

At a meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 1st JULY, 2021 at 6.00p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Lauchlan in the Chair

Councillors Donaghy, Farthing, Fletcher, Laws, F. Miller, D. E Snowdon, Taylor, D. Trueman, H. Trueman, M. Walker, P. Walker and Williams.

Also in Attendance:-

Mrs. Karon Purvis	-	Area Officer – Sunderland City Council
Mr. Jon Ritchie	-	Executive Director of Corporate Services, Sunderland City Council
Mr. Paul Wood	-	Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mrs. Helen Peverley	-	Area Co-ordinator – Sunderland City Council
Ms Denise Gilhome	-	Washington Community Support Worker
Mr. Alan Duffy	-	Gentoo
Mr Phil Sowerby	-	TWFRA

Apologies for Absence

There were apologies for absence from Councillor G. Miller and Warne. Shirley Gillum, Sylvia Copley and Allison Patterson

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

Minutes of the last meeting held on 18th March 2021

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 18th March, 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record

Washington Area Neighbourhood Investment Plan Delivery Plan 2020-2023 and Neighbourhoods and Community Board Governance Arrangements 2021-2022

The Chair of Washington Neighbourhoods and Community Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the Washington Neighbourhood Investment Delivery Plan 2020-2023 and also provided an update of progress against the Area Priorities associated with the Delivery Plan, which would be the focus for the Washington Area Committee during 2021 onwards.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Laws presented the report, highlighting the key points of action with the relevant Task Groups and was on hand to answer any queries raised by Members.

At this juncture, the Committee viewed a short video on the Delivery of the Washington Area Committee Delivery Plan

In response to Councillor Williams enquiry, Karon Purvis, Area Officer advised that they were looking to get Memberships and dates for the Groups to be arranged for straight after the Council recess but the Youth Group already had a date which had been sent out.

Councillor Dianne Snowden commented that it was really positive to see via the video shown that so much had been done during a challenging year but it was concerning that she was hearing of so many residents now in receipt of benefits due to COVID and we may need to have a refresh of our priorities to ensure that we are covering all of the people that need help.

Councillor Farthing queried what progress had been made in relation to the use of cameras to catch the perpetrators of fly tipping and where they intended to be situated. Mrs Purvis advised that the Project had already started but she would seek to provide a further detailed update at a Washington Neighbourhood and Community Board meeting via Michelle Coates.

Councillor H. Trueman commented that the video highlighted a fantastic programme of works carried out and referred to the 52 tonnes of street rubbish which had been taken from streets and suggested that something did need to be done to tackle this, with the possible solution of cameras.

Councillor Taylor commented that the Area Committee had agreed funding for rock cameras previously and enquired as to what happened to these. These cameras were battery powered and motion sensed therefore didn't require

great staff resourcing. Councillor Taylor also commented that with regards to fly tipping we really needed to start reminding people that if it was their waste, it was their responsibility, especially as the Council provide a bulky waste service of £10 for 6 items so there wasn't any excuse for fly tipping.

Mrs Purvis advised that she would investigate as to the status of the rock cams from the previous project mentioned.

In response to Councillor Donaghy's query, it was advised that the cameras in question were covert cameras.

2. RESOLVED that the Committee

- i) Considered the progress and performance update with regards to the Washington Area Committee Delivery Plan 2020- 2023, and agreed the proposals for future delivery as contained within Annex 1 of the report
- ii) Noted the Area Committee Video presented at the meeting which summarised the Annual performance of the Area Committee during 2020-2021. A summary of the Area Committee performance would also be shared with Full Council later in 2021.

Washington Budget Report

The Assistant Director of Community Resilience submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided a financial statement as an update position on progress in relation to allocating Area Committee Funds, Neighbourhood Investment Capital Programme and Community Chest as well as presenting proposals for further funding requests.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mrs Purvis presented the report and was on hand to answer any queries raised by Members.

With regards to the Delivering Washington and Heritage Culture Offer application, Mrs Purvis enquired if there was anything else Members wished to see included in the Project Brief. Councillor Williams requested that a Member of the Committee be included as part of the Governance structure to provide an effective link.

The Committee agreed the Project Brief with the inclusion of Councillor Williams suggestion.

In relation to the Washington Encampment Safety Measures application Councillor F. Miller commented that Page 30 made reference to the Barmston Pond design and queried that as these were the same type of barriers being installed as previously, had the impact assessments not already been done.

Mrs Purvis advised that it would be an equality assessment to consider the groups of people that could be affected by the individual measures proposed and was required legislatively as if there was a chance that the scheme could affect a disabled group or a particular group of people then this assessment had to be done.

Councillor Taylor commented that this wasn't just about illegal encampments but also included those vehicles that were part of the Nissan supply chain and the hauliers that had to wait for orders to be able to return. These people were having to park in the areas with no toilet facilities.

Councillor Taylor referred to the illegal encampments and advised that our own residents cannot use their parks for its intended purposes due to these and as Council Officers had known of these issues for many years now, residents felt that they were being ignored and they have had enough. The time to take action was now.

Councillor Taylor advised that he had written many emails requesting a meeting over the policy which had never occurred and he felt this wasn't good enough and also informed of an encampment opposite North Biddick Club which unfortunately hadn't been dealt with as we didn't have the relevant officers covering the weekend times that this had occurred. Councillor Taylor advised that if they don't move on after 5 days, the court cases to enforce take 5-6 weeks, which was 5-6 weeks in which our Washington residents had to suffer. Councillor Taylor believed the policy wasn't fit for purpose and that this needed to change and should be referred back to Cabinet.

Councillor Williams referred to the Delivery Plan which highlighted the investing in play, cycling and walking routes and commented that we needed to ensure these were safe in the long term and whilst she accepted there were a number of protected characteristics she did feel the policy needed a refresh and suggested that consultation be undertaken with Washington residents on how best to deal with this as the park needed to be available for everyone to use in a sensible way. Councillor Williams added that there was the need to get the balance right as residents pay their Council Tax and we needed to give them confidence that we would keep these places safe and tidy.

Jon Ritchie, Executive Director of Corporate Services advised on the need to find the balance from a financial and legal position and that all measures needed to be implemented within the policies and framework that was in place. Mr Ritchie advised that there may be a proposal that residents wish for, but if this were to contravene the legal position or requirement then it wouldn't be possible to implement therefore it was necessary for the impact assessments to be done.

Mr Ritchie also advised that he was aware that the Chief Executive and senior officers were looking at consideration of the renewal of the wider policy and he would look to try and set up the meeting requested by Councillor Taylor.

Councillor Taylor commented that Sunderland City Council needed a transfer site for genuine travellers and he was very disappointed it had taken this long. Councillor Taylor advised that he had met with senior officers and he felt he was only being paid lip service and residents had had enough which was also very frustrating for Councillors.

Councillor H. Trueman commented that this had been an issue for years and an officer had been appointed by the government with the remit to sort this, yet they hadn't been able to and a site had been identified but never materialised. Councillor H. Trueman acknowledged the need for the impact assessments but queried what would happen if the assessment stopped the measures and where we went from there.

Mr Ritchie advised that should the recommendation for a particular solution come back as a negative then it would be the challenge for officers to find a workable solution and that he would take back the clear sense of feeling portrayed by Members to the next Chief Officers meeting.

Councillor Taylor referred to the overhead barriers installed at Barmston Mere after complaints had been received about hauliers parking and an equality impact assessment would already have been carried out in order for this to be implemented.

Councillor Taylor commented that Durham County Council had a totally different attitude with temporary transfer sites put in every year and also made announcements asking travellers not to travel this year due to Covid, whereas Sunderland didn't do any of this.

Councillor Taylor also commented that in terms of Service areas, Sunderland only had one, which was Birtley in Washington so hauliers had nowhere else to go.

Councillor Fletcher informed the Committee that this had been a topic of conversation since 2006 and we were still in the same position now. Councillor Fletcher advised that within her Ward there had been a terrible issue of travellers parking on the roads off the A195 and the solution had been to dig a ravine, which after two years stopped this from happening.

Councillor Williams suggested that the policy be revisited by referring it back to Cabinet and also that the enforcement service become a 24/7 service rather than 9 to 5 Monday to Friday. Mr Ritchie advised that he could look at the referral back to cabinet with the Chief Officer Group and Joint Leadership Team and he would also look at the budgets for the Enforcement Team to consider the feasibility of becoming a 24/7 service.

With regards to the truck stop site, Mr Ritchie advised that there was still money in place for the original site that has been changed therefore he would pick this up with Peter McIntyre for any news on an update and he would also liaise with Mark Jackson in relation to the complaints over the Highways Issues.

In relation to the recommendations of the report, Councillor Taylor referred to bullet point 4 and requested that a time limit be placed on this. Mr Ritchie commented that he was happy to make the commitment that Members would be notified within 14 days of any update being received on the assessments.

Councillor Dianne Snowdon requested that a different title be given to this project as it did not just relate to encampments and it also included parking issues from hauliers and such like. Mrs Purvis advised that the title was inherited from the original project and she would come up with a more appropriate title for the project in future.

In relation to the request to refer the policy to Cabinet, Mrs Purvis advised that this application was only to align the funding for the proposals and Mr Ritchie had promised to look at the other areas raised through the Chief Officers Group and Joint Leadership Team.

3. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- i) Noted the financial information detailed within sections 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1 of the report;
- ii) Approved the 2 projects as detailed in Section 2 and Annex 1 of the report using the Neighbourhood Fund;
- iii) Considered the 1 project detailed in Section 3 and Annex 2 of the report, using the Neighbourhood Investment Capital Programme;
- iv) Noted the approved Community Chest grants from 1st April 2020 as detailed in Annex 3 of the report;
- v) Noted the approved Community Chest grants from 1st April 2021 as detailed in Annex 4 of the report.

Partner Agency Reports

a) Washington Area Community Voluntary Sector Network

The Voluntary and Community Sector Network submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update with regard to the Washington Area Community and Voluntary Sector Network.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mrs Purvis presented the report on behalf of the VCS Network.

Councillor Williams wished it be placed on record, the Area Committees gratitude to the VCS for their work over the past year and she looked forward to how the new alliance would bring us closer together along with the additional funding that would be available for the sector to utilise.

Members having considered the report, it was: -

4. RESOLVED that the content of the report and the opportunities and issues

raised by the Washington Area Voluntary and Community Sector Network be received and noted.

b) Northumbria Police

Northumbria Police submitted a report which provided data on crime and disorder in the Washington area comparing 'Year to date' figures with the preceding year.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

As Inspector Gjørven was not in attendance it was requested that any queries be emailed.

Councillor Taylor commented that he was disappointed the Inspector wasn't in attendance as he wished to refer to page 8 of the minutes and the use of the Fire Authority's Drone to tackle the antisocial Quad bike riders . Councillor Taylor informed the Committee that he had spoken with the Chief Fire Officer, who had been very keen to work collaboratively with the Police on this but the Police Inspector was yet to return the emails sent on this. The Chairman advised that they would see if this could be progressed.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

c) TWFRS

The Tyne and Wear Fire Service submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided performance-monitoring details in relation to the Local Indicators for the Washington Area Committee from 1st March 2021 to 31st May 2021, compared with the same period in 2020

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Phil Sowerby, Station Manager presented the report and expanded on the figures provided

Councillor Farthing commented that she was staggered at the number of deliberate fires and in particular those in Washington South Ward with a lot occurring in the plantations. This was a great concern as the Ward had a great deal of plantations which were becoming vulnerable and many were in close proximity to dwellings.

Councillor Farthing also advised that of a badly burned tree that had been reported but had taken a great deal of time to locate and requested if better details of locations could be provided to help officers locate these when they occur.

Councillor Dianne Snowdon wished to thank the Fire Authority for the work carried out every day at the Nightingale Hospital and requested this be passed onto staff.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Planning Applications – For Information Only

Current Planning Applications relating to the Washington Area for the period 1st May, 2021 to 4th June, 2021 were submitted for Members information only (copy circulated).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) L. Lauchlan,
Chairman.