

At a meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held in THE MILLENNIUM CENTRE MAIN HALL, CONCORD, WASHINGTON on THURSDAY, 30TH JUNE, 2022 at 6.00p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Lauchlan in the Chair

Councillors Fletcher, Guy, Laws, F. Miller, D. Trueman, H. Trueman, P. Walker, M. Walker and Williams

Also in Attendance:-

Mrs. Karon Purvis	-	Area Officer – Sunderland City Council
Ms. Jill Colbert	-	Chief Executive Together for Children, Sunderland City Council
Mr. Paul Wood	-	Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
Denise Gilholme	-	Community Support Worker
Shirley Gillum	-	Area Network Representative
Mr. Alan Duffy	-	Gentoo
Ms Bethan Wilkie	-	Gentoo
Mr Martin Farrow Farrow	-	TWFRA
Mr Paul Thompson	-	TWFRA
Inspector Steve Passey	-	Northumbria Police

Apologies for Absence

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Farthing, G. Miller, D.E. Snowden and Warne. Also apologies from Sylvia Coptley and Julie McBurnie

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

Minutes of the last meeting held on 17th March 2022

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 17th March, 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the typo on page 3 of the minutes being corrected to “around”.

Washington Area Committee Delivery Plan 2020-2023

The Chair of Washington Neighbourhoods and Community Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update of progress against the Area Priorities associated with the Delivery Plan which would be the focus for the Washington Area Committee during 2022-2023 and also provided an update on the Neighbourhood and Community Board Governance Arrangements for 2022-2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Laws, Chair of the Washington Neighbourhoods and Community Board presented the report, highlighting the key points of action within the relevant Task Groups and was on hand with Karon Purvis, Area Officer Washington to answer any queries raised by Members.

Mrs Purvis advised that Councillor Laws would replace Councillor F. Miller as the representative on LMAP's

2. RESOLVED that the Committee
 - i) Considered the progress and performance update with regards to the Washington Area Committee Delivery Plan 2020- 2023, and agreed the proposals for future delivery as contained within Annex 1 of the report;
 - ii) Noted that Area Committee Governance arrangements for 2022-2023 outlined in Section 3 and Item2 Annex 2 of the report;
 - iii) Noted the Area Committee Year in numbers from 2021/22 as detailed in Annex 3 of the report;
 - iv) Noted the Area Facebook page key statistics from the Communications Plan from 2021/22 as detailed in Annex 4 of the report;

Washington Area Budget Report

The Assistant Director of Community Resilience submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided a financial statement as an update position on progress in relation to allocating Area Committee Funds, Neighbourhood Investment Capital Programme and Community Chest as well as presenting proposals for further funding requests.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mrs Purvis presented the report and was on hand to answer any queries raised by Members.

In relation to the extension of the Washington Clean and Green Project, Councillor P. Walker advised that he had attended two other of the City's Area Committee meetings and the feedback on this project had been tremendous and across the city we could not put a price on the work they were doing which was fantastic.

The Chairman wished to echo those comments as we received so much benefit from the project out of such a small amount of money given. It was amazing the amount of work the people of Washington were doing and it was money well spent.

Mrs Purvis also advised of the benefits the volunteers of the project received such as the gained confidence which had led them to progress into other areas.

With regards to the Project Brief for the Washington Events Programme, Councillor Williams commented that the money was worth every penny but was unsure if the programme was deliverable on £60k and suggested that this be increased by £70k, this proposal was seconded by Councillor F. Miller.

Councillor Williams also raised concerns regarding the timescales for organisations to turnaround the upcoming events such as the carnival.

Councillor M. Walker agreed that a 10 week turnaround would mean that the applicants needed to be agreed as soon as possible.

Mrs Purvis advised that if approved, she could put out a Facebook post and that she knew of one organisation that had delivered in the past and would be ready to go if successful but it depended on if any other bids were received.

In response to Councillor P. Walker's enquiry, Mrs Purvis advised that funding for road closures for events such as Remembrance Sunday were not included in this and that the groups were expected to organise these themselves however it could be done via the Council and sometimes had been funded via Community Chest.

Councillor H. Trueman advised that during his term as Mayor he had noticed the prices of the vendors on these events with some charging as much as £9 for a sandwich. Councillor H. Trueman commented that as we faced a cost of living crisis, if we had any influence and suggested if vendors could cap their prices, they could possibly receive some kind of discounted rate. Mrs Purvis advised that this would be up to the successful applicant and suggested that something could be included in the brief as to how they would bring in extra revenue and a possible direction of travel to consider cost benefits for residents.

Councillor Williams suggested that if the additional £10k proposed was approved, that this could be used to look at reducing the costs for those families that were struggling.

With regards to the Positive Activities Programme Project Brief, Councillor Fletcher commented that we also needed to remember the smaller organisations that lose out on scoring which puts them off applying for such projects. Mrs Purvis advised that they do work with those organisations to help achieve funding and this had happened just recently.

In respect of the Call for Projects- Youth Matters, Mrs Purvis advised that both applications received had failed to meet the criteria on scoring and that the recommendation was to decline the applications and take this back to the July Board meeting for further discussion on a revised project brief.

- i) Noted the financial statements set out in Tables One, Two and Three of the report;
- ii) Considered and agreed the approval of NF funding of £24,775 to Community Opportunities to extend the Washington Clean & Green Volunteering Programme as set out in Section 2.4 and Item 3 Annex 1 of the report;
- iii) Considered and agreed the approval of NF funding of £100,000 to Sunderland City Council to deliver proposals for the NE Community Forest and management and maintenance of plantations in Washington as set out in Section 2.4 and Item 3 Annex 1 of the report;
- iv) Considered and agreed the approval of NF funding of £70,000 (amended) and the Project Brief and Call for Projects for the Washington Events Programme 2022/23 as set out in Section 2.4 and Item 3 Annex 1 of the report;
- v) Considered and agreed the approval of NF funding of £100,000 and the Project Brief and Call for Projects for the Positive Activities Programme 2022/23 as set out in Section 2.4 and Item 3 Annex 1 of the report;
- vi) Considered and agreed the approval of NF funding of £12,000 to Sunderland City Council to deliver the Area Committee Communications Plan as set out in Section 2.4 and Item 3 Annex 1 of the report;
- vii) Considered and approved the approval of NC funding of £100,000 for the delivery of the Washington Fixed Play Survey as set out in Section 3.4 and Item 3 Annex 2 of the report;
- viii) Noted the Community Chest approvals supported from 2021/2022, as detailed Item 3 Annex 3 of the report; and
- ix) Noted the Community Chest approvals supported from 2022/2023 as detailed Item 3 Annex 4 of the report.

Partner Agency Reports

a) Washington Area Community Voluntary Sector Network

The Voluntary and Community Sector Network submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update with regard to the Washington Area Community and Voluntary Sector Network.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Shirley Gillum, Area Network Representative presented the report on behalf of the VCS Network along with Denise Gillholme, Community Support Worker.

The Chairman wished to thank both Ms Gillum and Ms Gillholme for the presentation, for a great annual report and for all the work that they did within the Washington community.

Councillor Fletcher commented that we needed to acknowledge the great work done by the volunteers of Keep Washington Tidy and also Mickey's Place who now had a great deal of elderly residents using the facility, especially within the last two weeks, it was working extremely well.

Councillor P. Walker commented that it was great to see the Alliance knocking on corporate doors and that whilst Nissan had always been a great employer for the City, they hadn't always been considered a good neighbour to have by the residents so it was nice to see them becoming more involved and stepping up to the plate.

Ms Gillholme advised that if Members had any other suggestions/contacts of organisations and companies for partnership working then to get in touch with her.

Mrs Purvis advised that social values were playing a greater part within any new contracts drawn up for any new developments that came in and there was effectively a shopping list of community needs and a monitoring service for this.

In response to Councillor Guy's comments, Mrs Purvis advised that the residents association and community associations have been offered training with three offers in the last few months but many don't take this up. Ms Gillholme has the time to support these groups more and there was the offer of training, support and governance for any organisation that wants to utilise it.

Councillor H. Trueman enquired as to groups working with Ukrainians in the City as he believed there were possibly 75 Ukrainians in the City and the majority of these were in Washington. Ms Gillholme advised that there were groups supporting, particularly in Columbia where a lot of fundraising had been done. There was also support available from the Council and Gentoo also.

Councillor Williams commented that these were an amazing group that had been very keen to help and it was wonderful to have them doing such an incredible job.

Councillor Williams also referred to the new changes in the Management structure of the Council and that whilst a new set of eyes can always be useful we had to be cautious that we didn't change ways that's already worked well and there was plenty of help out there, we just needed to ensure it was tailored.

Councillor Laws commented that whilst it was excellent to see the efforts being made for the people of Ukraine, he was still waiting to hear anything on behalf of the Afghanistan refugees. Jill Colbert, Chief Executive Together for Children advised that the Ukrainian families were sponsored by a visa scheme and this was a different legal status from the Afghanistan refugees, where there was no demonstrable programme from the government.

Ms Colbert advised that they routinely receive asylum seekers from Dover/Kent with the national transfer scheme but with specific reference to Afghanistan there was no new information that could be given other than what had been briefed to Members already.

Councillor Laws commented that there was no criticism to be made of the Local Authority on this and that he believed there was no doubt there was a difference in how the Government was tackling the issue of Ukrainian refugees to that of Afghan refugees.

Members having considered the report, it was: -

4. RESOLVED that the content of the report and the opportunities and issues raised by the Washington Area Voluntary and Community Sector Network be received and noted.

b) Gentoo

Gentoo provided a report to the Committee on current Gentoo developments, projects and priorities for the period March 2022 to June 2022.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Alan Duffy, Head of Operations, Gentoo presented the report and introduced Ms Bethan Wilkie who would be taking over his role for future Committees.

Councillor Laws referred to the tenant arrears of £2.5 million, commenting that this was a high figure and that whilst they could not look at all tenants situations to see who was struggling, enquired what they could do in terms of signposting.

Mr Duffy advised that they had the Money Matters Team to help and if they

couldn't they did signpost residents to others. Ms Wilkie advised that every Neighbourhood Co-ordinator had just been provided with training so they knew what could be offered also.

Councillor Laws acknowledged the Money Matters Team and the service they provided but questioned if they had the capacity to deal with the expected worsening position of the current financial climate. Ms Colbert informed the Committee that the Council spends a fair amount on there Welfare Advice Team and a household support fund would be available to pensioners and single people also had welfare support available. Ms Colbert commented that we may not have all the answers, but we should have the capacity to support.

Mrs Purvis advised that with the rollout of the Household Support Fund, the VCS were coming together to identify locals that needed support.

Councillor Williams requested that comparative data on arrears be included from the other Area Committees in the City and enquired if we would start to see a rise in evictions now that the ban had ended after Covid restrictions were lifted. Mr Duffy advise that in terms of arrears the figures hadn't really changed over the past 5 years and he would look at the data for comparative figures in the future.

With regards to evictions, Mr Duffy advised that there had been around 100 across the City and that this really was a last resort for them and the key priority was to speed up the re-letting process.

The Chairman thanked Mr Duffy and Ms Murphy for their report

5. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

c) TWFRS

The Tyne and Wear Fire Service submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided performance-monitoring details in relation to the Local Indicators for the Washington Area Committee from 1st January 2022 to 1st June 2022, compared with the same period in 2021

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Martin Farrow, Station Manager presented the report and expanded on the figures provided.

The Chairman thanked Mr Farrow for his attendance.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

d) Northumbria Police

Northumbria Police submitted a report which provided data on crime and disorder in the Washington area comparing 'Year to date' figures with the preceding year.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Inspector Steve Passey presented the report and was on hand to answer Members queries.

Councillor Fletcher commented that it was great to see the long lens camera that the Committee had funded finally being utilised and had worked well in Princess Anne Park. Inspector Passey confirmed that the camera was being used more now and this was a definite priority.

Councillor Williams raised concern about certain vindictive messages being made on message boards about anti-social behaviour and one in particular about a child being assaulted in Princess Anne Park, yet upon investigation this had not been reported.

Councillor Williams also raised the issue of people driving through bus only links and requested clarification as to what the position was with these and if the Council were taking over responsibility for this.

Inspector Passey commented that bus lanes were a pet peeve for many but this all depended on the signage as some taxis could drive through certain links and that whilst this was a minor offence, he was sure Members could appreciate the pressures that the team were under that they couldn't be policing these lanes as much as other areas and priorities. However, Inspector Passey further added that Operation Butternut was about improving road safety which would hopefully impact upon this issue as well.

Councillor H. Trueman commented that as far as he was aware, no bus links allowed taxis to go through.

Mrs Purvis suggested that Graham Carr, from Highways be invited to the next Board meeting for clarification.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Passey for his attendance

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Planning Applications – For Information Only

Current Planning Applications relating to the Washington Area for the period 1st May, 2022 to 31st May, 2022 were submitted for Members information only (copy circulated).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) L. LAUCLAN,
Chairman.