

At a meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held at the HETTON CENTRE, WELFARE ROAD, HETTON-LE-HOLE on THURSDAY, 12TH MARCH, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. Richardson in the Chair

Councillors Anderson, Blackburn, Rolph, D. Smith, J. Scott, Speding and Tate.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Ellis, A. Hall, Heron and Wakefield.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 7th January, 2009

i) Sport and Leisure in the Coalfield Area

Councillor Rolph stated that she had raised the issue at the last meeting that three quarters of Fence Houses did not have any play provision and that this area should be added to the list of priorities.

ii) Minutes of the Last Meetings of the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group

The Chairman referred to the last meeting when the Committee had been invited to nominate a named Deputy representative on the LMAPS Group and asked the Committee to give some consideration to the matter, and it was:-

1. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the minutes of the last meeting held on 7th January, 2009 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of the above comments in relation to the Fence Houses area; and
- b) Councillor J. Scott be appointed as the Deputy representative on the LMAPS Group on a temporary basis until an alternative Member of the Committee, preferably from the southern area of the Coalfield, comes forward.

Declarations of Interest

Item 6 – Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB): Regeneration Issues Report

i) **Refurbishment of the area in Hetton Town Centre known as the 'Mini Park'**

Councillors Anderson and Blackburn declared personal and prejudicial interests as Members of Hetton Town Council and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

ii) **Feasibility Study to develop a sports and social facility on the site of New Herrington Working Men's Club**

Councillor J. Scott declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application as a member of New Herrington Working Men's Club and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

Councillor Speding declared a personal interest as he has knowledge of the scheme as he lives in the vicinity.

iii) **Education Business Connections Ltd. – Event at Houghton Kepier School in order to develop partnership working with Poland**

Councillor Rolph declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application as a Council appointed Governor at Houghton Kepier School and as a parent of a child at the school and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

N.B. Councillor Rolph did not return to the meeting as she had another engagement.

Item 8 – Strategic Initiatives Budget: 2008-09 Ward Based Community Chest

Councillor Rolph declared a personal interest in the application from Herrington Burn YMCA as a Council appointed Director.

Councillor Speding declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application from Herrington Burn YMCA and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

Item 9 – Executive Summaries of the Meetings of the Coalfield Area Forum

Councillor Rolph declared a personal interest as a Member of the Management Committee of the Forum.

Item 13 – Hetton Town Council – Request for a Town Council Charter

Councillors Anderson and Blackburn declared personal interests in the item as Members of Hetton Town Council.

Northumbria Police Crime Statistics relating to the Coalfield Area

A copy of the crime statistics produced by Northumbria Police (copy circulated) showing all crime in Sunderland and detailing the figures for the Coalfield Area from March 2007 to January 2009 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Community Inspector Graham Finlay was present at the meeting and updated Members in relation to the various crime categories. He pointed out that there had been an increase in dwelling burglary of 16.7% which equated to 22 more victims. There had been a 55% increase in robberies which equated to 15 more offences with attacks being made on shops and garages in the Hetton area. He added that crime levels had been low last year and the number of incidences which had been recorded recently was normal.

Community Inspector Finlay highlighted to Members that the Northumbria Police website showed crime figures at ward level for the previous 3 months.

Members welcomed the above information, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the crime statistics for the Coalfield Area be received and noted.

Minutes of the Last Meetings of the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group

A copy of the minutes of the meetings of the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) Group held on 16th December, 2008 and 20th January, 2009 (copies circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn referred to the incidents of anti social behaviour taking place at Easington Lane. He advised that as a result of the relocation of a CCTV camera to the area first identified, the anti social behaviour had been displaced to the street immediately behind and was impacting on residents in that area.

Community Inspector Finlay advised that incidents of anti social behaviour had been displaced from Easington Lane High Street to Moorsley however action had been taken and the disorder had been quelled. He added that incidents of anti social behaviour were down 30% in the last two months however he confirmed to Councillor Blackburn that reported incidents were still being recorded.

In response to Councillor Anderson's enquiry as to what progress the Police were making in tackling underage drinking, Community Inspector Finlay advised that the

Hetton/Houghton Team had made several operations to check off licences and regularly checked public houses.

Councillor Speding sought clarification as to where responsibility lay with regards to enforcement action concerning indiscriminate parking issues.

Community Inspector Finlay advised that the Local Authority tended to operate the City Centre area. However the Police still had powers to deal with obstruction issues. He invited Members to ring in and report any regular parking issues and they would be dealt with.

In response to Councillor D. Smith who enquired whether it was possible to give Community Support Officers powers to deal with issues of this nature, Community Inspector Finlay advised that it would be up to Government to extend the powers of Community Support Officers if this was considered appropriate and that it was not in his discretion to do so.

3. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the LMAPS Group held on 16th December, 2008 and 20th January, 2009 be noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB): Regeneration Issues Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) outlining proposals for the allocation of SIB funding to support initiatives of benefit to the area.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Regeneration Officer, outlined the budgetary position to the Committee as detailed in paragraph 4.0 of the report. Ms. Hopper advised that the £10,000 allocated at the last meeting to Houghton Sports College to support the 'Learning in the Community' project would be returning to the budget as the sports college had informed her that due to changes within the school the project would not now be going ahead. Ms. Hopper advised that a further £8,000 would be returning to budget from those projects that had not spent the funding allocated to them in the two year time period.

Mr. Dennis Napier, Finance Manager, Technical Services, City Treasurer's Department, confirmed that the monies returning to budget would be carried over to the budget for 2009/2010.

The Committee then proceeded to consider the applications for SIB funding:-

i) Refurbishment of the area in Hetton Town Centre known as the 'Mini Park'

Mr. Keith Hamilton, Deputy Manager, Planning & Implementation, was in attendance and outlined the project to the Committee. In response to Councillor Rolph, Mr. Hamilton advised that public consultation on the project would take place once they had an indication of the financial support in place. With regards to the enquiry made as to lighting, it was a modest scheme

involving localised lighting and he would be consulting with lighting experts to ensure best practice, taking into account the need to reduce carbon emissions.

Councillor Speding commented that it was practice to plant fruit trees around miners' memorials and enquired as to whether this would be included in any future design.

Mr. Hamilton stated that he was not aware of the above, thanked Councillor Speding for informing him of this practice and stated that he would give some thought to the matter.

ii) St. Oswalds Church Community Hall

Mr. H. Graham, Community Hall Manager, was present at the meeting.

Councillor Speding wished the organisers well with the project, stating facilities were much needed in the Shiney Row area.

iii) Penshaw Homing Society

Mr. Bailey, a representative of the Homing Society, was present at the meeting.

iv) Feasibility Study to develop a sports and social facility on the site of New Herrington Working Men's Club

Mr. Bill Dickinson, a representative of the Workingmen's Club, was in attendance.

Councillor Rolph enquired:-

- why the project organisers thought it was a good idea and whether it would have community support;
- the arrangements as to future maintenance of the site; and
- as it was a Workingmen's Club, whether the facilities would be available to women also.

Ms. Hopper advised the Committee that the application for SIB funding was to carry out a feasibility study into whether there was a need for the facilities and that the development would not progress if it was found not to be the case.

Mr. Dickinson advised that the Workingmen's Club did have women Members.

Councillor Speding confirmed that the facilities would be within the boundary of the Club and therefore there would not be any future maintenance costs for the Local Authority. The Club had submitted a planning application for the development some time ago which had been granted.

In response to Councillor Anderson, Mr. Dickinson said that the Club was struggling and was looking to get younger people interested. It was felt that better facilities might help with this.

The Committee noted that funding for the application was being requested from the 2008/09 budget and not 2009/10 as stated in Section 7 of the application.

v) Education Business Connections Ltd. – Event at Houghton Keping School

Ms. Barbara McClennan, Chief Executive of the Company and Mr. Iain Kay, Volunteer Company Secretary, were present at the meeting and outlined the project to the Committee, which involved a whole week of events to take place at Houghton Keping School. Herrington Burn YMCA had also been identified. In response to Members' enquiries, Ms. McClennan confirmed that Mr. Kay had resigned from the Company and was undertaking the Company Secretary role on a voluntary basis to protect other employees' positions.

4. RESOLVED that approval be given to:-

- i) the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget funding of £30,000 from the 2008/09 budget to contribute to the refurbishment of the area of Hetton Town Centre known as the 'Mini Park' to create a Memorial Garden incorporating a sculptural footpath;
- ii) the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget funding of £10,000 from the 2008/09 budget to provide disabled access and toilets to St. Oswalds Church Community Hall;
- iii) the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget funding of £1,350 from the 2008/09 budget to provide storage facilities for Penshaw Homing Society;
- iv) the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget funding of £19,000 from the 2008/09 budget to carry out a feasibility study to develop a sports and social facility on the site of New Herrington Workingmen's Club; and
- v) the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget funding of £2,350 from the 2008/09 budget for Education Business Connections to deliver an event at Houghton Keping School in order to develop partnership working with Poland around understanding and delivering the enterprise agenda.

Strategic Initiatives Budget Update

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an update on live projects for which the Area Committee has previously approved funding through its Strategic Initiatives Budget.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In response to the Chairman, Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Regeneration Officer, informed the Committee that she had not managed to contact the organisers from the Lambton Miners' Memorial Project but that she would keep trying in order to invite them to a future meeting to feedback on the project. Ms. Hopper stated she would also contact those projects in the live report which had not incurred any expenditure to date to seek an update regarding progress made.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Urgent Item

In accordance with Section 100(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman proposed and it was agreed by the Committee to consider further applications for Strategic Initiatives Budget funding from the 2008/09 Ward Based Community Chest as detailed on Annex 1A circulated at the meeting.

Strategic Initiatives Budget: 2008/09 Ward Based Community Chest

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) bringing forward a total of 10 recommendations relating to the 2008/09 Community Chest Scheme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members discussed the report and it was:-

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) approval be given to the 9 proposals for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest as detailed in Annexes 1 and 1A; and
- ii) consideration of the proposal in respect of Herrington Burn YMCA as detailed on Annex 1A be deferred to the next meeting of the Area Committee.

Executive Summaries of the Meetings of the Coalfield Area Forum

A copy of the minutes of the meetings of the Coalfield Area Forum held on 28th January and 18th February, 2009 (copies circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the Executive Summaries of the Meetings of the Coalfield Area Forum held on 28th January and 18th February, 2009 be received and noted.

Flytipping and Cycle Path Interventions

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) providing information relating to research undertaken across Sunderland and advising of the planned expenditure to address flytipping and improve cycle paths as part of the Council's Strategic Investment Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, referred Members to the sites to be tackled which were listed on Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Anderson highlighted to the Committee that as part of the work being undertaken a beautiful feature rockery and shrubs had recently been removed from the entrance to Hollowdene Estate, Hetton-le-Hole. She added that she had already spoken to Mr. High on the matter. Councillor Anderson commented that she found it to be disgraceful that the site had been destroyed, adding that this did not lend to creating an attractive City. She welcomed the work to clear walkways and remove flytipping in general.

Mr. High explained that there had been a miscommunication and the workers had removed the rockery and shrubbery by mistake at Hollowdene. Removal of the rockery and shrubbery had not been included in the project. The areas that were included in the project were not adjacent to residential areas but were open spaces. The work in this particular area should have stopped behind the Fox and Hound Public House. Remedial works would be undertaken at Hollowdene as of the next week.

Councillor J. Scott referred to Burdon Lane, McClaren Way, Herrington and Herrington Road opposite Market Crescent, two locations detailed on the Appendix and reported on the anti social behaviour being committed there.

Mr. High advised that he would write to Councillor Scott to inform him what was going to happen in these areas.

8. RESOLVED that the proposed programme of works in the Coalfield Area be approved.

3G Rapid Deployment Cameras

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an update on the recently acquired 3G CCTV cameras and the protocol for their deployment.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Stephen Eagling, Assistant Security Officer, and Mr. Steve Barnes, CCTV Liaison Officer, Development and Regeneration Directorate, were in attendance at the meeting. Mr. Barnes proceeded to demonstrate the quality of the CCTV

cameras by playing back footage taken earlier that day. Members were very impressed with the picture quality.

Mr. Eagling briefed the Committee on the report, advising that requests had been received to deploy cameras in specific areas including:-

- on the bridge over the A690 in Houghton to counteract anti social behaviour;
- Church Street, where incidences of anti social behaviour had occurred;
- the Philadelphia Depot where high levels of burglary had taken place.

Mr. Eagling stated, however, that it would not be possible to site CCTV cameras on any of these sites due to technical considerations.

Mr. Eagling advised that two of the four CCTV cameras were in situ on the Broadway at Houghton and at Easington Lane High Street. A further two cameras would be deployed in Hetton Town Centre and Shiney Row; locations which had been put forward by the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) Group.

Councillor Speding commented that he was amazed and astonished that it had been suggested that a camera be sited to protect the Philadelphia Depot stating that the CCTV cameras had been acquired to protect the public and not private businesses. There had been a number of incidents in Shiney Row as people were aware there was no CCTV.

Mr. Eagling referred the Committee to the protocol for deployment and emphasised that it was the Area Committee that would consider any proposals for deployment and that it was up to the Members to either authorise, or identify alternative deployment arrangements, together with the reasons for their decision.

In response to Councillor Speding, Mr. Eagling confirmed that the 3G CCTV cameras were supplemented by a range of other measures including mobile stills cameras (flash cams) used for environmental crime and other CCTV capability provided by partner agencies. Requests for deployment of the 3G CCTV cameras were to be considered initially by the LMAPS Group, however, the other cameras were available at their discretion and could be deployed relatively quickly.

Mr. Eagling stated that all Members needed to do was to request a deployment and this would be considered. Mr. Eagling undertook to circulate request forms to Members of the Committee.

Councillor Speding queried the process to get incidents onto the LMAPS report, stating that he had reported incidents in the past and had expected the Anti Social Behaviour Team to pass these on, however this did not appear to be happening.

Councillor Blackburn requested that the comments made with respect to the proposed deployment of cameras to protect commercial premises be passed on to the LMAPS Group.

9. RESOLVED that the contents of the deployment protocol be noted.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit Progress Report

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the performance of the Benefits Section in the processing of new claims and changes in circumstances in accordance with the new National Indicator (Right Time), NI181 for Housing and Council Tax Benefit and, in addition, updating Members on developments relevant to the business.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Steve Atkinson, Benefits Manager, City Treasurer's Department, briefed the Committee on the report and in response to the Chairman explained the process involved in relation to the time taken to process new claims and change events NI181.

Councillor Blackburn stated that the feedback he had received from Claimants was that they found the form confusing if they were only claiming either Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit. Mr. Atkinson stated that if Councillor Blackburn provided details of the particular claim outside of the meeting, he would take a look at it.

Councillor Anderson commented that she recently had personal experience of making a claim for Single Person's Council Tax discount which she said had taken a long time to process.

Mr. Atkinson advised that this was handled by another section in the Department, however, he would look into the matter and commented that claims of this type should not take that long.

Councillor Speding commented that the work carried out to ensure those entitled to benefit take it up and the publicity around it was well spent and that he appreciated the efforts made by the Benefits Section in this respect.

10. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Hetton Town Council – Request for a Town Council Charter

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) seeking the Committee's views on a request to enter into a Local Council Charter for Hetton Town Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

11. RESOLVED that the proposal to adopt a Local Council Charter for Hetton Town Council be noted.

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

(Signed) D. RICHARDSON,
Chairman.