

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 16th June, 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors I. Cuthbert, E. Gibson, Kelly, D. Richardson, Scaplehorn, Tye, Wakefield, Whalen, Wood and A. Wright

Also Present:-

Councillors Mordey and Tate

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Ball.

Minutes of the last Meeting

Councillor Wood asked whether the information regarding the Citywide Speed Limit Review had been analysed and when the results would be available.

The Chairman suggested that there could be a report back to the committee.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented that he had not yet received a reply from Peter High in relation to the fly tipping statistics in the Performance Monitoring Report.

The chairman advised that Mr. High was unable to attend the meeting and requested that he be informed that Councillor I. Cuthbert was requiring a response to his query.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 21st April, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 6 - Sunnyside Planning and Design Framework

Councillor I. Cuthbert declared a personal interest in the item as an employee of Orange Communications which was one of the consultees.

Response from Cabinet – 28th May, 2008 Policy Review – Study into Public Realm and Streetscene

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with the feedback from the Cabinet meeting held on 28th May, 2008, which considered the Committee's Policy Review, "Study into Public Realm and Streetscene". Richard Smith from Living Streets also provided feedback based on the community audit events which were organised as part of the study.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Richard Smith, Living Streets, presented the report and gave a presentation which provided the members with photographs of the areas covered by the walkabouts.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented on the possible consideration of a raised crossing on Cumberland Street and whether this would be in the style of a speed hump.

Richard Smith advised that there were many options and the most likely would be a raised table or hump which would bring the crossing to the level of the pavement.

Councillor I. Cuthbert then commented on the graffiti in Front Street, Concord and stated that he thought that street cleaners would be encouraged to report graffiti.

Mr Smith replied that council employees were encouraged to report problems although there was the problem that members of the public generally did not know who to report problems such as graffiti to.

Councillor Wakefield commented that in the photos it could be seen that the power poles had additions stuck to them and were getting bigger.

Mr Smith commented that it could be possible to have the power cables run underground which would help to de-clutter the street. There would also need to be a de-cluttering audit to see which signs would be able to be removed or consolidated.

Councillor Kelly commented that he had taken part in the Concord walkabouts and asked what participation there had been in the Sunderland walkabouts.

Mr Smith advised that there had been a poor level of participation with only a handful of people taking part and a disappointing level of business participation even though he had written to all of the businesses on High Street West and Union Street but only 3 or 4 people attended while in Concord this number was over 20, He felt that the reason behind this was that in smaller shopping areas with smaller shops local people have more passion about the subject.

Councillor Tye commented that when the committee appointed Living Streets to undertake the community audits it was agreed that the walkabouts would need to be held at time which would allow members in full time employment to attend and that he had not been able to attend as the audits had been held during the day on weekdays.

The Chairman agreed that in the future consideration would need to be given to members with full time employment and that times would need to be set to help suit all members.

The Chairman commented that paving in both areas appeared to be poor quality and that he felt that there was a need to continue to look at this. He also commented on the mixed quality of paving in the City.

Mr Smith advised that it was recognised that it was a common problem as when improvements take place they are normally phased which would result in boundaries between new and old paving and that it is a key area to look at.

2. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Response to the Policy Review be received and noted.

Regional Spatial Strategy: Further Proposed Changes – Response of the City Council

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the committee's advice and consideration on a report considered by Cabinet on 28th May, 2008, on the Council's Response to further proposed changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) published for consultation by the Government Office North East (GO-NE).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, presented the report and advised that once published the RSS would become part of the Sunderland development plan and as such would carry full weight when determining planning applications.

Councillor Wood commented that he got the impression that Mr Lowes was not happy with the outcome of the consultation and asked what action would be taken.

Mr Lowes stated that he was anticipating disappointment. The purpose of the plan was to become a strategic plan for the region and that policy would need to be compliant and that 80% of new homes would be built on Brownfield sites.

The Chairman asked whether the other authorities across Tyne and Wear felt the same way about the strategy.

Mr Lowes replied that it was a consistent approach which was supported across the board.

3. RESOLVED that the comments made be reported to the Council on 25th June, 2008.

Sunniside Planning and Design Framework

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised the members of the responses received following consultation on the proposed policies and proposals outlined in the Sunniside Planning and Design Framework (SPDF) and sought comments on the revised SPDF.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, presented the report and advised that Sunniside was identified as a Strategic Area of Change where the Council would encourage continued development of the area.

Councillor Wood commented on car parking and highlighted several references to providing parking provision and advised that there were other comments within the document which appeared to contradict the positive comments including mention of removing car parks and providing only sufficient parking to remain commercially attractive.

Mr Lowes replied that parking was an important issue and that the document suggested room for flexibility was important. He also advised that there needed to be a balance with on street parking to ensure that while sufficient parking was provided the area did not become dominated by parking.

Councillor I. Cuthbert asked whether there were plans to join the cycle links together.

Mr Lowes advised that there were plans to develop the cycle networks.

4. RESOLVED that the comments be reported to cabinet with a recommendation to adopt the framework.

Terms of Reference of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with the opportunity to consider proposals contained in a report to Cabinet relating to the future role and operation of the Review Committees.

Jim Diamond, Review Co-ordinator, presented the report and welcomed comments from Members.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented with regards to petitions that 250 signatures was too high a number as 90% of people within an area could be less than 250 signatures and suggested that percentages could be used rather than fixed numbers.

The chairman commented that it was an arbitrary number and asked where it had come from.

Mr Diamond advised that it was only a proposed number and that it was subject to review.

Rhiannon Hood, Assistant City Solicitor, clarified that this was a number that had been proposed during consultation. Government's final proposals, which would take account of issues identified through the consultation, were not yet available. If these proposals allowed for flexibility in local arrangements to be agreed, the Committee might want to recommend that the Council considers carefully what the best arrangements will be for Sunderland, taking account of Members' comments. Members supported this approach.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented that the strategic priority focused on the Prosperous City could also be relevant to the Environmental and Planning Review and Regeneration and Community Review Committees. He also commented that the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee should pass more work on to the other review committees.

Councillor Miller commented on the Councillor Call for Action and stated that although the legislation is not yet in place there are already plans to implement it.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and the comments made be reported to the next meeting of the full Council.

MORI Survey – Sunderland Resident's Survey Briefing Note – Work of the Committee

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with background information following the Scrutiny Workshop held at the Stadium of Light on 20th May, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jim Diamond, Review Co-ordinator, presented the report and advised that the information in appendices A and B were included in the information packs provided at the event on 20th May and that the item was intended to help prepare Members for the information included in item 9 of the agenda, the Work Programme for 2008-09 by providing background information.

Councillor I. Cuthbert asked how many surveys had been returned and whether all areas had been covered.

Sal Buckler, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, advised that there had been 1200 responses from across all areas of the City.

Councillor I. Cuthbert then commented on the table showing the results for aspects of Getting Around Sunderland and advised that this was inconsistent when compared to the other meetings and that he assumed the information was in percentages and commented that there was no year on year change listed.

Ms. Buckler advised that there was a reference to the table showing percentages and that although the table did not show the changes she did have access to the information and would provide it.

Councillor Tye commented that the 20th May had been short notice and that with the event held during the day it was difficult for members who work full time to attend the event.

The Chairman advised that the City is based around three distinct regions and asked whether the resident's survey could be broken down to show the figures from the individual areas. He also commented that the fourteen percent dissatisfied with public transport were likely to be in Washington.

Ms. Buckler advised that she would be able to break down the figures.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Work Programme 2008-09

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with information to allow them to consider and agree a work programme for the Committee for the municipal year 2008-09.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jim Diamond, Review Co-ordinator, presented the report and welcomed Members views on the work programme.

Councillor Wood commented on the Scrutiny heading for the February meeting and asked that the Co-ordination of work undertaken by the Utilities

had a focus on the quality of work. He also advised that a special meeting had been discussed with regards to the Leamside Line item on the July meeting.

The Chairman advised that there had been attempts to get people to attend from Network Rail and that further attempts could be made though this would delay the item.

Councillor Mordey advised that the Parliamentary recess was between July and October and that this could be the best time to invite Fraser Kemp MP to the meeting.

Councillor Miller advised that the September meeting would be the only possible time to invite Fraser Kemp MP as it would be short notice for the July meeting and there is no meeting during August due to the Council summer recess.

Councillor I. Cuthbert asked whether Network Rail would be sending a representative to the July meeting.

Mr Diamond advised that Network Rail were unable to attend meetings on Mondays.

Councillor Miller moved that the report be submitted to the September meeting of the committee which was agreed by all members.

Councillor I. Cuthbert asked that graffiti be added to the list of Environmental Services to be considered.

7. RESOLVED that:-

- i. the work programme be approved and submitted to the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee and;
- ii. there be a discussion of the proposed topics at the next meeting to decide on a policy review subject.

Request for Inclusion of an Item on the Agenda – Kerb it Recycling Scheme

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider a request from Councillor I. Cuthbert to include an item on a future Committee agenda.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman advised that Peter High was unable to attend the meeting and asked Councillor I. Cuthbert what course of action he would want the Committee to take.

Councillor I. Cuthbert advised that the request was for the Head of Environmental Services to present a report to the committee detailing the progress being made in bringing the Kerb-It Recycling collection in house and requested that a report be submitted to the July meeting of the Committee.

8. RESOLVED that a report on the Kerb It Recycling Scheme be brought to the July meeting of the committee.

Request for Inclusion of an Item on the Agenda – Planning Consents

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed members to consider a request from Councillor I. Cuthbert to include an item on a future Committee agenda.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor I. Cuthbert presented the report and advised that the request was for the head of Planning and Environment to present a report to the Committee detailing how the play provision within planning consents 98/00514/OUT and 00/01730/REM were not implemented at the time of the development at Biddick Woods, Shiney Row ward, and whether there were any measures implemented or planned to be implemented to ensure this kind of omission would not happen again.

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment advised that he would be happy to submit a report to the committee. Negotiations with regard to this matter had stalled, but in such situations the Council can always consider enforcement action.

Councillor I. Cuthbert commented that buyers buy the houses going by what is shown on the relevant plans and if there is no play provision provided after it has been on the plan then this could cause problems.

Mr Lowes advised that he would be able to submit a report to the July meeting of the Committee.

9. RESOLVED that a report would be submitted to the July meeting of the Committee.

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.