

19th MARCH 2012

REPORT OF THE SUNDERLAND EAST VCS AREA NETWORK

COMMUNITY ACTION IN SUNDERLAND EAST – NEW ISSUES

EMPTY COMMERCIAL PREMISES IN THE CITY CENTRE

1.0 Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1 To make Committee aware of an issue discussed and raised at a recent East Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Area Network meeting regarding empty commercial premises in the City Centre.

2.0 Current Position

- 2.1 There is currently a national problem with commercial premises becoming empty in City Centres due to the economic climate, with the majority of these premises being privately owned. Voluntary Sector organisations are often seeking city centre venues to deliver their services from and would be willing to work with the landlords of the properties to bring them back into use. For example on short term leases to deliver a particular service or to celebrate and launch specific projects such as National Volunteer Week.

3.0 Proposed Next Steps

- 3.1 The East VCS Area Network are proposing to Area Committee that the feasibility of developing a short term leasing agreement between Landlords of commercial premises within the City Centre and local VCS organisations is explored with a future report being brought back to Area Committee on the outcome.
- 3.2 The Network believe that this is a real opportunity for public, private and VCS sectors to work collectively to improve the appearance and usage of empty commercial properties in the City Centre, by local groups being provided with a short term leases to promote their organisations and services to visitors and residents of the City and strengthen working relationships across the Sectors.

4.0 Recommendation

Committee is requested to:

- i) Note the report and agree to receive future updates.

Contacts: Cllr A Emerson and Paula Hunt (Co-Chairs of Area Network)

ScrutinyandAreaArrangements@sunderland.gov.uk Tel: 0191 561 1162