

At a meeting of the WEST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY, 2009 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Allan, Arnott, Gofton, Morrissey, Old, S. Watson, A. Wilson and T. Wright.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors L. Martin and J.B. Scott.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 27th November, 2008

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 27th November, 2008 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 7 – Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB): Regeneration Issues Report – Polish Partnership Project

Councillors T. Wright and Gofton declared personal interests in the application as Members of the Governing Body of Academy 360.

Presentation from Northumbria Police on Crime Rates Relating to the West Sunderland Area

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Acting Inspector Ken Robinson who advised that there had been a decrease of 12.6% in overall crime in respect of the period April to November 2008 compared to the same period the previous year.

Over the period the number of burglary dwellings had increased by 146 offences. This matched the increase nationally and the police were responding by targeting hot spots. Burglary from other than dwellings had declined by 18 offences, this amounted to a 9% decrease. Robbery had reduced by 8 offences, a 40% decrease. Theft from Person was down by 3 offences, a 30% decrease. Theft of pedal cycles had reduced by 7 offences, a 4.3% reduction. Taking Without Owners Consent had reduced

by 17 offences, a 13.8% decrease and interference with vehicles had reduced by 40%.

There being no questions for Inspector Robinson, the Chairman thanked him for his presentation and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted.

Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS)

Consideration was given to a report of the West Area LMAPS (copy circulated) on issues discussed at meetings of the LMAPS covering South Hylton, Ford Estate, Pallion, Pennywell, Springwell, Plains Farm, Grindon, Barnes and Thorney Close held on 4th November and 9th December, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan, the Committee's LMAP representative referred to the new format of the report which was in a narrative rather than tabular form and hoped that Members would find it easier to follow. He referred to major enforcement exercises carried out in the past with regard to the operation of illegal motorcycles and asked if there would be more in the future. Inspector Robinson advised that he would check and advise Councillor Allan accordingly.

Councillor T. Wright advised that he had attended an excellent meeting at North Moor regarding the development of an Off Licence Watch. He had been excited by the proposals but had heard nothing since. Inspector Robinson advised that the development of the scheme was still ongoing however he would advise Members in due course once the launch date was known.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with information on the following project which it had previously funded through its SIB allocation:-

- Pallion Action Group's Resource Centre

Richard Parry, Area Regeneration Officer, introduced Doreen Buckingham, Centre Manager and Annabelle Snowden, Senior Advice Worker, in respect of the Project who proceeded to provide Members with a commentary on their feedback report and answer questions thereon.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Buckingham and Ms. Snowball for their presentation, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the feedback report be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) : Regeneration Issues Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) on the proposed allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) funding to support the following initiatives of benefit to the area:-

- (i) £60,000 as a contribution to the 'Barnes Burn Rejuvenation' Project;
- (ii) £55,000 as a contribution to the 'Riverside Walk' Project;
- (iii) £3,320 as a contribution to the 'Multi Area Polish Partnership' Project;
and
- (iv) £20,500 as a contribution to the 'Best of the West' Magazine Project'.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Richard Parry, Area Regeneration Officer, presented the report and advised that the 4 applications for funding before the Committee were requesting £138,820 in total from the 2008/09 budget. Should the Committee grant these requests a balance of £528 would be left in the budget.

Consideration having been given to the applications, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that approval be given to the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget funding of:-

- (i) £60,000 to the Director of Development and Regeneration as a contribution to the 'Barnes Burn Rejuvenation' Project;
- (ii) £55,000 to the Director of Development and Regeneration as a contribution to the 'Riverside Walk' Project;
- (iii) £3,320 to Education Business Connections Ltd. as a contribution to the 'Multi Area Polish Partnership' Project; and
- (iv) £20,000 to Hendon 2000 Ltd. as a contribution to the 'Best of the West Magazine' Project.

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 and changes in circumstances in accordance with the new National Indicator (Right Time), NI181 for Housing and Council Tax benefit and in addition to update Members on developments relevant to the business.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Deborah Younger, Appeals Manager, presented the report advising Members that the computer system installed two years previously had now bedded in and the new procedures were working well.

Councillor Arnott referred to the current economic downturn and asked was the level of staffing in the section adequate to deal with a likely increase in benefit applications and had any provision been made to increase staffing levels.

Keith Beardmore, City Treasurer, advised that the previous year's performance (2007/08) was 27 days, the current performance was well under 20 days. With regard to the round of Budget efficiencies, no reductions had been sought in respect of the Benefits Service. Various provisions had been made in the capital programme which would help improve performance. It was one of the Council's highest priorities to drive down response times and increase benefit take up.

Councillor Allan stated that the improved performance of the Benefits Service proved the wisdom of the invest to save approach with regard the purchase of the hardware and software and the planned system upgrade. He advised that if necessary staffing levels would be increased.

6. RESOLVED that the Housing and Council Tax Benefit progress report be received and noted.

Fly tipping and Cycle Path Interventions

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the West Area Committee with information relating to research undertaken across Sunderland to enable investment to be made to address fly tipping and improve cycle paths.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Peverley, Project and Service Development Manager, presented the report and requested feedback on the proposed programme of work in relation to the West Area as detailed in the schedule to the report.

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that the proposed programme of works in the West Area be approved.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) 2008/09 Ward Based Community Chest

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) on 9 projects recommended for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest Scheme in respect of the Barnes, Pallion, Sandhill and St. Anne's Wards.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

8. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 9 projects recommended for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest budget with a total value of £5,260 as detailed in Annexes 1 and 1A to the report.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) D. FORBES,
Chairman.