

At a meeting of the SOUTH SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 30TH OCTOBER, 2006 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Tye in the Chair

Councillors Blyth, E. Gibson, P. Gibson, Oliver, Porthouse, L. Scott, P. Smith and Tansey

Apologies for Absence

All Members being present, there were no apologies for absence.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 4th September. 2006

Subject to Councillor Tansey's apologies being submitted to the meeting.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 4th September, 2006 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 5 – Sunderland Housing Group – Update

Councillor Blyth declared a personal interest as a tenant of Sunderland Housing Group.

Councillor E. Gibson declared a personal interest as her husband sits on the Sunderland Housing Group South Area Board.

Councillor P. Gibson declared a personal interest as a Board Member of the South Area of the Sunderland Housing Group.

Councillor L. Scott declared a personal interest as a Board Member of the South Area of the Sunderland Housing Group.

Councillor Tansey declared a personal interest as his partner was an employee of Hetton and Houghton Housing Company.

Item 7 – Food in Schools Programme

Councillor Blyth declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item as a governor of Mill Hill Nursery School and his daughter-in-law being a member of staff and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the item.

Councillor Porthouse declared a personal interest as a governor of Farrington Primary School.

Item 9 – Regeneration Issues Report : Feedback on Projects Previously Funded through Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB)

Councillor E. Gibson declared a personal interest as a family member works for Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust.

Item 10 – Strategic Initiative Budget (SIB) : Regeneration Issues Report

Councillor Porthouse declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item as a governor of Farrington Primary School and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

Councillor P. Smith declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a Local Authority Representative for Silksworth C.A. and withdrew from the meeting before the Committee gave consideration to the application.

Item 11 – Strategic Initiatives Budget Update

Councillor Porthouse declared a personal interest as a member of the Jubilee Centre Management Committee.

Item 12 – Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) 2006/07 Ward Based Community Chest

Councillor E. Gibson declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a member of Doxford Park C.A. Management Committee.

Councillor P. Gibson declared a personal interest as Chair of Silksworth C.A.

Crime Rates Relating to the South Area – Presentation from Northumbria Police

Inspector Michael Smith was in attendance and circulated for Members' information details of crimes committed in the South Sunderland Area for the period July – September 2006 in comparison with the same period in 2005

and 2004 together with the number of juvenile disorder reports from each of the South Area Wards.

(For copy statistics – see original minutes)

Inspector Smith highlighted the significant increases/decreases for individual wards.

Councillor Peter Gibson queried whether calls to the 101 number were included in the statistics. Inspector Smith replied that the 101 number was a service run by local partnership, if a problem is reported that requires action by the Police, the case is converted to a Police incident and would be included in the statistics.

Councillor Peter Gibson expressed concern that the statistics did not reflect the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in Silksworth as residents of Warwick Terrace and Somerset Street had been experiencing problems and had received no response when dialling '101'.

Inspector Smith explained that he was aware of the problems in Somerset Street and would be meeting with the beat manager – P.C. Taylor about these issues. The inspector commented that it was impossible to Police communities in isolation, there was a great deal of reliance on members of the public who are able and prepared to provide intelligence about incidents in their neighbourhood and it would therefore seem nonsensical to ignore relevant calls about anti-social activity. The scheme has been regarded as a success to date however it will take time to evaluate the performance and allow the scheme to embed itself.

In response to a query from Councillor Porthouse regarding the correlation between varying Juvenile disorder figures on the statistics. Inspector Smith explained that one set of figures related to the combination between juvenile annoyance and actual crime and disorder and it was historically difficult to isolate incidents just classed as disorder.

Councillor Porthouse went on to explain a problem he had recently experienced with the '101' service when he had phoned at 5.15 p.m. to report youths in the school field at Farringdon Primary. The operator could not identify the area. Inspector Smith could not explain how this had happened and could only assume it was a database error.

Inspector Smith closed by saying that he was unsure how much longer he would be staying with the area command, however he had enjoyed his time at the South Area and was particularly pleased to have been party to embracing the neighbourhood model.

The Chairman having thanked Inspector Smith for this update, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted

Sunderland Housing Group – Update

The Chief Executive of Sunderland Housing Group submitted a report (copy circulated) to update the South Area Committee on the progress of Sunderland Housing Group's Investment and Renewal activity within the South area and the City of Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Eric Johnson, Sunderland Housing Group, presented the report.

The Chairman commended the work that had been carried out in Silksworth but felt more needed to be done to sort out the problems with fencing and garage blocks in disrepair. In response, Mr. Johnson confirmed that phasing programmes would include fencing, heating and garage maintenance.

Councillor Smith queried how successfully tenants who needed to be moved for various reasons were being decanted. Mr. Johnson explained that this had proved very difficult as Silksworth was a very popular area.

Councillor Porthouse commented that certain areas in Farringdon were lacking some services e.g. burst pipes that needed to be repaired. Councillor Porthouse explained that some of the pipework was 50/60 years old and in desperate need of attention. Mr. Johnson agreed to ascertain where the problems lay in order to investigate maintenance issues.

In response to a question from Councillor Tansey regarding when Phase II will commence. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the planning submission had been submitted in two weeks ago with a 15 week deliberation period. Therefore it was hoped that building work would commence during the summer.

Councillor Scott queried whether Sunderland Housing Group were obliged to service all gas appliances and how this was affected by difficulties in accessing properties. Mr. Johnson informed the Committee that people do refuse to allow engineers access, however the Sunderland Housing Group do have right of entry. There is a given time period before a letter and ultimately notice is served on tenants refusing access to their property. Moreover, any logged repairs for a household refusing access for boiler servicing are frozen.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Johnson for this update, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit – Progress Report

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of the performance of the Benefits Section in the processing of new claims in accordance with the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVP178a) for Housing and Council Tax Benefit for the period 1st April, 2006 to 30th September, 2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Steve Atkinson, Benefits Manager, Revenues Section, City Treasurer's Department, briefed the Committee on the report. He highlighted that the Section were processing claims within the 27 day target with a figure of 25.74 days City-wide. The Benefits Section had also exceeded the 93% local target for new claims processed within 14 days of receipt of all necessary information by achieving 95.84%. These two performance measures were also well within the Department for Work and Pensions standards.

Members were also advised that the implementation of the new benefits system had suffered technical difficulties and the revised implementation date was likely to be early-mid January.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Atkinson for this update, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Food in Schools Programme

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise the Area Committee of the existing work undertaken by the Food in Schools team as part of the City-wide strategy for the DfES transitional school meals funding.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Oliver queried whether the programme received input from physical education initiatives and was advised that as part of the Healthy School Award Scheme, schools must complete a target based on their own health priorities which may include physical activity. Further, Children's Services is currently running a scheme called "passport to health", a rewards based initiative for school children who can demonstrate a commitment to healthy choices. Prizes include free swim vouchers for local swimming pools.

The Chairman having thanked the representative for this update, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Puma Tennis Centre and Silksworth SC : Summer Holiday Programme 2006

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise the Area Committee of the success of the Summer Holiday Promotion, which was introduced throughout the City's Leisure Complexes in 2006, including Puma Tennis Centre and Silksworth Sports Complex.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman having thanked the representative for this update, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Regeneration Issues Report : Feedback on Projects Previously Funded Through Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB)

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with information on the People's Pedal Power Project and Compass Community Transport which it had previously funded through its SIB allocation.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Les Wascoe provided Members with an update on the People's Pedal Power Project, which provided adapted bicycles and tricycles to disabled people in Sunderland to allow them to participate in healthy cycling activities in a safe and supportive environment.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Wascoe for attending the meeting and wished the worthwhile project continued success.

Mr. Richard Parry, Member of the Management Committee for Compass Community Transport, provided Members with an update on the service.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Parry for his feedback.

7. RESOLVED that the feedback reports be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) : Regeneration Issues Report

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) on the proposed Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) to support the following initiatives to benefit the area:

- (i) Community Safety Improvement Project;

- (ii) Farrington Homing Society;
- (iii) Virement of previously agreed funding for the Plains Farm and Humbledon Community Initiative.

Mr. Richard Parry, Area Regeneration Officer, advised that subject to the approval of all projects at the meeting, £28,435 remained from the 2006/07 budget.

Discussion ensued regarding the extension of funding for the Farrington Homing Society. Members acknowledged that there had been a series of delays and difficulties in securing planning permission but expressed the need for this project to progress.

Full consideration having been given to the applications, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that approval be given to:-

- (i) £14,908 from the 2006/07 budget, as a contribution to the Community Safety Improvement Project;
- (ii) Extension of funding for the Farrington Homing Society be extended for six months. This extension is final, whereby any further application of funding would not be considered. It was agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Society expressing the decision of the Committee;
- (iii) Virement of £2,500 from the 2006/07 budget and £15,000 from the 2007/08 budget, subject to approval of previously agreed funding for the Plains Farm and Humbledon Community Initiative.

Strategic Initiatives Budget Update

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to update Members on live projects for which the Area Committee has previously approved funding through its Strategic Initiatives Budget.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

9. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) 2006/07 Ward Based Community Chest

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) on 17 projects recommended for support from the 2006/07 Community Chest Scheme in respect of the Doxford, Silksworth and St. Chad's Wards.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

10. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 17 projects recommended for support from the 2006/07 budget with a total value of £8,694 as detailed in Annex 1 to the report.

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

(Signed) P.M. TYE,
Chairman.