

At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL on MONDAY, 26th JUNE, 2023 at 5.30p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Herron in the Chair

Councillors Ali, Curtis, Dixon, Fagan, Gibson, Graham-King, Hodson, Leonard, Mordey, Morrissey, Potts and Scanlan.

Also Present:-

- Stephen Gordon - Gentoo
- Matthew Jackson - Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
- Fiona Kelly - Area Community Development Lead, Sunderland City Council
- Julie Maven - East Area VCS Representative
- K. Ramanathan -- ~~East Area VCS Representative~~ Neighbourhood Inspector, Northumbria Police
- Jamie Southwell - Area Community Development Lead, Sunderland City Council
- Gilly Stanley - Area Community Development Lead, Sunderland City Council
- Gerry Taylor - Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities, 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 Reed and A. Wood together with Lee Bell, Station Manager TWFRS

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 27th March 2023

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th March 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

VCS Area Network Progress Report

Julie Maven provided the Committee with an update on the work of the East Area VCS Network.

The network had previously been meeting monthly but was now meeting on a two monthly basis which was working more effectively. There was a regular e-bulletin provided to members of the network. Since the last meeting of the Area Committee there had been one meeting of the network and presentations had been received including from the Cultural Spring and network members had been given an opportunity to share the work they had been doing. A lot of the network members had been operating warm and welcoming spaces. Work was being done with partners around social enterprise.

Councillor Scanlan questioned the decision to stop funding the fancy a day out project. Ms Stanley advised that at the Area workshops Members had agreed that youth activities through the whole year rather than just in the school holidays would be the priority with there being proposals for activities to take place 50 weeks per year. The groups who had been providing services had been encouraged to apply to Together for Children for HAF funding. Councillor Scanlan then stated that the groups had been informed of this after the closing date for applying for HAF. Councillor Hodson stated that youth provision was proposed to be the Area Committee's key priority for the year; it was concerning that groups had missed the deadline for applying for HAF. Councillor Fagan commented that in Doxford Ward Walk and Talk funding had been used to ensure that Box Youth Project had sufficient funds to provide the holiday provision.

Ms Maven stated that the deadline for applying for HAF was in April however it had been June before they had found out that there would not be funding from the Fancy a Day Out project. Discussions had taken place and it had been allowed for funding bids to be submitted to HAF. There were a lot of families who were struggling but who did not receive free school meals and HAF did not apply for these families.

Ms Taylor added that the Council had topped up the Public Health Grant for HAF to broaden the reach to increase coverage to families who were not in receipt of free school meals.

Councillor Dixon stated that Fancy a Day Out had been an integral part of the area's provision for a number of years and that he felt that Members should have been made more aware of the implications of not funding the project in the coming year.

Concerns were raised that decisions had been taken at the workshops when not all Councillors had been in attendance. Members were reminded that the Board and workshops were not decision making bodies; the final decision rested with the Area Committee and the priorities for the coming three years

were to be considered as part of item three on the agenda for tonight's meeting.

2. RESOLVED that the update from the East Area VCS Network be noted.

Northumbria Police Update

Neighbourhood Inspector Jamie Southwell provided the Committee with an update on the crime statistics for the East area and of the work done by Northumbria Police.

Within the A1 area, which covered the City Centre, there had been a significant reduction in antisocial behaviour which was as a result of the SAIL Team being set up. Overall antisocial behaviour had reduced by 5 percent while rowdy behaviour had reduced by 73 percent; alcohol related ASB had reduced by 48 percent; as had street drinking; and begging had reduced by 20 percent.

Total crime in the A1 area had reduced by 2 percent although there had been a spike in reports of retail thefts; this increased reporting was due to there having been improvements in the relationship with retailers encouraging them to report offences. Violent crime had reduced by 9 percent with public order offences having seen a 26 percent reduction. Burglaries had reduced by 56 percent.

Within the A2 area, which covered the wider East Sunderland Area, there had been a reduction in antisocial behaviour of 29 percent with youth antisocial behaviour reducing by 65 percent. Total crime had reduced by 8 percent. Burglaries had reduced by 17 percent with vehicle crime having reduced by 32 percent. Violent crime had reduced by 18 percent and drug related crime had reduced by 55 percent.

All of the teams were putting in a lot of hard work and there had been an additional 7 officers recruited to the neighbourhood teams; allowing each team to have one new officer. All of the PCSOs in the area would be retained. A lot of proactive work was done and this was reflected in the crime figures. The two dedicated SAIL Team officers had issued 44 percent of all of the dispersal orders issued across the whole force area and had arrested 100 people. A high number of stop searches had been carried out in the area; the videos of these had been reviewed and all had been carried out correctly and had a positive impact in removing prohibited items from the street. Two wanted offenders had been tracked down earlier today and they had been found to be in possession of drugs and a weapon; it was likely that they would receive custodial sentences.

Within Millfield house burglaries had been a key priority and there had been a significant reduction in the number of offences with there now being almost no

offences taking place. There had also been targeted work to tackle drug related crime in the Ward.

Funding had been received to run the operations to tackle antisocial behaviour during the summer and officers were on duty as part of these operations every day.

Councillor Mordey commented that it was good to see that the PCSOs were being retained and he extended his thanks to the officer who was now attending the PACT meetings. He referred to the increase in antisocial behaviour; especially involving off road bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters and asked what was being done to prevent issues. Inspector Southwell advised that a lot of work was done to identify offenders and that drones and cameras were used extensively as part of this. There was a week of action taking place from 3rd July to tackle off road bikes and this would see work being done with petrol stations. There were issues with e-scooters during the night time economy. Work was done alongside the youth providers to tackle youth antisocial behaviour and young people were encouraged to make use of the services available.

Councillor Ali commented that it was good to see that work was being done to tackle the issue of off road bikes; this was a major issue in Ryhope, especially on Sundays. He asked whether a detailed update on this issue could be provided at the next meeting.

Councillor Fagan asked whether the report relating to Doxford Ward could be provided to Members and Inspector Southwell advised that he would ask Inspector Passey to provide this report. Councillor Fagan then stated that there was a need for the traffic police to attend as there were a lot of complaints from residents relating to speeding traffic and other motoring offences. Inspector Southwell agreed to provide the details of Operation Modero and also to ask the officers to make contact; they would look at requests for traffic enforcement and would look at where speed camera vans could be sited. Councillor Mordey stated that the Scrutiny Committee had been informed that the safer roads partnership was being re-established and asked whether they could be invited to the next meeting. The Chair agreed that this would be a good idea as did Councillor Hodson who added that it had been a long term request for someone from roads policing to attend.

Councillor Dixon stated that there had been an examination of Sunnyside by the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and asked whether there was information available regarding crime in that area. Inspector Southwell advised that Sunnyside was considered to be a key part of the city centre and there was a daily police presence in the area. There had been significant reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour.

Councillor Dixon then stated that when residents reported hotspots for issues and provided information to the police there was then no feedback provided so they did not know if work was being done to resolve the issues. Inspector Southwell advised that there was often limited feedback that could be given

but that the named point of contact could be emailed for updates or the question could be asked at meetings such as PACT meetings.

Ram advised that there had been issues with youths abusing the delivery riders at McDonalds on High Street and Inspector Southwell advised that there was CCTV in the area and he would ensure that this issue was looked into.

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

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

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Update

Lee Bell, Station Manager Sunderland Central Fire Station, submitted a written report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the work of the fire service for the period 1st April to 15th Jun 2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

4. RESOLVED that the report of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service be noted.

Gentoo Update

Stephen Gordon, Gentoo Group presented a report, (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on current Gentoo developments, projects and priorities.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Gordon advised of the performance in terms of rent collection and relet times. Work was being done by Neighbourhood Coordinators to support tenants to help them sustain their tenancies . each area now had two Neighbourhood Coordinators and they were also responsible to managing vacant properties and ensuring that neighbourhoods were well maintained, clean and tidy.

At Easter colleagues were asked to bring in donations for Sunderland Foodbank and this had seen 219 meals worth of food donated.

The property investment programme was provided which showed the works being done in the area and the numbers of properties which would benefit from the works.

Councillor Gibson referred to the rent collected being over 100 percent and asked whether this was due to arrears being paid. Was the money matters

support helping to ensure that arrears were paid off. Mr Gordon advised that this was the payment of arrears and that the money matters support had been created a number of years ago as it was known that debts impacted on people's ability to pay their rent. A big issue was that people did not always claim all of the benefits that they were entitled to and 977 tenants had been supported in making financial gains in 2022/23 by assisting them in making claims.

Councillor Hodson stated that the car parks for the city centre tower blocks were under utilised due to the costs being too high. Mr Gordon agreed to look into this; it was his understanding that the car parks were council owned.

Councillor Mordey referred to the refurbishment works at Hedworth Court; residents were being required to redecorate after the works were completed and £50 per room was provided by Gentoo however residents were still struggling to afford to carry out the redecoration; he asked whether there was any more that could be done. Mr Gordon advised that he was not aware of any tenants being required to vacate during the works and that he would find out more information relating to the redecoration grants; there was a contract with Johnstones Paints in Hendon which allowed tenants to get more than they normally would due to the discount provided by this contract.

The Chairman queried whether there was a significant issue around debts to loan sharks. Mr Gordon advised that there were a few isolated cases however people often did not tell Gentoo if they were in debt to loan sharks. Gentoo had a strong policy to tackle loan sharks.

5. RESOLVED that the report from Gentoo be noted.

East Sunderland Area Neighbourhood Delivery Plan 2023 - 2026

The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the East Sunderland Area Committee Area Plan for 2023/2026 for consideration and approval and provided an update on the Governance arrangements.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Stanley introduced the report and drew Members attention to the discussions which had taken place at the workshops in April and June which had been used to inform the production of the draft area plan.

Councillor Hodson stated that maintaining the walk and talk budget was regularly mentioned by Members and asked whether walk and talk would continue; Ms Stanley advised that there was still a budget remaining in some wards and that there would be discussions around how to move forward with walk and talk at a future board meeting.

Councillor Dixon stated that the only reference to housing was empty properties and asked whether this could be extended to cover other housing issues; he also suggested that Graham Scanlon be invited to attend a future meeting. Ms Stanley advised that Graham Scanlon was scheduled to be attending the July meeting of the board.

Councillor Mordey expressed concerns over the timescales for the allocation of budgets to priorities; it took a long time to get funds allocated and he asked whether the process could be shortened. Ms Stanley advised that the budget report asked Members to approve the alignment of funds to priorities in order to allow quicker allocation of funds and that the Chairman had the ability to make decisions as a matter of urgency under the Responsive Decision Making process which included an email consultation of Members.

Councillor Dixon asked whether there was any funding from last year's budget to be brought forward; Ms Stanley advised that there was still money aligned to the East Community Projects and to Sunderland MIND and that this would be discussed at the July meeting of the Board.

6. RESOLVED that:-
- i) the draft Area Committee Area Plan for 2023-2026, as set out in annex 1, be agreed with the external priorities referred to Cabinet for approval.
 - (ii) it be agreed that the internal priorities be shared with Council Service Leads and Partners to consider the feasibility of delivery and provide feedback.
 - (iii) it be agreed that discussions of the Service Plans with Council Service Leads continue and that a list of Area Priorities for the East Area be developed; this list of priorities would be appended to the Area Plan and quarterly updates would be provided.
 - (iv) it be agreed that collaboration with the key partners (including Gentoo, Police, TWFR, VCS Networks and the Voluntary Sector Alliance) continue. They would provide their plans for future activity in the area and quarterly updates would be provided.
 - (v) the terms of reference set out in annex 2 of the report be noted.

East Area Budget Report

The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided financial statements in respect of the Area Committee's delegated budgets and presented proposals for further funding requests.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Gilly Stanley, Area Community Development Lead, presented the report highlighting the Committee's financial statement, the Neighbourhood Fund had a starting balance of £408,817 for the 2023/24 year and there was one proposal for alignment of funds totalling £187,500 towards developing youth

offer across the 5 wards. If this alignment was approved then there would be a remaining balance of £221,317.

Each ward had been allocated a Community Chest budget of £10,000; the approvals were det out in annex 1 and 2 with the remaining balances shown in the table at paragraph 3.2.

In response to Councillor Dixon, Ms Stanley advised that there would be a task and finish group set up to look at the delivery of the youth provision as each ward would likely have different issues to address. There would be groups held at a ward level.

Councillor Scanlan queried the walk and talk budget and Ms Stanley advised that some wards still had a budget remaining while others had spent all of their allocation, she agreed to discuss this further outside of the meeting.

Members gave consideration to the applications and it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-
 - i) the financial statements set out in sections 2.1 and 3.1 of the report be noted;
 - ii) approval be given to the alignment of £187,500 from the Neighbourhood Fund towards the development of youth offer as set out in section 2.3 of the report.
 - iii) the Community Chest approvals from the 2022/23 budget and 2023/24 budget as detailed in annex 1 and annex 2 be noted.

Planning Applications – For Information Only

Current Planning Applications relating to the East Sunderland Area for the period 1st April to 25th May 2023 were submitted for Members information only (copy circulated).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Prior to the meeting being closed Councillor Hodson advised that the Area Boards would now be taking place at the later time of 5.30pm rather than the previously diaried 3.30pm; there would be a change to the dates of some of the board meetings and Members would be informed of these.

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

(Signed) M. HERRON,
Chairman.