

**At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2018 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor D. MacKnight in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Curran, M. Dixon, Foster, Galbraith, E. Gibson, Jackson, Marshall, Taylor and Turner

Also in attendance:-

Ms Sharon Appleby, Head of Business Operations, Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID)

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr Mark Speed, Head of Place Management, Sunderland City Council

Mrs Christine Tilley, Governance Services Team Leader, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor O'Brien.

**Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Curran clarified that in relation to the report on Bishopwearmouth Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan, that he would like to see the name 'Crowtree' used again in that area of Sunderland where the Sunderland Minster is located.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the above.

**Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

There were no declarations of interest made.

## **Business Improvement District (BID) Annual Update**

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), to provide the Committee with a progress report on the work of the Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman invited Ms Sharon Appleby, Head of Business Operations, Sunderland Business Improvement District to present the report to the Committee. Ms Appleby advised the Committee that the BID was funded through a levy from businesses in the city and had approximately £660,000 to spend every year to reinvest in the city centre.

Ms Appleby highlighted the events delivered by the BID including the World Cup Fanzone, Euros Fanzone and Annual Christmas programme which has included an ice rink and the support provided to Sunnyside Live, Chinese New Year and the bi-annual Restaurant Week which was held in March and September. She advised that bars and pubs had reported increased trading during the recent world cup.

Ms Appleby provided Members with a copy of the 'Little Book of Offers' which contained vouchers for discounts at a range of businesses in the city. She advised that copies had been handed out to visitors at the recent Tall Ships event and this would be repeated at the Sunderland Airshow.

Ms Appleby stressed the importance of the Vibe Magazine in promoting what's on in the city as well as the positive features. She also highlighted the partnership initiatives such as Pubwatch and Shopwatch to keep the city safe and crime free. The BID was also working with absent landlords around vacant properties to bring them back into use and improve the cityscape.

Ms Appleby informed the Committee that the BID was working with university students and Nissan who have given their staff volunteering days and they were at the early stages of developing a Nissan Trail. In addition to this she had met with Officers in the Council to look at how all of this could be taken out to the local areas also.

Ms Appleby advised that the BID was looking to do a lot more work with high street businesses which needed to adapt to survive and give customers a good experience in order to compete with internet shopping and not suffer any more than it was already.

Ms Appleby briefed the Committee on the BID renewal timeline advising that it was currently undertaking a consultation exercise asking for views on the priorities it had formed. Feedback would be gathered and a new business plan developed taking this into account with the new business plan being launched in September. A ballot would be carried out in November with the aim of the BID securing a second term from April 2019.

Ms Appleby advised that the BID produced a Business Newsletter and offered to send this to Members which the Chairman stated on behalf of the Committee, would be very useful.

Members proceeded to ask Ms Appleby questions.

Councillor Foster referred to the free parking at Sunnyside for patrons of the cinema and enquired whether similar arrangements could be extended to other businesses.

Ms Appleby advised that they were trying to expand a similar scheme of 'Parking Perks' to other areas, however bigger businesses needed to be involved and they were looking to get them on board.

Councillor Jackson referred to the arrangement the Theatre Royal in Newcastle had with the Tyne and Wear Metro in that theatre goers could travel free to and from a show and enquired whether any thought had been given to a similar scheme with the Sunderland Empire.

Ms Appleby advised that they could talk to the Empire. They were working with Nexus and Stagecoach to package up travel and added that this might be something that could be jointly funded and promoted.

Councillor M. Dixon enquired whether there was any disadvantage to smaller businesses by not paying the levy and about the progress in Sunnyside.

In response, Ms Appleby replied that the BID definitely needed to work harder with businesses and understood that it was more difficult for smaller businesses to get involved, although there were lots of different ways to engage. There had been massive investment in Sunnyside. There were 27 food and leisure outlets however there was very little marketing of the area and they did very little to help each other. The BID had suggested that they create a collective for business to chip into which they would be able to use to promote the whole area.

Councillor Dixon enquired whether it would help if car parking was relaxed during Restaurant Week.

Ms Appleby confirmed that this would help and they were looking to work with the Council on this for the 10 days involved, adding that the BID could assist with the funding in this respect.

Councillor Curran commented that he felt Nissan should put an event on in the city centre to show what they were doing for those who can't get to see the production line.

Ms Appleby confirmed that they were talking about having a Nissan Trail. The Apprentices were looking at a whole range of work which could be done to capture the heritage.

In response to Councillor Curran, Ms Appleby advised that students at the college in Park Lane didn't tend to go into the city centre and use the facilities there, but used the shops in the immediate area. It was a similar situation with the university where students tended to use the facilities located in the immediate area around it located on the other side of the city. The question remained what to do with the city to make sure it did not become a ghost town.

In response to Members' questions Ms Appleby advised that the Bridges car park was working with them looking at permits for workers to encourage them to stay in

the city using the pubs and restaurants and not leave at the end of the day. There were other things and incentives to make it more attractive to people to come to Sunderland. Stagecoach was working well with Go North East and the BID to improve bus services; it was about getting others to do the same thing.

The Chairman expressed concern that there were lots of empty shops in Sunderland.

Ms Appleby stated that they were working with landlords and looking to get them to think differently about the 'big sheds' and how to use the space by splitting them up into smaller units, having pop up shops etc.

The Chairman thanked Ms Appleby for her report and attendance which she stated, Members had found very interesting.

Ms Appleby having advised that she would be pleased to report back to the Committee at Christmas, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the progress of Sunderland BID be received and noted.

### **Environmental Services Update**

The Head of Place Management submitted a report (copy circulated), providing the Committee with an update on a range of environmental issues affecting the city.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Mark Speed, Head of Place Management advised the Committee in respect of the refuse collection rounds that they had firstly brought in the alternative collections and then had made changes to the collection routes to allow collections to be carried out more efficiently.

Mr Speed advised the Committee that there wasn't any concern about Ash Dieback in Sunderland and that there were a large number of trees. In Washington there had been overplanting as it had been expected that the attrition rate would be greater, however the trees had taken better than anticipated.

Mr Speed advised that Councillors Farthing and A. Wilson had asked him to look at a new Tree Management Plan which was currently being scoped.

Mr Speed advised that an additional £1.5m had been put into Environmental Services and had been used for 96 frontline posts; 30% of which were permanent. There had also been some seasonal posts created to cover issues like winter maintenance and reduce the numbers of Agency staff. There were 20 apprentices in Environmental Services, 10 in Local Services and 10 in the Waste and Recycling function. The Department was trying to sustain the apprentices as far as possible and profile them into posts at the end of their apprenticeship. There had been a further 3 posts created in the Environmental Enforcement Team, 1 Senior post and 2 others with an appointment made to provide Technical Support.

Mr Speed advised that additional staff had been employed for the Tall Ships Event to keep the city clean and additional bins had been provided.

In response to a question from Councillor Blackburn, Mr Speed advised that the Council could only take enforcement action against anyone dumping waste on its own land. Officers were working on a gazetteer to identify all Council land and hoping to make it as accurate as possible to make it easier to check who the land belonged to. He also confirmed that the Council's Tree Policy was on the website and that the Department received notice of new build house completions from the Planning Department so that they were able to provide those households with refuse bins and incorporate them onto the appropriate refuse collection route.

In response to Councillor Foster, Mr Speed confirmed that he was aware of the focus group which had been set up to look at the issue of trees in the city and that Councillor Waller was consulting with other Councillors to inform policy development on the matter. He advised that he was going to bring some team resource across to look at priorities in respect of tree management and that this would be linked in with Arbor Services in the Council.

Councillor Galbraith commented that you could not see into Herrington Country Park as you drove past due to the overplanting of trees.

In response to Councillor Gibson who commented that residents were being told that it would take up to 15 days for requests for local services to be addressed, Mr Speed advised that unless something was dangerous the service did not react as it was no longer a 'responsive' service. The service schedules were agreed by the Local Boards. The bins outside shopping areas were emptied more regularly but if a particular area was causing an issue then Officers could look at providing bigger bins etc.

Councillor Taylor enquired whether the Local Services Teams had kept to the scheduled grass cutting regimes, given the hot weather there had been in recent weeks and that the grass might have not needed to be cut and if not, whether Mr Speed could advise what this resource had been re-directed to doing.

Mr Speed advised that if the grass did not need to be cut then the Teams would move onto other things and confirmed that they would look to make sure the footpaths were cleared of leaves, berries etc. as best as they could, as it was a constant battle and if there was a particular concern such as OAP homes or a Doctors' surgery where there was imminent danger, then the resource would be re-directed to address the particular issue.

Councillor Taylor enquired about the waste bins located in the lay-bys of the A1231 which he had reported on a number of occasions as they had been overflowing. He advised that he wanted to check who emptied them and how often, as he had been informed that they were emptied by different operatives operating via a "citywide" route and were not part of the agreed two weekly servicing regime by the Washington based team. He asked how many bins there were across the city like this that were subject to similar arrangements as he had outlined above.

Mr Speed advised that there were a number of different schedules for different locations in the city and offered to have a separate conversation outside of the meeting with Councillor Taylor.

Councillor Turner queried why it took 16 working days for a resident to receive a blue bin for which they had paid.

In response Mr Speed advised that it could take this amount of time, particularly if the bin was not in stock. He asked Councillor Turner to send details of the case to him if she wanted him to look into it and provide specific details.

Councillor Jackson commented that the waste bins at Roker and Seaburn beach were often overflowing. She queried the effectiveness of reporting that the bins were full and needed to be emptied. She advised that Members of the Public were getting frustrated and asked whether communications could be improved and ways in which to get things referred could be publicised. She also asked whether in areas where there were a lot of dog walkers, the bins could be replaced with larger ones.

Mr Speed asked Councillor Jackson to send through the particular location so as it could be assessed and advised that the service did monitor locations.

In response to Councillor Galbraith, Mr Speed advised that they did speak to companies that weren't managing their waste correctly, that they had to pay for it if the Council collected it and arrangements were bespoke to need.

Mr Speed added that the Service Area was looking at new technology and developing an application based on a triage system which would provide a reply to the service requestor to advise when the job had been completed and thus provide better feedback going forward. He advised that they were working as quickly as possible to get the application in place.

In response to Councillor Dixon, Mr Speed asked that he forward the address where refuse bins were constantly being left out in the back lanes to him, even though yellow stickers had been placed on them, rather than taking them back in so as Council Officers could go out and speak to the householders concerned.

In response to Councillor Foster, Mr Speed asked that he forward the location where he had wanted some shrubs to be removed that had not been carried out. Mr Speed advised that it would be a one-off payment to remove the shrubs and make back the area.

The Chairman having thanked Mr Speed for his attendance, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the update on environmental services be received and noted.

### **Annual Work Programme 2018/19**

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out the current work programme of the Committee for the 2018/19 Municipal year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer advised Members that arrangements were being made for a visit to an Environmental Waste Plant in Teesside in September.

4. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme for 2018/19 be noted.

### **Notice of Key Decisions**

A report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 (copy circulated), was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer reminded Members to contact him if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

5. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman advised Members of the proposal to bring forward future meetings of the Committee to start at the earlier time of 4.30 pm, to enable some Members of the Committee to attend their regular Ward Surgery meetings scheduled later that evening.

Members discussed the proposal and agreed that arrangements be made to hold the remainder of the Committee's meetings for the municipal year at the earlier start time of 4.30 pm.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) D. MACKNIGHT,  
Chairman.