

At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 2nd FEBRUARY, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Wares in the Chair

Councillors Ball, P. Dixon, M. Forbes, Paul Maddison, T. Martin, Mordey, O'Connor and Wood

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Fairs, Peter Maddison and M. Smith.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 24th November, 2008

Councillor T. Martin advised that he had declared a personal interest in item 9 – Sport and Leisure in East Sunderland as a Director of the Raich Carter Sports Centre.

With regards to selective licensing of landlords in Hendon Councillor T. Martin advised that it was not voluntary, the current scheme was voluntary however the selective licensing when introduced would be compulsory.

Inspector Neal Craig advised that speed detection equipment had been obtained by the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the above amendments being included.

Declarations of Interest

Item 6 – Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB): Regeneration Issues Report

Councillor Wares declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application as Chair of the East Area Forum.

Councillors T. Martin and Paul Maddison declared personal and prejudicial interests in the application as members of the East Area Forum.

Item 7 – Strategic Initiatives Budget: 2008/2009 Ward Based Community Chest

Councillors T. Martin and Paul Maddison declared Personal and Prejudicial interests in the application for Sunderland Orphanage and Educational Foundation as members of the Sunderland Orphanage and Educational Foundation.

Councillor Paul Maddison declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application for Grangetown Community Association as a member of Grangetown C.A.

Presentation from Northumbria Police on Crime Rates Relating to the East Sunderland Area and Minutes of the Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS)

Inspector Neal Craig presented the crime rates for Millfield and St. Michael's Wards.

He advised that all crime had reduced 1.7 percent compared with the same period last year. This was a reduction of 78 crimes. The detection rate for all crimes was 47.4 percent.

Violent crime had reduced by 1.9 percent, a reduction of 21 crimes. The detection rate was 55.5 percent.

Vehicle crime had decreased by 5 crimes which equated to 0.9 percent and the detection rate was 29.1 percent.

There had been 36 fewer burglaries from dwellings; a reduction of 22.6 percent, the detection rate was 29.3 percent.

The only increase on last year had been for burglaries from properties other than dwellings where there had been 68 more crimes, an increase of 39.3 percent. There had however been decreases monthly since August.

There had been 79 fewer crimes recorded for Criminal damage, a reduction of 9.2 percent the detection rate was 21.3 percent.

In response to a question from Councillor Wood, Inspector Craig advised that in August there had been an increase of between 60 and 70 percent on the previous year. Since then there had been significant decreases each month but the figures still showed an increase on the year due to the significant increase in crimes in August.

Inspector Keith Goldsmith presented the figures for Hendon and Ryhope.

He advised that for all crime the detection rate had been 32.1 percent. There had been 14 more crimes than last year, an increase of 0.9 percent. In Hendon there had been 16 more crimes, an increase of 1.8 percent while Ryhope had seen a 10 percent decrease, 39 fewer crimes.

For Criminal Damage the detection rate was 12.8 percent. There had been a reduction of 10.1 percent, 50 fewer crimes. There had been a 16.4 percent decrease in Hendon, 54 fewer crimes. Ryhope had seen an increase of 2.5 percent, 2 more crimes.

Violent crime had seen an increase of 3.3 percent, 10 more crimes. There had been a 3.1 percent increase in Hendon, 6 more crimes. Ryhope had seen 2 more crimes, a 2.6 percent increase. The detection rate was 55.9 percent.

In Hendon theft of motor vehicles had decreased by 37.5 percent, 12 fewer crimes. Theft from motor vehicles had increased by 14.1 percent, 9 more crimes. In Ryhope there had been 2 more thefts of vehicles, a 15 percent increase while thefts from vehicles had reduced by 4 percent, 1 less crime. Overall there was a reduction of 4.5 percent, 8 crimes. The detection rate was 11.8 percent.

Burglary from dwellings had increased by 70.7 percent in Hendon, this was 29 more offences. In Ryhope there had been 10 fewer crimes, a reduction of 20 percent. Overall there was an increase of 46.2 percent, which was 35 more crimes. Inspector Goldsmith advised that 44 of the burglaries in Hendon had been empty properties.

For Burglaries from properties Other than Dwellings there was a detection rate of 16.3 percent. There had been an increase of 13 crimes which was 14.3 percent. In Hendon there had been 34 more crimes, an increase of 87.2 percent. In Ryhope there had been 20 fewer crimes, a decrease of 16 percent.

In response to a question from Councillor T. Martin regarding empty properties, Inspector Goldsmith advised that the selective licensing would be targeting the landlords with empty properties. The Act relating to selective licensing had come into force in 2004 and it was useful in dealing with bad landlords and tenants. He would be receiving an update on the situation in the near future.

Councillor P. Dixon advised that last year there had been 5 or 6 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) covering Millfield however now there was only 2. Inspector Craig advised that they were good PCSOs and some had become Police Officers, the remaining PCSOs were overstretched. In January 35 new PCSOs had been recruited for the Northumbria Police Region.

Councillor P. Dixon then commented on the 'News from the Nick' page in the Sunderland Echo which listed ward surgeries and asked whether there were any plans for ward surgeries in the Millfield area. Inspector Craig advised that the meetings were generally PCSO roles and it was hoped that once full staffing levels had been reached there would be an increase in the number of meetings as currently there were less meetings than desired.

Councillor Wood advised that the number of Officers on the streets seemed to be going up and down, he wanted to see consistency and hoped that levels could be maintained. Inspector Craig advised that maintaining levels would be better and that deployment of more Police Officers to the Neighbourhood Teams was being investigated.

In response to a question from Councillor Wood, Inspector Craig advised that LMAPS funding would be used mainly in the City Centre to provide cameras and burglar alarms.

2. RESOLVED that the crime figures and LMAPS reports be received and noted.

Regeneration Issues Report: Feedback on Projects Previously Funded Through Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB)

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with information on the following project which it had previously funded through its SIB allocation:-

- NERAF – awarded £17,995 on 1st October, 2007 to deliver a Community Alcohol Information and Aftercare Pilot Project

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Regeneration Officer, introduced Kevan Martin in respect of the project who proceeded to provide Members with a commentary on his feedback report and answered questions thereon.

The chairman having thanked Mr Martin for his presentation it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB): Regeneration Issues Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) on the proposed allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) funding to support the following initiative of benefit to the area:-

- (i) £18,480 from the 2008/2009 budget to support the 'East Area Forum Development' Project.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Nicol Trueman, Area Regeneration Officer, presented the report and advised that should the committee endorse the request before the committee it would leave a balance of £36,259 in the 2008/2009 budget.

Ms. Trueman provided members with a summary of the application and introduced Paula Hunt from the East Area Forum Management Committee who was present to address any comments and questions from Members.

Consideration having been given to the application it was:-

- 4. RESOLVED that approval be given to the allocation of Strategic Initiatives Budget Funding of:-
 - £18,480 from the 2008/2009 budget to support the 'East Area Forum Development' project.

Strategic Initiatives Budget: 2008/2009 Ward Based Community Chest

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) on 12 projects recommended for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest Scheme in respect of the Hendon, Millfield, Ryhope and St. Michael's Wards.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

- 5. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 12 projects recommended for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest Budget with a total value of £7,658 as detailed in Annex 1 of the report.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit Progress Report

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed members of the performance of the Benefits Section in the processing of new claims and changes in circumstances in accordance with the new National Indicator (Right Time), NI 181 for Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Steve Atkinson, Benefits Manager, presented the report and advised that there had been a rapid shift from old style benefits payments to Local Housing Allowance.

In response to a query from Councillor Mordey, Mr Atkinson advised that there were two powers involved in deciding whether to pay the tenant or landlord. The benefits regulations stated that if a tenant was eight weeks in arrears then the landlord should be paid. If there had been arrears of less than 8 weeks it was still possible to pay the Housing Benefit directly to the landlord if it was felt that this would be appropriate.

Councillor Wood congratulated staff on the improvements made and the reduction in time taken to process claims from 28 days to 18 days. He commented that the times shown were averages and asked what the minimum and maximum times were.

Mr Atkinson advised that the minimum could be as little as 1 day. The maximum could be as high as 40 or 50 days in difficult cases. Claims should not take longer than 28 days to process and the regulations allowed claims to be withdrawn if they were not completed after 28 days; however the Benefits Section did not like to do this. They aimed to have all claims processed within 21 days.

Councillor Paul Maddison asked whether Sun FM could be used for advertising. Mr Atkinson stated that Sun FM was the most listened to radio station in Sunderland and advertising had been looked into however it was very expensive.

In response to a query from Councillor T. Martin regarding the source of the benefit money, Mr Atkinson advised that 95 percent came from a central government grant while the remainder was funded by the Council. The administration was paid for partly through the government grant and partly through Council Tax.

Mr Atkinson confirmed that Gentoo received almost all of its payments directly from the Council as there was an agreement in place between the Council and Gentoo. He also advised in response to a query from Councillor Wood that the government had decided that only private landlords would be included in the Local Housing Allowance scheme.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Heritage Open Days – Post Event 2008

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the Heritage Open Days 2008 events.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Julie McCann, Principal Librarian - E Resources & Information Services, presented the report and advised that there had been 191 buildings, tours and activities had taken part during the Heritage Open Days Event. There had been a total of 46,853 visits to the activities and events which took place across Tyne and Wear. In Sunderland there had been 9,136 visits to 53 participation venues and events.

Councillor T. Martin asked whether these events were similar to the centenary celebration event which was held at Hendon library. Ms. McCann advised that they were.

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Fly Tipping and Cycle Path Interventions

The Director Of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with information relating to research undertaken across Sunderland and the proposed expenditure to address fly tipping and improve cycle paths as part of the Council's Strategic Investment Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Helen Peverley, Project and Service Development Manager, presented the report and advised that approval was sought from the committee for the proposed programme of works in the East Area.

Councillor Paul Maddison asked whether the cameras would be in place constantly or only when needed. Ms. Peverley advised that the masts would be installed and there would be cameras in place at all sites initially followed by moveable cameras being installed when required. It was planned that the scheme would be proactive.

Councillor O'Connor advised that in the Queensbury Street area there were no problems when the camera was in place however when the camera was removed the problems started again, he felt there was a need for a permanent deterrent. Vine Place and Blandford Street needed to have a camera in place permanently as there was a problem with antisocial behaviour and the back lanes were horrendous with the bins being set alight regularly.

Councillor Wood asked when the camera would be installed on Princess and Azalea Terrace. Ms. Peverley advised that the cameras would be installed by the end of the financial year and the planning application was currently being submitted.

Councillor Wood then asked how one camera could cover Blandford Street and Vine Place. Ms. Peverley advised that there would be three camera sites on Vine Place and Blandford Street.

Councillor M. Forbes asked whether the underpass at the Barnes would be included as for years it had been a problem with fly tipping, graffiti and other vandalism occurring and there had been complaints for years. Ms. Peverley stated that she would find out and respond directly to Councillor M. Forbes.

Councillor T. Martin advised that he was inundated with complaints of fly tipping. One year while cleaning Hendon Beach there had been a van driven down to the beach and the driver had dumped tyres. There was a need for prosecutions as they would act as a deterrent to others. He welcomed the installation of the cameras and asked who would be monitoring them. Ms. Peverley advised that the CCTV unit would be monitoring the cameras.

8. RESOLVED that the proposed programme of works for the East Area be approved.

(Signed) D.R. WARES,
Chairman.