

19 September 2012

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Place Board Progress Report

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update of progress against the current year's (2012/13) Place Board Work Plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 21 June 2012 Coalfield Area Committee agreed its Local Area Plan for 2012/13. In doing so Area Committee agreed how it can most effectively contribute to delivering Sunderland City Council's Corporate Outcome Framework (COF) at a local level and relevant to the Place and People themes.
- 2.2 Those Local Area Plan priorities associated with Place were referred to the Place Board to action on behalf of the Area Committee. The Place Board have started to initiate action on those priorities and agreed target dates for delivery and feedback to the Area Committee for the year ahead. The Place Board Work Plan and target delivery dates are attached as Annex 1.
- 2.3 This report provides Area Committee with a progress update on the Place Board Work Plan during period June - August including requests for decisions where necessary.

3 Place Board Progress Update

3.1 Responsive Local Services (RLS)

- 3.1.1 In supporting the Area Committee to influence the delivery, design and review of services at an Area level the Place Board has a key role in terms of influencing the operational deployment of Streetscene (RLS) core service. As such each Place Board meeting has a dedicated agenda item to discuss streetscene services. The Area Response Manager (ARM) discusses information on services, such as, graffiti removal, fly tipping, litter, dog fouling, grass cutting, refuse collection and recycling, parks, cemeteries, winter maintenance and maintenance of play areas.
- 3.1.2 Members of the Place Board and Area Committee have highlighted the importance and value of having direct contact with the Area Response Manager who can rapidly deploy resources, where appropriate, to deal with issues and concerns under his area of responsibility. Individual requests and issues raised are addressed quickly by the Streetscene operatives and all intelligence is considered by the Area Response Manager to identify hot spots or patterns in complaints or requests. This will form the basis of further discussion and action at future Place Board meetings, and where decisions on resources need to be made recommendations will be presented to Area Committee. As part of the Love Where You Live Campaign, an educational project with local schools was delivered to help young people understand the importance of picking up litter. A poster competition was held in July 2012. Winning entries will be displayed in 'Ad Bins' during October – December 2012.

3.1.3 The August Place Board meeting discussed the lack of signs in some local parks regarding dog fouling and littering. The Head of Streetscene will look into the current position regarding bylaws and signage in connection with littering and keeping dogs under control in parks and other public areas.

3.2 Area Priority: Neglected Land

3.2.1 Four priority Council owned sites were identified, and improvements on the first site, Collingwood Drive, are now complete. Options for improvement of the remaining three sites will be developed by the Place Board and presented to Area Committee for approval. Land and Property, in conjunction with Street Scene are developing plans to deal with other areas of Council owned land currently derelict.

3.2.2 First stage letters have been sent to all owners of identified sites not in Council ownership. Next steps have been proposed and work is in progress to work with landowners who have responded to the first stage correspondence and to contact those who have not responded with a second stage letter.

3.2.3 An exercise is underway to explore the 'pooling' or 'centralising' of maintenance budgets held in various departments within the Council. The Head of Street Scene and Head of Land and Property are exploring various options for consideration for future years.

3.3 Area Priority: Allotments

3.3.1 Refurbished plots have been let to those on the waiting list with mixed results. Some prospective tenants have failed to establish gardens and have given up their plots within a matter of weeks. In order to speed up the process of reducing the waiting lists, more time effective ways of contacting potential tenants through email and text are being explored. Promotional work and marketing within the local community is being carried out to ensure those genuinely interested in taking on an allotment are given the opportunity. Houghton Feast will be used to promote the benefits of owning an allotment.

3.3.2 Some of the harder to deal with issues are now producing positive results. Tenants using their plots illegally or inappropriately have had their tenancies terminated and those who are not vacating the site voluntarily are being referred to Property and Legal services to enforce eviction.

3.3.3 A 'masterplan' has been drafted for the Britannia Terrace site and various options for redevelopment are being explored. A comprehensive plan for the site and the surrounding area will be discussed by the Place Board at the end of 2012 and options will be presented to Area Committee early in 2013 to agree future use. In the meantime options to create a safe walking route to Dubmire Primary School through the allotment site are being explored.

3.3.4 A programme of work to make improvements on all sites across the Coalfield area is being delivered. Water installation, clearing and repairing of paths, provision of exterior fencing and gates and strimming of communal areas are some of the improvements made. The Place Board recommend that a further £30,000 from the 2012/13 budget is allocated to the Allotments priority in order to continue the momentum and improvement across all sites. Detailed options and proposals will be brought to Area Committee for a decision.

3.3.5 The Place Board has requested that options for improvement of allotment sites not in Council ownership, but leased by the Council, are explored by the Lead Agent for allotments. This will be discussed at the next Allotments Working Group meeting in early October 2012.

3.4 Area Priority: Local Shopping Centres

3.4.1 The Shop Local campaign has successfully delivered events, including Easter and the Diamond Jubilee, to increase footfall in local shopping centres. A feature in the November 2012 edition of Community News is planned and traders are being consulted with regard to developing a Shop Local brochure for Christmas. Traders are being actively encouraged to take part in Houghton Feast activity and promotion.

3.4.2 Following two meetings with traders in Houghton, a Traders' Forum is now being established. In consultation with traders in Hetton and Shiney Row the scheme will be expanded. The Business Support Programme is working with traders on a one to one basis depending on their needs. The Place Board recommend that in order to support more traders who wish to engage in the project, the remaining £15,000 in the shopping centres budget from 2011/12 be used to expand the Business Support Programme. The Place Board also propose that £20,000 from the 2012/13 budget is ring fenced for future activity against this priority in order to provide an ongoing programme of support. Detailed options and proposals will be brought to Area Committee for a decision.

3.5 Public and Local Transport

3.5.1 Go North East is planning a series of commercial service changes effective 28 October, and has been carrying out public consultation regarding these changes. The August 2012 Place Board meeting discussed the proposed changes to the number 20 Durham to Sunderland service and the impact the changes would have on local residents. A letter of objection to the proposed changes was prepared and sent to Go North East on behalf of the Committee. The final details of the changes were not available in advance of Area Committee papers being published. However, it is anticipated that further details will be available and therefore a verbal update will be given by the Nexus representative at Area Committee.

4 Recommendations: Members are requested to:

- Note the report, and the Place Board's timetable for activity for the year ahead. (Annex 1).
- Agree to accept progress update reports based on the timetable outlined in Annex 1.
- Agree to the allocation of £30,000 from the 2012/13 SIB budget for future improvements on allotments.
- Agree that the £15,000 remaining from last year's Shopping Centres budget be used to extend the Business Support Programme.
- Agree that £20,000 from the 2012/13 SIB budget be allocated for further support for local shopping centres.

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