

At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 9th NOVEMBER, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Wares in the Chair

Councillors Ball, P. Dixon, Errington, M. Forbes, E. Gibson, Paul Maddison, Peter Maddison, T. Martin, Mordey, O'Connor, M. Smith and Wood.

Also Present:-

Kath Butchert	- Youth Development Group Manager, Sunderland City Council
Graham Carr	- Highway Maintenance Manager, Sunderland City Council
Colin Curtis	- Senior Waste Manager, Sunderland City Council
Bob Donaldson	- Transportation Manager, Sunderland City Council
Alan Duffy	- Head of Operations, Gentoo Sunderland
Graeme Farnworth	- Interim Head of Culture and Tourism, Sunderland City Council
Jane Hall	- Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism, Sunderland City Council
Matthew Jackson	- Democratic Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
Janet Johnson	- Deputy Chief Executive and Area Lead Executive, Sunderland City Council
Mike Lowe	- Conservation Officer, Sunderland City Council
Vicky Medhurst	- Cultural Heritage Manager, Sunderland City Council
Vivienne Metcalf	- Area Community Coordinator, Sunderland City Council
Eddy Moore	- Chairman, Long Streets Action Group
Jane Peverley	- Marketing Manager, Sunderland City Council
John Smith	- Environmental Health Manager (Commercial), Sunderland City Council
Phil Spooner	- Programme Manager, Sunderland City Council
Nicol Trueman	- Area Officer, Sunderland City Council
Insp. Cheryl Warcup	- Neighbourhood Inspector, Northumbria Police
Jeremy Wicking	- Media Officer, Sunderland City Council
Graeme Wilson	- Assistant Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal Manager, Sunderland City Council

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Julie Raine

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 7th September, 2009

Councillor M. Forbes stated that with regards to the Learning Area Summary she had asked whether Wards would be able to choose to buy their own local provision and what the cost would be. She asked for the minutes to be amended to reflect this.

Councillor M. Forbes then commented on the Community Communications, she stated that it seemed that the committee was being consulted on a decision that had already been made as the committee had not wholly agreed but the project was carrying on; she had not received any information on how the money was going to be spent, and was against the whole project.

The Chairman advised that a trial was going to be carried out; this had not yet taken place. It had been agreed that any Member would be able to submit information for inclusion in the newsletter.

Jeremy Wicking, Area Communications Link Officer, advised that the newsletters were ready to be distributed to Members.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the amendment requested by Councillor M. Forbes.

Declarations of Interest

Item 10 – Financial Statements and Funding Request

Councillor Errington declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the live update report as a council appointed member of the Box Youth Project committee.

Questions to Area Committee

There were no questions to the Area Committee received.

Sunderland East and Attractive and Inclusive Area Summary

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with information on the Attractive and Inclusive Area theme and which sought Members agreement on the seven proposals outlined in the appendix to the report.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, introduced the report and advised that the proposals would be presented by officers who had been involved in the development of the proposals.

Graeme Wilson, Assistant Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal Manager, presented proposals one and two; Encouraging private landlords to become registered, and Bringing empty properties back into use. He advised that the East area has the greatest number of privately rented houses in the city, many of the private landlords were good, responsible landlords however unfortunately there was still some unscrupulous landlords. There was the intention to improve housing for tenants. The council would vet prospective tenants for accredited landlords; in Sunderland there were 228 accredited landlords, with 100 of these being in the East area.

There were 1200 Houses of Multiple Occupancy in Sunderland; only the larger of them required licences and all of the 120 that required a licence were licensed.

Selective Licensing was being proposed for parts of Hendon, this would require all landlords in the area to be licensed by the Council. This would ensure that only fit and proper landlords would be able to operate in the area.

Mr Wilson then went on to present priority two. He advised that empty properties were a wasted resource and that 3.6percent of private sector homes in the East Area were long term empty homes; this was above the figures for Sunderland as a whole of 2.5percent and also the National figure of 1.35percent. Houses were classed as being long term empty after they had been empty for 6 months.

Empty properties often became a focus for problems and the Council had powers to tackle empty properties however Compulsory Purchase Orders and Enforced Sales could be expensive and time consuming processes. It was preferable to work with owners rather than take enforcement action.

There would be a report on both of these topics presented to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee on 10th November, 2009 and it was recommended that there would be a further report received in the New Year.

Councillor T. Martin commented that empty properties needed to be tackled before they become vandalised; broken windows provided easy access and lead to problems such as fires and fly tipping. There was a need for all parts of the Council to be involved in tackling empty houses.

Mr Wilson advised that there were plans to increase the number of eyes on the street that could report empty properties.

In response to queries from Councillors T. Martin and Mordey regarding Selective Licensing, Mr Wilson advised that officers would be speaking with the Secretary of State and it was expected that a decision would be made within 8 weeks. Once the Selective Licensing scheme was accepted it would then take approximately three to four months to implement the scheme.

Mr Wilson advised that in his experience, working with Gateshead Council, Selective Licensing did work and it needed to be operated in conjunction with other regeneration activities. The Council would be working with Back on the Map to deliver a full range of regeneration initiatives.

Councillor M. Forbes asked whether the police and Council worked together to combat Anti Social Behaviour.

Mr Wilson stated that this was the case and that there was an Anti Social Behaviour Team and an Anti Social Behaviour Officer sat on the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS).

Councillor M. Forbes then commented that student housing can cause problems with short term empty properties; in Newcastle there was a proposal to limit the number of student lets in some areas.

Mr Wilson advised that restricting the number of student lets was more of an issue for the planning department. Newcastle had more of an issue than Sunderland, as in Newcastle there were areas of the city which were almost solely student lets.

Councillor Errington asked Mr Wilson how the partnerships worked in Gateshead.

Mr Wilson replied that the Council had a good relationship with Gateshead Housing Group and the Police. There were a large number of Neighbourhood Wardens in Gateshead. The LMAPS groups provided a good method of communication between the partner organisations.

Jane Hall, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism, and Vicky Medhurst, Cultural Heritage Manager, presented priorities three and five: Delivering activities along the river corridor, and celebrating heritage.

They advised the committee of the proposals for activities within the area.

Councillor T. Martin expressed concern over Trinity Church, he stated that this was a fantastic building and asked that it be restored.

Councillor Wood agreed with this and asked that a report be delivered to the next meeting of the committee. This church was an important feature of the area.

The Members agreed to receive a report to the next meeting.

Councillor M. Forbes commented on the condition of Fawcett Street and the way the upper floors of the buildings had been neglected. She asked that the report include any plans for Fawcett Street.

Ms Hall agreed to include Fawcett Street in the report.

Councillor Mordey commented on the staffing levels. He felt that it was unacceptable that there were only two part time workers involved.

Janet Johnson, Area Lead Executive, advised that throughout the Council there were a lot more resources available, the two part time employees was what was available within the Culture and Tourism section of City Services.

Councillor O'Connor stated that the river should have been a great asset as it had been in the past. Since the closure of the shipyards the Council had not dredged the river and as a result an important asset had been lost.

Ms Johnson advised that the river would be looked at as part of the Economic Masterplan.

Councillor Mordey asked whether the regeneration of the Sea Front could be linked in with the regeneration of the river.

Ms Hall advised that the strategies had boundaries and that the river would be linked into other development and strategies.

Councillor T. Martin commented that the Sea Front was not just Roker and Seaburn; there was a need to look at regeneration of Hendon and Ryhope beaches.

Graeme Farnworth, Interim Head of Culture and Tourism, presented priority four; promoting and cleaning up the city centre.

He advised that there were six full time street sweepers worked in the city centre in addition to compact mechanical sweepers which operated from 6am to 8pm. There were also two large mechanical sweepers which operated overnight.

The first of the Farmers Markets had been very successful and it was expected that the next one would be a repeat of the success.

There had been footfall cameras installed to monitor movement around the city centre, this would ensure that events were held in the correct locations.

The Chairman commented that the paths in the city centre were quite good, he had been in Oxford Street in London and the pavements there had cracks which caused there to be a lot of puddles when it rained.

Councillor Wood stated that it was good to see plans for improvements to Holmeside. There needed to be something done with the Vaux site, he suggested that the site could be used for holding markets. Fawcett Street had been discussed at Planning and Highways Committee and would be looked at by the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor T. Martin advised that Toward Road and other roads into the city centre were restricted access and this caused problems for taxis. He felt that taxis should be allowed to use these roads as it would help to increase the number of people visiting the city centre.

Mr Farnworth advised that the City Centre Strategy included traffic management proposals.

Councillor O'Connor stated that the evening economy in the city centre lasted until the early hours of the morning; there was no street sweeping at this time and there were large amounts of litter on the streets. He would like to see 24 hour street cleaning. There was also a serious problem with gulls; there was a danger caused by them swooping and there were often complaints made, he had asked several times for there to be a cull.

Councillor M. Forbes commented that the redevelopment of Holmeside should be linked in with the redevelopment of the central station. The proposed undercroft car parking could be linked to the station to provide parking for rail users. There was currently no long term car parking near to the station. With regards to litter she felt that enforcement action should be taken and people should be fined rather than the litter just being swept up.

Mr Farnworth advised that there was a new enforcement officer in post and there should be a positive impact seen.

Colin Curtis, Senior Waste Manager, presented priority six; improving recycling services. There would be changes to the services for waste and recycling collection. New recycling bins were to be introduced to replace the current recycling boxes and a wider range of materials would be able to be recycled.

Councillor Paul Maddison asked whether large domestic appliances referred to in the report included computers and printers.

Mr Curtis advised that this was the case; the report was referring to the items which were catered for at the waste reception centre at Beach Street.

Councillor P. Dixon commented that it was good to see the proposals for the new blue recycling bins. There was however a need to encourage people to use them, on collection day there was often only one recycling box put out for collection out of 22 houses in his street.

Mr Curtis stated that he recognised the need to encourage recycling, people had been asking for cardboard and plastic recycling and this was going to be provided. People would be asked why they were not recycling and there were participation surveys ongoing, the results of which would be used to see if there was an increase in participation with the introduction of the new bins.

Councillor P. Dixon then asked whether the Beach Street facility could be made more user friendly.

Mr Curtis advised that in the long term there were proposals for a Recycling Village which would improve access, in the short term there would be improvements to the facility and the site was now operated by the Council rather than a contractor.

Councillor T. Martin asked whether there would be any assistance provided for collection of the recycling bins for disabled people.

Mr Curtis advised that there were smaller bins available and that there was an assisted collection scheme in place.

In response to a query from Councillor O'Connor, Mr Curtis advised that there were no fireproof bins available however there would be officers checking that bins had not been left out after collection.

Bob Donaldson, Transportation Manager, presented Priority 7, Improving public transport routes and walk ability across the area.

Councillor Wood asked about the School Travel Plan referred to in the report; how many schools still needed to develop the plans and would all of the schools have a plan in place by the target date of March 2010.

Mr Donaldson advised that there were a number of schools still needed to complete the travel plans; it was hoped the target would be met although it was dependant on the schools taking a proactive approach.

Councillor E. Gibson congratulated Go North East; previously there had been no service between Silksworth and the Royal Hospital after 8:30pm however now the number 35 ran through Silksworth.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and the priorities identified be developed.

Sunderland East Area Committee Work Plan – Thematic Action Plans – Feedback from Working Groups

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the work being carried out by the working groups. The report looked at the work that had been done by the working groups for the Safe and Learning priorities.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, presented the report and advised that Kath Butchert, Youth Development Group Manager, was available to answer questions from Members regarding the three options for consideration. There was also a proposal for an application for SIB funding from Groundworks which the Members were asked to consider.

Councillor E. Gibson queried why the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving group (LMAPS) minutes were no longer presented to the committee.

The Chairman advised that there were separate meetings with the police which allowed a full discussion of the work of the LMAPS. All Members were invited to these meetings.

Councillor Wood commented that this new system was working well.

Councillor Mordey asked why the action for linking the Youth Offending Service into the area committee on the Safe theme had been categorised as Red when there had been no feedback.

Ms Trueman advised that this action was classed as Red because there had been no feedback on the progress made.

Councillor Wood asked why the Youth Village proposal was classed as Green when the committee had rejected the proposal.

Ms Trueman stated that the proposal was being looked at to see whether there was a way to move the proposal forward.

Councillor T. Martin expressed concerns over Hendon beach; there was an absence of lifelbelts and other safety features, would the beach be featured in the work of the committee.

The Chairman requested that the relevant officers contact Councillor T. Martin to provide him with a response to his concerns.

Kath Butchert presented the three options available for consideration from the Youth Development Group. These were:

- Inviting young people to an event which celebrates the young person led initiatives in the area;
- A small amount of SIB funding being provided to allow young people to allocate funding to projects which would benefit the young people in the area; and
- Developing a Councillor shadowing scheme in conjunction with the Youth Councillor proposals.

Councillor O'Connor commented that there were already schemes in place where young people were able to allocate funds to projects. This was good to see as the young people were enthusiastic and they were able to provide to projects which were important to them.

Councillor T. Martin commented that any scheme which provided an opportunity to engage with the youth should be welcomed.

Councillor P. Dixon advised that he felt that option three; the Youth Councillor proposal; was the best option to develop.

Councillor Mordey agreed with this; he had been involved with the Councillor shadowing and welcomed the opportunity to get more young people involved in the community.

Councillor M. Forbes stated that she felt all of the options were good and as such she did not have a preference. If option three were to be developed there could be problems with Ward Surgeries as often people wanted to discuss sensitive issues which they may not want young people to be involved with.

Councillor P. Dixon suggested that any Ward Surgeries with young people could be held in addition to the normal surgeries.

The Chairman agreed that the surgeries would need to be kept separate. He then asked the Members to decide which option would be developed.

The Members agreed to develop option three, the Youth Councillor proposal.

Ms Trueman then asked whether the Committee were happy to receive the application for SIB funding for the Groundworks Green Team project.

The Members expressed concerns over the amount of money that was being requested. They felt that more information was required before a decision could be made.

The Chairman proposed that more information be provided and then a decision be made on whether an application would be received.

3. RESOLVED that:

- i. The report be received and noted
- ii. Councillor T. Martin be provided with a response to his concerns regarding Hendon Beach
- iii. Option three; the Youth Councillor project; be developed
- iv. More information be provided on the Green Team project before an application be received.

Review of the Local Area Plans (LAP)

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Members with the details of the review of the Local Area Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, presented the report and advised that the area plan was a working document. It would be used to make the committee aware of what was going on in the area ready for when the work plan was set in June.

The Chairman stated that Ryhope Community Association had not been included in the plan.

Ms Trueman agreed to ensure that the plan was amended to include Ryhope Community Association.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and the reviews and assessments be undertaken.

Responsive Local Services

The Executive Director of City Services and the Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised Members of the Responsive Local Services Project which had commenced as part of the Community Leadership Programme.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Phil Spooner, Programme Manager, presented the report and advised that the project would lead to improvements in quality of life for residents. It was proposed that the project would commence with a focus on litter; refuse collection; grass cutting; graffiti; and dog fouling; these were all important high volume neighbourhood services which would have an early impact.

The Chairman commented that he felt that the Committee should be involved with this project.

Councillor Paul Maddison asked whether the figures that would be provided would be broken down to show the individual wards.

Mr Spooner advised that it was intended that the figures would be broken down to a ward level.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Area Committee Handbook

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the Members approval and adoption of the handbook.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer, presented the report, the handbook had been developed to provide guidance for everyone involved in the Area Committee. The handbook was designed to be used in conjunction with the Council's constitution.

6. RESOLVED that the Area Committee handbook for 2009/10 be adopted.

Financial Statements and Funding Requests

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed the Members to consider the proposals for support from Community Chest and SIB and sought approval of the SIP emergency protocols.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer presented the report. She advised that the emergency protocols had been amended and the process would now take no more than 1 to 5 working days. The applications would be determined by the Deputy Chief Executive using the Council's Scheme of Delegation and would then be reported to the next meeting of the committee.

There were 10 proposals for Community Chest funding set out in annex 1 to the report. These 10 proposals totalled £6,264 and should they be approved then there would be funding remaining as follows:

Doxford: £2,713

Hendon: £591

Millfield: £207

Ryhope: £4,081

St. Michael's: £6,609

There was one proposal for funding from the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) for £14,426 for Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue to deliver the Phoenix Project. This project was over two years; the full allocation of £14,426 would be allocated from 2010/11 budget.

7. RESOLVED that:

- i. The 10 proposals for support from the 2009/10 Community Chest be approved
- ii. The proposal for support from the 2009/10 SIB budget for the Phoenix Project be approved
- iii. The refreshed emergency protocols for accessing SIB and SIP funding be approved
- iv. The live update report and financial statement be received and noted.

(Signed) D.R. WARES,
Chairman.