

Sunderland West Area Committee



Cllr Peter Gibson
Chair of West Area Committee and
Place Board Chair



Cllr Rebecca Atkinson
People Board Chair

The West Area Committee has embraced its role as community leader and shaper – using its area priorities to shape and influence core service delivery as well as continue to engage and support with the West Voluntary and Community Sector.

The West Area Committee local priority themes were

- Activities for Young People
- Job Prospects
- Health and Well being
- Environmental and Streetscene improvements including shopping centres

These broad priority themes have enabled the Committee to be flexible in their approach – linking their influencing role for core service delivery, with problem solving at a local level. The Place and People Boards have continued to be pivotal, providing an opportunity for focused discussion with officers and partners, to support the Area Committee to make the right decisions for the local area.

Funding

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) is allocated to each Area Committee on an annual basis. The budget is allocated to initiatives that support the delivery of Area Priorities. During 2013/2014 the West Area Committee worked diligently to achieve best value and improved outcomes from the SIB allocated. They recommended £416,073 to support 14 projects within the West of the City, to strengthen communities and improve hundreds of people's lives.



Community Chest Grant funding provides support for projects which benefit communities and meet the priorities of the local area. During 2013/2014 the West Councillors awarded £42,191 to support 61 local community groups and organisations. The average value is of each grant was £768.

What we have influenced – the Area Committee has influenced core 'People, Place and Economy' service delivery, considering how services are delivered across the locality and has directly influenced the development of services for the city. Some key achievements include:

Library Services – are changing within Sunderland to a 'Reading and Learning Information Service' – delivering services to meet the needs of the local area, focusing upon learning hubs, community libraries and community outreach activities. The West Area Committee influenced delivery across the West to ensure services reflected the need of local communities.

Committee continue to work closely with Library services and the Voluntary and Community Sector to develop services that support local priorities and meet the needs of our residents.

A major success to date has been the ongoing development of the former Silksworth Library now known as Beckwith Mews Resource Centre. The centre has been progressed in partnership with Beckwith's Community Interest Company, Housing 21 and the library service with the support and involvement of local councillors. The former library is now operating as a community hub offering a range of activities, events and learning opportunities for local residents as well as continuing to offer a large range of library books as a community book collection point.

Children's Centres - The services delivered from within Children's Centres were re-commissioned during 2013-2014 and the Area Committee was involved every step of the way. Members visited the West Children's Centres, viewing the current services delivered first hand and looking for opportunities to improve outcomes for local people. Parents (particularly young parents) often lack confidence and require support to encourage them back into the workplace, offering opportunities to volunteer in Children's Centres and within the Community is critical, therefore when the West Area Committee funded community job clubs across the area, they ensured that venues for delivery included the West Children's Centre.

The Chair of the People Board is also the Chair of the Children's Local Advisory Board (CLAB), and this arrangement has strengthened opportunities to ensure service providers/partners connect to utilise resources most effectively – for example the Midwife Service now signpost mothers-to-be to Children's Centres, to ensure they sign-up pre-birth for health information and advice

as well as general parental support.

Street Scene Services – The Committee continue to ensure that Street Scene Services are responsive and they understand the connection between a clean, green and safe environment with the health and wellbeing of their local communities. All partners and communities are encouraged to work together to not only improve the environment but also to improve health, well-being and community cohesion. The West Area Committee tours the area regularly, either collectively or through their dedicated, SIB funded 'walk and talk' programme. The walk and talk programme has been extended, with the main outcome to connect people to places – not only tackling a 'clean-up' issue but also working with the community to encourage ownership and participation; placing green spaces at the heart of communities to be utilised and support families to keep fit and active, spending valuable time together.

Working in partnership – We have focused on strengthening our partnerships throughout the year and will continue to ensure that collaborative working remains a focus for the year ahead. It has been critical for us to ensure close links between Sunderland Council 'people' services such as Children's Centres, Adult and Social Care and Public Health with the Clinical Commissioning Group. We've developed a health plan-on-a-page which enables us to see at a glance where we can support each other to achieve our collective priorities – all being to ensure better health for the people of Sunderland.

Work Clubs – A gap was identified, in support for those residents who are actively seeking work but not receiving support from the 'Work Programme'. A local 'work club' programme, was developed and delivered locally through all 6 wards within the West Area by three of our voluntary and community

sector organisations as a consortium approach. The programme has been incredibly successful to-date with 60 new clients registered for support, several clients securing employment, interviews and commencing training during the first month of delivery.

Enterprise and personalisation – looking at the transformation of Adult Social Care, the West area considered the link between enterprise and the Personalisation agenda and how the establishment of new enterprise may assist in not only creating new employment opportunities but also offer greater choice and control to Sunderland residents who may require support and assistance to maintain their independence. A proposal has been financially supported by Committee to pilot the establishment of 10 businesses offering business mentoring, training and start up loans.

Strengthening Communities – As Chair of the West Area Committee, it is also a great privilege to chair the West Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Network meetings. These meetings support the sector allowing information to be shared and opportunities to be offered. The VCS Network form part of the West Area Committee as a key partner, alongside the Police and Fire Services. During 2013-2014 the network received training and guidance to support procurement of contracts from the Council, as well as information on key service delivery such as

Children's Centres, Library Services, Public Protection and Regulatory Services and the role of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) moving forward – linking the VCS network to the CCG to support their aspirations for broader and meaningful community engagement.

The year ahead for the West – The Area Committee will continue to develop and strengthen their influencing role for the commissioning and delivery of services, particularly focusing upon the integration of services, working together to get maximum benefit from resources available to the community and public sector.

Health and Wellbeing continues to be a key priority for the West Area and is central to the successful delivery of all outcomes moving forward – we want to ensure from -9 months to end of life, all residents live positive lives and thrive within their communities.

Our thanks go to the members of West Area Committee, our partners and officers, Voluntary and Community Sector and our communities – without their hard work and dedication we would not have achieved such positive outcomes. We look forward to working together throughout 2014-2015, building upon our strong foundations and continuing to create opportunities for communities to become more resilient and confident for the future.

