

**At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor S. Watson in the Chair

Councillors M. Dixon, Ellis, Foster, Rolph, J. Scott, L. Walton and Wilson.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Chamberlin, Errington, J. Scott and Wares.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2010**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**Performance Report Quarter 3 (April – December 2009)**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with a performance update relating to the period April to December 2009 including:-

- progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators;
- progress in relation to the place to play policy review recommendations;
- the results of the annual budget consultation undertaken during October/ November 2009 in so far as it related to the Committee's remit.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Gillian Robinson, Corporate Performance Monitoring Manager, together with Paul Allen, Research and Performance Management Officer, presented the report and with regard to other performance activity, advised that the net additional homes

figure was 339, improving from 299 during 2008/09. The target of 90 had already been achieved. Homelessness performance continued to improve as the level of prevention increased (752 cases from 675). Homelessness acceptances had reduced from 217 to 166 with the number of households in temporary accommodation reducing from 11 to 6.

With regard to the Policy Review Recommendations, Ms. Robinson informed the Committee that as part of the development of Scrutiny, particularly in terms of strengthening performance management arrangements, the recommendations had been incorporated into the quarterly performance report on a pilot basis. Of the 20 actions arising from the 'A Place to Play' policy review, one had already been achieved, 13 were on schedule and 6 were not on schedule. The actions not currently on schedule related to the review of the Music Strategy and identification of funding to develop a music directory.

Councillor Rolph stated that when you drill down into the statistics, they did not tell the whole story, for example, the figure for net additional homes did not indicate how many had been demolished and how many had been brought back into use. She offered her congratulations in respect of the decrease in the number of households in temporary accommodation. With regard to the ARCH system she stated that there had been no training provided for Elected Members and asked if the definition of hate crime included stalking. With regard to the 'Prevent Agenda' she stated that as a representative of the Coalfield Area she had attended a Metropolitan Police workshop on the matter. It had highlighted that of particular concern in the North East, had been the growth of the far right and animal rights activists. She asked if the Council's work was taking this into account.

Ms. Robinson advised that stalking was included in the definition of 'hate crime' and the Prevent Action Plan did pick up on the rise of the far right and animal rights activism.

Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, advised that there was 80% / 20% split between homes brought back into use and demolition. With regard to the Areas he advised that the service had its own area profiles which could be drilled down to neighbourhood level.

With regard to an enquiry from Councillor M. Dixon with regard to empty property hotspots, Mr. Caddick advised that they tended to centre on Hendon (hence the selective licensing), Millfield and the City Centre.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Robinson, Mr. Allen and Mr. Caddick for their attendance it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

## **Annual Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for approval as part of the overall Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10 for submission to Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rolph having suggested the inclusion of the Committee's discussion of the built environment's heritage, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that approval be given to the Annual Report for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10.

### **Policy and Development Review 2009/10: Draft Final Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with the final draft report from the evidence gathered in relation to the Committee's Policy Review on Access to Social Housing in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rolph advised that she had supplied a list of minor amendments and had requested that recommendation (b) was strengthened.

Alan Caddick advised that his role on the back of the review would be to take forward the recommendations and he assured Members that he would do his utmost to ensure that they were delivered. He thanked the Committee for instigating the review and for raising the profile of the issue. He informed Members that there would be clear timescales for action with regard to the recommendations and he would not allow the report to be left lying on the shelf.

4. RESOLVED that the draft final report of the Committee's Policy Development and Review into the issue of access to social housing in Sunderland be approved for presentation to Cabinet at its June 2010 meeting.

### **Policy and Development Review 2009/10: Draft Final Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with the final draft report from the evidence gathered in relation to the Committee's Mini Policy Review into Local Studies.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Acting Scrutiny Officer, presented the report which detailed the evidence, research and conclusions drawn throughout the review process and recommendations arising from the evidence gathering.

5. RESOLVED that the draft final report of the Committee's Mini Policy Review into Local Studies be approved for presentation to Cabinet at its June 2010 meeting.

### **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> May – 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2010**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period

1<sup>st</sup> May – 31<sup>st</sup> August which related to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rolph referred to item 01400 'To agree improving access to Social Housing'. She expressed concern that this was the first time the item had appeared on the Forward Plan, yet it was being scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2010 and thereby denying the Committee prior sight of the report. This was not the first time an item had appeared in this fashion and it was clear the reporting mechanism of the Forward Plan was not operating as it should with regard to the scrutiny committees.

6. RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be received and noted.

### **Work Programme 2009/10**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to consider the current Work Programme for the 2009/10 Council Year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Acting Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised that any outstanding items would be carried forward onto the Work Programme for the new municipal year.

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) S. WATSON,  
Chairman.