

At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 5th DECEMBER, 2016 at 5.30p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Ball in the Chair

Councillors M. Dixon, English, E. Gibson, Hodson, Hunt, Kay, Marshall, McClennan, Mordey, O'Neil, Scanlan and Wood

Also Present:-

Jeff Boath	- Station Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Hazel Clark	- VCS Representative
Alan Duffy	- Head of Operations, Gentoo
David Groark	- Place Manager, Sunderland City Council
Matthew Jackson	- Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
Andrew McGuinness	- Nexus
Jen McKevitt	- VCS Representative
Gillian Robinson	- Area Co-ordinator, Sunderland City Council
Jamie Southwell	- Neighbourhood Inspector, Northumbria Police
Nicol Trueman	- Area Officer, Sunderland City Council

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillors Emerson and Oliver together with Sarah Reed and Lisa Wilson Riddell

Declarations of Interest

Item 5 – Area Budgets Report

Councillor Ball declared that she was a member of the Blue Watch Youth Project.

Councillor Hunt declared that she was employed by Ryhope Community Association.

Councillor Kay declared that he was the Chairman of St Mark's Community Association and that he was a Member of Chance and Back on the Map and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the applications.

Councillor Marshall declared that she was a member of the Box Youth Project and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the application.

Councillor McClennan declared that she was a Council appointed Member of Chance.

Councillor Mordey declared that he was a Council appointed Member of Back on the Map.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 3rd October, 2016

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3rd October 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

VCS Area Network Progress Report

Jen McKevitt delivered a verbal update on the work of the VCS Network. There had been two meetings of the network and a number of presentations had been received including presentations on Libraries, the City of Culture bid, East Heritage, the NHS Sustainable Transformation Plan, Sunderland People First and the Council's Budget Consultation. Concerns had been raised that people without access to computers or with disabilities might not be able to engage as the consultation and voting was all online.

Concerns had been raised over the impacts of cuts to youth services and a meeting had been held with Alex Hopkins, the Director of Children's Services and a further meeting would be held in January with youth project managers, Mr Hopkins, and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Councillor Farthing.

The Chairman thanked Ms McKevitt for her report and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the VCS Network progress report be noted.

Northumbria Police Update

Jamie Southwell presented the update from Northumbria Police. He referred to the number of right-wing demonstrations in the area and the community tensions; the police were aware of the instigator of these demonstrations and were aware that he seemed to be organising more frequent demonstrations. These demonstrations put pressure on the police and were not good for the

image of the city centre. Work was being done to build relationships and to gather evidence of any offences committed at these demonstrations.

There was an operation running in Millfield to tackle burglaries; the police were aware that traditionally this area suffered with an increase in burglaries at this time of year; there were a range of covert and overt tactics being used and a known offender had been arrested and imprisoned.

Operation Lantern had seen additional visible resources deployed in the city centre to tackle burglaries of commercial properties.

There was also Operation Guardian which was aimed at the night time economy and intended to provide resources to keep revellers safe. There was now a permanent presence on Holmeside and the surrounding streets until 6am. The operation had seen help provided to vulnerable people and also the targeting of potential offenders.

There had been a number of events held in the city centre and there had been no issues as a result of any of these events.

There was still an issue with a small number of aggressive beggars being present in the city centre. These aggressive beggars were not homeless and they often had a number of previous convictions and in some cases were armed. One of these beggars had been given a dispersal order to remove him from the city centre; he had then breached the order within 12 hours and had been arrested as a result; at the time of his arrest he had £86 in his possession from begging and he stated that he would be spending it on gambling. Bin raking was also an on-going problem in the city centre.

In response to queries from Councillor Wood Inspector Southwell advised that the most problematic of the demonstrations was the one at Peel Street and that there had been a core attendance of around 40-50 people; curious local residents had then attended which had doubled the amount of people there. The demonstration in the city centre had seen around 30-40 people attend and the police were currently investigating potential offences which occurred at this demonstration.

Councillor Mordey thanked the police for their hard work around the demonstrations. There was good liaison work with the BME community however they were concerned that it seemed to them that racist demonstrators were being allowed to say whatever they liked regardless of any offence caused.

Councillor Hodson stated that local businesses were concerned by the activities of drinkers outside of a licensed premises in Holmeside as these people could be intimidating. There were concerns over these people's links to far right groups. Inspector Southwell advised that discussions had been held with the management and they had removed the tables and chairs from outside of the premises. The premises was still a regular meeting point for people from far right groups however there were no longer incidents

occurring. There had only been one negative report against the premises however the police knew that the alleged incident had not actually happened as the police had already been in attendance due to the demonstration that was taking place that day.

Councillor Kay commented that there were a large number of elderly residents lived in the city centre and that they had noticed an increase in the number of beggars and also changes in their attitude; it was making the residents feel uncomfortable as they felt obliged to hand over money as they did not know what the outcome would be if they did not. He thanked the police for their hard work around addressing the situation at a licensed premises on Holmeside and commented that he hoped that the new ownership of another public house in the area would be a positive step towards reducing the amount of resources required within that area. It was also good to see that there was an operation tackling burglaries in Millfield. He also stated that he had not heard of many reports of burglaries of commercial properties recently. Inspector Southwell advised that there had been a break in at the old BHS store however security had been increased following that incident. There had also been a burglary of a commercial property reported this morning; investigations into this were on going.

Councillor M. Dixon stated that the demonstrators had met at the Ivy Leaf; he queried whether there had been any problems at the premises. Inspector Southwell advised that there had not been any issues at the premises; the demonstrators had used it as a meeting point and the landlord was welcoming of the additional trade.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Southwell for his report and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the update from Northumbria Police be noted.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Update

Jeff Boath presented the figures for the three months from September. He advised that there had been 63 deliberate fires in the area during this period, compared with 72 for the same period last year. In Hendon there had been 38 fires compared with 33 last year. Millfield had seen a reduction in fires with 11 compared with 14 last year. Ryhope had also seen a reduction to 6 from 12 last year. St Michael's had increased with 4 fires this year compared with 2 last year. Doxford had seen 4 fires compared with 11 last year.

Councillor Mordey queried whether the requirement for residents to pay for replacement bins unless a crime number was provided had led to a decrease in bins being left out. Mr Boath advised that a lot of the fires were rubbish fires and the delays in removing fly tipped waste had been then biggest impact.

Mr Boath then advised the Committee that the service was to be restructured in April and as part of this restructure Sunderland would be merged with

South Tyneside to form a new 'East' District. There would also be a North district for the area north of the Tyne and a Gateshead district covering Gateshead and Washington. The changes would not affect service delivery.

The Chairman thanked Mr Boath for his report and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the update from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service be noted.

Gentoo Update

Alan Duffy presented the update from Gentoo. He advised that the welfare reform was the biggest challenge being faced by Gentoo at the moment; within the east area there were 90 people who were in arrears due to the changes to welfare including the introduction of universal credit. People were in average arrears of £230 before claims were paid. By 2022 it was expected that there would be 10,000 people in the area in receipt of universal credit. Gentoo had a money matters team to help claimants with financial difficulties. The 'bedroom tax' affected 3,847 of Gentoo's customers and there was total of £47,000 of arrears as a result of this. There were 165 people affected by the benefits cap and the worst case scenario would see this costing Gentoo £400,000 per year. The stock condition survey was underway and there had been £25million spent on improvements to properties.

Councillor Kay queried whether the proactive help given to tenants in financial difficulties would be able to continue following the redundancies. Mr Duffy advised that the 300 redundancies were not in the core services and that the scale of the money matters team may change but the service would still remain. The rates of rent collection were very good however with the welfare changes it would become more difficult.

Councillor M. Dixon stated that Gentoo owned a number of derelict properties around Mackies Corner in the City Centre including the former Chambers nightclub; he asked whether there were any plans to bring these properties back into use. Mr Duffy advised that he would find out and report back with the information.

Councillor McClennan asked Jen McKevitt whether Back on the Map were experiencing the same issues due to the welfare changes. Ms McKevitt advised that the changes had impacted on all housing providers and it was difficult for Back on the Map when tenants could not pay their rent. A challenge was that tenants could not speak to anyone until after they were in arrears and that it was no longer possible to speak to anyone at the council about any issues. Landlords wanted as many people as possible signed up for the rent payments to be made directly to the landlords however the DWP wanted payments to be made to tenants so that they could then pay the landlord. Mr Duffy added that tenants needed to be in 8 weeks of arrears before it was possible for the landlord to get a direct rent payment from the DWP.

Councillor Mordey expressed concerns over the change to monthly benefit payments; he was worried that vulnerable people were being given large sums of money and that they may not be able to manage their monthly budget or may be taken advantage of by others. He was also concerned by the payments being made in arrears as it could take up to 8 weeks for payments to be made and by this time landlords could have applied for tenants to be evicted.

Councillor Hunt commented that it was a concern that although Gentoo tenants had access to support packages there was nothing available for tenants of private landlords.

Ms McKeivitt expressed concerns that the DWP did not have a proper classification of vulnerable people. Councillor Mordey then added that the DWP had been asked for their definition of vulnerable when they had attended the People Board; they had agreed to return to provide a further update and he suggested that a representative of the housing team should be invited when the DWP returns to the board.

5. RESOLVED that the update from Gentoo be noted.

Nexus Update

Councillor Mordey introduced Andrew McGuinness from Nexus and invited him to provide the Committee with an update.

Mr McGuinness advised that Stagecoach had recently carried out public consultation in relation to proposed changes to their bus services. It was good to see consultation being undertaken and it was now a case of waiting for the outcomes of the consultation to be published.

There had been works to improve the Metro infrastructure and a bid was being submitted to the government for funding to replace the fleet of trains which were now approaching 40 years old. He referred Members to www.metrofutures.org.uk for more information on the future improvements to the network. A new fleet would help with the potential extension of the network and if any new trains were dual voltage then it would allow them to be operated on both the Metro tracks and also the rail network which would assist with expanding the Metro service. There was a desire to increase Metro coverage however government funding was required to enable this to happen.

Councillor Kay stated that he hoped that Mr McGuinness would come to the Committee regularly; he also commented that the Metro trains had held up well for their age but he was concerned that they were approaching the end of their life and needed to be replaced.

Councillor Mordey commented that he was the Council's representative on the regional transport committee; he advised that all five of the authorities were supportive of the renewal of the Metro fleet. There was a desire to see the Metro extended to cover between Hendon and Doxford Park and then on

to Washington. Buses were an issue and there was a local advisory bus board which Members could refer any issues to.

Councillor Wood then asked for more information on the local advisory bus board; Councillor Mordey stated that he chaired the board as it fell within the remit of his portfolio; the rest of the board membership was the Chairs of each of the Place Boards.

6. RESOLVED that the update from Nexus be noted.

East Sunderland Area Place Board Progress Report

The Chair of the East Sunderland Area Place Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on the work done against the priorities included in the Work Plan for 2016/17.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chair of the Place Board, Councillor E. Gibson, introduced the report and advised Members of the key achievements of the board up to 30th November 2016.

Councillor Mordey referred to the Celebrating the East Area's Heritage and Historical Assets priority and the recommendation to align SIB funding to this priority. He stated that he had been at the place board and that it was his recollection that the proposals would be looked at further and that expressions of interest should be received before any money was aligned to the projects. There was a lot of money to be aligned to these proposals and in the current financial climate he was not convinced that this much money should be spent on events. Nicol Trueman advised that the outline proposals had been presented to the September meeting of the board and at that meeting figures had been requested; these figures had been presented to the November meeting of the board following the receipt of expressions of interest. She also advised that it would be more appropriate to discuss this under the Area Budgets Report.

Councillor Mordey then referred to the Cameras and Columns Research priority and commented that the Environmental Enforcement Policy was on the agenda for the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6th December. Councillor E. Gibson stated that the report to the scrutiny committee made no mention of CCTV cameras. Councillor Mordey then stated that the cameras were not part of the policy but were an East Area Priority. He added that the previous cameras had not been successful as there had not been the resources to effectively monitor the cameras to act on any issues; the new policy would introduce powers for the Council to issue fixed penalty tickets based on the CCTV evidence rather than taking people to court. He also stated that the new cameras would be 3G/4G and would not be monitored by the control room but would be able to have the footage downloaded by officers when issues had occurred.

Nicky Rowland advised that there had been some confusion over the terminology used and it was now clear what type of cameras was being proposed; she stated that there were installation costs and costs for moving the cameras and she would investigate and report back with more information on the matter.

Hazel Clark then advised that there used to be 3G cameras in Hendon; she queried whether the columns for these could be reused or whether they were obsolete. Ms Rowland agreed to look into whether these columns were able to be used.

7. RESOLVED that the East Sunderland Area Place Board Work Plan and the progress made against the priorities be noted.

East Sunderland Area People Board Progress Report

The Chair of the East Sunderland Area People Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on the work done against the priorities in the work plan for 2016/17.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chair of the People Board, Councillor Marshall, introduced the report and advised Members of the progress made against the priorities up to 30th November 2016.

Councillor English expressed concerns over the NHS Sustainable Transformation Plan which seemed to be about making cuts to the NHS by stealth; he had felt that the officers who delivered the report were trying to hide information and he had found the presentation to be infuriating. He was concerned by the suggestion that maternity wards would be cut as during what is a very stressful time it would be difficult for people to get to a maternity ward in another city.

Councillor Scanlan queried whether the board was able to do anything in respect of the NHS Sustainable Transformation Plan; Councillor Marshall advised that the board was not doing anything beyond allowing Members the opportunity to voice any concerns to the NHS.

Councillor Kay commented that he felt there were poor relationships between the hospital management and the Council and it seemed that they tried to avoid providing detail to Councillors. A lot of information had not been provided and it was not known whether this was because the officers delivering the presentation did not have the information or whether they had not wanted to provide the information. He was concerned that the plans would put people at risk.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that he did not think that the presentation had been very good as it was full of management speak and did not actually provide Members with any real information. He felt that it was a real shame, especially as the presentation had been followed by an excellent presentation on the drug and alcohol services.

Councillor Mordey then referred to the Fancy a Day Out programme and commented that he felt that this was an excellent programme which should be carried out every year.

8. RESOLVED that the East Sunderland Area People Board Work Plan and the progress made against the priorities be noted.

Area Budgets Report

The Head of Area Arrangements, Scrutiny and Members Support submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the financial statements for Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) and Community Chest.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman presented the report and advised that there were five proposals for SIB funding to be aligned to projects totalling £79,400. In addition there were three requests for the approval of SIB funding totalling £178,070 with £50,000 being from the 2015/16 budget and the remainder being from the 2016/17 budget.

The proposals for the alignment of SIB funding were set out at annex 1 to the report and Ms Trueman introduced each of the proposals and invited comments from Members.

The first project to be considered was Celebrating Our Historical Assets for which it was proposed that £9,000 be aligned which would then be used to host seven open day events in 2017 and two in 2018.

Councillor McClennan expressed concerns that some of the assets were citywide assets and she asked why the East Area would be paying for these. She was also concerned by the applications from churches as she felt that approving these applications could then pave the way for applications to be received from all other churches in the area. The Chair advised that there was no citywide budget and that the assets were located within the East Area.

Councillor Hodson queried how the amount had been decided on as £1,000 would be a huge amount for the Donnison School but would be a small amount for the Sunderland Empire. He also expressed reservations about giving money to religious institutions and the freemasons. Councillor M. Dixon stated that it was the buildings that were to be celebrated not the people or organisations.

Ms Trueman advised that the Place Board Councillors had been asked to identify assets within their wards and the list had been produced as a result of this. Mowbray Park was located within Hendon Ward and was considered to be the jewel in the crown of the East Area. The Empire Theatre was in Millfield Ward. The Churches were mostly located within St Michael's Ward; it was not the intention to give the organisations money; rather the funds would be used to complement the heritage week festival. The £1000 for each asset was based on the average amounts spent on previous applications and was just a guide. If Members did not want to go ahead with any of the proposals then they could be removed from the list.

Councillor Kay commented that as the East Area contained the city centre and the original settlement of Sunderland it had a much larger number of historical assets than other areas of the city. As a result of this it always fell onto the East Area to fund heritage events which he felt should be citywide projects. He felt that there needed to be discussions held around the creation of a citywide budget for significant citywide assets and he felt that it was important not to set a precedent that the East Area would pay for events for citywide assets.

Councillor Mordey commented that he was concerned by resident's likely perceptions of money being spent on heritage events in the current economic climate; he felt that using the funds on a project such as Fancy a Day Out would be more appropriate.

Councillor Scanlan commented that £9,000 was not a significantly large sum of money and that the money would not be provided to the organisations. She was not keen on the tours of the churches but supported the other events.

The Chairman then put the proposal to the committee and Members agreed that the £9,000 be aligned to the project however Councillor McClennan asked that her objections to the Mowbray Park events be noted.

Ms Trueman then introduced the proposals for the alignment of £10,000 to the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the River Wear Commissioners in 2017; the celebrations were proposed to include a 'small ships' parade which would help with the build-up to the tall ships visiting the city in 2018. She asked Members whether they wanted further feasibility investigations to be carried out

Members discussed the proposal and there was a suggestion from Councillor McClennan that the North Sunderland Area Committee be approached to see if they were willing to contribute to the events along the river corridor.

Members agreed that further investigations should be undertaken.

Ms Trueman then introduced the proposals for the Port 300 Exhibition where it was proposed that £25,000 be aligned.

Councillor McClennan expressed her opposition to this proposal, she felt that as the port was a commercial enterprise then if they wanted to hold events then they should be responsible for the cost of it without the Area Committee needing to provide financial support. Councillor Kay agreed with these concerns.

Councillor Hodson expressed concerns that there had not been an itemised budget provided for this proposal which was requesting more funds than any of the other proposals.

Councillor M. Dixon queried whether this proposal had been agreed by the board and Members had now changed their mind.

Ms Trueman advised that the figures had been provided to the board and that the board had agreed to recommend that funding be aligned to the project.

Councillor Mordey commented that he did not feel that this proposal should be supported.

The Chairman then put the proposal to the Committee and with no Members voting to approve the proposal; 10 Members voting to reject the proposal and 3 Members abstaining it was agreed that the proposal be rejected.

Ms Trueman then introduced the proposals to align £15,400 to the installation of brown Tourist signage. The criteria for destinations to meet for a brown sign to be installed were set out in the report together with details of attractions in the East Area that could potentially have brown signs installed. It would only be possible to install the signs within 30mph speed limit areas as within higher speed limits different signs were required which cost more. Information on whether the potential sites met the criteria was still being collated.

Members discussed this application and agreed that Ms Trueman should further investigate the proposals before any funds be aligned or approved.

Ms Trueman then introduced the proposals for the alignment of £20,000 of SIB funding to allow the undertaking of a call for projects in respect of the Fancy a Day Out Scheme which had previously been known as the Holiday Hunger project.

Members were fully supportive of this proposal and agreed that the call for projects should be undertaken.

Ms Trueman then moved onto the three proposals for the approval of SIB funding totalling £178,070 which were set out in the report and fully detailed at annex 2. £98,070 had been aligned from the 2015/16 budget while the remaining £80,000 was from the 2016/17 SIB budget.

Members discussed these proposals and agreed that the funding requests should all be approved.

Ms Trueman then advised Members of the 40 previously approved Community Chest applications which were set out at annex 3 and asked Members to note the approvals.

9. RESOLVED that:-

- a. The financial statements set out in sections 2 and 3 of the report be noted.
- b. £9,000 be aligned to the Celebrating Historical Anniversaries project and £20,000 be aligned to the Fancy a Day Out scheme.
- c. Further investigations be undertaken in respect of the 300th Port Celebration: Small Ships Parade and the Brown Tourist Signage Campaign before any funding be aligned.
- d. The proposal to align £25,000 to the Port Exhibition in the Museum be rejected.
- e. The three SIB projects totalling £98,070 from the 2015/16 budget and £80,000 from the 2016/17 budget as set out in annex 2 be approved.
- f. The 40 approved Community Chest proposals, set out in annex 3, be noted.

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

(Signed) E. BALL,
Chairman.