

DRAFT END OF YEAR REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF THE REGENERATION AND COMMUNITY REVIEW COMMITTEE 2008/09**REPORT OF THE CITY SOLICITOR****Strategic Priorities: Safer and Prosperous City
Corporate Performance Objective: CI01,CI04****1 Why has the report come to the Committee**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to allow Members the opportunity to review the operation and achievements of the Committee over the last year.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Review Committee agreed an annual work programme at its first meeting of the municipal year. The work programme sets out on a month by month basis, the agenda of the Committee for the year ahead. Its contents seek to reflect the remit of the Committee and also balance its role in terms of policy review, policy development and scrutiny of the executive.
- 2.2 In drawing up the work programme, it was considered important to retain a degree of flexibility in order to allow the Committee to deal with issues of immediate concern.
- 2.3 In developing its work programme for the year, the Committee was keen to build on its work from previous years and reflect the priorities of the public. The Committee has therefore focused on a number of key themes including the regeneration of the city centre, crime and fear of crime, housing issues and equality and community cohesion. The Committee has also closely monitored the Council's performance through regular performance monitoring reports.

3 Current Position*City Regeneration*

- 3.1 During 2007/08, the Review Committee undertook a detailed review of the operation of Sunderland arc. In order to monitor the progress being made, Mr David Walker (Chief Executive of Sunderland Arc) has twice attended the Committee during the year.
- 3.2 Details were provided on the current position on the Vaux site, Holmeside Triangle, Farringdon, Row, Sunnyside, Stadium Village, the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor and the former Groves Cranes site.

- 3.3 It was noted that Sunderland arc are operating in a difficult and uncertain economic climate. However, progress had been made in a number of areas and the foundation was being laid in anticipation of the economic upturn. Improvements have been made in marketing and communications and in developing links with the private sector.
- 3.4 Louise Hardy (City Centre Manager) reported on the action being taken to improve the vibrancy of the city centre and develop the retail sector. The Committee agreed to continue to monitor developments in the year ahead.
- 3.5 The Committee also asked for a report setting out the impact of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund in narrowing the gap in disadvantage of the eleven most deprived wards in the city. Details were provided on the projects funded by the NRF and its key outcomes met. Members went on to request further clarity on the sustainability of the jobs created and the nature of the qualification achieved.
- 3.6 The Committee was also invited to comment on the new Working Neighbourhood Strategy and stressed the importance of ensuring that mechanism are in place to allow for progress to be measured against targets.
- 3.7 At the beginning of the year, Chairman asked for an item on to be included on the agenda in relation to the Post Office Network Change Programme.
- 3.8 Representatives from Post Office Ltd were invited to attend a meeting to explain the rational behind the programme and the basis by which any appeal could be made. Council members with post offices threatened with closures in their wards were also invited to attend. At the meeting, Members highlighted the concerns of local residents at the implications of the programme and the lack of meaningful consultation. The comments of the Committee formed the basis of the Council's response to the Post Office's Ltd Network Change Programme consultation.

Equalities

- 3.9 During the year, the Committee has closely monitored the progress being made by the Council on equalities issues and the implementation of the Equalities Action Plan. The Committee was pleased that the Council had achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and stressed the importance of pushing on to achieve Level 4. The Committee intends to continue to closely monitor progress in this area.
- 3.10 The Committee is keen that it should have an opportunity to contribute to the policy making process at an early stage. The Committee were consulted and commented on a number of draft policy documents including the draft Community Cohesion Strategy and the draft Unauthorised Encampment policy.

Housing

- 3.11 During 2005/06, the Review Committee undertook a detailed study into the formulation of the Council's Housing Strategy 2006/11. The Committee has continued to monitor progress on both the strategy and the recommendations it made.
- 3.12 The Committee also asked for and received details of the outcome and implications of the recently completed Local Housing Market Assessment for Sunderland. This sets out the major challenges and demands facing housing in the city for the years ahead.
- 3.13 The Committee received regular update reports on the progress being made on the housing renewal programmes for Castletown, Hetton Downs and Middle Hendon and the work going on to draw in additional funding for these schemes.
- 3.14 Based on performance monitoring information, the Committee has also asked for and received further details of the work being undertaken to prevent the risk of homelessness and support those who are homeless in the city. This included the implications of the current economic climate and the difficulties facing people securing mortgages and meeting their mortgage payments. A lot of good work is being undertaken with Banks and landlords to attempt to tackle any difficulties at an early stage and thereby prevent homeless. The Committee remains committed to closely monitoring the situation in the future.
- 3.15 The Committee was also interested to hear of the important work of the new Home Improvement Agency and the operation of the Financial Assistance Policy for private sector renewal. This work is essential to the improvement of the standard of housing in the private sector. The Committee also received regular update on development in the Council's housing enforcement policies and also measures being taken to alleviate fuel poverty in the community.

Crime and Disorder

- 3.16 In July 2008, the Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish to look in detail at the issue of fear of crime in relation. The Group focused on the key reasons behind fear of crime, the action being taken by our SSP partners and the effectiveness of the measures and initiatives being taken.
- 3.17 The Group has received evidence written evidence from a broad range of stakeholders including gentoo, Nexus, Northumbria Criminal Justice Board, National Probation Service, Sunderland Youth Offending Team, Northumbria Police and Government Office North East. Based on the information received the Group had follow up meetings with representatives from Nexus and the Probation Service.
- 3.18 Members of the Group also attended a joint meeting with the Children's Services Review Committee Task Group on the issue of alcohol and young people.

- 3.19 The Group visited and spoke to staff at Sunderland Magistrates Court and the Police Headquarters in Southwick, meeting Acting Chief Inspector Musgrove. The Group also viewed the operation of the CCTV centre in the Civic Centre.
- 3.20 The report of the Committee and its recommendations are included on the agenda for this Review Committee. The recommendations propose a range of measures which it is hoped will improve levels of fear of crime in the city.
- 3.21 The Committee has also received reports on the progress being made in meeting the targets set out in the Sunderland Safety Strategy.

Performance Management and Monitoring

- 3.22 The quarterly performance monitoring reports are an integral part of the Committees work programme. The reports allow the Committee to monitor the Council's performance across a range of key performance indicators and highlight any areas of risk or underperformance at an early stage. The reports set out performance against a number of key indicators, any areas of key risk, the reasons behind any variations and the remedial action being taken.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider the operation, achievements and impact of the Committee during 2008/09 and that the issues raised at this meeting be incorporated into the final report.

5. Background Papers

CPA Action Plan
City of Sunderland Corporate Assessment

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