

At a meeting of the NORTH SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held at the BUNNY HILL CENTRE, HYLTON LANE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 4th JANUARY, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Bell in the Chair

Councillors Charlton, Copeland, Foster, Francis, Howe, Shattock, Stewart and D. Wilson

Also in Attendance:-

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| Ms. Estelle Brown | - Youth and Community Lead, SNCBC |
| Mr. Graham Burt | - Strategy Development Manager, Sunderland City Council |
| Ms. Amanda Cantle | - Centre Manager, Bunny Hill, Sunderland City Council |
| Mr. Les Clark | - Head of Street Scene, Sunderland City Council |
| Sgt. G Dickson | - Northumbria Police |
| Ms. Colleen Doneathy | - Corporate Communications Team, Sunderland City Council |
| Mr. Andrew Griffiths | - Head of Neighbourhood, Gentoo |
| Ms. Vicky Happer | - Corporate Communications Officer, Sunderland City Council |
| Ms. Pauline Hopper | - Area Officer, Sunderland City Council |
| Insp. Lisa Musgrove | - Northumbria Police |
| Mr. Andy Neal | - Youth Development Group Manager, Sunderland Council |
| Mr. Ron Odunaiya | - Executive Director City Services, (Area Lead Executive) Sunderland City Council |
| Mr. Andrew Perkin | - Senior Partnership and Policy Officer, Sunderland City Council |
| Mr. Mike Poulter | - Head of Project and Service Development, Sunderland City Council |
| Ms. Julie Raine | - Director, City of Sunderland Colleges |
| Ms. Joanne Stewart | - Senior Democratic Services Officer, Sunderland City Council |
| Mr. Paul Young | - Centre Operations Manager, Sunderland City Council |

Members of the North Sunderland Area Community

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors G. Hall, J. Walton, L. Walton and N. Wright.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 9th November, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 9th November, 2009 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of Councillor Copeland being in the Chair and Councillor N. Wright's apologies being recorded.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Questions to Area Committee

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of the Questions to Area Committees received to date and sought the Committee's agreement to extend the pilot for a review to be undertaken and reports to the March meeting.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Joanne Stewart, Senior Democratic Services Officer, presented the report to the Committee, advising that to date the following questions had been received for each of the area committees as follows:-

| | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|
| - | Coalfield Area | - | 0 |
| - | East Area | - | 3 |
| - | North Area | - | 0 |
| - | Washington Area | - | 7 |
| - | West Area | - | 1 |

In view of the relatively low number of questions received and the fact that this Committee was one of two not to have received any questions it was proposed to extend the pilot and undertake a review, with a report to be submitted to the March meeting for Members consideration.

The Chairman having thanked the Officer for her report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that a review of the pilot to Questions to Area Committees be submitted to the March meeting of the Area Committee for Members' consideration.

North Sunderland a Prosperous Area

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which asked Members to consider and identify their main proposals for further development and action in relation to their Prosperous Area priority theme.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Officer, reminded Members that the Committee had agreed its work programme for the year at its meeting held in June and that the Prosperous priority was the fourth to come to the committee for discussion and consideration.

Mr. Andrew Perkin, Senior Partnership and Policy Officer, took Members through each of the seven priority issues, as detailed below. Each priority was considered in turn and Members were given an update with regard to current activity and actions taken for each.

- i) Build on strengths of the area and attract business investment;
- ii) Provide co-ordinated advice and support to businesses;
- iii) Co-ordinate work of advice and business support agencies;
- iv) Work with employers to develop relevant training packages to meet skills shortages;
- v) Provide in-work support to those gaining new jobs;
- vi) Provide access to educational activities for all adults and raise aspirations and skills in relation to employability; and
- vii) Co-ordinate approach to enterprise support and development.

He advised Members that the North Sunderland Area was quite diverse with unemployment levels ranging from 2.9% in the Fulwell Ward to 10.4% in the Redhill Ward and a benefit claimant level of 22%.

Councillor Howe questioned if the 2.9% of unemployment in Fulwell took into account the high number of retired residents in the ward, and was advised that the figures were based on individuals who were economically active and therefore retired persons would not be included in the unemployment rates.

He then referred to the lack of initiatives and assets in the Fulwell area and queried that there was very little new developments coming into the ward. Mr. Perkin advised he did not have information to hand on the exact area but would respond to Members outside of the meeting.

Councillor Wilson commented that years ago local residents had, in the majority, worked in local businesses and asked if figures were available on how many businesses employed local people now. Mr. Perkin advised that this work could be carried out in small areas of the city or they could ask a large employer such as Nissan for details of their employees.

Councillor Wilson went on to ask if there was any way to put an obligation on new businesses to employ local residents and was informed that they could be encouraged to recruit locally and job centres/advisors could be asked to direct unemployed residents towards new ventures in their area.

With regard to the seafront, Mr. Perkin agreed with Councillor Wilson that the profile of the coastline needed to be raised and more images of it needed to be used in promotional materials for the city.

Councillor Foster referred to Northumbria Water being the sponsors for Castle View Academy which specialised in Business and Enterprise and commented that there was an opportunity to use the highly professional business people on the Board as experts to help in making improvements. Mr. Perkin advised that they were presently working with Castle View Academy and Thornhill School to promote specific aspects of business with a look to widening the project out into other areas and would take the Members suggestions on board.

Councillor Stewart asked how much the Council were doing to encourage employers to offer Modern Apprenticeships for school leavers. Mr. Perkin advised that the national approach to encourage businesses to adopt their apprenticeship scheme had not been as successful as they'd hoped. Work was being undertaken with the Learning and Skills Council on how to embed Modern Apprenticeships in business and a meeting was being held in the near future to discuss the matter.

Councillor Charlton commented that a scheme had been introduced last year, which the Council had submitted a bid for and Heads of Service in the Council, partners throughout the city and training providers were working together on the apprenticeship issue.

Councillor Stewart stated that the apprenticeship schemes were one of the few routes which could target young, local people into local employment straight from school. Councillor Bell commented that the working world had changed now and whereas in the past employers would look to develop and hone an employees skills to the job they were employed to do, nowadays businesses were looking for staff ready trained with the skills to go straight into a position.

In response to a comment from Councillor Copeland which referred to the Jobcentre plus not supporting newly unemployed residents getting back into work, Mr. Perkin advised that unfortunately following the merger of the job seeker and benefits services, the benefits service had appeared to become the priority. Work was being carried out with Job Linkage and the Job Centre to ensure they ran alongside one another to establish job outlets and be in the best position to offer all opportunities to each individual.

Councillor Shattock referred to the lack of quality hotel provision in the city, especially if there were plans to promote future events at venues such as the Stadium of Light. Mr. Perkin advised that they recognised there was a lack of quality bed space accommodation across the city but informed the Committee that the Council had been working with potential hotel developers and investors to rectify this but unfortunately without success to date.

Councillor Charlton informed Members that over the last 18 months the Council had received over 20 applications for hotel developments but it was up to developers if they wished to take them forward. Council Officers worked with applicants to make the process as smooth as possible and hopefully in the future the right developers would be encouraged to come to the city and build.

In response to a query from Councillor Howe as to whether Gentoo would propose to build hotels in the city, Mr. Griffiths advised that they had been involved in discussions with the Council and prospective developers regarding their plans but in the current economic climate he did not think Gentoo would undertake a hotel development itself.

Mr. Odunayia explained that one of the key elements was to ensure that the Council worked with local businesses to best understand their needs and then support residents in achieving the skills required so that they were best placed for any future jobs which may arise once the recession ends.

In response to a question from Councillor Francis regarding the measure of successes, Mr. Perkin referred Members to the unemployment graph, contained within his presentation, and advised that seeing a reduction in unemployment across the city would indicate that there were more residents making an economic contribution and be seen as a measure of success.

Other indicators of success could be new businesses being launched and still running six months or a year later, reducing the number of residents claiming benefits and seeing a more physical presence of businesses, showing the city as a vibrant and sustainable economy that other developers would want to move to.

The Chairman having thanked the Officers for the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the following actions identified in Annex 1a and 1b of the report be noted:-

- Sunderland arc to provide progress reports / further information to Area Committee regarding current and future activities when available; and
- Results from the 'Visible Workspace' project to be provided to the Committee once they are available.

Thematic Feedback Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with feedback from the established working groups for each of the five thematic priorities the Area Committee had agreed and considered as set out in the work plan for 2009/2010.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

In July, September and November 2009 the Area Committee had agreed a number of actions and proposals relating to the Attractive and Inclusive, Safe and Learning priorities, respectively, which had both been formulated into action plans for Members to monitor.

Ms. Hopper took Members through the report highlighting any progress against the actions and identifying proposals which had come from them for Members consideration.

Mr. Andy Neal, Youth Development Group Manager, gave the Committee an update on the commissioning of youth work exercise, advising that documents were prepared to go out to tender following the needs analysis process and the setting of the tender specification. The decision on who to award contracts to would be made at the beginning of March and Members would be given an update on the outcome of the tendering process at their next meeting.

Mr. Simon Smart, Restorative Justice Manager, was keen to look at the Community Payback Scheme in more detail and was meeting with the Youth Offending Service and taking suggestions from the community on any areas that needed cleaning within their locality.

Councillor Howe commented that the probation service had once carried out a similar project tidying the Cut Throat Dene area in the Fulwell ward. He explained that only a small amount of work had been carried out at the site by them but that it had been appreciated.

Ms. Hopper advised that all other actions within the plans for the three themes were progressing and updates would continue to be fed back to the Committee.

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

4. RESOLVED that the report and action planes be agreed.

Financial Statements and Funding Requests

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with the current expenditure from the SIB, SIP and Community Chest and applications for funding from these budgets in order to support new initiatives.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Hopper presented the report, advising Members that there were 28 proposals for support from the 2009/2010 Community Chest budget, four proposals for support from the 2009/2010 SIB budget, one proposal to defer for support from the 2009/2010 SIB budget and one proposal for support from the 2009/2010 SIP budget. Members were also advised of the financial statement for 2009/2010.

Ms. Hopper took the Committee through each of the applications for SIB and SIP funding, the Community Chest proposals and the financial statement, and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

- i) approval be given to the 28 projects recommended for support from the 2009/2010 Community Chest budget with a total value of £7,696 as detailed in Annex 1 to the report;

- ii) approval be given to the Sea Front Improvements recommended for support, from the 2009/2010 SIB budget with a total value of £32,000;
- iii) approval be given to the Sunderland History Fair recommended for support, subject to the condition as set out in the report, from the 2009/2010 SIB budget with a total value of £3,800;
- iv) approval be given to the ABOUT (A Body Of United Teenagers) recommended for support, subject to the conditions as set out in the report, from the 2009/2010 SIB budget with a total value of £23,685;
- v) approval be given to the Miners Memorial Window – Civic Suite recommended for support, subject to the conditions as set out in the report, from the 2009/2010 SIB budget with a total value of £5,000;
- vi) the application from the Community Leaders of the Future Project be deferred;
- vii) approval be given to the Sea Front Improvements recommended for support, from the 2009/2010 SIP budget with a total value of £96,000; and
- viii) the financial statement for 2009/2010 as detailed in Annex 4 to the report be noted.

Area Review Process:- Introduction of a Referral Criteria and Process for Dealing with Issues of Local Concern Incorporating a Revised Mechanism for Councillor Call for Action – Initial Proposals

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which outlined the proposed introduction of a referral criteria and process for dealing with an Area Review Process to be used by Area Committees, Scrutiny Committees and the Sunderland Partnership, and included amalgamation with the Councillor Call for Action Mechanism

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Hopper presented the report advising Members that they should contact her directly with any comments on the proposed referral criteria within the next two weeks, and it was:-

6. RESOLVED that:-
- i) the Area Committee support the introduction of the referral criteria and process for determining the appropriateness of undertaking an investigation triggered either by the non-mandatory referral/Councillor Call for Action route; and
 - ii) subject to any comments received from the Area Committees, the Scrutiny Committees and the Sunderland Partnership, the revised procedure be referred to Cabinet for approval, implemented and included in the Area Committee Handbook.

Area Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Networks and Volunteering in Your Area

The Executive Director City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of progress and proposed future development regarding the involvement and representation of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) within the new Area Arrangements.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Amanda Cattle, Centre Manager, Bunny Hill, presented the report advising Members that the first meeting of the Area VCS Networks had taken place in December, where the draft terms of reference for the membership and nominations process had been discussed. Self nomination forms had been provided to Members and the VCS, with a deadline of 22nd January, 2010 for submissions. She commented that nominated individuals would represent the views of the VCS within their areas and not their own organisational interests.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Cattle for her report, and it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the update on the position of the Area VCS Networks and feedback in relation to the area based Volunteer celebrations be noted.

Responsive Local Services

The Executive Director City Services and Chief Executive submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which presented Members with the current Service Standards for the services currently being reviewed as part of the Responsive Local Services (RLS) project and ascertained present service performance for the area.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Mike Poulter, Head of Project and Service Development presented the report advising that the reporting systems were still in their infancy and as more 'live' information was fed into it more useful data would be produced and fed back to the Committee.

In response to a query from Councillor Francis regarding not prosecuting minors for littering, Mr. Poulter advised that he did not have the information with him but that he was aware that adults could be subject to on-the-spot enforcements. He would check the information regarding young people and report back to Members.

Councillor Copeland gave praise to the cleansing department staff involved in removing fly-tipping and graffiti from back lanes in Southwick and felt that it was making a big difference in her ward. Mr. Poulter agreed to pass the praise onto the relevant colleagues and departments.

Councillor Charlton referred to incidents of dog fouling and the reduction in stray dogs being sited around the city, congratulating the Dog Warden Service on a good job, and asked if information was available on the percentage of dog fouling incidents that were fined or taken to court. Mr. Poulter agreed to incorporate that information into future reports to the meeting.

Mr. Poulter commented that they planned to take one issue forward in each of the areas as a problem to focus upon and as residents were generally dissatisfied with the rubbish or litter lying around he suggested this may be the best item for this Committee to address, which Members agreed with.

Councillor Wilson asked if the Committee could also receive a report to a future meeting of the Committee on the issues with grit the city had experienced during the recent bad weather. Mr. Poulter advised that the responsive local services only dealt with the five areas as identified at the moment but that he would take the issue to the relevant department and request a report be submitted to a future Committee.

Councillor Wilson then referred to a resident who had been injured in Castletown following a fall on an untreated footpath and advised that he had contacted the Cleansing Section who had responded by providing grit at the site. Councillor Howe commented that he had also contacted the same service to advise of areas in his ward where grit bins were empty and he had been asked to inform residents of the provisions at the Beach Street Depot that they could access. Mr. Odunaiya commented that in reality the service should only respond to identified priorities and this would primarily be to service priority roads and networks and he would look into the Members receiving alternate advice.

Councillor Copeland commended those working in the grit service as she had contacted them to advise them that the roads and pathways to Southwick School had not been treated and were dangerous and the school was opening the next day and they had responded quickly in treating the area surrounding the school.

As a point of information Councillor Shattock advised that a report had been requested to be submitted to the Health and Well Being Review Committee on the number of accidents related to the bad weather and the cost to the health service. Information on the cost of gritting the city had also been requested as part of the report and she felt it may be beneficial for the Committee to receive a copy of the report once it had been finalised.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Poulter for his report, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that
 - i) the report be noted for information;
 - ii) that the issue of litter be the first of the five areas identified for action; and

- iii) that the Committee receive a report on the issue of grit provision.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) R. BELL,
Chairman.