

At a meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held at the MILLENNIUM CENTRE, CONCORD on THURSDAY, 4TH FEBRUARY, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Kelly in the Chair

Councillors Chamberlin, Cuthbert, Fletcher, I. Richardson, Scaplehorn, Snowdon, Trueman, Wake, P. Walker and Whalen.

Amanda Healy – Sunderland TPCT

Stephen Dodds – Nexus

John Usher – Nexus

Neil Revely	-	Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services (Area Lead Executive)
Vicki Medhurst	-	City Services
Janet Robinson	-	City Services
Graham Burt	-	City Services
Susan Brown	-	City Services
Mike Poulter	-	City Services
Derek Welsh	-	Health, Housing and Adult Services
Nicol Trueman	-	Chief Executives
Victoria Glass	-	Office of the Chief Executive
Louise Darby	-	Office of the Chief Executive
Victoria Gamble	-	Office of the Chief Executive
Paul Wood	-	Office of the Chief Executive

Members of the Washington Community.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Barkess, Miller, Stephenson, Timmins and Mr Jon Anderson.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 5th November, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 5th November, 2009 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 7 – Financial Statements & Funding Requests

Councillor Snowdon declared personal and prejudicial interests in Annex 2 as a business ambassador for EBC and Annex 4 due to her husband being employed by Groundworks.

Councillor Snowdon declared personal interests as a board member of Columbia Community Association and also in relation to the Washington Nature Trail.

Question to Area Committee – Review of Pilot Scheme

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform the Committee of the Questions to Area Committees received to date and to seek the Committee's agreement to extend the pilot with a review to be undertaken and reported at the March meeting of the Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Attached as Annex 1 was a list of the Questions submitted to the Area Committee, along with the relevant response from the Council for Members' consideration.

In relation to Question 6 and the request submitted by Mr. Craddock (in attendance) for Nexus to provide Electronic Information Boards at Concord Bus Station, Stephen Dodds, District Bus Manager, Nexus, had provided the following response.

The renovation of the shelters and signage in Concord Bus Station was due to take place this year, commencing mid April. During this process independently lit information boards would be installed, and LED lighting would be fitted inside the refurbished shelters, rendering the timetables easier to read. There were no plans to install electronic information boards at Concord at this time, but the displays at The Galleries were to be updated to show real time bus information.

Mr Craddock commented that these measures would only deal with the issues temporarily and would not be cost effective.

It was agreed that Mr Dodds would speak with Mr Craddock after the meeting.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Committee approve a review of the pilot to the Questions to Area Committees to be submitted to the March meeting of the Area Committee;
- (ii) Members note the questions received and the response given by the Council and its partners.

Washington – An Attractive and Inclusive Area Summary

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for the Committee to consider and discuss the priority of an Attractive and Inclusive Area, as agreed in the work plan for the 2009/10 municipal year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Stephen Dodds and John Usher of Nexus were in attendance and advised that they would be briefing Members at the Civic Centre on the Bus Networks with a view to bringing the Consultation back to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman enquired as to why Washington was a 3 zone area when others were only 2 zone, resulting in cheaper travelling costs to neighbouring cities, then to Sunderland.

Mr Dodds advised that they were looking at the Network Travel at the moment but they did not have any influence with regards to the costs charged by the bus companies.

In response to the Chairman's query, Mr Usher advised that Nexus did have influence over the zones and that he would feed the concerns into the Consultation.

The Chairman requested that all Members consider the issues and feed into the Consultation to be brought before the Committee at the next meeting.

In relation to the monthly email updates to Members on road safety and traffic measures in Washington, which had been agreed at a previous meeting of the Committee, Councillor Chamberlin commented that they were not being received and also that expressions of interest forms for SIP allocations had been submitted that had not been processed.

The Chairman advised that there had been an issue with information not being processed as not all were going through the Area Officers as a contact but there was opportunity to use SIP funding.

Councillor Snowdon advised that an SIP application had been submitted for a designated cycle route linking the new Wheeled Sports Park to the Coast to Coast route.

The Chairman advised that City Services would be reporting at the next Committee meeting on sport and leisure issues but there was a major problem due to large parts of Princess Anne Park being owned by Prudential, whom the Council were looking to engage with and hopefully have more information to bring back to the Committee at a later date.

Councillor Wake enquired as to the situation in relation to the lady being prosecuted for picking up the wrong dog dirt.

Mike Poulter, Head of Project and Service Development advised that he would find out the specifics of the case and inform via email.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The Committee note the actions identified in Annex 1.
- (ii) Review – The Committee note the contents of the information contained under priorities 1, 2 and 3 and in a previous report by the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services, and agree to accept an update report at a future meeting focussing on empty properties, private landlords and housing supply and demand in Washington. Lead; Health, Housing and Adult Services.
 - The Committee note the contents of the information contained under priorities 5 and 6 and agree to accept an update report at a future meeting re: Nexus Secured Services Consultation. Lead: Nexus.
 - The Committee receive a report to a future meeting outlining recommendations of the Jacob's report re: Issues and Solutions for Accident Cluster Sites. Lead: Highways.
 - Area Committee note the contents of the information contained under priority 9 and agree to accept an update report at a future meeting focussing on anti social behaviour.
 - The Committee also note the initiatives already taking place to tackle Anti Social Behaviour. Lead: Health, Housing and Adult Services.
- (iii) Call for Projects
 - The Committee agree to receive a further SIB/SIP application to meet the needs and gaps with regard to traffic calming and speeding measures, dropped kerbs and parking provision as identified. Lead: Area Committee.
- (iv) Escalate to Scrutiny
 - Agree to escalate to the relevant Scrutiny Committee: A number of business units on trading estate (start up, nursery units) had been approved as fast food outlets. This has resulted in an increase in litter and anti social behaviour on nearby estates. In addition, the excessive number of food and drink licenses being granted has resulted in a high proportion of food and drink premises centralised on High Streets and shopping areas. Area Committee requests Scrutiny looks at guidelines, regulations and protocols re licensing and how qualitative data and reporting

can be taken into consideration when applications are presented to the Licensing Committee.

Washington Area Action Plans

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to update Members on the key actions from the Safe, Learning and Prosperous themes which were discussed at the previous Area Committee meetings.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nicol Trueman, Area Officer presented the report and introduced Inspector Paul Barrett of Northumbria Police to inform Members of the crime figures and initiatives ongoing in the Washington area.

Inspector Barrett advised that one of the main priorities was to reduce crime and increase the confidence of the public of Washington.

There had been a reduction in all crime by 6% and since November there had been a 19% reduction in burglary dwellings due to robust tactics used.

Violent crime, particularly in the Concord area had reduced by 75% over the Christmas period.

In trying to build trust and confidence, the Police were to reinvigorate the Neighbourhood Watch Schemes with the help of CSO's and also to reduce numbers of anti-social behaviour through long term projects.

Engagement activities had been arranged so that the public could meet Officers, who had also attended events at the Galleries and Gala bingo, to find out what the public wanted in a service. They were also attending primary schools to promote a respect campaign to the children.

Inspector Barrett also advised that they hoped to engage with Councillors, Youth Services and so on to form action plans to provide longer term solutions, hopefully this would take place in early March.

In response to Mrs Trueman's query, Inspector Barrett advised that they would liaise with the Council so that everyone worked together in developing any initiatives.

Councillor I Richardson enquired if the crime figures could be broken down into Wards and supplied to Members regularly.

Inspector Barrett advised that he had reviewed the Officers primary recording system so that when Officers attend the Neighbourhood Watch meetings they can identify what issues are occurring in each area. In relation to how this information is shared with Members, and the public, consideration needed to be given on the best way of displaying the figures, as crimes measured in percentages can sometimes be misleading and may have a negative effect on perceptions/fear of crime.

Neil Revely, Area Lead Executive commented that Inspector Barrett had a valid point as Performance Indicators measured in percentages can give false impressions.

The Chairman commented that for the outset, only Members should receive such figures.

4. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- (i) Considered the Safe report (Annex 1) and noted the future reports and updates requested through the Safe Area Action Plan.
- (ii) Considered the Learning report (Annex 2) and noted the new commissioning model for youth contracts across the City to be confirmed by April 2010.
- (iii) Considered the Prosperous report (Annex 3) and noted activity detailed through the Prosperous Area Action Plan.

Financial Statements and Funding Requests

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to outline current expenditure from the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB), Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and Community Chest and applications for funding from these budgets in order to support new initiatives, which would benefit the area and the delivery of the Local Area Plans.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to the funding of the Washington Theatre Group through the Community Chest, Councillor Cuthbert commented that due to the postponement of the January meeting of the Committee, if the project required any further funding, the Washington East Ward would meet any shortfall.

Victoria Gamble, Solicitor advised that due to the exceptional circumstances, that would be acceptable.

In relation to the miners' memorial project, Councillor Cuthbert proposed that the application be strongly rejected as it was a piece of work for the Civic Centre and was of no benefit to the Washington area.

Councillor Walker commented that he was strongly in favour of the project as there was a strong miners' heritage in the region and as Washington was aiming for its own memorial, he would like to think, the proposal would receive support from other areas.

The Chairman requested the decision be put to a vote, with 7 in favour and 4 against, it was agreed to approve the application.

In relation to the River Wear Trail project, Mrs Trueman advised the recommendation was to defer the application as the project did not demonstrate a clear link to the current priorities identified in the LAP and had not provided sufficient evidence that the project was ready to be delivered. It was proposed the application be brought back once the information had been supplied.

Councillor Cuthbert expressed his disappointment that the information had not been passed on to allow the project to go ahead and requested this be rectified quickly. Councillor Cuthbert also wished to thank the Chairman for supporting the application as a SIB bid.

Mrs Trueman advised that the recommendation to reject the Seafront Improvement project was due to the application not meeting the local priorities.

Councillor Trueman disagreed with the recommendation as very few cities had a coastline and was a great benefit to Sunderland. Thousands of people attended the Airshow each year and it provided a great deal of employment.

Councillor Trueman acknowledged that transport needed to be looked at and he would be seeking discussions with Nexus on providing links to the coast.

Councillor Chamberlin commented that she would support the project as it followed the same criteria as the miners' memorial project.

Councillor Cuthbert commented that he appreciated that the Seafront was an asset to the City but it had no benefit to the Washington area.

Councillor Wake agreed with Councillor Trueman's comments and stated the people of Washington could also benefit from the Seafront.

The Chairman requested the decision be put to a vote, with 8 in favour and 2 against, it was decided to agree to support the Seafront Improvement project.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- (i) approve the 18 proposals for support from the 2009/10 Community Chest as detailed in Annex 1;
- (ii) approve £25,280 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIB budget and the 2010/11 allocation (subject to Washington Area Committee approving a second year of funding) for the Washington Arts Centre Remix Project;
- (iii) approve £15,000 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIB budget and the 2010/11 allocation (subject to Washington Area Committee approving a second year of funding) for the Sulgrave Play Area Project;
- (iv) approve £5,000 as a contribution from the 2009/10 SIB budget and the 2010/11 allocation (subject to Washington Area Committee approving a second year of funding) for the Miners' Memorial Project;

- (v) defer the proposal to contribute £26,500 from the 2009/10 SIB budget, to the River Wear Trail Project;
- (vi) defer the proposal to contribute £11,543 from the 2009/10 SIB budget, to the Community Leaders of the Future Project;
- (vii) approve the proposal to contribute £10,000 from the 2009/10 SIB budget, to the Sea Front Improvements Project;
- (viii) reject the proposal to contribute £11,645 from the 2009/10 SIB budget to the Kool Kids Project;
- (ix) approve the proposal to contribute £4,572 from the 2009/10 Washington Central SIP allocation to the Washington Nature Trail Project
- (x) approve the proposal to contribute £9,973 from the 2009/10 Washington Central SIP allocation for the Columbia CA Refurbishment Project;
- (xi) note the financial statement for 2009/10 as detailed in Annex 3 of the report;
- (xii) agree for a SIB funding application of £53,850 to support the Green Team Programme to be brought to the March 2010 Committee.

Area Review Process – Introduction of a Referral Criteria and Process for Dealing with Issues of Local Concern Incorporating a Revised Mechanism for Councillor Call for Action – Initial Proposals

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which outlined the proposed introduction of a referral criteria and process for dealing with an Area Review Process to be used by Area Committees, Scrutiny Committees and the Sunderland Partnership and included amalgamation with the Councillor Call for Action mechanism.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Area Committee support the introduction of the referral criteria and process for determining the appropriateness of undertaking an investigation triggered either by the non-mandatory referral/Councillor Call for Action route; and
- (ii) subject to any comments received from the Area Committees, the Scrutiny Committee and the Sunderland Partnership, the revised procedure be referred to Cabinet for approval, implemented and included in the Area Committee Handbook.

Area Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Networks and Volunteering in your Area

The Executive Director City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of progress and proposed future development regarding the involvement and representation of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) within the new Area Arrangements.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Susan Brown, Area Community Co-ordinator presented the report and advised that the Voluntary Community Sector Network had met in December and January.

Ms Brown updated Members on the representatives appointed to the Network for the Voluntary Sector for the Washington area and also requested Members put forward any suggestion, nominations for the Volunteers Awards event which was due to take place.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that it was incredibly important volunteers were recognised for the excellent job they perform.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Scaplehorn was the Co-Chair of the Network and was available if required.

Councillor Trueman commented that it was a most difficult role for volunteers to be asked to represent the whole of the Voluntary Sector and it was vitally important that they receive support in carrying out such a role.

Ms Brown advised that there were support mechanisms in place and training is offered to the representatives.

Graham Burt, Strategy Development Manager also advised that the three representatives sitting on the Committee, only one would be a paid member of staff representing the Voluntary Sector, the other two were unpaid.

7. RESOLVED that the update on the position of the Area VCS Networks and feedback in relation to the area based volunteer celebrations be noted.

Responsive Local Services

The Executive Director City Services and Chief Executive submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which presented Members with the current Service Standards for the services currently being reviewed as part of the Responsive Local Services (RLS) Project and ascertained present service performance for the area.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mike Poulter presented the report and advised that the Directorate was already working on providing more in-depth reports so that the Committee could get a better understanding of the service.

Mr Poulter also commented that at the previous meeting there had been a desire to look at graffiti, which he was happy to answer any queries on and that they were also looking at the issue of littering by working with partners, shop owners and schools, and as a last resort, if necessary look at enforcement.

Councillor Cuthbert commented that in general the services provided such as refuse collection and so on were excellent but the problem with graffiti had been the vast majority of incidents on private land did not get reported and he would like to see this included in future updates.

Mr Poulter advised that as a general standard, if the graffiti is of a racist nature, it would be dealt with very quickly, but there were issues over land ownership which was to be looked at through partnership working.

Councillor Cuthbert stated that he had issues in the past where graffiti had been on Council owned land, yet still had not been dealt with.

Mr Poulter advised that he would investigate the matter further.

Councillor Chamberlin queried if the figures in any future reports would be based on Wards in Washington.

Mr Poulter informed the Committee that the information they can provide is governed by the system that they use and unfortunately can only provide figures by area at present.

Councillor I Richardson welcomed the proposals for a quick response on littering and enquired on the costs to Directorates in implementing education, enforcement measures and so on.

Mr Poulter advised that calculations of proposed costs for the services would be provided in the reports for Members consideration.

Councillor Walker commented that in his experience of the graffiti issue, the Council and Gentoo were performing an excellent job but a real concern was dealing with the utility providers. Councillor Walker commented that he would like to see the Council follow other Authorities example and enter into a standard agreement with the utility providers in tackling the problem.

Mr Poulter advised that he would take the suggestion back for further consideration.

In response to concerns raised by Mr Craddock, Mr Poulter advised that he would look into the land ownership of the overgrown public footpaths and dog fouling occurring in certain areas and speak with Mr Craddock outside of the meeting for further details.

8. RESOLVED that the report be noted for information.

Washington Heritage Offer – Discussion Paper

The Executive Director City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) for Members to discuss and recommend ways forward in relation to the Heritage agenda within Washington, in order that projects could be investigated and developed for the future.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Vicki Medhurst, Principal Librarian – Library Dev & Info presented the report and advised that Officers had consulted with Members of the community to discuss a Heritage Centre and raise awareness of how Heritage can boost the quality of life and give a sense of place.

Ms Medhurst commented that a number of options needed to be investigated and proposed to come back to a future meeting of the Committee with a funding application to carry out a feasibility study.

Mr Revely commented on the wider impact Heritage could have on society through intergenerational activities and the promotion of services and advised that as a Directorate they would wish to support.

9. RESOLVED that the report be noted and the Committee agree for a funding application to be brought to a future meeting.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) J. KELLY,
Chairman.