage over the North East region as a whole.

With regard to this last point, Councillor Rolph believed that one of the main reasons Sunderland was bucking the trend was the way the Council worked in partnership. With regard to generating efficiencies, she asked if there was a willingness for charities working in the same line of business to share back office costs and accommodation.

Ms. Cornish replied that she was conscious of the need to take organisation down the collaborative route. Sharing costs would make huge differences but organisations were often very protective of their responsibilities.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor A. Wright, Ms. Cornish advised that the accountancy service was available at a reduced rate of around one third of high street accountancy services. Budget spreadsheets were provided free of charge, however, full accounts would require a fee.

Councillor Rolph suggested the concept of a V-Day (Volunteery Day) where people interested in volunteering could try a taster session. People were often scared to come forward in case they found they were unable to commit fully. They also tended to be older and retired.

Ms. Cornish replied that organisations often became very reliant on their volunteers and this sometimes led to burn out. It would be wrong to say that they became staid. SCVS were busy trying to encourage young volunteers predominantly from the business sector. It was also important that organisations marketed themselves in a manner that would attract younger volunteers.

The Chairman stated that the report was very encouraging and welcomed that the voluntary and community sector were weathering the storm as well as could be expected and in some cases better than similar organisations in the region and nationally. In conclusion he stated that he was pleased to note that SCVS had such a high reputation among its members and informed Ms. Cornish that the Council recognised that it got an awful lot of value for money from the voluntary sector.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Hanking and Ms. Cornish for their presentation it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the presentation be received and noted.

### **Future Jobs Fund**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report which updated the Committee on the Council's management and co-ordination responsibilities for Phase 2 of the Future Jobs Fund programme on behalf of its partners in the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Gordon Bell, Strategic Programmes and Europe Team Manager, presented the report and addressed questions and comments from Members.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, Mr. Bell confirmed that the current position was different from that as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report. The figures in fact changed almost daily. It had recently been confirmed that City Hospitals were to employ 48 people under the Future Jobs Fund. Of the target of 550 jobs, 330 had been identified and 205 had been filled.

The Chair referred to the level of bureaucracy involved and believed there was a huge set of hurdles weighing down the ultimate delivery of the scheme.

Mr. Bell advised that Sunderland's bid was part of a wider City Region bid to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). He confirmed that the system was bureaucratic however the rules were set by the DWP and Local Authorities could be subject to a claw back if they were not followed. North Tyneside were not equipped to take on the direct administration of the scheme and the seven Local Authorities had signed an Agreement with them to cover risks. All regeneration grant projects were high risk and therefore a certain degree of bureaucracy was needed to carry out appropriate checks. There was an overriding need to ensure value for money.

Councillor Bell commented that ideally there was a need to get the private sector involved. Mr. Bell replied that opportunities in the care industry were being investigated in this regard. There was a concern, however, with the private sector that the Future Jobs Fund could be seen as a subsidy giving an organisation an unfair advantage.

In conclusion Mr. Bell advised that the Fund was a test of liaison between all the organisations involved. It was the first City Region project and it was the first time

North Tyneside had acted in the capacity of a Lead Authority. The nature of the project required that it was under continuous review and subject to constant planning for the future.

The Chairman having welcomed that the Council was now looking to increase its commitment to around 30 Future Jobs Fund places, thanked Mr. Bell for his report, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED the progress on the Council's role in co-ordinating and managing Phase 2 of the Future Jobs Fund Programme in Sunderland from April 2010 – December 2011 be received and noted.

### **Performance Report Quarter 3 (April – December 2009)**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with a performance update relating to the period April to December 2009 including:-

- progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators;
- progress in relation to the place to play policy review recommendations;
- the results of the annual budget consultation undertaken during October/ November 2009 insofar as it related to the Committee's remit.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Gillian Robinson, Corporate Performance Monitoring Manager, presented the report and addressed questions and comments from Members thereon.

Councillor Rolph referred to the fact that the figures for indicators 152 and 153 were given in percentages and those for 161 and 162 were given as numbers. She stated that it was an issue she had raised before, however, for meaningful comparisons to be made, the presentation of information needed to be consistent. She noted that NI163 was the only indicator not on target and asked if any research had been undertaken as to why. With regard to the reduction in the number of NEETs, Councillor Rolph offered her congratulations to all concerned. She believed that tourism had a massive potential to provide employment opportunities for NEETs. She referred to the growing interest in artisan food together with the development of an Artisan Food College in the Midlands which she believed could provide an example for Sunderland.

Ms. Robinson replied that NI163 was not liked by people working in adult learning. It was based on a national survey with a sample size that was so small it was difficult to unpick.

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

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

## **Annual Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for approval as part of the overall Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10 for submission to Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman having advised that the Committee's discussion of Lambton Cokework and today's presentation on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Recession Survey would also be included, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that approval be given to the Report for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10.

## **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May – 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2010**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May – 31<sup>st</sup> August which related to the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rolph expressed concern that this was the first time certain items had appeared on the Forward Plan, yet they were being scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2010 and thereby denying the Committee prior sight of the reports. This was not the first time items had appeared in this fashion and it was clear the reporting mechanism of the Forward Plan was not operating as it should with regard to the Scrutiny Committees.

6. RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be received and noted.

## **Work Programme 2009/10**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to consider the Committee's current Work Programme for the 2009/10 Council Year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that the final Policy Review reports in respect of the Working Neighbourhood Strategy and Tourism would now be submitted to the extraordinary meeting re scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> May. It was envisaged that the revised ARC Strategy document would be submitted to the ARC Board in May and therefore it was hoped it would be available for Committee consideration in June.

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) M. ARNOTT,  
Chairman.