

At a meeting of the SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Watson in the Chair

Councillors M. Dixon, Ellis, Errington, Rolph, J. Scott, L. Walton and Wilson.

Also Present:-

Councillor Tate – Chairman of the Management Scrutiny Committee

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Foster and Wares.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 19th January, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January, 2010 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:-
 - i) Paragraph 7, page 3 – Councillor Ellis to be added to the list of Members who offered congratulations on the production of the Design Guide.
 - ii) Pages 4-5 – all references to 'Julie Grey' be amended to read 'Julie Gray'.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

State of the City's Historic Built Environment Review

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of the current circumstances with regard to the City's designated built heritage assets.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mike Lowe, Principal Planner, presented the item which detailed the development of the 'State of the Historic Environment Report' which was presented to Council in April 2007 (revised 2008), the main areas of change since it was issued together with priorities for 2010/2011.

Councillor Ellis advised that she had had a good look at the on line document and while she appreciated that the service had limited resources with regard to staffing and budget, she would welcome the document being 'fleshed out' to cover underlisted areas such as Houghton. For example she cited Rectory Park which she believed to be the oldest garden in the British Isles. In addition she informed Mr. Lowe that she had tried to access the register of listed buildings on the Council's web site but had been unable to load it.

Mr. Lowe replied that the document only included those assets which had a formal designation. For example, the Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest compiled by English Heritage only contained two Sunderland parks, Mowbray and Roker. While he did not doubt the significance of Rectory Park, it had not been included in the document as it had not received the same formal designation as Mowbray and Roker.

Councillor Rolph stated that she was interested to hear Mr. Lowes' comments regarding the Register of Parks and Gardens and asked if there was anything the Council could do to influence the nomination process, in particular 'going out to bat' for Rectory Park given its historic significance. She referred to paragraph 1.2 and advised that in fact the Committee had requested such a report as far back as last November rather than just last month. The report had been requested because Members had felt that a silo mentality operated between the Planning side and Cultural side of the heritage remit.

Mr. Lowes advised the Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest had been initiated in 1995 by English Heritage who had asked the five local authorities to undertake a joint survey of parks throughout Tyne and Wear. Following an appraisal process, Mowbray and Roker had been selected for the register. Mr. Lowes stated that he did not know the criteria upon which the selection had been based. It would be possible for the Council to present a case and make recommendations but the decision regarding any final listing would be down to English Heritage.

He hoped that it did not appear that a silo mentality existed between the two aspects of the Heritage remit. Officers from Planning and Culture met regularly to exchange information and more formal liaisons were held every two months. He assured Members that Planning and Community and Cultural Services did not work in isolation and acted collectively with regard to matters such as the Heritage Open Days, Fulwell Mill and Bowes Railway.

Councillor Dixon referred to paragraph 3.2 and asked for clarification regarding the statement "there are a small number of very significant public/voluntary sector schemes in the pipeline that may progress".

Mr. Lowes replied that the paragraph referred to grant schemes currently operating in the East End of the City funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Specifically these related to Holy Trinity Church, Sunderland Orphanage and a project to improve interpretation of the East End. The latter project was being carried out in conjunction

with Living History North East and included an audio guide for self guided walks in Hendon and the East End.

There being no further questions for Mr. Lowe, the Chairman thanked him for his report and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

English Heritage Christmas Workshop

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided a brief overview of the English Heritage Christmas Workshop attended by Members of the Committee on Monday 14th December, 2009 which centred on partnership working and opportunities for effective scrutiny.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report highlighting how the workshop had looked at how scrutiny functions could monitor, support or promote the mainstreaming of heritage protection into service areas, by:-

- questioning Cabinet proposals as they were developed;
- recommending that links to heritage issues were included in relevant Cabinet reports;
- including issues in the scoping criteria for Scrutiny Reviews.

The Workshop concluded that local authorities needed to share their experiences and examples of heritage related scrutiny across the region.

The overriding message was one of making the new scrutiny powers work for the benefit of both overview and scrutiny committees and partners. Ensuring that partners respond to scrutiny effectively, and that the Council was open and clear about its priorities and the information required.

Councillor Ellis stated that she had been very pleased to attend the Workshop which she had found extremely useful and informative. She enquired whether the Council held a local list of heritage sites valued by the local community.

Mr. Lowes advised that the Authority did not currently hold such a list, however, if resources permit it was hoped to compile one during 2010/2011. The Authority was currently liaising with local Heritage Groups, however, the promised Guidance Note on Best Practice in Relation to Local Lists was still awaited from English Heritage. Mr. Lowes stated that there was desire from some heritage groups to see a local list produced for Sunderland and in many ways this would be a positive step as it encouraged engagement. However on the negative side it raised expectations and an assumption that the local authority was able to provide protection. In reality the Council would be powerless to prevent developers demolishing a building if it wished.

Councillor Ellis commented that a variety of useful and important information could be gleaned by tapping into the knowledge of ordinary people.

Councillor Rolph reported that an interesting issue arising from the Workshop had been the idea of audits of War Memorials. This was extremely important given the number of memorials erected in old schools and businesses. She asked Mr. Lowes if Sunderland had carried out such an audit. In addition she asked if the Council included heritage related questions in the annual Mori Survey or used Community Spirit to ask the public what they expected from the Council with regard to heritage.

Mr. Lowes advised that the Council did not currently have an audited list of war memorials however he believed that colleagues within Land and Property Services may be undertaking work in this regard. Mr. Cummings advised that he would liaise with Mr. Lowes in trying to obtain a list from Property Services. In addition Mr. Lowes advised that there were certain war memorials in Sunderland that had been officially listed. The Authority was also in discussion with the 'Brothers in Arms' organisation regarding a piece of work to honour service men and women who had fallen since the Second World War.

With regard to the annual Mori Survey, Mr. Lowes confirmed that it contained no specific questions with regard to the historic built environment but that Community Spirit was engaged when consultation was sought on various issues.

Councillor Errington asked whether the Council was looking to encourage people to expand their interest in local history and find out more about their local areas. He cited the 50th Anniversary of the founding of Washington New Town as an example of an event that could act as a catalyst to generate interest.

Mr. Lowes advised that Sunderland had a Heritage Forum which acted as a direct interface between planning/culture and local heritage groups.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Review into Local Studies Provision in Sunderland: Draft Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members of the Committee with the first draft report in relation to the mini-review in local studies which presented in detail the evidence gathered, together with the research and conclusions drawn throughout the review process.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that it had been submitted to Members for comment with regard to relevance, clarity and accuracy. The final draft would be submitted for consideration at the Committee's April meeting.

Councillor Ellis stated that local studies was so important to so many people that serious consideration should be given to providing local studies centres in areas such as Houghton rather than being centralised. Helen Lancaster, Assistant Scrutiny Officer, advised that Councillor Scott had also made the same point, during

the course of the study however, the library service had replied that this would actually involve people having to travel greater distances. Members have expressed a degree of incredulity at this response. Mr. Cummings advised that he would make enquires and in any case would reference Councillor Ellis' point in the report.

Councillor Rolph referred to the comment regarding the need to establish local centres and advised that the Ancestry website could be accessed via links in Houghton. As more and more information was digitised it should become available via local libraries.

Councillor Rolph advised that the recommendations accurately reflected the findings of the Working Group, however, she believed that Recommendation 2 should be amended to read 'in conjunction with the registrars'. She also suggested that there should be a better explanation of the local studies unique selling points and reference to the BS 5454 recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents. With regard to Recommendation 5, she wondered whether the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) would be able to co-ordinate the production of the guide.

In conclusion Councillor Rolph advised that she would email a copy of her comments to Mr. Cummings and Ms. Lancaster.

Councillor A. Wilson pointed out that the recommendations detailed in the tabled report were listed (a) to (i) where as previously they had been numbered (1) to (9) which she believed was preferable.

The Chairman and Members having congratulated Ms. Lancaster and Mr. Cummings on their report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the draft recommendations, together with Members' comments and amendments, be included in the final review report of local studies by the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee;
- ii) the final review report be presented to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee at its April 2010 meeting prior to its submission to Cabinet.

Policy Development and Review

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members of the Committee with the first draft report in relation to the Committee's policy review on access to social housing which presented in detail the evidence gathered, together with the research and conclusion drawn throughout the review process.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that it had been submitted to Members for comment with regard to relevance, clarity and accuracy. The final draft would be submitted for consideration at the Committee's April

meeting. Mr. Cummings informed Members that prior to this, the Working Group would meet again to talk through the recommendations.

The Chairman stated that she had really enjoyed being part of the Working Group and urged Members to forward any comments or amendments to Mr. Cummings as soon as possible. The Committee having congratulated Mr. Cummings on his endeavours to pull the report together, he advised that he would write to Members in due course with the date of the Working Group.

5. RESOLVED that following final consideration of the recommendations by the Working Group, the final review report be presented to the Sustainable Communities Committee at its April meeting prior to submission to Cabinet.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st April to 31st July, 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st April – 31st July, 2010 which related to sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Assistant Scrutiny Officer, having drawn Members' attention to the most recent version of the plan (copy tabled) published following the dispatch of the agenda, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Work Programme 2009-10

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the Committee's current Work Programme for the 2009-10 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Helen Lancaster, Assistant Scrutiny Officer, invited the Committee to note the work programme.

Councillor Rolph stated that the April meeting should also include reports back from Culture and Tourism and on the Sport Conference.

Ms. Lancaster having advised that she would write to Members with details of the Annual Scrutiny Conference it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the work programme be received and noted.

There being no further business on the agenda, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) S. WATSON,
Chairman.

Performance Report Quarter 3 (April – December 2009)**Report of the Deputy Chief Executive****1.0 Purpose of the report**

The purpose of the report is to provide Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee with a performance update relating to the period April – December 2009. This quarter the report includes:

- Progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators
- Progress in relation to A Place to Play Policy Review Recommendations
- Results of the annual budget consultation which took place during October / November 2009.

2.0 Background

Members will recall that a new national performance framework was implemented during 2008/2009. This includes 198 new National Indicators which replaces previous national performance frameworks. As part of this new framework 49 national indicators have been identified as key priorities to be included in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Performance against priorities identified in the LAA and associated improvement targets have been reported to Scrutiny Committee throughout 2009 as part of the quarterly performance monitoring arrangements. The LAA priorities are a key consideration in CAA in terms of the extent to which the partnership is improving outcomes for local people.

CAA was introduced in April 2009 to provide an independent assessment of how local public services are working in partnership to deliver outcomes for an area. The first results were reported on the Oneplace website (www.oneplace.direct.gov.uk) on 9 December 2009. Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the findings of the draft area assessment report in January 2010.

Members will recall from previous performance reports that the CAA lead plans to adopt a Risk Assessment Matrix which will be the primary tool against which the Sunderland Partnership will be assessed. The Matrix will incorporate those issues that were identified in the first year of the CAA area assessment as having the most potential to become red flags and green flags. Once the Risk Assessment Matrix has been agreed, the CAA Lead will use it to monitor progress against the agreed performance trajectory (up until the end of September 2010) for each issue to arrive at his final area assessment judgement for 2010. Progress will be monitored through the Council and the Sunderland Partnership's performance management and reporting arrangements.

As part of ongoing improvement planning the Sunderland Partnership's Delivery Plans have refreshed to ensure that the work programme is targeting

the right issues, and outcomes can be demonstrated, minimising the risk of areas for improvement becoming red flags in 2010. These Delivery Plans were presented to Scrutiny Committees in February 2010.

The annual budget consultation took place during October / November 2009. The consultation took the form of a survey followed by participatory workshops which were held across Sunderland with Community Spirit panel members and representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The purpose of the workshops was to prioritise approaches to addressing the budget priorities that had been drawn from the survey results and also provide attendees with:

- A better understanding of the issues that have to be addressed in the budget setting process and information about the budget priorities
- An opportunity to hear the viewpoints of others when making judgements about budget priorities

The findings helped to inform the Council Revenue Budget for 2010/2011 which was approved on 3 March at a meeting of the full Council. A summary of how resources will be directed to the top priorities identified in relation to sustainable communities can be found in section 3.

As part of the development of Scrutiny particularly in terms of strengthening performance management arrangements, Policy Review recommendations have been incorporated into the quarterly performance report on a pilot basis. The aim is to identify achievements and outcomes that have been delivered in the context of overall performance management arrangements to enhance and develop Scrutiny's focus on delivering better outcomes both as part of CAA requirements and future partnership working. Progress in relation to the Place to Play Policy Review is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Appendix 2 provides an overview of the position for relevant national indicators and also any local performance indicators that have been retained to supplement areas in the performance framework that are not well covered by the new national indicator set.

3.0 Findings

3.1 Performance

- 3.1.1 In relation to Sustainable Communities no issues have been identified in the first year of the CAA area assessment as having potential to become red flags.
- 3.1.2 In relation to Sustainable Communities three national indicators are priorities identified in the LAA. An update is available in relation to 1 NI in relation to the period April to December 2009. An overview of performance can be found in the following table.

Ref	Description	2008/09 Outturn	Latest Update	Trend	Target 2009/10	On Target
NI 1	% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together	67.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NI 4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	26.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NI 154	Net additional homes provided	299	339	▲	90	✓

3.1.3 The number of net additional homes provided to the end of December 2009 was 339 well above the LAA target of 90 additional homes provided.

3.1.4 There are no key risks in relation to the LAA at this stage. In terms of other national indicators the following performance is of note

3.1.5 Reducing Homelessness

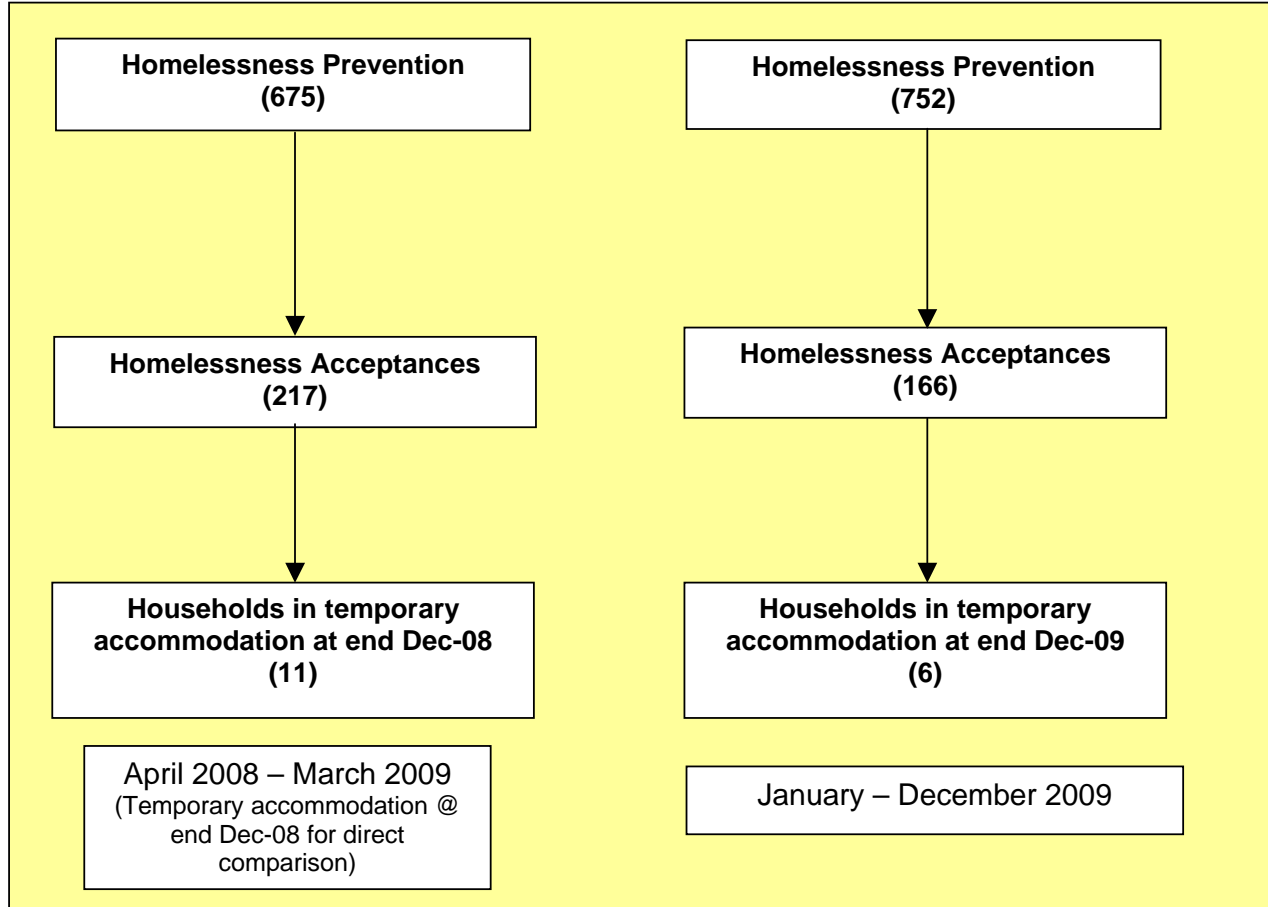
3.1.6 As Members will recall, the Council's and city's approach to homelessness is divided into 3 areas:

- *"Homelessness Prevention"*: Providing appropriate information, advice and support to households earlier to reduce their risk of homelessness;
- *"Statutory Homelessness Acceptance"*: i.e. relating to those households to which the Council has statutory responsibilities within Housing Acts;
- *"Utilising Temporary Accommodation"*: i.e. relating to those statutory homelessness acceptance households needing provision of temporary accommodation and then supported to identify and move to more permanent accommodation solutions in the city.

3.1.7 Reducing the risk of homelessness remains a high priority for the Council and city. The key objective of the Council in this area is a focus on more preventative solutions earlier (i.e. in advice and information) than more complex interventions later (such as statutory powers, including temporary accommodation). To support this approach, the Council made a significant investment in more preventative advice services for people with housing and financial problems, as well as practical support for people in their current tenancies, e.g. officers providing home visits to those at risk of homelessness and work with private landlords to support individuals' tenancies.

3.1.8 Figure 1 shows progress in achieving this move towards a greater degree of prevention diagrammatically. As it shows, the number of preventative cases increased between the 12 month periods ending March and December 2009, with a decrease in the number of people statutorily accepted as homeless over the same two periods. This continues a long-term trend underpinned by the successful implementation of a more preventative approach to homelessness. Both these indicators are on course to exceed 2009/10 targets by the financial year end.

Figure 1 – Comparison of Homelessness Performance Outcomes
(Figures in brackets are number of cases)



3.1.9 Figure 1 shows the Council improved its already strong performance in reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of December (NI 156) towards its target is no more than 6 households in this accommodation for the end of 2009/10, in line with its original CLG target. However, it should be noted that the number of people who present at risk of homelessness (and who may then require temporary accommodation) shows some seasonal variation with fewer such cases presenting in December. This has meant historically that the number of households in temporary accommodation declined in December, before increasing early the following calendar year as more cases present. This seasonal trend continued in 2009/10, but nonetheless, the number of households in such accommodation continues to be lower than the corresponding position the previous year, as Figure 1 shows, with fewer individuals in bed & breakfast accommodation (often the least favourable type of accommodation).

3.1.10 It's to further build on good progress thus far, and to support pressures placed on households as a result of the economic downturn, that one of the Council's Business Improvement Projects relates to reducing the risk of homelessness through a more holistic approach to supporting individuals.

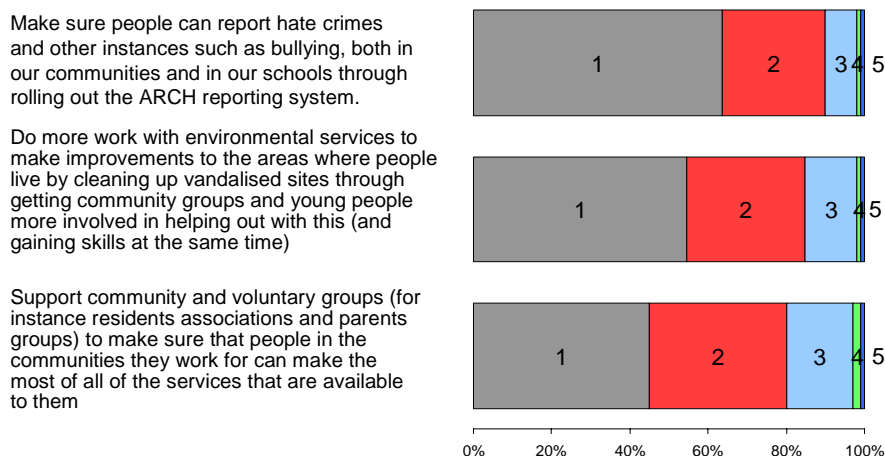
- 3.1.11 Private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority
- 3.1.12 Performance against the local indicator for this objective, measures the number of such dwellings returned to occupation/demolished. This figure improved to 261 between April – December 2009 (or 367 in total in 2009), broadly in-line with the target for 2009/10 (375) as result of the Council accelerating progress against this measure in the latter months of 2009. To help ensure the Council can intervene earlier in locations which seem to have an increasing number of empty dwellings (which can be an early indication of decline), it is developing an Empty Properties Action Plan that will seek to “segment” the issues and risks associated with vacant properties (e.g. geographically poor fit between available households and demand, market forces, including landlords unable to let etc.) and identify appropriate actions, based on extensive research already undertaken. One of the key issues will be to explore more preventative approach with partners to ensure that longer-term vacant properties become less of an issue in the first place – the majority of Area Committees have highlighted empty properties as an area to tackle.
- 3.1.13 The importance of this issue has been recognised and money has been provided to increase the numbers of Empty Property Officers from the current number of two to five.

3.2 Budget Consultation

- 3.2.1 As part of the budget consultation a survey questionnaire was completed by 1075 Community Spirit panel members (a response rate of 67%). Of those who expressed an opinion, the majority of respondents who expressed an opinion (77%) think that the way in which people get along together in their local area has stayed the same over the last 12 months. A further 15% believe it has got worse and 8% think it has got better.
- 3.2.2 The majority of respondents considered all of the approaches to improving the way in which people get along together to be high priority (ranked them as 1 or 2) as shown below. The most favoured approach relatively was in terms of the ARCH reporting system for hate crimes and bullying.

Getting along with each other

% of respondents where 1 is high priority and 5 is low priority






- 3.2.3 To explore the issues raised by the survey a series of workshops were held where participants were to prioritise a range of approaches to addressing the budget priorities that emerged from the survey results. The priority identified during the consultation in relation to sustainable communities was around getting along with each other.
- 3.2.4 Sunderland ARCH is a reporting system which allows people to report racist incidents that have happened to them or that they have witnessed in Sunderland. An important priority in terms of helping communities get along together was the roll out of the system across the city and into schools.
- 3.2.5 In 2010-2011 the ARCH system will be further developed, meaning that people can report other hate crimes such as homophobic incidents, disability incidents and instances of bullying. An ARCH Development Officer has been appointed who will be responsible for this work. This will involve work with schools and other organisations such as housing groups and the police to train people about how the system works, to encourage reporting onto the system and to ensure that the information on the system is used to do something to address problems, including ensuring that the victim is supported.
- 3.2.6 The roll out in schools will start with a pilot in 5 Sunderland schools in summer term 2010. Training will be given to teachers and pupils around the importance of reporting racist incidents. ARCH will also work with youth projects in Sunderland so that young people are able to report racist incidents outside school times. Finally ARCH is also linking with the Anti-Bullying Strategy Group to look at using ARCH to record all bullying incidents in schools.

3.2.7 The government has allocated a grant of £164,000 to support the 'Prevent;' Strategy. Sunderland's approach to the 'Prevent' agenda focuses on ensuring that we thoroughly understand our communities and work with them to address any problems they might encounter with regard to people who hold extremist and violent views and who thereby pose a threat both to their community, to the wider communities around them, and the country as a whole. Some practical examples include collaborative working with the Sunderland BME Network, as well as providing small budgets to the area based Community Cohesion networks (both practitioner and strategic) to provide some immediate financial assistance in order that low cost local solutions can be delivered to any identified areas or 'hot spots' highlighted. Funding to support this provision is being allocated through the Area Based Grant.

3.3 Policy Review Recommendations

3.3.1 The recommendations agreed to improve A Place to Play in Sunderland as part of the committee Policy Review will deliver a range of improvement activity. A full overview of progress is attached as appendix 2, the table below provides a summary of the number and percentage of each policy reviews recommendations that have been achieved, are on schedule to be achieved or are not on schedule to be achieved.

Policy Review	Rag Key		
	 Green (Recommendation achieved)	 Amber (On schedule)	 Red (Not on schedule)
A Place to Play	1 (5%)	13 (65%)	6 (30%)

3.3.2 Recommendations achieved to date include; research undertaken with regard to the management and maintenance of poster sites, comparing models in a range of town centres across the country. The Arts Centre Washington continues to develop new initiatives in music for young people. Music programme developed and enhanced throughout 2009 and continues into 2010.

4.0 Recommendation

That the committee considers the continued good progress made by the council and the Sunderland Partnership and those areas requiring further development to ensure that performance is actively managed.

5.0 Background Papers

A Place to Play Policy Review Recommendations - Progress April to December 2009

RAG Key			Current Performance		
★	Green - Recommendation achieved		1 Recommendation (5%)		
●	Amber - On schedule to achieve recommendation		13 Recommendation (65%)		
▲	Red - Not on schedule to achieve recommendation		6 Recommendation (30%)		
Ref	Description	Owner	Delivery Timescale	RAG	Progress
PRR01	To identify potential sites for poster points in and around the city and also to identify the resources to purchase poster point.	Channing, Zoe	31/05/2010	●	Various sites have been explored in the city centre further research around the sites needs to be done. Grant application to the Arts Council in Spring 2010 to be submitted.
PRR02	To undertake research into best practice with regard to the management and maintenance of poster sites	Channing, Zoe	28/02/2010	★	Research has been undertaken comparing models in a range of town centres across the country. Completed.
PRR03	To explore the development of a promoter's network for Sunderland including other forms of entertainment like dance and theatre.	Channing, Zoe	31/05/2010	●	The Arts & Creative Development team are currently exploring the development of a Promoters Network and this will also be the subject of a grant application to the Arts Council in Spring 2010.
PRR04	To identify existing and emerging promoters and look to develop support mechanisms within the city for promoters	Channing, Zoe	30/04/2010	●	The Arts & Creative Development Team are seeking support from Generator – the regional music agency with regard to supporting existing and emerging promoters. A Training Day is to take place at Arts Centre Washington in the New Year.
PRR05	To continue to ensure that music plays a prominent part in festivals and flagship events and that relationships with the local music scene are further enhanced.	Channing, Zoe	not set	●	Discussions are underway with regard to the involvement of music across festivals and events for 2010-11. Ongoing.

Ref	Description	Owner	Delivery Timescale	RAG	Progress
PRR06	To support the development of music with both young people, adults and professionals through the development of Arts Centre Washington as a music venue.	Channing, Zoe	not set	●	Arts Centre Washington continues to be develop new initiatives in music for young people. Community Music Space. Received final confirmation from DCMS about securing funding for Arts Centre Washington to become one of ten Community Music Spaces in the country. Music programme developed and enhanced throughout 2009 and continues into 2010. Discussions taking place with the Diversity & Inclusion Manager to identify opportunities for music projects with young people to address anti-social behaviour
PRR07	To hold discussions with youth development groups to consider the issues around transport for young people to access music events within the city centre.	Channing, Zoe	31/12/2010	▲	This issue will be picked up as part of the review of the music strategy.
PRR08	To identify and develop a Sunderland directory of rehearsal and performance spaces for performers, promoters and audiences.	Channing, Zoe	31/03/2010	▲	Funding has still to be identified for the development and production of the Directory.
PRR09	To explore the notion of a centralised ticket sale facility for the city.	Channing, Zoe	30/06/2010	●	Currently the Tourist Information centre in Fawcett Street can provide this facility to any organisation for a small fee. Funding is currently being sought to develop a computerised Box Office at Arts Centre Washington which would enable tickets to be bought over the internet as well as over the phone
PRR10	To raise awareness of the current marketing avenues available to promote music events and to explore a variety of different methods including the use of new technology.	Channing, Zoe	not set	●	Organisations have been sign posted to advertise their events on the sunderlandevents.com website. A number of groups are also using Facebook and Myspace to promote their activity.
PRR11	To raise awareness of existing venues through the development, production and distribution of a Sunderland Music Directory.	Channing, Zoe	30/04/2010	▲	Funding has yet to be identified for the development and production of the Directory.
PRR12	To continue to explore opportunities for a small to medium sized venue within the current regeneration of the city centre	Burnham, Charlotte	30/06/2010	●	Discussions are ongoing with a number of interested parties regarding refurbishment of existing building and the potential for new build

Ref	Description	Owner	Delivery Timescale	RAG	Progress
PRR13	To raise the profile of the diverse range of music venues currently available in and around Sunderland that already cater for a variety of music genres.	Channing, Zoe	30/06/2010	●	Venues are encouraged to promote their activity through the sunderlandevents.com website
PRR14	To develop a venue network for the city that provides support and assists venues in supporting themselves.	Channing, Zoe	30/06/2010	▲	This issue will be picked up in the autumn.
PRR15	To highlight and signpost Springwell Village Hall as a model of good practice as a local community venue.	Channing, Zoe	30/06/2010	▲	This issue will be picked up in the autumn between the Arts & Creative Development Team and Oxclose and District Young People's Project as part of the Music Strategy Review.
PRR16	To support the refurbishment of Holy Trinity by the Churches Conservation Trust through partnership working that realises the potential of the venue as a hub of creative activity.	Channing, Zoe	not set	●	The Arts & Creative Development Team and other officers of the City Council are supporting the development of the venue as a centre for Creative Activity.
PRR17	To continue to offer advice, support and information to the University Big Band.	Channing, Zoe	not set	●	The Arts & Creative Development Team are supporting the University's application to the Arts Council for funding towards the 2010 festival.
PRR18	To identify resources within the City Council to address issues identified throughout the review report that will develop the infrastructure required for music to grow and develop in Sunderland in line with the overarching music strategy for Sunderland.	Channing, Zoe	28/02/2010	▲	Funding needs to be addressed as part of the Music Strategy review
PRR19	To look at the creation of a music development group, that includes the key music stakeholders within the city, to ensure a coordinated and joined up approach to the development and implementation of the recommendations of this review and the wider music strategy delivery plan.	Channing, Zoe	28/02/2010	●	A review of the strategy action plan has been completed and a new steering group has been proposed. First meeting to take place in May 2010.
PRR20	To devise a delivery plan including key actions, milestones and costings to monitor progress on the review report and its recommendations, that will sit within the wider delivery plan for music development in Sunderland	Channing, Zoe	30/04/2010	●	This is currently underway and will be reported as part of the wider review of the music strategy

Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee - Appendix 2								Comments
Ref	Description	2008/2009 Outturn	Latest Update	Time Period	Trend	2009/2010 Target	On Target	
Attractive and Accessible City								
Outcome - By 2025 Roker and Seaburn will have a key role in providing cultural and tourism attractions								
National Indicators								
NI 189	Flood and coastal erosion risk management	100%	16.50%	April to Dec	▼	33%	✗	Two of the six actions that the council have agreed to with the Environment Agency should be achieved by the end of March 2010 as a minimum. The first meeting of the Tyne & Wear Flood Risk Management Coordination Group has been arranged with the Environment Agency for 23rd March 2010 to discuss what their expectations are in relation to the remaining actions.
Outcome - By 2025 the citys carbon emmissions from homes, businesses and transport will be reduced by at least 26% compared to 1990 levels								
National Indicators								
NI 185	CO2 reduction from Local Authority operations	-4%	Annual			2.80%	n/a	
NI 186	Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area	1.4%	Annual			5.70%	n/a	
NI 188	Planning to adapt to Climate Change	Level 1	Level 1	April to Dec	◀▶	Level 2	✗	Brief for Durham Wildlife Trust has been developed and the work that they undertake should enable the council to achieve Level 2 by the end of March 2010.
NI 194a	Percentage reduction in NOx emissions	-3.8	Annual			Not Set		
NI 194b	Percentage reduction in PM10 emissions	-2.5						
Outcome - By 2025 all housing in Sunderland will meet the decent housing standard and the citys stock of social housing will have been rebalanced with 3800 replacement dwellings constructed on sites across the city and 700 higher value houses will have been develop								
Local Area Agreement Indicators								
NI 154	Net additional homes provided	299	339	April to Dec	▲	90	✓	
National Indicators								
NI 155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	230	Annual			133	n/a	
NI 158	% non-decent council homes	0.58%				Not Set		
Local Indicators								
BV 64	The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority	387	261	Apr - Dec-09	◀▶	375	✓	Performance is expected to recover into the final quarter of 2009/10, remaining stable against the previous financial year and exceeding the annual target of 375.
Outcome - By 2025 at least 25% of residents will feel that they contribute to their community and 50% of residents will feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area								
Local Area Agreement Indicators								
NI 4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	26.3%	Annual			Not Set		
Outcome - By 2025 over 75% of people will agree that sunderland is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together								
Local Area Agreement Indicators								
NI 1	% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together	67.2%	Annual			Not Set		
Outcome - We will address the barriers to creating active citizenship and increase the number of people formally volunteering to five percentage points above the national average by 2025								
National Indicators								
NI 6	Participation in regular volunteering	14.4%	Annual			Not Set		
Outcome - We will build confidence and trust in local areas so that by 2025 50% of people feel that their neighbours can be trusted and 90% of people agree that people in their local area are willing to help out their neighbours								
National Indicators								
NI 2	% of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood	64.6%	Annual			Not Set		
Outcome - We will ensure that people feel that local services have the best interests of the community at heart so that by 2025 more than two thirds of the population agree that this is the case								
National Indicators								
NI 3	Civic participation in the local area	8.2%	Annual			Not Set		
Local Indicators								
BV 156	The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people.	89.65%	95%	April to Dec	▲	90%	✓	
BV 165	The percentage of pedestrian crossings with facilities for disabled people.	89.7%	Annual			90%	n/a	

Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee - Appendix 2								Comments
Ref	Description	2008/2009 Outturn	Latest Update	Time Period	Trend	2009/2010 Target	On Target	
Learning City								
Outcome - Ensure that people of all ages and backgrounds have access to cultural activities and are engaged in the design and development of them								
National Indicators								
NI 10	Visits to museums or galleries	51.3%	50.60%	Oct-09	▼	54.70%	✗	Interim outturn to Oct 09. Confidence level is +/- 4.4% so interim figure represents no change from 2008 baseline. To set the result in context, the Tyne & Wear average was 51.6% and the North East average 50.3%. DCMS has assessed this result as 'no change' over the Mar/April 2009 result. A statistically significant change is indicated by 'increase' or 'decrease', when there is a 95% certainty that there has been a real change. Where there has been no statistically significant change this is indicated by 'No change'. As previously discussed, the survey does not assess the success of individual museums, nor whether the participants visited a museum in their local area, it simply records the activity of a small sample (in this case, less than 0.18% of the Sunderland population). The data is further compromised by the way in which it is collected – as part of the Active People Survey which primarily concentrates on how much sporting activity the survey participants undertake.
NI 11	Engagement in the arts	35.3%	35.60%	Oct-09	▲	45%	✗	Interim outturn to Oct 09. Confidence level is +/- 4.2% so interim figure represents no change from 2008 baseline. The recent outturn figure from DCMS shows a slight increase in Sunderland's engagement in the arts. All future activity will seek to increase participation in arts activity by residents over 16.
Local Indicators								
BV 170a	Visits to / usage of museums	1437	1194	April to Dec	▲	1453	✓	Visits in person at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens have been strong, and usage is on target.
BV 170b	Visits to museums in person	1249	1052		▲	1268	✓	At Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens the numbers of people visiting in person have been excellent. On 30 January 2010, <i>China: Journey to the East</i> opened. This major exhibition from the British Museum, revealing the compelling story of one of the world's most important civilisations, is expected to sustain this trend.
BV 170c	Pupils visiting museums and galleries	16333	10034		▼	14300	✗	Numbers for school children visiting Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens have been excellent. From 30 January, a major exhibition from the British Museum on Chinese civilisation, with a strong associated learning programme, is expected to sustain this trend.
Properous City								
Outcome - By 2021 we aim to provide 15000 new homes in the right place at the right price that people can afford through an affordable housing policy enabling everyone to access the housing market								
Local Area Agreement Indicators								
NI 154	Net additional homes provided	299	339	April to Dec	▲	90	✓	
National Indicators								
NI 155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	230	Annual			133	n/a	
NI 156	Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation	9	6	April to Dec	▲	5	✗	
NI 158	% non-decent council homes	0.58%	Annual			Not Set		
NI 159	Supply of ready to develop housing sites	145%	145%	April to Dec	◄►	100%	✓	Review of 5 year housing supply strategy underway. Update due in March.
NI 187a	Tackling fuel poverty - % of income based benefits recipients in low energy efficiency homes	4.7%	Annual			4.50%	n/a	
NI 187b	Tackling fuel poverty - % of income based benefits recipients in high energy efficiency home	33.7%				38.70%		
Local Indicators								
LPI 42	% private sector homes vacant for 6+ months	2.59%	2.57%	Jan to Dec	▲	Not Set		A target of 2.60% was set against this indicator, therefore, this measure is currently achieving target.
LPI 43	% social housing that is decent	99.4%	Annual			100%	n/a	
LPI 44	Total number of homeless cases prevented	674	532	April to Dec	▲	700	✓	For the 12 months ending December 2009, it was reported that there were 752 homelessness prevention cases and consequently, the service is performing very well in relation to this indicator.
LPI 45	Homelessness prevention cases per 1000 households	n/a	4.3		n/a	5.6	✓	
BV 183a	The average length of stay in b&b accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need	3.55 days	4.55 days		▼	2 days	✗	

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27th April 2010

ANNUAL REPORT

Report of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP2: Healthy City.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO4: Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City'.

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 To approve the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee report as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2009/10, that is to be presented to Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 In previous years each scrutiny committee has published an individual account of the work conducted by the committee in an annual report, and was presented to Council. The annual report reflected the committees work programme and included achievements, highlights and policy review work.
- 2.2 This year for the first time the annual report will be a single combined report of all seven scrutiny committees. The annual report will outline the development in the scrutiny function and provide snapshots of the outcomes achieved during the last 12 months.

3. Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee 2009/10

- 3.1 The proposed Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee report is attached at appendix 1 for member's consideration. The report provides a very brief snapshot of the some of the main work undertaken by the committee during 2009/10. It should be noted that the report is written from the perspective of the Chair of the Committee reflecting over the year.
- 3.2 Some of the main themes covered in the annual report revolve around the following issues:
 - Policy Review: Access to Social Housing in Sunderland
 - Mini-Review: Local Studies Provision in Sunderland
 - Annual Sport Report
 - English Heritage Workshop.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Committee has developed and delivered an ambitious work programme in 2009/10, which is reflected in the annual report. The Scrutiny Committee has worked well with Council Directorates, stakeholders and partner organisations to deliver the work programme and the Scrutiny Committee has tackled a number of issues throughout the year and looked to work with officers and stakeholders to provide solutions and improvements to services delivered across the city.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members approve the Sustainable Communities report 2009/10 for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 2009/10 Agendas

Contact Officer: Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, 561 1006
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APPENDIX 1: ANNUAL REPORT

Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee 2009/10

Chair: Cllr Susan Watson

Vice-Chair: Cllr David Errington

Committee Members:

Cllr Tom Foster, Cllr Kath Rolph, Cllr Jim Scott, Cllr Ross Wares, Cllr Amy Wilson, Cllr Kath Chamberlin, Cllr Michael Dixon, Lillian Walton and Cllr Sheila Ellis.

The review and development of the scrutiny function in Sunderland led to the formation of a brand new seventh scrutiny community, and it gives me great pleasure to present the first annual report of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Social housing is always going to be a topic that generates interest, particularly with current drives to ensure fairer and more flexible approaches are adopted to social housing allocation. With this in mind it was of little surprise that the first major review for the committee was around the access to social housing in the city.

The committee in gathering evidence for the review held a number of focus groups with key stakeholders including social housing providers and private landlords. To add to this we also received presentations at committee around regional Choice Based Lettings and also from the homeless charity Shelter. Members of the committee also visited a Gentoo Customer focus group to talk with social housing tenants around their own experiences. In conducting this review we were also very fortunate to be able to invite Coventry City Council to Sunderland to share their experiences of Choice Based Lettings with the committee.

The review has proved a worthwhile piece of work to undertake and the committee has gathered a lot of evidence during the year. With the invaluable contribution from my colleagues on the committee we have highlighted a number of issues and recommendations, which will help improve the customer experience in accessing social housing within Sunderland.

As well as looking at social housing, the committee also decided to undertake a lighter review into local studies provision in the city. Programmes like the BBC's 'Who do you think you are?' has increased public interest in local studies and now almost 70% of visitors and enquiries are about family history.

As part of this review members of the committee visited local studies centres in Sunderland, Washington and Newcastle, and also held a focus group with local studies centre staff and service users. The review was interesting and certainly highlighted the importance of local heritage and the enthusiasm that many people have for it. Although not as in-depth as our main policy review we have still made a number of recommendations that can help to promote and develop the local studies service further.

Following on with the theme of heritage a Christmas workshop was organised by English Heritage in Newcastle. The aim of the workshop was to look at establishing relationships and see where scrutiny committees and English Heritage could work in partnership on appropriate projects. Only two local authorities attended this workshop and I am pleased to say that we were one of those. The importance of our heritage cannot be underestimated and we will look during the coming years to see how we can develop some of the themes highlighted at this workshop for the benefit of Sunderland's own rich heritage.

The role of sport, play and wellness cannot be underestimated and the committee recognises the part they all have to play in creating inclusive communities within Sunderland. The committee was pleased to be given the opportunity to comment on the progress, achievements and future work of the City Services Directorate in relation to Sport, Wellness, Aquatics and Play. The committee have also been involved in the Football Investment Strategy and recently received a presentation from consultants, Knight, Kavanagh & Page, which outlined the work that had been done and how the strategy will help to provide clear pathways for improvement and investment in football pitches across the city.

The challenge for any new committee is in developing and establishing a varied and robust work programme, and throughout this first year of operation I feel the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee has achieved a great deal. I look forward to the coming year and the challenges that this will bring and I feel sure we will build on our early achievements.

Cllr Susan Watson
Chair of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

POLICY DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW 2009/10: DRAFT FINAL REPORT

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME: POLICY DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW

Report of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP1: Prosperous City; P5: Attractive and Inclusive City

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO4: Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City'.

1. Why has this report come to committee?

- 1.1 The report provides Members of the committee with the final draft report from the evidence gathered in relation to this year's policy review on access to social housing.
- 1.2 The review report presents in detail the evidence, research and conclusions drawn throughout the review process and recommendations arising from this evidence gathering. Members are asked to give consideration to the final report and the recommendations of the policy review.
- 1.3 The review into access to housing has clear links to all the Councils Strategic Priorities in particular 'Prosperous City' and 'Attractive and Inclusive City'. The review also has links to Corporate Priorities on delivering customer focused services and improving partnership working.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 15th June, 2009 following discussions regarding the work programme the Committee consider the possibility of a study into the issue of access to social housing in Sunderland.
- 2.2 The review came at an important time in light of the work being undertaken at both regional and national levels. The Committee used its skills and expertise to develop themes presented during their evidence gathering procedures. Housing features heavily in the Sunderland Strategy with an aim that 'increasing the amount of affordable housing to meet the decent homes standards, whilst making the best use of available resources across the council and city'.

3. The Draft Final Report

- 3.1 The draft final report on Access to Social Housing in Sunderland is attached as an appendix to this report and presents members with the facts and evidence that have been gathered throughout the review process. As part of the review process evidence was obtained from a variety of national, regional and local key witnesses and stakeholders.

3.2 The report is divided into a number of sections which provide the background information to the review, how the review was carried out and the findings and conclusions from the review process. The findings from the review reflect the main themes raised during the Committee's investigations and evidence gathering as follow:

- Social Housing – The National and Local Picture
- Social Housing Providers
- Private Landlords
- Tenants and Applicants
- Choice Based Lettings.

3.3 Members are asked to read the report and comment on the content with particular reference to the recommendations arising from the evidence gathered and presented in the report. Members may wish to amend the report for purposes of accuracy, clarity or relevance to ensure the report is a true reflection of the work undertaken.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee is presented with a final draft copy of the policy review document for comment and amendment with the aim of producing a final report for presentation and approval by Cabinet.

5. Recommendation

5.1 That the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee provides comments on the final draft report and that any agreed amendments are made.

5.2 That consideration is given to the recommendations contained in the final draft report.

5.3 That the agreed final report is presented to the Cabinet for approval at its June 2010 meeting.

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Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee Policy Review 2009 – 2010

Access to Social Housing in Sunderland Draft Final Report

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1 Foreword from the Chairman of the Committee

On behalf of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee I am delighted to publish this report. I would like to thank all those who participated in the process, for their time, effort and commitment to helping Sunderland continuously improve. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of my colleagues who service on the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee in undertaking this piece of work and in particular Councillors Dixon, Rolph and Wilson.



Conducting this piece of work has been very worthwhile in engaging with a wide variety of people and in doing so we have had the opportunity to look at the issues involved in depth. It is one of the real strengths of the scrutiny process that the committee can look in such detail at a particular aspect of council business and work with officers and key stakeholders to look at how services can be improved.

Social housing is extremely important and the way in which people access this resource is equally significant. Housing allocations need to be simple, convenient, transparent and fair. As this report illustrates, and throughout the committee's evidence gathering, one thing is clear any new allocation system will not increase the social housing stock. What it will do is make better and more effective use of a resource, which through the economic downturn and the effects of the recession, is in demand more than ever.

It is also important to note that in driving change and improvement to the way in which social housing is accessed across the city and that it is the local authority that is leading such process. The City Council is work closely with Sunderland's social housing providers to ensure that the strategic housing objectives for the city are met.

It is hoped that through the work undertaken by the scrutiny committee, council officers, our key partners and stakeholders, that improvements can be made to the way in which people access social housing, and that ultimately the experience of applying for social housing is one of greater choice and fairness.

Councillor Susan Watson, Chair of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Annual Scrutiny Conference was held at the Stadium of Light on 11th June 2009 and at the Sustainable Communities breakout session a number of viable policy review proposals were formulated for discussion by Members of the committee. At its meeting on 15th June 2009 following discussions regarding the work programme the Committee considered the possibility of a study into access to housing in the city.
- 2.2 In Sunderland the increase in house prices and the reduction of social housing, (by 10,000 units in the last 10 years, mainly due to Right to Buy and clearance), has led to imbalances in several housing market areas. Affordability and a range of housing that meets people's needs and aspirations are key issues facing many households across Sunderland, not least newly forming households, who are finding in some instances prevailing market prices too high and a lack of available mortgage finance to enable them to purchase a property. Sunderland has considerably higher levels of semi detached and terraced housing than other types of housing in the city. It has been identified, through past surveys, that there is a real need to increase the choice of housing on offer and also the need to increase the supply of affordable housing across the city.
- 2.3 Whilst supply of housing is an issue it must be acknowledged that any new supply will take many years to come to fruition and therefore the key driver for the review would be looking at how people access the housing that we already have, focussing mainly on social housing, and ensuring that access to it is as clear and equitable as it can be so that the best outcomes for customers are achieved.

3 Aim of the Review

- 3.1 The aim of the review was to investigate current practices and policies across the city in relation to the way in which people access social housing in Sunderland and suggest ways in which improvements could be made.

4. Terms of Reference

- 4.1 The title of the review was agreed as 'Access to Social Housing in Sunderland' and its objectives were agreed as:
- (a) To provide a national and local context to the availability of social housing in the city;
 - (b) To consider the current ways by which people access social housing in the City;
 - (c) To identify and highlight the issues relating to how people access social housing in the City;
 - (d) To look at what services are available to support people to access social housing;
 - (e) To investigate how the Council and its partners work together;

- (f) To look at the potential impact of Choice Based Lettings on how people access social housing;
- (g) To ensure that a single route in to social housing is attained so that improved customer outcomes are achieved; and
- (h) To consider examples of best practice and innovative provision from local authorities and other key stakeholders across the country in relation to access to social housing.

4.2 Members agreed that as the review progressed, it may be appropriate to further narrow the focus of the review to ensure that robust findings and recommendations are formed.

5 Membership of the Committee

5.1 The membership of the Committee consisted of Councillors Susan Watson (Chair), David Errington (Vice-Chair), Kathryn Chamberlin, Michael Dixon, Sheila Ellis, Thomas Foster, Kathryn Rolph, John Scott, Ross Wares, Lilian Walton and Amy Wilson.

6 Methods of Investigation

6.1 The approach to this work included a range of research methods namely:

- (a) Desktop research – review of relevant documentation including government documents such as the Fair and Flexible: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England;
- (b) Interviews – with key individuals both internally and externally;
- (c) Focus groups – with key individuals both internally and externally; and
- (d) Presentations to the Scrutiny Committee.

6.2 The Following focus groups were held as part of the evidence gathering for this review:

- (a) Housing Staff – Health, Housing and Adult Services;
- (b) Registered Social Landlords;
- (c) Private Landlords;
- (d) Gentoo Customer Service Group; and
- (e) Waiting List Applicants.

6.3 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee also received evidence from the following organisations and individuals:

- (a) Councillor Trueman – Portfolio Holder Sustainable Communities;

(b) Shelter – Homeless Organisation; and

(c) Tyne and Wear Housing Partnership – Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings

- 6.4 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee also received verbal evidence from the Head of Housing Policy Services, of Coventry City Council in relation to themes around Choice Based Lettings.
- 6.5 All participants were assured that their individual comments would not be identified in the final report, ensuring that the fullest possible answers were given.
- 6.6 Time restrictions did not allow large scale surveys to be carried out for this research, therefore it should be noted that many of the statements made are based on qualitative research i.e. interviews and focus groups. As many people as possible were interviewed in an attempt to gain a cross section of views, however it is inevitable from this type of research that some of the statements made may not be representative of everyone's views. All statements in this report are made based on information received from more than one source, unless it is clarified in the text that it is an individual view. Opinions held by a small number of people may or may not be representative of others' views but are worthy of consideration nevertheless.

7 Findings of the Review

Findings relate to the main themes raised during the Committee's investigations and evidence gathering.

7.1 Social Housing – The National and Local Picture

Housing: Facts and Figures – The National Perspective

- 7.1.1 The last 25 years has seen the social housing sector become smaller as a proportion of the total of all households, the proportion fell from 31.7% in 1981 to 17.7% in 2008. It is estimated that in 2008 there were approximately 3.8 million households in the social rented sector.
- 7.1.2 The stock of social housing within in England at 1st April 2008 was estimated at 4.1 million properties with approximately 2.25 million owned by housing associations (55%) and 1.8 million owned by local authorities (45%).
- 7.1.3 It is also estimated that approximately 5 million people will be on social housing waiting lists by 2010, a million more than in 2008. Also in England in 2007 there were almost 100,000 homeless households, twice as many as in 1997, and by the end of March 2009 there were 64,000 homeless households living in temporary local authority accommodation. It should also be noted that black and ethnic minorities represented just under a quarter of all households found to be homeless in England.
- 7.1.4 There are also currently more than 750,000 empty homes in England made up of surplus flats built for buy-to-let landlords, failed private rented properties and homes left pending delayed regeneration schemes.
- 7.1.5 In 2006-07 there were a reported 554,000 overcrowded households in England.
- 7.1.6 In a drive to increase the numbers of affordable homes across England the Government has invested £141 million into a council housing drive. This is part of an extra £1.5 billion in the Housing Pledge made in June 2009 to build an extra 20,000 much needed affordable homes. This is not only aimed at getting councils building homes again but also in helping Housing Associations build more affordable homes too.

Housing: Facts and Figures - The Local Perspective

- 7.1.7 The City of Sunderland is the industrial capital of the North East of England and has an overall population of 280,300 (based upon the Office for National Statistics mid-2007), who reside in 119,275 households (with a tenure breakdown of 63% owner occupation, 34% social rented and around 3% private rented sector).
- 7.1.8 Sunderland has significant deprivation with 11 of its 25 wards in the top 10% most deprived in the country. On average, men in Sunderland live 75.3 years compared with 76.9 years for England and the life expectancy of women is 79.4 years compared the England average of 81.1 years. Average life expectancy in Sunderland has increased consistently over the last 10 years.
- 7.1.9 The number of households in Sunderland is expected to rise to 137,000 by 2029.

- 7.1.10 There are currently over 20,000 people on numerous social housing waiting lists in Sunderland, leading to duplication and confusion.
- 7.1.11 Gentoo has successfully applied for Government funding which will result in the erection of 422 dwellings across 5 schemes.
- 7.1.12 At the end of March 2009 there were 17 households in Sunderland living in temporary accommodation, 8 of whom had dependent children – this is a decrease from 29 households living in temporary accommodation in 2008.
- 7.1.13 In 2008/09 there were 217 people accepted as homeless in Sunderland, a decrease from 433 in 2007/08. Also there were 673 people who were prevented from becoming homeless in 2008/09 an increase from 363 in 2007/08.
- 7.1.14 There are also more than 5,000 empty properties currently in Sunderland, 2390 of which are in the private sector and have been empty for more than 6 months.
- 7.1.15 Gentoo has secured £40 million of Kickstart money from the government Homes and Communities Agency fund and plans to build 515 new homes. The new properties will be a mix of affordable and intermediate rent, with 170 for sale.
- 7.1.16 The current system by which people access social housing in Sunderland is flawed and doesn't focus on the customer, their needs or expectations. It is:
- (a) Confusing for customers;
 - (b) Has duplication within it;
 - (c) Access and nomination arrangements are multi-stranded;
 - (d) Exclusion policies are not standardised;
 - (e) It is seen as not fair;
 - (f) Not transparent;
 - (g) Lack of choice;
 - (h) Inconsistent; and
 - (i) Does not manage customer expectations.

7.2 Social Housing Providers

- 7.2.1 The Committee learnt that there were approximately 27 Housing Associations and/or Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) managing the social housing stock within Sunderland. The majority of this stock is managed by Gentoo, and they are by far the largest social housing provider within Sunderland. Appendix 1 of this report lists the social housing providers in Sunderland including stock information.
- 7.2.2 Each housing association has its own waiting list, application forms, offices, allocations policy and priorities. Sunderland City Council also, by law, has an

allocations policy and a housing register despite possessing negligible housing stock. However, the Council does have nomination rights on certain housing association properties.

- 7.2.3 At a focus group held with social housing providers it was clearly identified that access to housing in the city was difficult due to factors including the lack of turnover of properties, individual housing registers and the reducing housing stock. It was also highlighted that there was a lack of quality literature for customers and that the quantity and variety of current literature often leads to confusion. Most of the housing providers agreed that a common list would be beneficial and provide a consistent approach across the city.
- 7.2.4 It was also identified to Members that those actively seeking accommodation were aware of the various housing providers, the various waiting lists and how to maximise the potential for receiving an offer of accommodation. Providers at the focus group did comment on the common misconception held by the public that Gentoo and Sunderland City Council were one and the same organisation. It is often difficult to change these conceptions with people but it was something that both the City Council and Gentoo would continue to do.
- 7.2.5 Members were also informed that once a person was registered on a waiting list there was little or no feedback, or information on progress and the potential chances of being housed. This raised an important issue around managing expectations of customers. The providers identified the importance in providing a service that managed people's expectations and also raised awareness to the length of waiting lists.
- 7.2.6 Most of the housing providers interviewed, as part of this research, recognised the Choice Based Lettings model as an open and transparent system for not only letting houses but also for creating a single route into housing.
- 7.2.7 There is also an issue with how current allocations policies are perceived. In particular how frustrations and misconceptions arise through complexity and lack of transparency inherent in many allocations policies and misinformation generated by the media. One of the biggest misconceptions lies around queue jumping by other groups including the migrant population. Research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission reveals that 60% of new migrants coming to the UK over the past 5 years are living in private rented accommodation.
- 7.2.8 Further to this separate research by Sheffield City Council confirmed that 90% of those who had arrived in the biggest wave of immigration in the UK's history had crowded into the bottom end of the private rented sector. In terms of the overall proportion of new lettings, out of 170,000 new council or housing association tenants in 2006/07 in England fewer than 5% went to foreign nationals and less than 1% went to east Europeans.
- 7.2.9 The focus group highlighted the need to 'myth bust' around allocations to alleviate a number of these misconceptions including the notion that it was not what you knew but who you knew that increased a person's chances of success in getting a house. It was also highlighted as important to keep people up-to-date and informed around housing issues.

- 7.2.10 On a similar theme it was important to look at eliminating, where possible, jargon from the process making it easier for those wishing to use it.
- 7.2.11 Signposting was also identified as a very important aspect. Housing providers reported that if they were unable to help would always provide some form of signposting. With regards to homeless cases these were always signposted to the local authority for further advice, guidance and help. Sunderland City Council has also worked with a number of agencies to improve signposting issues through training, the internet and other mediums.

7.3 Private Landlords

- 7.3.1 Research from the English Housing Survey Headline Report 2008-09 indicated that a decrease in the number of owner occupied households from a peak of 14.8 million in 2005 and 2006 to 14.6 million in 2008-09. In contrast the number of households renting privately rose by one million since 2001, from 2.1 million to 3.1 million in 2008-09. This recent surge may have been due to a combination of factors: the flexibility offered by private renting; affordability issues; increased supply due to the availability of 'buy to let' mortgages in recent years; and, during the last year, owners choosing to let out properties instead of trying to sell them in a difficult housing market. Further to this Private sector landlords, in terms of ownership, are very much small scale with two out of three landlords being 'one-person' operations, and only one in three letting properties as a main business. Figure 1 below from the University of York's Centre for Housing Policy illustrates the profile of the private rented sector in England as at 2006.

Landlord Type	Proportion (%)
Individuals	48
Couples	25
Private Companies	13
Public Companies	2
Partnerships	4
Family Trusts	3
Charities	2
Church or Crown Commissioners	1
Government Departments/Agencies	1
Educational Establishments	1
other	2
Total	100

Figure 1: Types of Private Landlord in England, 2006

- 7.3.2 Private sector landlords in Sunderland were of the opinion that their role was to provide good quality, affordable housing within the city. Landlords also indicated that the private rented sector had become ever more important now that Sunderland City Council no longer provided their own housing, and due to the numbers of houses and properties that have been demolished over recent years.
- 7.3.3 Whilst landlords acknowledged that there was often confusion in accessing housing in the city for those first-timers looking for a property, they felt the majority of people had experience of the system and were aware of the procedures. However, the constant changing forms could be problematic but most good landlords were willing to help tenant's complete paperwork or signpost people to support organisation like the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

- 7.3.4 In relation to a single route into housing the private landlords in attendance at the focus group were unsure if this would make any difference as there was a perception that the major housing providers were already 'cherry picking' the best tenants. Although it was recognised that a single route into housing has the potential to level the playing field to a certain extent and could reduce the 'cherry-picking'. A single entry system could also help to promote better intelligence and C.V's on tenants and applicants.
- 7.3.5 Members were curious that if the practice of 'cherry-picking' exists then how would private landlords find or contact potential tenants. It was emphasised that at present there were very few empty properties available and often tenants would be referred by word of mouth or from other landlords. Also prospective tenants would be available to access a list of accredited landlords from the City Council. The Homeless and Social Services departments of the City Council will also contact landlords to enquire about empty properties. However there is often little or no feedback from these departments if the properties are still required and private landlords cannot afford to keep properties empty. Occasionally landlords will advertise properties in the Sunderland Echo too.
- 7.3.6 The Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LAS) was seen as a positive scheme that provided assurances for prospective tenants. There were also disadvantages for landlords in so much as it was easier for the local authority to inspect or request higher specifications from accredited landlords, already having their details. The numbers of landlords signing up to the scheme seems to have levelled off, despite the continuing advertising of the scheme. It was suggested that some landlords were afraid to put their names forward. This was highlighted the issue that the relationship between the local authority and private landlords was still suspicious. It was difficult to reason why landlords should provide detailed information to become accredited and ultimately penalised more than those landlords who do not.
- 7.3.7 The point was also raised that tenants have much higher expectations in today's market and therefore expect better quality housing as the overall quality of life for people increases.
- 7.3.8 Landlords certainly felt that the local authority could provide more support to landlords in the form of a vetting system to protect landlords from high risk tenants. It would even help to provide greater information on what support is available from the local authority and other organisations to private landlords. It was interesting to note that the Council Forum with private landlords had not met in over a year. It was generally felt that it would be a positive move to restart, promote and develop this forum to provide an ongoing dialogue between the local authority and private landlords.

7.4 Tenants and Applicants

- 7.4.1 Members visited a meeting of the Gentoo Customer Focus Group to speak with current housing tenants. Alongside this a number of phone interviews were conducted with a random sample of social housing tenants including people who had applied for social housing and were currently active on Sunderland City Council's waiting list. A number of key common issues were highlighted through this process and provided further evidence around the access to social housing review.

- 7.4.2 The time people waited was very much dependent on circumstances and this was reflected by the applicants spoken to. Experiences varied from short waiting times due to applicant's current landlady selling the property, to lengthy waiting periods for high demand areas. There was also a lot of understanding around the application process and many of the applicants had used the system previously. However there were still a number of misconceptions around the waiting list process and confusion over the priority given to other applicants. A number of applicants did not understand how people got houses so quickly and perceived the system to be unfair. There was also a feeling that the system was open to abuse and that people had become savvy to ways of increasing their chances of getting a property.
- 7.4.3 The Gentoo Customer Focus Group echoed this sentiment and acknowledged that the whole system of allocations to social housing seemed to be lacking in transparency. It was argued that people see void properties in areas and do not understand why these are not being allocated. This can give rise to misunderstandings and misconceptions around the housing system and allocation process. It was suggested that properties could be labelled to specify certain features and this could perhaps better inform people, creating a greater understanding around suitability and allocation of properties. The group also recognised that attending regular Gentoo Focus Group meeting allowed them to have a better understanding of the 'bigger picture' and that not everyone had this insight.
- 7.4.4 In relation to the process working well for applicants it became apparent that for those who had received a positive outcome the process was good, and for those who had been offered unsuitable accommodation or were still waiting, the process appeared to be lacking. A number of applicants expressed their satisfaction at how well they had been kept informed through the process by staff at both Gentoo and Sunderland City Council. It was also highlighted that people could contact housing staff to get further information and keep track of their own application. The onus was very much seen as on the individual and this was fine to a degree but for those more vulnerable applicants it was felt that a more proactive role from the housing organisations was required.
- 7.4.5 The issue around the quantity and choice of accommodation across the city was raised. In speaking to applicants who had been recently housed it was identified that they had generally received one or two offers of properties before finally accepting an offer of accommodation. The Gentoo Customer Focus Group noted that a lot of people were under the wrong assumption about the quantity and demand for properties. The links between expectations, needs, quantity and choice were identified by many of the applicants and tenants interviewed, and that the way in which this was handled was important to the overall customer experience.
- 7.4.6 In discussing the concept of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme with customers it was generally considered a good idea to have one housing waiting list that could help eliminate confusion and having to fill in numerous application forms. At the Gentoo Focus Group a number of people were unaware of all the housing associations operating within the city. This raised the issue that if this was the case how many other people looking for social housing were unaware of what was actually out there.

- 7.4.7 Applicants and housing tenants also commented on the how available properties were advertised within the city. While there was acknowledgement of good practice including the publication of vacant properties at 2pm every Friday by Gentoo, and the weekly mailing of a vacant property list to those customers requesting it. The idea of better utilising publications including the city council's Sunrise Magazine to promote housing properties and inform people of housing issues was also discussed.
- 7.4.8 It was interesting to note that a number of applicants spoken to still did not differentiate between Sunderland City Council and the Gentoo Housing Group. The traditional role of the local authority as social housing provider seems a difficult perception to change in many people. While the local authority and Gentoo working closely together in providing a social housing service within Sunderland there still appears to be blurring of the roles of responsibility that can leave customers confused.

7.5 Choice Based Lettings

What is Choice Based Lettings?

- 7.5.1 Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) replaces the traditional way of allocating housing under which housing officers seek to match applicants who have priority on the waiting list to available vacancies. CBL allows applicants for social housing (and existing tenants seeking a move) to apply for available vacancies which are advertised widely (e.g. in the local newspaper, local offices or on a website). Applicants can see the full range of available properties and can bid (i.e. apply) for any home to which they are matched (e.g. a single person would not be eligible for a three-bedroom house). The successful bidder is the one with the highest priority under the scheme. Authorities provide feedback that helps applicants to assess their chances of success in subsequent applications.
- 7.5.2 Communities and Local Government's five year housing plan, *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All*, published in January 2005, set out the Government's plans for taking forward its CBL policy. The aim is to have in place choice nationwide by 2010. The Department also supports the development of CBL schemes on a regional and/or sub-regional basis, recognising that housing markets do not follow local authority boundaries.
- 7.5.3 Research funded by Communities and Local Government into the original CBL pilot schemes found that social housing customers welcomed the choice, control and transparency of Choice-Based Lettings (CBL). They also considered that the extra effort required to take part in CBL, by looking through vacancies and bidding for suitable vacant properties, was worth it. More recent research also funded by Communities and Local Government generated positive findings about the longer term impacts of CBL. In particular it was found that CBL led to improved tenancy sustainment and tenant satisfaction; encouraged applicants to think more flexibly about their housing choices; tended to reduce rather than compound ethnic segregation; and that outcomes for homeless households were largely positive.

Coventry Homefinder

- 7.5.4 The Committee were informed that the Coventry Homefinder is a choice based lettings scheme, developed from an initial pilot scheme, which has seen housing

associations in the city team up with Coventry City Council and advice agencies to create a new service. As part of the review investigation the committee invited Stephen Rudge, Head of Housing Policy & Services, from Coventry City Council to share their experience of Choice Based Lettings.

7.5.5 The Coventry Homefinder scheme is based around banding applicants based on their assessed level of housing need. The scheme initially commenced with a 3 band model but through necessity this model now operates with sub groups within the main bands. Based on this banding system 75% of the advertised properties are prioritised by banding with the remaining 25% prioritised by registration date alone. Those in the highest banding are reviewed after 3 months and if no bids have been recorded, those applicants are moved down a priority banding.

7.5.6 The inception of Coventry Homefinder saw Coventry's housing waiting list rise from 5,000 applicants to 27,000 applicants. Although it was noted that 49% of those who registered had never made a bid. A total of 222,018 bids were made during 2008-09 giving an average of 92 bids for each property let. The highest number of bids received was 579 for a 3 bedroom house in a desirable area of Coventry. Figure 1 below provides further information from the Homefinder scheme in relation to bids and successfully let properties. It is difficult to use the CBL waiting list as an indication of housing need with such high levels of non-participation, but as Coventry have found it is more important to focus on the priority bands where the numbers of real housing need have tended to remain the same throughout. Numbers of properties being advertised on the CBL scheme is approximately 70 per week with around 40 of these being flats.

Number of Bids Received	Offers Accepted
1-10	317
11-25	208
26-50	409
51-75	413
76-100	335
100+	742
Total	2424

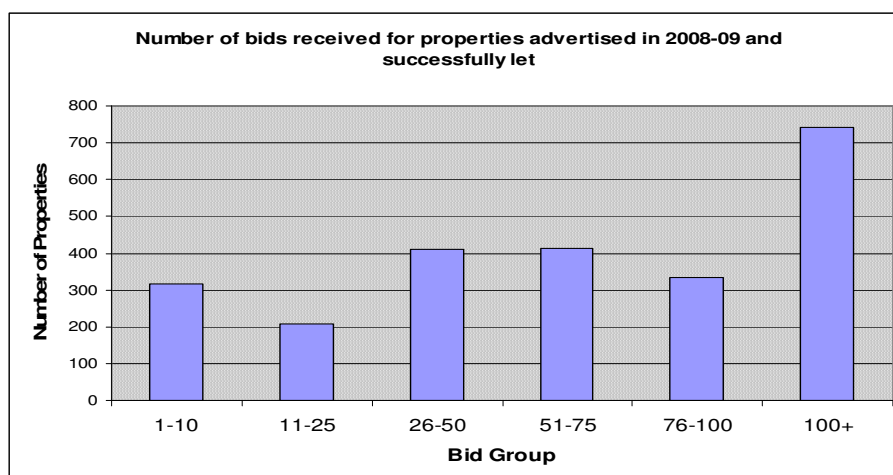


Figure 1: Coventry Homefinder information around successful bids for properties

7.5.7 In relation to homelessness, Members learnt that Coventry City Council provided homeless people with an overriding priority for one week on the CBL list, this allows a bid submission for any property during that week with the real potential of being successful.

7.5.8 All bidding for Coventry Homefinder properties was via electronic means with 97% of all applications to the scheme also being electronic. Terminals were available within the civic centre, one stop shops, housing association offices and sub-offices and libraries. The Coventry Direct Bus also travels to outlying areas and provides the same facility. Printed lists of properties are also available in major supermarkets

and advice centres. Bidding for properties can also be done by text. Vulnerable people are helped to register and bid via the agencies that support them.

- 7.5.9 The Coventry scheme has not been rolled out on a sub-regional level due to complications arising from having 6 main housing providers in Coventry which all need to adopt such a scheme. Having worked extensively on the Coventry Homefinder scheme it is over the coming year that sub-regional arrangements will look to be developed.
- 7.5.10 Housing Associations in Coventry were found to be regional or national organisations and worked to their own defined policies. A priority system has been agreed with the housing associations whereby Coventry City Council was able to nominate tenants, however, the housing associations have reserved the right to turn down nominations and this has become easier e.g. if a tenant is in rent arrears of two weeks. The legal section is challenging where appropriate and reassessment of cases has seen a dramatic rise. Coventry City Council have taken the decision of referring people back to the housing association where they have been accepted by the local authority and nominated, but subsequently rejected by the housing association.
- 7.5.11 Members were further informed that Coventry City Council funded and operated the Choice Based Letting system and this put them in a better position in terms of making requests of the different housing associations. There were a team of eight people funded through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and due to the significant set-up and ongoing costs, Coventry City Council were now considering charging housing associations a fee for each vacancy advertised.
- 7.5.12 It was also highlighted that through the recession Coventry has seen more private landlords approaching the local authority to let properties. This has been positive in that it has increased the numbers of properties available, particularly in the more desirable parts of the city.

Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings

- 7.5.13 As previously mentioned within this report, there is also a Government drive for all Choice Based Lettings Schemes to develop sub-regionally and/or regionally and to work in partnership with other local authorities, registered social landlords and other landlords. The aim of this is to offer customers greater choice and greater mobility. Benefits of a sub-regional approach would see a larger pool of housing for customers together with a break down of the artificial boundaries between local authority areas. Partner organisations would also benefit from reduced costs through efficiency improvements, better use of IT, making better use of housing stock as well as assisting in homelessness and crisis prevention.
- 7.5.14 The sub-regional drive on CBL has ensured the establishment of working groups which are examining policies, procedures, communication, consultation and ICT development. There has also been a successful grant bid from CLG of £148,647 towards project costs. Through the working group a number of options had been developed and the preferred model of operation had been identified as one application process, one housing register, one website, one selection process but that allowed for the retention of local policies where good practice had been identified.

- 7.5.15 In terms of the migration of people in a sub-regional CBL context research indicates that there is approximately a 10% migration of people however, the majority only move within a few miles radius. The obvious risk areas are where people live close to the boundaries with other local authorities.
- 7.5.16 Gentoo as the major social housing provider in the city are committed to the sub-regional development of Choice Based Lettings and were a member of the steering group. The smaller registered social landlords had not committed but were keen to see how the scheme developed. Discussions had not yet commenced with the Private Landlords Association but it was seen as a scheme that could develop to involve private landlords and potentially assist them in getting better tenants, as well as addressing their concerns over housing associations 'cherry-picking' tenants.

Fair and Flexible

- 7.5.17 In light of the *Ahmad* ruling, which reversed a line of Court of Appeal authority that held that allocation schemes were required to provide for cumulative preference, there was a need for the Government to revise the statutory guidance in order to encourage those local authorities which have been cautious in their use of flexibilities and to ensure greater use of them. The Government's thinking is that this will enable local authorities to better meet local needs and circumstances and make more efficient use of their social rented stock, for example by tackling under-occupation and supporting a wider range of vulnerable groups. There is also a strong public perception that housing allocation systems are unfair. To challenge this, the fair and flexible guidance aims to promote the role of local authorities in raising awareness of allocation policies and engaging local communities in developing them.
- 7.5.18 The Fair and Flexible guidance looks to increase the involvement of local people in discussions about allocation policies, which will lead to an improved awareness and understanding of allocations and address some of the misconceptions that surround it. It also aims to encourage local authorities to increase their use of flexibilities so that allocation policies best meet local needs and circumstances within the existing statutory framework.

Shelter – North East

- 7.5.19 Based on the information presented to the Committee, Members learnt that Shelter was a charity that worked to alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing. The organisation provided advice, information and advocacy to people in housing need, and campaigned for lasting political change to end the housing crisis. Shelter recognised the transparent, variety and responsiveness of a Choice Based Lettings system but equally acknowledged the importance of the priority of need of housing applicants within any system.
- 7.5.20 Shelter also shared some of its concerns with the possible inflexibility and exclusions based on housing related debt that was often inherent in Choice Based Lettings Schemes. "52% of respondents were worried or very worried about being excluded because of their age and 45% were worried about having a criminal conviction" (Centre Point, 2008). It also raised the issue of the advertisement of properties and how the harder to reach and vulnerable groups would access this information.

7.5.21 Shelter strongly supported the Government's Fair and Flexible in so much as overall priority for social housing should go to those in greatest need. However, Shelter also argued that housing authorities needed to exercise extreme care when setting the allocation of social housing within a wider housing options approach. While also looking to local community involvement in developing allocations policies that could increase transparency and dispel many of the myths around housing allocations.

8 Conclusions

8.1 The Committee concluded:-

8.2 That the social housing sector has changed considerably over the last 25/30 years, particularly as a result of the right to buy. Evidence from the Department of Communities and Local Government shows that the sector is getting smaller, in 2000 there were 329,000 socially rented dwelling stock (local authority and registered social landlord) in the North East and by 2007 this had decreased to 272,000. As a result there is also a pressure on social landlords to concentrate even more on housing those economically disadvantaged and most in need. Whether the trend will continue, of new entrants to the social housing market being of low incomes is difficult to determine. Also in recent years it has become increasingly difficult for a greater percentage of the population to move into home ownership;

8.3 That research by the Homes and Community Agency had identified that a tension existed in policy making between allocating social housing to those most in need and at the same time trying to make it a 'tenure of choice' that can attract and retain households. Retaining higher income households within the sector could play an important role in supporting longer term sustainability of neighbourhoods and communities. However, in a climate of restricted public spending and slow economic growth there was pressure to ensure that scarce resources go to those most in need;

8.4 That Sunderland's access to social housing was not unique and very similar to many other parts of the country, in that it is confusing, creates duplication, lacks transparency and fails to manage customer expectation. The main social housing provider, as in 55% of England, is a housing association and for many council tenants this meant that without moving house they have become housing association tenants;

8.5 That changes to the housing allocations policy would improve the service provided to the customer and through better use of limited resources would help meet the housing needs of the city more effectively. As well as the local drivers for change there were also national policy drivers including the authorities statutory duties in relation to homelessness, and the requirement under the 'Sustainable Communities: Homes for All' 5 year housing plan (2005) to adopt a Choice Based Lettings Scheme by the end of 2010;

8.6 That the majority of social housing providers agreed that Choice Based Lettings offered the potential to have an open and transparent system for allocating houses. Whilst offering a common policy across Sunderland is an important improvement, it was essential that any housing allocation system identified and helped those with the greatest housing need. However, some housing associations had opted out or

chosen not to participate in such schemes as it conflicted with their own national policy frameworks, or simply did not generate applicants for their properties. There will always be exceptions in implementing new schemes or systems but if the key and/or majority of stakeholders were on board this would help to improve the access into housing;

- 8.7 That managing expectations was important and if people were aware of the estimated length of time they could expect to wait before receiving an offer of accommodation this could only help to improve the customer experience. It could often be difficult to manage expectations as different policies could reflect different positions on different lists, but keeping customers informed could only help to reduce frustrations. The greater the information provided to customers comes a greater understanding of the policies and allocations system in general, which could also help to diminish many of the misconceptions held about housing allocation;
- 8.8 That private landlords have an important role to play within the city in helping the local authority meet some of the housing need that exists within Sunderland. They are often one-man bands and often take risks with their properties. Whilst they recognise the good team that operates within the local authority, there still appears to be a degree of suspicion within this relationship. It is important that private landlords have a channel to create an ongoing dialogue with the local authority which can not only provide valuable intelligence but help towards service improvement and removing the barriers of suspicion;
- 8.9 That the Landlord Accreditation Scheme is viewed as a positive step forward with accredited landlords. However it is also felt penalised for those who remain unaccredited appear to be under far less scrutiny, which has perhaps created a barrier to further take-up of the scheme;
- 8.10 That the single route into housing would help private landlords in a number of ways and certainly it was felt that this could help to eliminate the notion that the best tenants were 'cherry-picked' by the larger housing associations. It would also alleviate some of the confusion, which currently existed around the various application processes across the city.
- 8.11 That those who were accustomed to the social housing system were most comfortable with it but for others it could be complicated and confusing with so many providers, differing policies, application processes and waiting lists. Equally there was confusion based around misconceptions and perceived unfairness and transparency of waiting lists. This was also supported through work undertaken by the Communities and Local Government Department. In its research 'Attitudes to Housing: Findings from Focus Groups' social housing tenants expressed feelings of unfairness when they saw others less 'deserving' than themselves allocated housing, and that time spent waiting was given little priority when compared against those in greatest need;
- 8.12 That the satisfaction of customers was directly linked to the outcomes of applying for social housing. There was an important balancing act to be achieved in managing customer's expectations through providing advice, support and ongoing information. This could also go a long way to eroding the misconceptions and popular myths around social housing allocation, and provide for a more transparent process for customers;

- 8.13 That there still appeared to be confusion around the roles and responsibilities in relation to social housing. The traditional role of the local authority as the major social housing provider had changed, Gentoo now owned and administered the stock previously owned by the council. It seemed difficult to change many people's traditional views around who was the custodian of social housing;
- 8.14 That the idea of a Choice Based Lettings scheme was greeted by most customers interviewed as being a positive move forward. It was seen as something that could help remove much of the confusion that existed around social housing at present. It was also seen as providing people with greater control and choice over where they lived;
- 8.15 That there were clear Government drivers for the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings System and for the development of sub-regional links. Choice Based Lettings provided an accessible system which offered a single point of entry for social housing. The importance of having the majority of stock owning associations within the scheme cannot be underestimated if a true single route into social housing is to be achieved;
- 8.16 That Choice Based Lettings puts the customer very much in the driving seat in relation to accessing housing as it provided choice, control and transparency for social housing customers. This enabling of customers to look through vacancies, engage in a bidding process and ultimately being successful gave greater worth and ownership to those participating. Sadly the one thing that Choice Based Lettings does not increase was the housing stock available;
- 8.17 That the importance of any system being based on those most in need cannot be underestimated and this has certainly been highlighted throughout the research undertaken. The development of a banding mechanism could assist to ensure that those most in need for housing were prioritised accordingly within a Choice Based Lettings system. With any banding system it was virtually impossible to remove the hierarchical nature, even by substituting numbers for letters or colours. What is important was that the system recognised the most vulnerable and most in need providing them with the system that could improve their current housing situation;
- 8.18 That both Coventry City Council and Shelter raised the concern around the ease at which housing associations could refuse or turn down nominations. Certainly it had been Coventry's experience that there had been a dramatic rise in the reassessment of cases and challenge from the legal team. It will be important that nomination rights retain a degree of flexibility as well as clear policy guidance relating to exclusions to ensure that this issue is not repeated in Sunderland;
- 8.19 That not only was Choice Based Lettings seen as a local development but also as a sub-regional development with Gentoo, the major housing provider within the city, committed to this process. While this will allow for even greater choice for customers it will be important to retain local policies to ensure those most in need, together with local customers are not disadvantaged by such an arrangement; and
- 8.20 That the involvement of customers in any service development could only improve the process and allow for greater ownership by those who would ultimately use and benefit from the system. This is certainly echoed in the Fair and Flexible guidance and also by Shelter. This could only lead to better understanding of the process and dispel many of the myths that existed around the allocation of social housing.

9 Recommendations

- 9.1 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee has taken evidence from a variety of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Committees key recommendations to the Cabinet and partner organisations (where applicable) are as outlined below:-
- (a) That a Sunderland Choice Based Lettings Scheme be developed and introduced that provides a single entry point and single waiting list for the allocation of social housing stock within the city;
 - (b) That a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme be introduced, subject to the relevant governance process being adhered to, initially in Tyne and Wear with consideration being given to protocols of other neighbouring authorities, subject to local policies and initiatives being included;
 - (c) That any Choice Based Lettings Scheme is only fully introduced on completion of an in-depth consultation exercise, to include the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee and based upon the principles of the Fair and Flexible guidance;
 - (d) That any banding system introduced, as part of a Choice Based Lettings scheme, should fulfil any prescribed legal criteria, is needs based, well publicised and that those in the greatest of need are not disadvantaged by such system;
 - (e) That in leading the process, Sunderland City Council encourages Gentoo to undertake to jointly address the confusion and clarifies the respective roles of each organisation in relation to housing;
 - (f) That universal housing literature for Sunderland that outlines an easy step by step guide for potential and current customers to the housing process be produced;
 - (g) That Sunderland City Council and key stakeholders review the current customer experience and look to ensure that throughout the housing process there is sufficient information that ensures customer expectations are managed appropriately;
 - (h) That further work is undertaken with all housing providers across the city to develop and improve customer signposting in relation to access to housing;
 - (i) That with the acknowledgement of the crucial role that the private rented sector has in providing housing in Sunderland that the Council Forum with private landlords is re-established and promoted across the city to help develop relationships between the Council and private sector landlords; and
 - (j) That any future development and implementation of Choice Based Lettings schemes explore the potential to extend the scheme to include private rented sector properties.

10 Acknowledgements

10.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our review. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

- (a) Alan Caddick – Head of Housing – Sunderland City Council
- (b) Peter Smith – Housing Advice Manager – Sunderland City Council
- (c) David Smith – Housing Strategy and Operations Manager – Sunderland City Council
- (d) Stephen Rudge – Head of Housing Policy Services – Coventry City Council
- (e) Councillor Trueman – Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Communities – Sunderland City Council
- (f) Judith Tagg – Home Group – Social Housing Provider
- (g) Maria Vipsal - Anchor Trust – Social Housing Provider
- (h) Kathryn West - Anchor Trust – Social Housing Provider
- (i) Geoff Leask – Gentoo Housing – Social Housing Provider
- (j) Leanne Toal – Gentoo Housing – Social Housing Provider
- (k) Claire Foster – Homelessness Manager – Sunderland City Council
- (l) Christine McCardle - Co-op Housing in Partnership – Social Housing Provider
- (m) Michael Ashley - Nomad E5 Housing – Social Housing Provider
- (n) Carolyn Wood - Home Group – Social Housing Provider
- (o) Mr Clark – Private Landlord
- (p) Mrs Waterstreet – C&D Housing – Private Landlord
- (q) Danny Bulmer – Member of Washington Management Group – Gentoo Housing
- (r) Barry Lowther – Tyne and Wear Housing Partnership
- (s) Tracy Guy – Service Manager North East – Shelter
- (t) Nina Cara-Collins – Regional Children’s Coordinator - Shelter

11 Background Papers

11.1 The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:

- (a) Communities and Local Government 2009. Housing In England 07/08.
- (b) Chartered Institute of Housing 2007. Who Lives in Affordable Housing? Series looking at the future of affordable housing.
- (c) Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2006. The Supply of Rented Housing Inquiry.
- (d) Communities and Local Government 2006. Monitoring the Longer Term Impacts of Choice Based Lettings.
- (e) Communities and Local Government 2009. Fair and Flexible: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England.
- (f) Communities and Local Government 2009. Exploring Local Authority Policy and Practice on Housing Allocations.
- (g) Housing Quality Network 2009. What does Excellence look like? Allocations and Lettings.
- (h) Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009. Social Housing Allocation and Immigrant Communities.
- (i) Centre for Housing Policy University of York 2008. The Private Rented Sector: Its Contribution and Potential.

Appendix 1 – List of Social Housing Providers in Sunderland

Housing provider	Stock
Gentoo	6457
Tees Valley Trust Ltd	8
Nomad Housing Trust Ltd	27
Cheviot Supported Housing Ltd	42
Three Rivers Charitable Housing Association Ltd	68
Anchor Trust	636
Home Group Ltd	1515
Banks of the Wear Community Housing Association Ltd	205
Haig Homes	45
Cheviot Housing Association Ltd	784
North British Housing Ltd	108
Housing 21	144
New Leaf Supporting Independence Ltd	6
Enterprise 5 Housing Association Ltd	34
Accent Homes Ltd	94
The Salvation Army Housing Association	56
Two Castles Housing Association Ltd	431
English Churches Housing Group Ltd	12
Three Rivers Housing Association Ltd	305
Nomad Housing Group Ltd	132
Thornholme Housing Co-operative Ltd	31
Ath-Gray Housing Co-operative Ltd	31
Sunderland Riverside Housing Co-operative Ltd	87
Peel Street Housing Co-operative Ltd	30
Wearmouth Housing Co-operative Ltd	67
Freemen's Almshouses	4
Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association	158
Aged Merchant Seaman's Homes	32
Railway Housing Association and Benefit Fund	14
Jane Gibson Almshouses	8

REVIEW INTO LOCAL STUDIES PROVISION IN SUNDERLAND: DRAFT FINAL REPORT

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME: POLICY DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW

Report of the Chief Executive

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP1, SP5
CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1, CIO4**

1. Why has this report come to committee?

- 1.1 The report provides Members of the committee with the draft final report from the evidence gathered in relation to the mini-review into Local Studies.
- 1.2 The review report presents in detail the evidence, research and conclusions drawn throughout the review process and members are asked to comment on this for relevance, clarity and accuracy.
- 1.3 The working group review into local studies has links to the Councils Strategic Priorities in particular 'Attractive and Inclusive City.' The review also has links to Corporate Priorities on delivering customer focused services and improving partnership working.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 15th June, 2009 following discussions regarding the work programme the Committee consider the possibility, among other topics, of a study into local studies within Sunderland. The Committee discounted a review of Local Studies as the in-depth policy review for 2009-10, however it was decided that a smaller review should be undertaken by the Committee.
- 2.2 Further to this a Scoping Paper for a review into Local Studies provision was presented to, and agreed by the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting of 15th December 2009 which contained the background, context and terms of reference for the review.

3. The Draft Final Report

- 3.1 The draft final report on local studies provision in Sunderland is attached as an appendix to this report and presents members with the facts and evidence that have been gathered throughout the review process. As part of the review process evidence was obtained from a variety of stakeholders.
- 3.2 The report is divided into a number of sections which provide the background information to the mini-review, how the working group review was carried out and the findings and conclusions from the mini-review process. The findings from this are set out as follows:

- Local Studies – The National and Local Picture
- Staffing Resource
- Partnership Working
- Volunteering Opportunities
- Accessibility
- Audience Development
- Consultation.

3.3 Members are asked to read the report and comment on the content with particular reference to the recommendations arising from the evidence gathered and presented in the report. Members may wish to amend the report for purposes of accuracy, clarity or relevance to ensure the report is a true reflection of the work undertaken.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee is presented with a final draft copy of the policy review document for comment and amendment with the aim of producing a final report for presentation and approval by Cabinet.

5. Recommendation

5.1 That the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee provides comments on the final draft report and that any agreed amendments are made.

5.2 That consideration is given to the recommendations contained in the final draft report.

5.3 That the agreed final report is presented to the Cabinet for approval at its June 2010 meeting.

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2010

A REVIEW INTO LOCAL STUDIES PROVISION IN SUNDERLAND – DRAFT FINAL REPORT

Report of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To receive a draft final report into the review into Local Studies Provision in Sunderland.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 As part of its work programme the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a smaller review of local studies provision in the City.
- 2.2 A Scoping Paper for a review into Local Studies provision was presented to, and agreed by the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting of 15th December 2009 which contained the background, context and terms of reference for the review.

3. Aim of the Review

- 3.1 To review the current service provision for Local Studies in the City, considering how to further promote local history in a joined up way, and provide a clear strategy for development in the area.

4. Terms of Reference

- 4.1 The agreed Terms of Reference for the review were as outlined below:
 - (a) To provide a national and local context to the provision of Local Studies;
 - (b) To consider the current service provision and remit for Local Studies in the City;
 - (c) To identify and highlight the issues that may affect effective service provision;
 - (d) To explore the possibilities of developing working arrangements with other local authorities in the region; and

- (e) To consider examples of best practice and innovative provision from local authorities and other key stakeholders across the country in relation to Local Studies.

4. **Methods of Investigation**

4.1 The following methods of investigation were used for the review:

- (a) Desktop research;
- (b) Site visits;
- (c) Verbal and written evidence from Council Officers;
- (d) Verbal evidence from Local Studies Users;
- (e) Verbal evidence from Local History Societies through the Sunderland Heritage Forum; and
- (f) Partner organisations

Full details of evidence gathering can be found in **Appendix 1**.

5. **Findings of the Committee**

National Context

- 5.1 There are no statutory requirements with regard to the provision of Local Studies, although the Public Libraries & Museums Act (1964) requires local Councils to provide a local library service which is comprehensive and efficient and that is available to all who wish to use it.
- 5.2 There are many differing models within local authority areas, these vary in size and delivery, and recently there has been a trend to merge Local Studies collections with Archives Services.
- 5.3 The CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) published national guidelines for the provision of Local Studies in the late 1990's. More recently CILIP published guidelines for Local Authorities, in which the provision of Local Studies featured prominently in what makes a good Library.
- 5.4 The BBC 1 programme 'Who do you think you are' is a **genealogy documentary series** in which celebrities go on a journey to trace their **family tree**. Seven

series have now been broadcast and the show regularly attracts an audience of more than 6 million viewers. The popularity of this, and other similar television and radio programmes have lead to an increase in public interest in researching family history.

- 5.5 Research suggests that customers researching their family history make up between 60-70% of the visitors and enquiries to Local Studies. Other aspects of research undertaken within Local Studies include local history, the history of a house or building, information about local businesses, planning related enquiries and school or college projects undertaken by students.
- 5.6 The Heritage Lottery Fund and the New Opportunities Fund offer funding for innovative projects in the area of Local Studies.
- 5.7 Projects undertaken within Local Studies' can encompass a wide remit in terms of community participation including themes such as Sense of Place, Community Identity and Social Inclusion.

Local Studies Provision in Sunderland

- 5.8 Local studies provision contributes to many of the key priorities for the City as identified in the Sunderland Strategy, for example;
 - (a) Attractive and Inclusive City – providing activities and information promoting the history and cultural heritage of the City such as talks, guided walks and information sheets, as well as promoting and participating in Heritage Open Days;
 - (b) Learning City – providing a range of learning opportunities in family and local history, and working with local schools on specific projects, such as 'Their Past, Your Future';
 - (c) Safe City – providing information and supporting activities that give residents a greater understanding of their City and how communities have developed;
 - (d) Prosperous City – promoting the cultural heritage and raising awareness of the City's heritage to visitors, as well as attracting visitors to the City who wish to research their family and local history.
- 5.9 The Committee found that Sunderland has two main centres for local studies provision, the main centre within the City Library and Arts Centre on Fawcett St, and a Heritage area within Washington Town Centre Library.
- 5.10 The main Local Studies centre is dedicated to the collection of local information in various formats to ensure the ongoing collection of history in Sunderland and

the local area. It holds a number of unique, locally significant collections including;

- (a) The Washington Armstrong Collection – black and white images from the early 1960s;
- (b) The Lilburne Collection – a unique collection of pamphlets and posters relating to Sunderland dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries;
- (c) The Corder Manuscripts – a collection of 38 complete volumes relating to topography and family history;
- (d) The Sunderland Yearbook from 1904; and
- (e) Shipbuilding collections.

- 5.11 Equipment in the Centre includes a digital reader, four microfilm readers, four microfiche readers and one public access pc specifically for use in local studies research. Machinery within Local Studies is limited and regularly breaks down, however every effort is made to ensure machines are regularly serviced and maintained, including the introduction of a rolling replacement programme for the machinery.
- 5.12 The Committee were pleased to note that all PCs throughout the library network in Sunderland have access to Ancestry Online, which is a very useful source of information for census and birth, marriage and death information. This is purchased through a yearly subscription and is a well used resource in the City, receiving approximately 80,000 hits last year.
- 5.13 The growth in popularity of local and family history has seen an increase in the demand placed on the Local Studies centre. In 2008/09 there were 62,000 visitors to the centre and 13,766 enquiries. Email enquiries have increased significantly in recent years and originate from all over the world, including Australia, Canada, France and Spain.
- 5.14 The size of the Local Studies centre is an issue. It restricts the development of the service in providing educational and practical handling sessions as well as being unable to display materials. Regular users of the centre are frustrated by the lack of space and physical issues such as the lighting within the centre. Limitations in funding and the inability to identify a suitable location have hampered previous attempts to source alternative locations.
- 5.15 The Committee were concerned to note that the capacity to preserve and store old and delicate materials appropriately following the BS5454 (British Standard) guidelines is an issue for the Local Studies service. There are no BS5454 environmentally controlled conditions available and this makes the effective

conservation of historical collections challenging. The Committee found that the storage facilities are extremely expensive to purchase and whilst these were in place in Newcastle City Library, this was planned and budgeted for in the initial plans for the state of the art facility.

- 5.16 The dedicated Heritage area within the newly refurbished Washington Town Centre Library is also well used. The Heritage area has two digital reader printers and six public access PCs. Locally relevant materials are displayed, currently the display promotes the connection to Washington DC, including a signed copy of the Friendship Agreement and a copy of George Washington's will.
- 5.17 The Heritage area is large and this space is utilised to host 'talks' from local historians which had proved to be very popular. A dedicated learning centre, equipped with PCs is attached to the Heritage area which is used to deliver Family History courses.

Staffing Resource

- 5.18 The Local Studies Librarian post is a dedicated post. The remit of this post has been changed recently to reflect the increasing need for business development, community participation and funding opportunities. The Committee found that the Heritage Service Manager role in Newcastle City Council is mostly strategic and outward looking, which has increased the identification of opportunities to develop partnership working; play a more active role in local history societies and groups and increase the range of work being undertaken to promote audience development.
- 5.19 The Committee found that staff within the service are highly regarded by those accessing the Local Studies service in Sunderland and their knowledge and expertise is invaluable. At any one time the centre is usually staffed by the Principal Librarian and one Library Assistant, who give advice and assistance to those coming into the centre, as well as those making enquiries via email. The Committee noted that whilst no research facility was in place, staff could often spend a large amount of time answering queries.
- 5.20 The Committee established that other organisations in the region charged for the use of staff time in researching family history and this was limited to one or two hours at a rate of £60 per hour. This had the advantage of generating an income for the service, as well as limiting the amount of time spent on more detailed enquiries.

Partnership Working

- 5.21 The Committee found that traditionally, cultural organisations have worked in silos, so there is much scope to increase regional and cross-sector working.

Newcastle Heritage has begun to tackle this and is working with local organisations including Tyne and Wear Archives Service, the Laing Art Gallery and local universities.

5.22 The Local Studies service is engaging in some partnership working, for example, there are good links with organisations such as Tyne and Wear Museums. In addition there is currently work ongoing with colleagues in the Conservation section, who deal with the city's built heritage, to develop a more joined up approach to the overall management of Sunderland's heritage.

5.23 The Committee noted that other cultural organisations had found many benefits to increased partnership such as;

- (a) Increased problem solving through the identification of common issues;
- (b) Pooling of resources, including the ability to 'borrow' items for display in the City;
- (c) Increased collaboration, including jointly funded projects;
- (d) Increased access to services for members of the public; and
- (e) Reduced duplication of work (for example, through the transcription of records).

5.24 The Committee also found that links were in place with other local authorities in the region. The Principal Librarian sits on the regional Local Studies group of the Society of Chief Librarians which are meetings aimed at sharing best practice and discussing regional issues. In addition the Cultural Heritage Development Officer is also a member of SLAM, which is a regular meeting held between staff from Culture and Tourism and Museums where a project is planned to undertake joint developments.

Volunteering Opportunities

5.25 The Committee learned that cultural organisations in the region, particularly within the local studies/heritage areas of local authorities use volunteers as a way of increasing capacity. There does not appear to be any dialogue between local authorities regarding the use of volunteers and it is not known whether in some instances volunteers are duplicating work being completed elsewhere in the region, for example in the transcription of records.

5.26 The Committee were pleased to note that regular users of the Local Studies service often spend a large amount of time within the centre and get a lot of enjoyment from conducting research into family history.

- 5.27 The Committee found that users often provide informal support to staff in the Local Studies centre by providing assistance to those people who need help with researching family trees. Regular users also transcribe handwritten records into electronic format, this not only enables records to be more easily located, it also makes it easier for users to read the information and make use of it accordingly. In this way they effectively act as volunteers for the service. This informal activity is not currently coordinated; those who wish to participate do so informally and on an ad-hoc basis.

Accessibility

- 5.28 The Committee found that the internet has transformed family history research, making it more accessible to those who wish to research their family tree. The digitisation of historical material not only increases accessibility but also assists with the preservation of materials. Digitisation costs are significant however this appears to be a priority for the future of local heritage.
- 5.29 In Sunderland, the digitisation of photographic material is now ongoing through the 'Then and Now' project. The website Flickr now holds 339 images of photographs of the City and there are approximately 1000 images waiting to be uploaded to the site. The Flickr website received 20,000 hits last year from Sunderland.
- 5.30 The Committee was concerned that there can be copyright issues around the production of photographs, however the Local Studies service have a policy in place for all new photographs being donated to the collection. Existing materials received in the past may have some issues attached which would be explored individually.
- 5.31 The Local Studies service delivers free Ancestry Website Taster sessions throughout the City and the Worker's Education Association (WEA) also delivers Family History courses at the Central Library and Washington Town Centre Library. All courses relating to family history research are very well attended. In order to attract a wider range of people, Washington Heritage recently delivered a course on a Saturday morning, this proved very popular with those who cannot access sessions on a week day.
- 5.32 The Committee established accessibility as an issue for those researching their family tree, however this is not just an issue for Sunderland. Members of the public often have to visit several different organisations and services in order to access the records they require to research their family tree. Users of Local Studies find this frustrating and people may be deterred by the complexities of accessing the necessary information. Often the organisations that hold the information are spread across the region and can be difficult to access using

public transport. The Committee felt that better signposting was needed to assist and support those people who were inexperienced.

- 5.33 The Committee noted that ideally more historical material would be held within local communities, more specifically having local studies provision in the Coalfields area. There are a range of Local Studies stock at all libraries in the City and the increased range of information available via the Internet is promoted. This information can be accessed free at all libraries. Members learnt that currently resources and space would restrict the development of a Local Studies Centre at Houghton Library.

Audience Development

- 5.34 The Committee found that work is being undertaken by the Local Studies service in local schools including the 'Their Past, Your Future' project, to promote the history of Sunderland. In addition, a project is also being delivered with local schools to encourage them to think about Local Studies and what should be preserved now for future history.
- 5.35 The Committee learned that audience development is a priority for Newcastle City Council. Heritage Librarians are 'getting out' into local communities and using local historical topics as a hook to get people involved. An example of this was a project about migrants to the City. They had found this to be a good way of engaging the people who are traditionally hard to engage in the Heritage service.

Consultation

- 5.36 At present the Local Studies service within Sunderland does not regularly consult or share information with users, however through the focus group conducted as part of the evidence gathering, the Committee found that users had a lot to contribute in terms of developing the service further. The Committee found that consultation had been used substantially throughout the development of the Heritage Area within Newcastle City Library and this had brought many benefits to the service, including a sense of ownership for users, who are pleased to see that they are being listened to.
- 5.37 In addition to consultation Newcastle Heritage held a number of 'Friends' groups, one of which being for the Theatre Royal in Newcastle.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Committee concluded:-

- (a) That Local Studies is an important service for the residents of the City. It contributes to the key priorities of Learning City, Prosperous City, Safe

City and Attractive and Inclusive City within the Sunderland Strategy. Raising the profile of the service across the Council would encourage a more joined up and innovative approach to achieving the overarching priorities for the City.

- (b) The Local Studies service is a well used service which has seen an increased demand placed upon it in recent years and that as a result of the increased demand the size of the Local Studies centre in the City Library has become an issue and limits the development of the provision;
- (c) The effective conservation of historical material is of great importance, however, there are significant costs involved in purchasing a storage facility of this kind;
- (d) The dedicated Heritage of the Washington Town Centre Library is an important and well utilised service for local people;
- (e) The Principal Librarian post for Local Studies should have a strategic, outward looking focus, thus encouraging the development of the service in terms of partnership working and audience development;
- (f) That staff within the Local Studies section are a valuable asset to the service and well regarded by users of the centre, however capacity is limited in being able to offer a research facility for users and answering general enquiries. Other more complex enquiries could have the potential of generating a small income for the service;
- (g) That efforts had been made to work in partnership with other organisations, and that increased partnership working would bring many additional benefits to the Local Studies service;
- (h) That a more coordinated approach to the use of volunteers would increase the capacity to provide advice and assistance, whilst ensuring the most effective use of time spent transcribing records held within the service;
- (i) That accessibility is a common issue across the region and better signposting is needed to ensure people know how and where to access records and information. Increased digitisation of historical material will not only preserve them more effectively but will increase accessibility through use of the internet;
- (j) That although all libraries in the Coalfields area have access to Ancestry Online, Flickr and other relevant websites, there is limited local studies provision for residents in this area, who have to travel to view local historical material or to research their family tree. The increased

digitisation of historical information will provide opportunities for local libraries to hold copies of original pieces.

- (k) That the Local Studies service does undertake a lot of work within schools but the importance of 'getting out' into the local community should be acknowledged as a way of engaging with those who would not otherwise utilise the service;
- (l) That the provision of courses on an evening and weekend attracts those people who cannot attend on a week day;
- (m) That regular consultation with users of Local Studies would increase customer satisfaction and raise the services' awareness of any issues; and finally
- (n) That many of the issues the Committee found were impacted upon by financial resourcing. This is a considerable issue at the present time for all services and in recognition of the current financial climate, an innovative approach should be taken to ensure local studies provision is adequate.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee has taken evidence from a variety of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Committee's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below:-

- 1) That marketing of the local studies provision is undertaken across Council services to promote the unique collections it holds and its contribution to the key priorities for the City within the Sunderland Strategy.
- 2) That the City Council's Principal Librarian duties include a strategic overview of local studies provision in Sunderland;
- 3) That an assessment of the feasibility of a research facility being established as a means of generating income and increasing capacity within the Local Studies service be undertaken, and links be made with the City's Registrars service to develop closer partnership working;
- 4) That partnership working with other cultural organisations across the region such as the archiving bodies, records offices, museums and other local authorities be further increased;
- 5) That the regular users of the Local Studies provision, who are currently providing informal support and advice to ad hoc users, be formally

acknowledged as volunteers and co-ordinated through the introduction of Family History Champions and Family History Surgeries and supported through training and development opportunities;

- 6) That a guide be produced and widely distributed that summarises the key cultural / heritage organisations across the region and includes specific information on the type of information held by each organisation, their location and accessibility, and advice be sought as to whether this could be coordinated regionally through the Society of Chief Librarians (North East) Local Studies Group;
- 7) That consideration be given to increasing access to Local Studies resources in the Coalfields area, subject to resources, and in the longer term any plans for future developments for the local studies service to include the Coalfields area;
- 8) That new local studies and heritage projects be undertaken on a regular basis to attract a wider range of public involvement and that appropriate funding opportunities be explored;
- 9) That the existing Family History and Ancestry Website Taster Sessions currently delivered by the Local Studies service be extended to evenings and weekends to attract and enable a wider range of people to attend;
- 10) That there is increased consultation with the users of the Local Studies service through the introduction of a 'Friends' group or through other means of regular consultation;
- 11) That links continue to be developed with local historical societies and 'Friends' Groups as an additional means of increasing consultation and widening participation in the Local Studies service; and
- 12) That in order to make on-going improvements to the current Local Studies provision, funding opportunities continue to be explored pro-actively and accessed wherever possible.

8. Acknowledgements

- 8.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our review. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

Vicki Medhurst, Cultural Heritage Manager;

Janet Robinson, Cultural Heritage Development Officer;

Julie McCann, Resources and Performance Manager;

John Wood, Librarian

Karen Newton, Washington Town Centre Library Manager

Kath Cassidy, Heritage Service Manager, Newcastle City Council

Stuart Miller, Chair of the Sunderland Heritage Forum

Margie Stewart-Piercy, Regional Manager for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Service

Service Users

9. Glossary of Terms

Microfiche and Microfilm: A piece of photographic film, containing printed information

Ancestry Online (**www.ancestry.co.uk**): A website holding records for birth, deaths and marriages as well as other information which enables users to trace their family tree

Flickr (**www.flickr.com**): A website for posting and sharing photographs

Digitisation: The process of creating a digital representation or image of an original through scanning or digital photography

BS5454 Storage and exhibition of Archival Documents: An advisory document. which attempts to help archivists understand what key points to consider when undertaking shelving and storage requirements within a BS5454 repository.

COUNCILLOR SUSAN WATSON
CHAIR OF THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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Appendix 1:

1. Visit to Sunderland Local Studies Centre – 3rd February 2010

As part of evidence gathering for the review, Members visited the Local Studies Centre within the City Library on Fawcett St on 3rd February 2010. Officers present included, Vicki Medhurst (Cultural Heritage Manager); Janet Robinson (Cultural Heritage Development Officer); Julie McCann (Principal Librarian, E-Resources and Information Services); John Wood (Librarian)

The Local Studies centre holds many historical items and records that document the City's history, including those areas not previously part of the Borough of Sunderland in the Coalfields area of the City.

Resources include books, maps, parish and electoral registers, census records, newspapers and trade directories. In addition users have access to information in microfilm and microfiche format, these are heavily used resources and are supported by appropriate machinery including a digital reader, four microfilm readers, four microfiche readers and one public access pc specifically for use in local studies research with access to Ancestry Online.

The internet has transformed the researching of family history. As well as provision within the centre, the main library has thirty public access pcs, all of which can be utilised for general family history/local studies research as well as to access Ancestry Online. Sunderland hold a subscription with Ancestry Online and the website received in excess of 80,000 hits in a year from users within the City. The website was accessible in all local libraries in Sunderland.

Efforts are now being concentrated on the digitisation of photographs, which will not only preserve photographs effectively, will also increase access to them through the website Flickr, which received 20,000 hits last year in Sunderland. Several digitised photographs can now be purchased by members of the public and it is hoped this can be rolled out further if it proves popular. There are copyright issues however there is a policy in place for all new photographs being donated to the collection. Existing materials received in the past may have some issues attached which would be explored individually.

Members were also informed of the special collections held at the Local Studies Centre and were given the opportunity to look at some of these, such as the Corder Manuscripts and the Lilburne Collection.

There are storage issues involved in preserving historical collections, currently the Local Studies centre have no temperature and humidity controls in place in the storage areas which does have an impact upon conservation. This would be something that would be explored further should funding opportunities become available.

The Local Studies centre receives approximately 350 visitors per week but an average of 1000 enquiries per month including face to face, telephone and email enquiries. Enquiries come from all over the world and the time Librarians spend researching and responding to individual enquiries can often be time consuming.

Members were also interested in staff resource for the Local Studies centre and were advised that there is a Local Studies Librarian post which is currently being advertised, the remit of the post having been changed to reflect changes within the service.

Finally Member's attention was drawn to the physical space within the Local Studies centre. The area is small and this restricts the ability to hold educational or practical handling sessions.

The tour was drawn to a close and Members thanked officers working in the Library for hosting the visit and contributing to the evidence gathering.

2. Focus Group - 3rd February 2010

A focus group was held on 3rd February 2010 to gather further evidence and discuss issues local studies provision. The Group included;

- Users of Local Studies
- Officers of the library, including Vicki Medhurst (Cultural Heritage Manager); Janet Robinson (Cultural Heritage Development Officer); Julie McCann (Principal Librarian, E-Resources and Information Services); John Wood (Librarian); Sylvana Robinson (Library and Information Assistant) and Gemma Farrow (Library and Information Assistant)
- Stuart Miller (Chair of the Sunderland Heritage Forum)
- Margie Stewart-Piercy (Regional Manager, Museums, Libraries and Archives) (MLA)

Local Studies Users

Members were interested in gaining the views of regular users of the Local Studies centre. Users commented that the machines available to them were old and regularly break. The Cultural Heritage Manager confirmed that this is a recognised issue, all machines are maintained and kept in working order and a rolling programme of replacement has been introduced to ensure older machines are replaced regularly.

The regular users often give help and advice to members of the public who have not had previous experience of researching their family tree. In addition they also transcribe the handwritten records held within Local Studies in order to increase the ease with which they can be located and understood. Members queried whether this was formally coordinated, for example, within the Local Studies Centre but also regionally with partner agencies to ensure there was not a duplication of effort? It was confirmed this currently there were no formal arrangements in place with regard to the use of volunteers.

Members asked users what made them come to the Local Studies Centre so regularly, users commented it was interesting and kept them engaged and occupied.

Members were interested to know whether users were consulted with formally on a regular basis, through 'friends' groups for example. They were advised that this does not happen currently but there was an opportunity to develop this further.

Users also wished to comment on the physical area of the Local Studies. They felt that space was an issue, as was the lighting in the area and the general layout. The Cultural Heritage Manager confirmed that the relocation of Local Studies had been explored in the past; however limitations in funding and establishing a suitable location had hampered this.

Partnership Working

Members enquired as to whether the Local Studies Centre worked in partnership with other organisations in the region. The Cultural Heritage Manager confirmed that Local Studies has strong links with Tyne and Wear Museums. Sunderland is also represented on the regional Local Studies group of the Society of Chief Librarians, the objective of these meetings is to share best practice and this is a forum at which regional issues can be raised for discussion.

Members commented that increased partnership working sub-regionally and cross sector would ensure a consistent use of volunteers and avoid duplication of effort. In addition Members commented they would like to see a more joined up approach with built heritage. The Cultural Heritage Manager confirmed that this relationship is being developed and initial meetings have taken place. The Regional Director of the MLA acknowledged the tendency for cultural organisations to work in silos and there was work to be done regionally around this.

Financial Capacity

The Cultural Heritage Manager confirmed that funding was an issue and limited the capacity for the Local Studies centre to develop and improve. In light of the economic downturn it is anticipated that funding may be limited further in the future.

External funding opportunities were regularly identified, for example the 'Your Past, Their Future' project was funded by the MLA. The Regional Manager for MLA commented that the economic downturn was having an impact on the MLA's ability to provide as many opportunities for bids for funding as it previously has been able to offer.

Members commented that Local Studies cuts across a number of targets in the Local Area Agreement and that this should be clearly demonstrated to ensure adequate resourcing in the future.

Accessibility

Members discussed access to local history and queried the possibility of developing local studies/heritage areas within local areas, particularly those on the outskirts of the City. Library staff confirmed as more records are digitised and put onto the internet accessibility to historical information and records would be increased, however it would not be feasible to divide up history and give to local areas as this would reduce accessibility as users would have an increased need to travel. In addition there are limitations space and storage opportunities for the conservation of historical material.

Users of Local Studies commented on the difficulty members of the public have in understanding where they can find information. Researching a family tree often means people have to travel outside of the City, for example to Durham County Records office, poor transport links means it is not always easy to do this.

The Resources and Performance Manager commented that increased digitisation would enable people to access more information within their own home or on a pc in their local library.

Audience Development

Members asked what is being done to involve those people who do not currently use the Local Studies Centre. The Local Studies centre has held Ancestry Website Taster sessions delivered at local libraries across the City which will become a regular service in 2010. Family History courses are also delivered by Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in libraries.

In addition work is being done in schools to engage with children and young people to find out what they think should be collected now as a record for the future

Members drew the session to a close and thanked the members of the Focus Group for their input into the review process.

3. Visit to Washington Heritage Area - 3rd February 2010

Members also visited the Heritage Area within Washington Town Centre Library on 3rd February 2010, the visit was hosted by Karen Newton (Manager, Washington Town Centre Library and Customer Service Centre)

Members were advised that the Library was newly refurbished and were shown the dedicated Heritage area that holds two digital reader printers and six public access pcs. In addition Members were shown the collection of display material promoting the connection to Washington DC, including a

signed copy of the Friendship Agreement and a copy of George Washington's will, as well as a number of books and maps relating to the local area.

Members were informed that the Heritage area was very well utilised, however currently, usage of the area was not monitored so no exact figures could be given.

Member's commented that the area was large and spacious and were informed that the space had been used to host 'talks' from local historians which had been popular. In addition to the Heritage area Members were shown an education room, equipped with pcs, which was to deliver the Family History courses also held in the City Library.

Members thanked officers working in the Library for hosting the visit and contributing to the evidence gathering.

4. Visit to Newcastle Heritage Centre, Newcastle Central Library - 3rd February 2010

As part of the Task and Finish Working Groups evidence gathering a visit took place to the Heritage Area within the newly built Central Library on 8th February 2010. The tour was undertaken by Kath Cassidy, (Heritage Service Manager), Newcastle City Council.

The Heritage area was purpose built as part of the newly developed Central Library, it is a much larger facility than previous, with a larger number of microfilm readers, microfiche readers and pc's. The facility also has environmental controls within the storage facilities to ensure conservation of historic materials.

The Heritage Service Manager confirmed that her role was a strategic one and as part of her remit she collaborated closely with other organisations such as the local universities, Tyne and Wear Archives Service and the Laing Art Gallery. In addition she also sat on a number of local historical societies and groups. This strategic overview enabled better links and relationships to be developed.

The importance of digitisation was recognised and so investment was made from the Heritage budget each year in a continuing programme.

The Heritage Service Manager confirmed a lot of emphasis is placed on audience development, encouraging those people who wouldn't usually access the Heritage area to come and access the facilities available. Heritage Librarians carry out work in schools, as well as inviting children and young people into the Library to view parts of historical collections. Work is also carried out with teachers to make links to local history within the curriculum.

In addition, staff visit the local community to talk to specific groups of people about their local history and encourage them to participate. Events are also held for different groups for people, for example at present a project is ongoing with a group of people with learning disabilities.

In terms of potential sources of revenue for the Heritage area, the Heritage Services Manager confirmed that the library charged to carry out research into family or local history, the price was currently £60 per hour. The Heritage section had also purchased a rare book scanner and were currently exploring the potential for charging other organisations to use the facility. When asked whether there was a target in place for revenue and the Heritage Services Manager stated that currently there was not but this might change in the future in response to budgetary pressures.

Consultation is undertaken with users of the Heritage area, particularly so during the development of the new building. Users of the area are invited to make suggestions and comments and these suggestions are often implemented, however there are no regular focus groups in place. Consultation has resulted in an increased ownership of the service by users, who are often pleased to find their suggestions have been implemented.

Volunteers are used within the Heritage Area and they are currently indexing the electoral roles, this work was not coordinated with any other organisations in the region as the records were specific to Newcastle.

The Heritage Area in Newcastle is very well resourced, in addition to the Heritage Service Manager there are three dedicated Library Information Officers and eleven support staff, although not all of these are full time. The support staff work across the Library to cover sickness and annual leave.

Members gave thanks to the Heritage Service Manager for hosting the visit and contributing to the evidence gathering.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FORWARD PLAN – KEY DECISIONS FOR THE PERIOD 1 MAY – 31 AUGUST 2010

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

27 APRIL 2010

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 May – 31 August 2010 which relate to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

2. Background Information

- 2.1 Holding the Executive to account is one of the main functions of Scrutiny. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive (as outlined in the Forward Plan) and deciding whether Scrutiny can add value in advance of the decision being made. This does not negate Non-Executive Members ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.
- 2.3 To this end, it has been agreed that, on a pilot basis, the most recent version of the Executive's Forward Plan should be included on the agenda of each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees. The Forward Plan for the period 1 May – 31 August 2010 is attached marked **Appendix 1**.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Following member's comments on the suitability of the Forward Plan being presented in its entirety to each committee it should be noted that only issues relating to the specific remit of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee are presented for information and comment. Due to agenda and publication deadlines a revised copy of this information will be circulated at the meeting reflecting any amendments.
- 3.2 For members information the remit of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee is as follows:-

Major Projects; Sustainability overview; Creating Inclusive Communities overview; Housing overview; Housing Strategy; Private Housing; Housing Associations; Culture overview; Art Development; Museums; and Heritage.
- 3.3 In the event of Members having any queries that cannot be dealt with directly in the meeting, a response will be sought from the relevant Directorate.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 To consider the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 May – 31 August 2010.

5. Background Papers

None

Contact Officer : Nigel Cummings 0191 561 1006
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**Forward Plan -
Key Decisions for
the period
01/May/2010 to
31/Aug/2010**



**R.C. Rayner,
Chief Solicitor,
Sunderland City
Council.**

14th April 2010

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01090	Approve submission document & sustainability appraisal for development in the Hetton Downs area to form part of the Council's Local Development Framework.	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Local residents, stakeholders, service providers, community reference group, Members	Meetings, briefings, letters, email, public exhibition, sunderland.gov.uk	Via contact officer by the 21 May 2010 - Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet report, report on preferred option consultation responses, submission document for Hetton Downs Area Action Plan, formal sustainability report.	Keith Lowes	5611564
01379	To approve a capital equipment grant to Company B to support economic development and job creation	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Portfolio holder	correspondence	To contact officer by 21 May - Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet Report	Janet Snaith	5611166
01343	To approve the draft Sunderland City Council Community Asset Policy	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Corporate Capital Strategy Group; Portfolio Holder	Meetings	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Management Scrutiny Committee	Report; Policy Document	Julie Gray	5617574

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01363	To consider any key decisions arising from the Capital Programme and Treasury Management Outturn 2009/2010 and First Quarterly Review of the Capital Programme 2010/2011	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Directors and third parties affected by the proposals	Report available and e-mailed to Directors	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Management Scrutiny Committee	None	Sonia Tognarelli	5611851
01367	To recommend Council to adopt the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2010/11 in respect of Environmental Health and Trading Standards.	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Member with Portfolio for Safer City	Briefing Session	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Report and Plan	Norma Johnston	5611973
01374	Agree the procurement of therapeutic services for children who have experienced abuse with effect from 1 October 2010	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	CS Joint Commissioning Team, TPCT, Corporate Procurement	Face to face meetings	Via the contact officer by 21 May 2010 - Children, Young People and Learning	Service specification relating to previous contract	Nick Murphy	5663235

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01383	To consider the recommendations of the Children, Young People & Learning Scrutiny Committee following a review of 16-19 machinery of government changes	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Work-based learning providers, Children's Services	Evidence at Scrutiny Meetings	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Children, Young People & Learning Scrutiny Committee	Scrutiny Committee Minutes	Karen Brown	5611004
01389	To approve the procurement of specialist grass cutting and horticultural equipment.	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Corporate Procurement; Director of Financial Resources; Member with Portfolio for Attractive and Inclusive City	Cabinet Report ; Briefings	To contact officer by 21 May - Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny	Report	Les Clark	5614501
01391	To consider the recommendations of the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee following a review of the action being taken by the Safer Sunderland Partnership to tackle Anti Social Behaviour.	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Council Officers and LSP Partners	Evidence at Scrutiny Meetings	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee	Scrutiny Committee minutes	Jim Diamond	5611396

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01392	To consider the recommendations of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee following a review into the introduction of 20 mph zones in the City.	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Council Officers, Police, Northumbria Road Safety Initiative, other local authorities	Evidence at Scrutiny Meetings and findings of Traffic Working Group	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee	Working Group minutes	Jim Diamond	5611396
01394	To agree the Re-Procurement of Day Care Services	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Cabinet Service Users and Carer Groups, Portfolio Holder, Adult Services Staff Health Partners	Briefings and/or meetings with interested parties	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Full Report	Graham King	5661894
01395	To agree the Re-Procurement of Day Care Services for people with Dementia	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Cabinet, Service Users and Carer Groups, Portfolio Holder, Adult Services Staff, Health Partners	Briefings and/or meetings with interested parties	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Full Report	Graham King	5661894

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01396	To agree the Re-procurement of Home Care Services	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Cabinet, Service Users and Carer Groups, Portfolio Holder, Adult Services Staff, Health Partners	Briefings and/or meetings with interested parties	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Full Report	Graham King	5661894
01400	To agree Improving Access to Social Housing	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Cabinet, Service Users and Carer Groups, Portfolio Holder, Adult Services Staff and Partners	Briefings and/or meetings with interested parties	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee	Full Report	Alan Caddick	5662690
01360	To agree the transfer of responsibility for 16-19 funding from the Learning Skills Council to the Local Authority in April 2010	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	LA in sub regional group, 14-19 Partnership	Meetings and distribution of draft reports for comment	To the contact officer by 21 May 2010 - Children, Young People and Learning	ASCL Act, November 2009, REACT Briefing notes	Lynda Brown	5611410

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01364	To consider any key decisions arising from the Revenue Budget Outturn 2009/2010 and First Quarterly Review of the Revenue Budget 2010/2011	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Directors and third parties affected by the proposals	Report available and e-mailed to Directors	Via Contact Officer by 20 May 2010 - Management Scrutiny Committee	None	Sonia Tognarelli	5611851
01384	To consider the recommendations of the Prosperity & Economic Scrutiny Committee following a review of the Working Neighbourhood Strategy	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Council officers, specialist providers, JCP, Job Linkage, Enterprise Consortia	Evidence at Scrutiny Meetings	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Prosperity & Economic Scrutiny Committee	Working Group minutes	Karen Brown	5611004
01387	To consider the recommendations of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee following a review of local studies provision in Sunderland	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Health, Housing and Adult Services staff, external providers, service users, public	Evidence at Scrutiny Committee	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee	Report of the Working Group	Helen Lancaster	5611233

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01385	To consider the recommendations of the Prosperity & Economic Scrutiny Committee following a review of Tourism & Marketing	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Tourism officers, ONE	Evidence at Scrutiny Meetings	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Prosperity & Economic Scrutiny Committee	Working Group minutes	Karen Brown	5611001
01386	To consider the recommendations of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee following a review of access to social housing	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Health, Housing and Adult Services staff, external providers, service users, public	Evidence at Scrutiny Committee, interviews, focus groups	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee	Policy Review final report	Nigel Cummings	5611006
01388	To consider the recommendations of the Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee following a review of tackling health inequalities in Sunderland	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Health, Housing and Adult Services staff, external providers, service users, carers, public	Evidence at Scrutiny Committee, interviews, community event, expert jury event	Via Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee	Policy Review final report	Nigel Cummings	5611006

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01399	To agree the Procurement of a Care Provider for Extra Care (for people with Dementia)	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Cabinet, Service Users and Carer Groups, Portfolio Holder, Adult Services Staff and Health Partners	Briefings and/or meetings with interested parties	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Full Report	Graham King	5661894
01393	To consider the recommendations of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee following a review of allotment provision.	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Council Officers, Allotment Holders and Associations	Evidence at Allotment Provision Working Group	Via the Contact Officer by 21 May 2010 - Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee	Working Group minutes	Jim Diamond	5611396
01401	To recommend Council to adopt the 2010-2011 Youth Justice Plan, prior to submission to the Youth Justice Board	Cabinet	09/Jun/2010	Youth Offending Service Board	Meetings of the Youth Offending Service Board	To the contact officer by 14 May 2010. Children - Young People and Learning	YJB Guidance, Sunderland Strategy, CIP	Kelly Davison - Pullan	5663048

Forward Plan: Key Decisions from - 01/May/2010 to 31/Aug/2010

No.	Description of Decision	Decision Taker	Anticipated Date of Decision	Principal Consultees	Means of Consultation	When and how to make representations and appropriate Scrutiny Committee	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Tel No
01397	To agree the Re-procurement of Short Break Services	Cabinet	21/Jul/2010	Cabinet, Service Users and Carer Groups, Portfolio Holder, Adult Services Staff and Health Partners	Briefings and/or meetings with interested parties	Via the Contact Officer by 21 June 2010 - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Full Report	Graham King	5661894

WORK PROGRAMME 2009-10

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Strategic Priorities: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO4: Improving partnership working to deliver 'One City'.

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 The report attaches, for Members' information, the current work programme for the Committee's work during the 2009-10 Council year.
- 1.2 The work of the Committee in delivering its work programme will support the Council in achieving its Strategic Priorities of a Healthy, Learning, Attractive and Inclusive City, support delivery of the related themes of the Local Area Agreement, and, through monitoring the performance of the Council's services, help the Council achieve its Corporate Improvement Objectives CIO1 (delivering customer focussed services) and C104 (improving partnership working to deliver 'One City').

2. Background

- 2.1 The work programme is a working document which Committee can develop throughout the year. As a living document the work programme allows Members and Officers to maintain an overview of work planned and undertaken during the Council year.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The work programme reflects discussions that have taken place at the 16 March 2010 Scrutiny Committee meeting. The current work programme is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The work programme developed from the meeting will form a flexible mechanism for managing the work of the Committee in 2009-10.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note the information contained in the work programme and consider the inclusion of proposals for the Committee into the work programme.

6. Glossary

n/a

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	JUNE 15.06.09	JULY 14.07.09	SEPTEMBER 22.09.09	OCTOBER 20.10.09	NOVEMBER 17.11.09	DECEMBER 15.12.09	JANUARY 19.01.10	FEBRUARY 16.02.10	MARCH 16.03.10	APRIL 27.04.10
Policy Review	Proposals for policy review (Review Coord)	Scope of review (Review Coord)	Approach to review (Review Coord)	Progress on Review (Review Coord)	Progress on Review (Review Coord)	Progress on Review (Review Coord)	Progress on Review (Review Coord)	Progress on Review (Review Coord)	Draft report (Review Coord)	Final Report
Scrutiny		Empire Theatre Annual Report Forward Plan	Forward Plan	Climate Change (JG) Homelessness Report (PB/DS) Young Persons Supported Housing Project (PB/DS) Forward Plan	Major Projects Report (JB) Football Investment Strategy (JR) Britain in Bloom (IC/NA) Forward Plan	Review of Local Studies in Sunderland (NC/HL) Forward Plan	Climate Change (JG) Sustainability Appraisals (NCo) Review of Local Studies – Setting the Scene (VM) Forward Plan Bowes Railway Report (VM)	Accommodation with Support Design Guide (AC) Annual Sport and Leisure Report (RL) Forward Plan	Forward Plan English Heritage – Christmas Workshop State of the Historic Environment Report (ML) Local Studies Review (HL)	Local Studies – Final Report Annual Report (Review Coord) Forward Plan
Scrutiny (Performance)			Performance & VfM Assessment Progress on Policy Review 08/09 – A Place to Play		Heritage Update (JH)	Progress on Policy Review 08/09 – A Place to Play	Performance Framework Q2 Strategic Planning Process	Annual Delivery Plan		Performance Framework Q3 Progress on Policy Review 08/09 – A Place to Play
Ref Cabinet	Terms of Reference of the Review Committee	Cabinet Response to the Policy Review-A Place to Play								

Committee business	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord) Conference Attendance	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord) Cooption Report	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)	Work Programme 2009/10 (Review Coord)
CCFA/ Members items/Petitions							Review of CCfA Mechanism			
Information										

Items Carried Forward

State of War Memorials in Sunderland

Weather and Climate Risk Management Strategy (Climate Change (NC))