

**At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.**

Present:-

Councillor S. Watson in the Chair.

Councillors Chamberlin, M. Dixon, Ellis, Errington, Rolph, J. Scott, L. Walton and A. Wilson.

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tate – Chairman of the Management Scrutiny Committee.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Foster and Wares.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 20th October, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:-

- i) references to 'arranged marriages' be amended to read 'forced marriages';
- ii) 'Tyne and Wear Archives Joint Committee' be amended to read 'Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Joint Committee'.

Declarations of Interest

Item 5 – Heritage Update

Councillor Errington declared a personal interest in the item as a family member was the owner of a listed building.

Change in the Order of Business

The Chairman advised that she would be taking item six on the agenda (Britain in Bloom Competition: Northumbria in Bloom) at this juncture to allow Mr. Coburn and Mr. Atkinson to attend another meeting thereafter.

Britain in Bloom Competition: Northumbria in Bloom

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an overview of the Northumbria in Bloom competition, its links to the Britain in Bloom initiative and the important part the competition played in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ian Coburn, Parks Development Manager and Norman Atkinson, Horticultural Co-ordinator, presented the report and drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 which detailed the Sunderland winners in the Northumbria in Bloom Awards 2009.

Councillor Rolph referred to the theme of community engagement and asked for examples of this in Houghton. She also asked if any areas for development had been identified with regard to future Northumbria in Bloom competitions. Mr. Atkinson replied that feedback was provided by the Northumbria in Bloom judges and this would help identify areas for development. There would always be room for improvement. With regard to community engagement in Houghton, Mr. Atkinson advised that the Houghton Racecourse Community Access Point had established a garden. Other examples included the use of community chest grants for bulb planting, together with community litter picks. People enjoyed taking part and it gave them a sense of ownership.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor John Scott, Mr. Atkinson advised that for community groups to become involved they would need to be a formally constituted group.

Councillor Ellis stated that the Northumbria in Bloom competition appeared to have moved away from its position in the past where entries from individuals and small groups were welcome to a point where entries had to be submitted via the Council. In conclusion Councillor Ellis offered her congratulations to the residents of Warwick Drive and Windsor Drive for their award in the category 'Best Combined Efforts of the Residents of a Community'.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Chamberlin as to whether the number of entries had remained static, increased or decreased, Mr. Atkinson stated that the numbers had increased. 2009 had seen a definite increase in entries from community groups and there had also been growth in school entries following the linking of horticulture to the national curriculum.

Councillor Chamberlin suggested that comparator figures should be kept to allow year on year comparisons to be made.

There being no further questions for Mr. Coburn or Mr. Atkinson, the Chairman thanked them for their report and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Football Investment Strategy

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented a draft copy of the emerging Football Investment Strategy in order for Members to provide feedback as part of the document's consultation process.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Julie Gray, Head of Community Services, introduced the item and welcomed Mr. Paul Eady of Consultants Knight, Kavanagh and Page who had been commissioned by the Council to develop a Football Investment Strategy together with a prioritised action plan for future investment.

Julie Russell, Sport and Leisure Partnership Manager, by way of an introduction, provided the Committee with a Powerpoint presentation outlining:-

- i) the National and Local overview;
- ii) satisfaction levels – including the reversal of previous dissatisfaction with grass root facilities;
- iii) the 2008 Phase 1 improvements to football facilities including examples of 'quick wins' at Ryhope Park and Silksworth Park together with the feedback received;
- iv) an introduction to the 2009 Phase 2 Football Facilities improvements to meet current and future demands;

Mr. Eady then proceeded to provide Members with a comprehensive presentation detailing:-

- i) the aims and methodology of the Knight, Kavanagh and Page study;
- ii) the results of the consultation;
- iii) the key challenges to address:-
 - A large number of one team clubs – need to build sustainable club entities.
 - Only one Charter Standard Community Club in the City – need to have full life cycle clubs.
 - Only 3 senior and 3 junior female teams, and no disability teams.
 - Reduce the decline of the 11 aside game.
 - Security of tenure for clubs.
 - Significant number of sites played to over capacity.

- Teams using sites with no (or poor) changing facilities.
 - Current culture of junior and youth teams not using changing facilities.
 - No priority access to booking pitches.
 - Perceived lack of training facilities for teams – both indoor and outdoor facilities.
 - Limited and sporadic use of school facilities (but some examples of good practice) – need to encourage greater use.
- iv) a vision for playing pitches in Sunderland, that 'Sunderland will have a range of playing pitch facilities and venues which offer increased opportunities for all sections of the community to participate formally and informally, contributing to an improved quality of life';
- v) three actions for delivery to support the proposed vision:-
- Action 1 – Improve the quality of facilities in the City;
 - Action 2 – Create and maintain sufficient facilities to meet current and future demand through identifying opportunities to add to the overall pitch stock;
 - Action 3 – Adopt a strategic management approach.
- vi) a proposed tiered development model to improve facilities;
- vii) the next steps -
- disseminate the assessment report for feedback;
 - prepare and distribute the strategy;
 - develop and prioritise the action plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

With regard to Charter Standard Clubs, Councillor Errington asked whether the Council should be working to obtain that standard on behalf of clubs or should the push come from the Durham County FA. Mr. Eady replied that would need to be a decision taken locally, however, in either case clubs should be incentivised to achieve that standard. Ms. Russell advised that many clubs needed the right facilities - it was about getting the right club at the right type of venue and getting the balance right. There were enough sites, however there were gaps with some sites not being used because of access problems.

Councillor M. Dixon stated that there had been many years of neglect. He used to play regularly on Council run pitches during the 1960s and 1970s and facilities at places such as Tunstall Hill and Thompson Park appeared to be no better now. He

stated that the Council needed to face facts that there had been a massive underinvestment in its pitches and facilities. He believed that this could have been a major contribution to the decline in the male 11 a side game referred to by Mr. Eady.

Mr. Eady advised that the decline of the 11 a side game was not unique to Sunderland and was common to the 40 plus other local authorities in which he had carried out research. Although facilities may have been a contributory factor it was by no means the single cause of the decline which was the result of many factors.

Ms. Russell advised that the Council had invested in other areas of physical activity such as the Aquatic Centre and the pools at Hetton and Silksworth. The Council needed to be realistic about the number of assets it had. Football clubs may perhaps use a facility once a week. There was a need to have the right pitches at the right sites and ensure they were well used.

Councillor M. Dixon asked if any feedback had been received from schools regarding the use of their facilities. Ms. Russell advised that schools were keen to get involved, however, some had issues regarding risk. Some facilities were not in a condition that could be used by the wider community. Other schools were worried they would be penalised if their facilities were not available for national curriculum, activities through over use. It was hoped that the agreement regarding the Belford House pitches could become a model for the future. The Football Foundation were also keen to promote a 5 year partnership between schools and clubs.

Councillor Ellis suggested that a sports investment strategy would have been more appropriate and asked if Russell Foster were considered as partners by the Council. Ms. Russell confirmed that they were and that although the Russell Foster facilities were run as a private business the firm put a vast amount back into the community.

Councillor Chamberlin stated that the fundamental reason the Football strategy was being developed was to take advantage of the football related funding that was available. She added that where enhanced community facilities were required, there was no mention as to how the pitches would be utilised for other sports. Ms. Russell replied that supply and demand would continue to be assessed through the playing pitch strategy which remained valid. It was important that other sports were acknowledged and this would be done within the tiered model.

Councillor Rolph welcomed that the strategy had acknowledged the need for mid week training facilities. There would be an obvious need for floodlit facilities during the months of November to March, however, these would need to be affordable. She welcomed the progressive scheme for coaching and stated that there was a need to encourage people to coach on an ongoing basis as a lot of volunteers only did so during the period when their own children were playing. With regard to the decline in female participation, Councillor Rolph believed a lot of this was to do with the standard of changing facilities. She stated that no mention had been made of the impact on the neighbouring communities of the new pitches in places such as Newbottle and Burnside. With regard to the priority project criteria, Councillor Rolph stated that she worried when cost was positioned at the top of the list and believed that greater importance should be placed on value. In conclusion Councillor Rolph stated that the strategy needed to have a mechanism built into it to prevent

communities on the margins of the City or in deprived areas being overlooked, becoming backwaters or football deserts.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Wilson, Ms. Russell advised that the mobile football pitches used as part of the XL youth villages, whilst ideal for exercise and having fun, would not be right for serious football training.

The Chairman having drawn the debate to a close, Ms. Gray thanked Members for their feedback and advised that the next phase of the process would be to finalise the strategy and action plan before bringing them back to Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Gray, Ms. Russell and Mr. Eady for their report and presentations, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report, presentations and Members' feedback thereon be received and noted.

Heritage Update

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated the Members on the work ongoing within the Culture and Tourism Service with regard to heritage in the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Vicki Medhurst presented the report advising Members of the following items of interest in respect of Sunderland's heritage agenda:-

- Heritage Open Days;
- Bede's Way Annual Walk;
- The Local Studies Centre and Fact Sheets;
- The Sunderland Heritage Forum;
- Fulwell Windmill;
- The History Fair 2010;
- The Herrington Hall Stones;
- Bowes Railway;
- The Citywide Heritage Strategy;
- World Heritage Site Status.

Councillor Ellis welcomed the development of the Citywide Heritage Strategy and commended the brilliance of the Heritage Open Days. She stated that she had noticed a few mistakes in the Bernard Gilpin fact sheet and would contact Ms. Medhurst outside of the meeting regarding this.

Councillor Rolph referred to the Street Names Project which had involved volunteers researching the street names of the City and asked if the definition of the 'City'

referred to its current boundaries or those of the Old Sunderland Borough. Ms. Medhurst confirmed that it referred to the current boundaries.

Councillor Rolph expressed her disappointment that the report did not include a more detailed discussion of the City's built heritage and asked that a report be programmed into the Committee's Work Programme for a future meeting.

Councillor M. Dixon informed the meeting that the Herrington Hall Stones had recently been stolen. Ms. Medhurst confirmed that this was the case.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Chamberlin, Ms. Medhurst replied that outreach work was promoted via the schools' library service and through workshops with school children.

There being no further questions for Ms. Medhurst the Chairman thanked her for her report and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Major Project Reporting

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with details of major projects currently being undertaken in Sunderland with a view to establishing quarterly reporting arrangement to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee in respect of those projects that were of particular relevance.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Janet Johnson, Deputy Chief Executive and Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, were in attendance to present the report. Ms. Johnson advised that a similar report was to be submitted to the following evening's Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee, following which reporting arrangements would be reviewed to ensure that they were appropriate.

Councillor Rolph contended that all major projects should be reported to this Committee in order that the sustainable aspects of each could be considered if necessary. In this regard she believed that Strategic Waste Management and Building Schools for the Future should have been included in the report.

Councillor Rolph referred to Section 1 of Appendix A and asked whether there would be any implications for Houghton Magistrates' Court of the Courts Service (HMCS) development at Farringdon Row. Mr. Lowes replied that the eventual decision would be one for HMCS however he suspected that Houghton Magistrates may be subsumed.

Councillor M. Dixon referred to the housing developments detailed on page 29 of the agenda and stated that in addition to the Hetton Downs and Castletown developments referred to, the former Regeneration Review Committee also received

updates on developments in the Mowbray Road and Suffolk Street area of Hendon. Mr. Lowes replied that there was currently nothing live with regard to that particular scheme. Harrogate Street and Amberley Street had been a Back on the Map project, however, he was not aware of any pre application discussions.

Councillor M. Dixon stated that he believed there had been an input from the Council into the Hendon scheme but this had now appeared to have been dropped. He suggested that Alan Caddick be invited to attend a future meeting to update the Committee.

There being no further questions for Ms. Johnson or Mr. Lowes the Chairman thanked them for their attendance and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Access to Housing Policy Review 2009/10 Progress Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) in respect of the above matter.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised that with regard to paragraph 4.3, the visit from Stephen Rudge of Coventry City Council had now been arranged for 28th January, 2010. Councillor Trueman would be invited to attend the next meeting together with a representative from Shelter. Councillor M. Dixon stressed the importance of seeking input from private sector landlords.

6. RESOLVED that the report and Policy Review timetable be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the period 1st November, 2009 – 28th February, 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st November, 2009 – 28th February, 2010 which relate to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Chamberlin suggested that the Seafront Strategy should be reported to the Committee.

Councillor Rolph believed that the current system of reporting Forward Plan items to the Committee prior to Cabinet was not working. She had requested that Items 01329 (to seek endorsement of the council's bid to be a host City for the 2018 World Cup) and 01316 (to agree Design Guide – Accommodation with Support) be submitted to the Committee for pre-Cabinet scrutiny but this had not happened.

The Chairman suggested that if the system of referring Forward Plan items was not working properly, the issue should be addressed by the meeting of the Scrutiny Committees' chairs and Vice Chairs.

With reference to item 01329, Councillor Rolph requested that information be provided on the likely impact of the changes to the Board of the National 2018 World Cup Bid in respect of the local Host City submission.

7. RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be received and noted and that Members' concerns regarding the system for considering and referring Forward Plan items be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting for discussion.

Work Programme 2009-10

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2009-10 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, having advised that the Performance Report scheduled for consideration at the December meeting would now be submitted in January, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the Work Programme be received and noted.

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

(Signed) S. WATSON,
Chairman.