

**At a meeting of the REGENERATION AND COMMUNITY REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on WEDNESDAY, 22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor J. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Copeland, M. Dixon, M. Forbes, Heron, Peter Maddison, O'Connor, Vardy, S. Watson and D. Wilson.

**Also Present:-**

Councillor R.D. Tate – Chairman of the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee.

**Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence submitted to the meeting.

**Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2009 and of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2009**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> March and of the extraordinary meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 (copies circulated) be confirmed and signed as correct records.

**Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

Item 6 - Draft Report of the Fear of Crime Task and Finish Group

Councillor Mrs. Forbes declared a personal interest in the report as a Magistrate.

Item 9 - Local Housing Company

Councillors Ball, Heron and D. Wilson declared personal interests in the item as Council appointed representatives on Gentoo Sunderland Limited.

Councillor O'Connor declared a personal interest in the item as a Council appointed representative on Gentoo Sunderland Limited and on the Gentoo Group Limited.

## **Performance Report – April to December 2008 (Progress in Implementing the Local Area Agreement and New National Indicator Set)**

The Chief Executive, Director of Development and Regeneration, Director of Community and Cultural Services and Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided Members with a detailed Quarter 3 position statement on key performance indicators and risk issues for service areas within the terms of reference of the Committee.

The report also provided the Review Committee with a position statement in relation to the first nine months of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), implementation of the new National Indicator Set during 2008/2009 and also the Council's plans to address findings from the annual MORI survey and provisional results of the biennial Place Survey.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Gillian Robinson, Corporate Performance Monitoring Manager, presented the report highlighting positive progress and the key areas of risk.

The report focused on key performance issues for the first half of the year identifying areas where performance was declining or not on schedule, along with any remedial action being undertaken. It also included a summary of individual performance indicators for each service area.

Councillor Copeland raised concerns that Gentoo were no longer to go ahead with the redevelopment of Hahnemann Court and that Southwick would be left with 2 derelict, grassed over areas, around which communities were being left to die.

Mr. Alan Caddick, Head of Housing replied that Southwick was a microcosm of what was happening in other areas of the City. What was needed was a complementary rather than competitive approach. There was a need to prevent blight by having a long term investment plan for the future.

2. RESOLVED that the Performance Report for April to December 2008 be received and noted.

## **Equalities Progress Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed the Committee of the progress in relation to the Council's equality agenda including the achievement of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Sarah Buckler, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, presented the report and addressed questions and comments from Members. Members were advised that the Equality Framework for Local Government was launched at the end of March and would supersede the existing Equality Standard. The associated assessment process would also change as the 5 levels of the Equality Standard would be replaced by

3 overall levels; Emerging, Achieving and Excellent. The Council had been assessed as having reached the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework and the existing Level 4 action plan would be adapted to form an action plan for achieving 'Excellent'.

The Council now intended to combine its existing equality policies and develop a Single Equality Scheme. This would be in line with the new Single Equality Bill. The changes would include bringing together and increasing the legal provision for a number of pieces of existing anti-discrimination and equality legislation covering the Equality strands of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religion and belief.

The Council had developed a consultation plan regarding the development of a Single Equality Scheme and was currently in the process of consulting relevant community groups and organisations.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, Ms. Buckler confirmed that she believed the Council was in a good position to reach the 'excellent' standard. There was a good deal of work to undertake including amendments to the action plan but the 'excellent' standard could be realistically achieved in approximately two years.

Councillor M. Forbes referred to the need to alter so many different policies and asked if there would be resource implications. Ms. Buckler advised that there would not.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor M. Dixon, Ms. Buckler circulated a publication entitled 'Living together, learning together' which demonstrated the outstanding and extensive range of links that Thornhill School had developed with its local community.

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

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Draft Report of the Fear of Crime Task and Finish Group**

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented for Members comments and approval, a copy of the draft report of the Fear of Crime Task and Finish Group.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members welcomed and endorsed the report. Councillor Heron suggested that reform of the judicial system could be a potential future review topic. Councillor Dixon suggested that a representative from the judicial system be invited to address a future meeting of the Committee.

Mr. S. Douglass, Safer Communities Manager advised that the Courts Service had received criticism in the past for being insular in nature. This was no longer the case. Plans were in place for a large Courts complex to be built in Sunderland to include a Crown Court. The Courts were extremely keen to work with the Council to achieve this aim and it would be possible to arrange a briefing session for Members regarding this or submit a formal report to the Committee.

The Chairman commended the report as excellent and offered his thanks to Mr. Douglass and the Members of the Task and Finish Group for their hard work throughout the year with regard to its production.

4. RESOLVED that the draft report of the Fear of Crime Task and Finish Group be approved.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committees for Crime and Disorder Matters: Draft Regulations**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated the Committee on the implications of the draft regulations for the statutory scrutiny of crime and disorder matters.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. S. Douglass, Safer Communities Manager presented the report advising Members that the draft regulations were received on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2009 requesting feedback by 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2009. The Home Office had indicated that the provision would come into effect on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2009.

Mr. Douglass informed Members that the provisions would put in place arrangements to ensure that every Local Authority would have a Committee (“the Crime and Disorder” Committee) with the power to:-

- Review or scrutinise the decisions made, or other action taken in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities who comprise CRDPs in England and Wales. (NB: the responsible authorities are: Local Authorities; the Police; Police Authorities; Fire and Rescue Authorities; and Primary Care Trusts).
- Make reports or recommendations to the responsible authority with respect to the discharge of those functions.

Consideration having been given to the matter and the implications for the Council, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

## **Draft End of Year Report on the Operation of the Regeneration and Community Review Committee 2008/2009**

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which gave Members the opportunity to review the operation and achievements of the Committee over the last year prior to its submission to Council, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the operation, achievement and impact of the Committee during 2008/09 be noted and that the Draft End of Year Report of the Regeneration and Community Review Committee be approved for submission to Council.

### **Sunderland Local Housing Company Update**

The Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed the Committee of the background to the concept of a Local Housing Company (LHC) and which provided an update on progress made to date in the development of a LHC in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Alan Caddick, Head of Housing presented the report advising that in broad terms a LHC would work by the Local Authority committing land to the scheme, the value of which would then be matched by a development partner or partners. The Local Authority would agree to forego the immediate market value of the site in return for the delivery of affordable housing and a share in the profits on the sale of market housing and 'staircasing' sales of shared ownership homes over the life of the contract.

An LHC could:-

- Increase the supply of a range of homes, including affordable homes
- Allow the City Council to invest land in housing development and to capture a share of the land value
- Position the City Council at a stronger point in the centre of the development process and have a longer term influence on the use of its land and how it is developed
- Provide opportunities for a range of investment and development players to become partners of the City Council
- Create quality schemes with wider consumer choice and tenure options

The LHC could offer the City Council the opportunity to become a fully active player in the housing market in the area, realising greater potential from land assets by forming joint venture (JV) companies with private sector partners. The LHC may also enable the City Council to have more influence over the types of development that come forward as well as potentially providing opportunities to benefit from long term property value increases.

Members were advised that the current position with respect to the LHC was that a series of housing sites had been identified as having development potential with respect to the LHC model, sufficient to accommodate over 1600 homes. In addition, EP had indicated that the Cherry Knowle hospital site would be made available for inclusion in the LHC site portfolio.

Discussions, conducted centrally by the Homes and Communities Agency had been held with a number of potential partners, both public and private, who had all expressed a keen interest in bidding to become delivery partners in the proposed LHC. The key attraction appeared to be the long term nature of the agreement coupled with the fact that up front payments for land were not required.

A number of different options were being considered nationally as appropriate legal arrangements for local housing companies, including partnerships, limited liability partnerships and companies limited by shares.

The final decision on the most appropriate option to be adopted for the Sunderland LHC would depend upon detailed legal and commercial advice and would take account of the risks involved with the various models.

Mr. Caddick concluded by stating that he was keen to stress that the concept was about a complementary rather than a competitive approach. It was about ensuring the Council had a long term influence. Presently when the Council sold land to a developer it lost all its influence over that land.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor M. Dixon, Mr. Caddick advised that the homes provided would be net additional. All sites that were currently being looked at had not had housing on them previously.

Councillor S. Watson expressed her concerns for Ford Estate and Pennywell if developers were to be encouraged to build on land that hadn't previously been utilised for housing. She stated that 700 homes had been knocked down in Pennywell with not a single one being replaced.

Councillor Copeland reiterated her concerns in respect of the Hahnemann Court development. Mr. Caddick advised that he would request a meeting with Gentoo and local Ward Councillors to ascertain exactly what was happening.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Dixon regarding timescales for the LHC, Mr. Caddick advised there would be a procurement process that would need to be undertaken. He anticipated that there would be a competitive dialogue lasting at least a year and he would hope to provide Members with a more definitive timescale in due course.

Councillor Vardy asked if the LHC would lead to the provision of larger developments. Mr. Caddick advised that this would not necessarily be the case and that some site would only provide up to 20 homes. In addition Councillor Vardy suggested that more than one developer be employed on the larger sites to create variety. Mr. Caddick replied that the LHC might look to use a consortia, this would also help to mitigate risk.

Councillor Vardy stated that a continuing problem was developers sitting on banks of land and questioned whether an LHC would make any difference. Mr. Caddick advised that what an LHC should ensure was that there was a confidence to enable developments to be delivered. The long term approach would help mitigate risks associated with the housing market.

In conclusion Councillor Vardy expressed concern that the development of an LHC would slow down Gentoo's renewal of areas like Pennywell if they were offered more attractive sites via the LHC.

Councillor M. Forbes stated that what was being proposed appeared to be based on assumptions and that she was not 'sold' on the idea.

There being no further questions the Chairman thanked Mr. Caddick for his presentation and it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and for their contribution to the work of the Committee over the course of the municipal year.

(Signed) J. SCOTT,  
Chairman.