

1 Reduce environmental crime (dog fouling, litter, graffiti)

Background/Key Issues

Although the Place Survey tells us that residents in the Coalfield consider rubbish or litter to be considerably less of a problem than the City average, there are still parts of the area where residents feel that the environment needs to be improved. Residents' satisfaction levels with parks and open spaces is higher in the Coalfield area than other areas within the City.

Current Activity

- Sunderland City Council is getting tougher on environmental crime. The Council's team of Environmental Enforcement Officers has been increased to 12 and they patrol the streets, educating the public and issuing fixed penalty notices if they see a littering or dog fouling offence, and will take appropriate action on those responsible for graffiti and fly tipping. In the period January to June 2009 there have been 29 fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, and 1 fixed penalty notice for litter
- Gentoo have a team of Neighbourhood Housing Managers out on the estates who regularly pick up issues and report to grounds maintenance, repairs, cleaning teams and also refer issues to the Council teams and other relevant partners
- Gentoo's Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers work closely with the Police and the City Council and regularly participate in joint estate walks and out of hours work
- Groundwork are involved in joint work with the Youth Offending Service, Gentoo and other organisations across the Coalfield area to make environmental improvements
- The SIP programme of works being carried out by Community and Cultural Services is designed to tackle fly tipping and make improvements to cycle ways

Gaps/Needs

- No reference of links to the Child Poverty and Communication Cohesion Strategies – significance of Poverty of Place
- Lack of detailed specific areas of concern (with locations)
- Area around the River Wear Trail unattractive and unsafe in parts. Funding from Local Transport Plan will provide £25,000, there is a shortfall of £46,000 to carry out improvements
- Education/awareness raising to encourage residents to look after their area

Actions

- Area Committee to provide information regarding specific areas of concern
- Environmental Enforcement Officers to provide information on successes and areas where progress has been made
- Community and Cultural Services provide an update regarding the SIP programme of works

Proposals

- Consider call for SIP/SIB funding application to enable Cox Green to Fatfield Bridge wheeled pedestrian section of the River Wear trail to be more accessible for disabled, and attractive and safe for all users (£23,000 if costs split with Washington Area Committee)
- Consider a joint education project between relevant agencies in order to raise awareness and encourage local people to improve their area. Lead organisation to be confirmed

2 Improve local shopping centres

Background/Key Issues

Local shopping centres in the Coalfield area have suffered due to lack of economic activity. Some streets have empty shops creating an unattractive environment and a negative impression of the area

Current Activity

- Environmental improvements have taken place in Market Street, Hetton in consultation with local traders, as part of the Hetton Area Action Plan (AAP) preferred option. The AAP will be adopted in September 2011
- The retail needs of Hetton and Houghton will be included in a Citywide report "Sunderland Retail Needs Assessment" to be presented to the Prosperity and Economic Development Committee in October 2009
- Through Working Neighbourhoods funding, talent scouts and business advisors are working throughout Sunderland to target new potential entrepreneurs and support them on the route to setting up in business. This is backed up by a small and larger grant fund to help new businesses develop and existing businesses grow
- The memorial garden adjacent to Hetton town centre is being improved as a result of securing SIB funding in the last municipal year

Gaps/Needs

- Promotion of empty properties to potential retailers
- Clean ups and facelifting required in specific areas
- Lack of financial support/grants for local businesses to improve premises

Actions

- Receive update/progress report regarding the Hetton Memorial Garden
- Receive feedback regarding "Sunderland Retail Needs Assessment" at the November Area Committee meeting
- Engage the Business Forum via Business Investment Team
- Receive updates regarding the Hetton Area Action Plan

Proposals

- Consider providing funding to replace damaged trees on Market Street (costs to be sought)
- Consider developing proposals to use SIP funding in areas of identified need

3 Make landlords accountable for state of their property

Background/Key Issues

There are a number of run down properties (both retail and residential) which are privately owned. The state of some of the properties is having a detrimental effect on the surrounding areas.

Current Activity

- When complaints are received, an inspection is undertaken and the state of the property is assessed using elements of the Housing Act 2004 and where appropriate legal notices are served on landlords to remedy disrepair

- There is proactive monitoring of Hetton Downs for disrepair, empty properties and vandalism as part of the renewal area. If disrepair or vandalism is found at properties, the landlord is contacted and legal notices used if necessary
- There are five Environmental Health Officers (Health, Housing and Adult Services) for the City
- Gentoo work closely with the Council and Police to report issues and have them dealt with. This can also include partnership working to address issues raised by private tenants

Gaps/Needs

- The service provided by the Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) is largely reactive to complaints received, due to limited staff resources
- Little proactive marketing of the services provided by the EHOs

Actions

- Engage the Private Landlords Forum via Neighbourhood Relations Team

Proposals

- Explore the provision of a more pro-active enforcement service in a small pilot area (Hetton Downs) to determine the impact proactive work would have on the education of the community with regard to housing conditions and the decent home standard and its subsequent impact on the level and nature of complaints received.
- Explore potential of developing a marketing scheme aimed at landlords outlining their responsibilities

4 Reduce problems caused by unadopted roads

Background/Key Issues

There is a high level of unadopted roads/streets in the Coalfield area compared with other parts of the City. Many of the roads are in bad repair and cause problems for residents.

Current Activity

- A referral from Environment and Planning review committee to Cabinet in 2007 concluded that 'the Council undertaking and funding the making up of private streets in the city cannot be accommodated within budgetary constraints and cannot therefore be recommended'. This position still remains
- The procedure outlined in a Cabinet report of January 2007 was adopted as policy
- Council policy stipulates that where residents can contribute their costs of making-up a private road, the Council will consider exercising its powers to make-up and adopt the road
- This is a recommendation of the Hetton Downs Area Action Plan preferred option

Actions

- The Area Committee to receive further information when updates are available

5 Bring empty properties back into use

Background/Key Issues

A small number of empty properties in the Coalfield are causing problems in surrounding areas. Copt Hill ward accounts for over 1/3 of empty properties within the Coalfield area. In 2008/09 74 properties were brought back into use or demolished. Coalfield has the lowest number of

residents contacting the Council to obtain housing advice and homelessness prevention work. Copt Hill has the highest number within the Coalfield.

Current Activity

- Empty Properties Officer and Private Sector Housing Officer work with owners to renovate and rent out or demolish empty properties within the private sector
- Working with the Housing Options Team, Officers match people who are homeless with empty properties
- Gentoo have some properties waiting to be demolished before being replaced with new housing. There will be new homes on the Racecourse Estate as well as another phase on Chilton Moor
- Gentoo have excellent re-let times and very few issues regarding empty properties
- An Empty Properties strategy is being developed for each area of the City. This will include actions and targets

Gaps/Needs

- With only two Empty Properties Officers for the whole City there is not the capacity to carry out more proactive work
- A dedicated officer for the Coalfield area would allow an officer to totally concentrate on this area and proactively tackle all of the empty homes

Actions

- Area Committee receive Empty Homes strategy and targets once complete

Proposal

- Area Committee to consider whether it wishes to explore the feasibility of funding the employment of an Empty Homes Officer for the area (estimated cost £34,250)

6 Address lack of parking provision in residential areas

Background/Key Issues

Some housing in the Coalfield area has a lack of dedicated parking spaces, leading to illegal/inconsiderate parking. More residents in the Coalfield area have access to a car (64.6%) than the City average (60%).

Current Activity

- Gentoo customers are encouraged to report housing issues and complaints to the City Highways team
- Some parking schemes such as Teesdale Avenue in Penshaw have been carried out to address parking problems

Gaps/Needs

- Planning issues are a constraint within some areas

Actions

- Identify worst areas with a view to providing a multi agency solution (e.g. Gentoo are open to discussion regarding selling/donating land where appropriate)

Background/Key Issues

Some estates and residential areas are visually unattractive and need maintenance work to improve appearance. The provision of shrubs, bulb planting etc...provide a more attractive place to live. In relation to their homes as a place to live, satisfaction levels of Coalfield residents are lower than the City average

Current Activity

- The City Council currently run a maintenance programme to ensure streets are up to standard
- Gentoo have a maintenance programme and work with residents to improve residential areas. This includes environmental schemes, such as planting, painting etc.. to improve the visual appearance of estates
- Work is ongoing within the City Council to finalise a strategy to promote affordable housing and develop a Local Housing Company within the Economic Regeneration Strategy for the City
- The Area Action Plan for Hetton Downs proposes many improvements
- Gentoo have a number of renewal areas – Homelands has 58 new homes, Chilton Moor has 60 with a further 32 to be provided in 2010, Racecourse has 28 bungalows and central Hetton 44 new homes
- Gentoo have introduced Neighbourhood Action Plans for all estates. Estates are inspected by Housing Managers and Grounds Maintenance Teams to ensure they are kept clean and tidy
- Gentoo ask customers for feedback about their estates and try to implement changes requested. This is often in partnership with other organisations
- Gentoo Housing Managers often carry out joint estate walks with local Councillors
- A Citywide audit of all green space is currently underway. The audit will look at a wide range of issues such as provision of litter bins, accessibility to greenspace, CCTV provision etc..

Gaps/Needs

- Requests for highway maintenance services are in addition to the routine and planned programmes of work which are funded from existing mainstream budgets
- Need to engage with communities effectively to encourage involvement and reduce negative perceptions of area
- Need to link with developing areas of work e.g. Community Cohesion Strategy, Child Poverty Strategy and Legible City

Actions

- Highways keep Area Committee informed of outstanding/completed work in the area
- Area Committee identify specific areas of concern in order to develop solutions

Proposals

- Area Committee to consider receiving an application for SIP/SIB funding to enable all current outstanding highway and carriageway requests etc... to be completed (approx £44,000 required to match mainstream budget of approx £78,000)

8 Address issues around lack of public transport in some areas

Background

There are parts of the Coalfield area which are isolated due to a lack of public transport. In some areas, the services cease at 6 p.m. Satisfaction levels of residents in relation to local bus services are considerably lower than the City average.

Current Activity

- The Attractive and Inclusive thematic group of the Sunderland Partnership are developing proposed approaches regarding issues with public transport
- Nexus provide a Link-Up service which is available when standard bus provision is not available
- Community Transport provided by EL-CAP can be booked by groups within the Coalfield area
- Age Concern run a Shopper Services (funded by Nexus) within the Coalfield area. This is being further developed
- Station Taxis run a Taxi Bus service between Kepier Health Centre and Dairy Lane/Fencehouses
- Go Ahead are the local bus operator in the area
- Nexus are designing a Network Development exercise which will examine current and required transport provision. Public consultation will take place between January and March 2010. This will inform future development of the transport network

Gaps/Needs

- There are a number of areas within the Coalfield who feel they are not adequately served by public transport
- Need to ensure a strategic link between various strategies/developments regarding public transport across the City

Actions

- Invite Nexus to be a core partner to attend future Area Committee meetings
- Receive updates and input into the work of the Attractive and Inclusive group
- Nexus to consult with Coalfield Area Committee in January/February as part of the consultation exercise regarding the Network Development