

**At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL on MONDAY, 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2021 at 5.30p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor E. Gibson in the Chair

Councillors Ali, Bewick, M. Dixon, Fagan, PWL Gibson, Hodson, Morrissey, Potts, Reed, Scanlan and P. Wood

**Also Present:-**

Victoria Gamblin	-	Gentoo
Matthew Jackson	-	Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
Nicol McConnell	-	Area Community Development Lead, Sunderland City Council
K. Ramanathan	-	East Area VCS Network Representative
Jon Ritchie	-	Executive Director of Corporate Services, Sunderland City Council
Jamie Southwell	-	Neighbourhood Inspector, Northumbria Police
Claire Tulley	-	Nexus

**Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillors Essl, McClennan and A. Wood together with Joanne Cooper, Trish Cornish and Shaun Makin

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2021**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **VCS Area Network Progress Report**

Ms McConnell presented the update from the VCS and advised that at the October meeting mental wellbeing had been covered and a presentation had been received from Home Group who had opened a specialist facility on Toward Road. The November meeting had been held at Chance and there had been discussions around poverty and the Software City had delivered a presentation around technical support.

The Chair thanked the VCS organisations and their volunteers for all of their hard work.

2. RESOLVED that the update from the VCS Network be noted.

### **Northumbria Police Update**

A report was submitted in respect of the West Area which covered Doxford Ward.

Neighbourhood Inspector Jamie Southwell provided the Committee with an update on the crime statistics for the East area and of the work done by Northumbria Police. In the A1 area which covered the City Centre, Millfield and Ashbrooke there had been an increase in total crime of 10 percent which was 271 additional offences; this had been linked to the reopening of the night time economy with 246 additional violent crimes linked to the night time economy. Vehicle crime had reduced by 27 percent. Burglaries had reduced by 3 percent while burglaries from properties other than dwellings had increased by 18 percent; this had been a spate of burglaries in the city centre at around 6am where people were smashing their way into premises.

Antisocial behaviour had increased by 35 percent with youth antisocial behaviour increasing by 41 percent. This was due to the figure for last year being lower due to the Covid-19 lockdowns.

In the A2 area which covered Hendon, Grangetown and Ryhope there had been a reduction in violent crime of 8 percent. Burglaries had reduced by 50 percent and burglaries of properties other than dwellings had also reduced.

Antisocial behaviour had increased by 41 percent.

Operation Kraken would be running again in the run up to Christmas to tackle antisocial behaviour and crime in the city centre. There was also an operation running to tackle youth antisocial behaviour in the city centre.

Operation Eagle which was targeting illegal use of off road motorbikes in Ryhope was ongoing.

Councillor Ali queried whether the police were aware of the antisocial behaviour issues in the Borough Road area; the issue appeared to be getting worse and he felt that the people responsible needed to be moved out of the city centre. Inspector Southwell advised that this had been an issue in the summer months for a number of years and extra resources had been put into the Borough Road/Sunniside area. It was a difficult issue as the people could not be moved on unless they were engaging in antisocial behaviour or crime.

Councillor M. Dixon queried what the policy was around beggars in the city, it was often the same people who were begging time after time. Inspector Southwell advised that professional discretion was used and that it depended on the circumstances. If it was aggressive begging then dispersal orders could be issued or the powers under the PSPO could be used. Other cities, including Newcastle, had a higher number of beggars than Sunderland. Where appropriate enforcement action could be taken and there had been successes where repeat offenders had been banned from the city centre. Help was offered to people where needed.

Councillor P.W.L. Gibson referred to antisocial behaviour; consumption of alcohol and drugs and fire starting in Blakeney Woods and Inspector Southwell advised that he would speak to Inspector Steve Passey and ask him to contact Councillor Gibson directly as it was within his area.

Councillor Hodson referred to an increase in graffiti within Millfield around the City Centre and provided details of the problem areas. Inspector Southwell advised that he had not been aware of any issue but would look into this.

3. RESOLVED that the update from Northumbria Police be noted.

### **Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Update**

No representative was in attendance at the meeting but a written report was provided to the Committee.

4. RESOLVED that the update from Tyne and Wear fire and Rescue Service be noted.

### **Gentoo Update**

Vicky Gamblin was in attendance to provide an update from Gentoo. There were 250 Christmas meals being provided to vulnerable customers and there had been a group of children taken to the panto at the Empire. 300 tenants had been supported by the Christmas appeal.

Tenants were being given options for new doors and worktops as part of the programme to upgrade kitchens.

There would be an increase in estate inspections; over the last year there had been 12 such inspections and this year there were 24 planned.

The tenants conference had been well attended.

Work was being done with the CCG to provide rooms for Covid booster vaccination clinics.

Storm Arwen had caused damage to properties; there had been 6500 calls and 800 emergency repairs had been carried out; the emergency and urgent repairs had been prioritised. Sub-contractors were being worked with to address the required roof repairs and priority was given to those which were causing a safety risk. There had been significant damage to boundary fences and walls and those which caused a danger had been removed; there were over 800 repairs required.

There had been properties had suffered extensive damage and this had resulted in three tenants needing to be temporarily rehoused; two of these had now returned; work was ongoing and support was being provided.

The renewal programme was ongoing with Hedworth Court seeing internal modernisation works and works taking place at the low rise blocks in Ashbrooke. There would also be new fire alarm panels installed into the high rise tower blocks.

Councillor Hodson referred to the City Centre tower blocks car parks; during rain the car park for Astral House was flooding in the area of the disabled parking which was causing access issues; he understood that this was a difficult issue as there needed to be work done between Gentoo, the Council and The Bridges to address it but it was a concern. He also advised that the lift from these blocks into Jackie Whites Market had been broken for a number of weeks and that the door for Planet House was also broken and was causing access issues for residents who were struggling to open it. Ms Gamblin advised that she would report these issues to the management team.

Councillor Ali queried how much of a delay to non-urgent repairs the urgent storm repairs would cause. Ms Gamblin advised that there were sub-contractors employed to tackle the emergency repairs so there would not be much of a delay on dealing with the non-urgent repairs. There had been difficulties due to the volume of calls received and tenants could report repairs using the mygentoo online portal.

5. RESOLVED that the update from Gentoo be noted.

## **Nexus Update**

No representative from Nexus was in attendance however a written update was provided.

6. RESOLVED that the update from Nexus be noted.

### **East Sunderland Area Neighbourhood Delivery Plan 2020 - 2023**

The Chair of the East Sunderland Area Neighbourhood and Community Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the East Area Committee Delivery Plan for 2020/2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor M. Dixon introduced the report and advised of the work that had been undertaken against the delivery plan since the last meeting of the Area Committee which was set out in the report. He thanked Members for their support for St Michael's Community Centre; there had been an open day held which had been well attended.

Councillor P. Wood referred to issues around speeding traffic, for a number of years there had been discussions around installation of fixed speed cameras. Councillor M. Dixon advised that Paul Muir had been asked about this when he had attended the Board; he queried whether Mr Muir needed to be invited back to a future meeting. Ms McConnell advised that it had been the November meeting of the Board that Mr Muir had attended and that in March 2020 there had been discussions where it had been suggested that it would take around 12 months to see any speed cameras being installed. Jon Ritchie advised that there had been discussions around this at the Scrutiny Committee the week before.

Councillor Hodson stated that there had been a lot of back and forth discussions over the last 2 years and he hoped that in 2022 there would be progress made. He then referred to the environmental enforcement project; other areas had already implemented this and there was a huge issue in the East Area which the project would tackle.

Councillor P.W.L. Gibson referred to the issues around houses being in disrepair. There were issues where landlords did not own the land, for example leasehold flats. Freeholders could be difficult to work with, especially where they were absent corporate freeholders. He also referred to the eviction prevention support; this was an excellent service and he queried whether it would extend to leaseholders who were having disproportionate action taken against them by freeholders. Ms Gamblin advised that leaseholders in Gentoo blocks paid a service charge to allow for works to communal areas to be undertaken and she was not aware of action ever needing to be taken against any leaseholders.

Councillor Ali commented that there was an issue around landlords not coming to the Council for help. There was assistance available to landlords to

bring empty properties back into use however the process was too complicated and he felt that it needed to be reviewed. There was an issue of people not being able to afford to bring empty properties back into use. Mr Ritchie advised that there needed to be a balance between ensuring that the process was robust but also attractive. Discussions were being held with colleagues from other Councils to see how they managed the issue. Councillor M. Dixon stated that a list of empty properties within each ward would be beneficial; there were properties which remained empty for years which Members were not kept informed about. Mr Ritchie advised that there were issues with information governance around providing this information however he would look into what information could be provided.

Ms McConnell advised that the empty property team had provided a list previously which showed the properties which had been empty for over six months. Owners of empty properties were being encouraged to apply for grants to bring properties back into use. There were issues with engaging with landlords who lived outside of the area.

**7. RESOLVED that:-**

- a. Consideration be given to the progress and performance updates with regard to the East Sunderland Area Neighbourhood and Community Board Delivery Plan 2020-23 and the proposals outlined for future delivery in Annex 1 be agreed
- b. The Area Committee video update be noted.

### **East Area Budget Report**

The Assistant Director of Community Resilience submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided financial statements in respect of the Area Committee's delegated budgets and presented proposals for funding requests.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms McConnell presented the report and drew Members attention to the financial statements set out in the report and the applications for funding totalling £127,145 from the Neighbourhood Fund as set out in Annex 1. There had been community chest grants approved and these were set out in annex 2.

Councillor Hodson referred to the environmental enforcement project; he queried whether the funding only being for one year was due to the budget for next year not being known yet and also asked what length the post would be advertised as. Ms McConnell advised that the budget for next year would not be approved by Council until March and that the service would bring back a progress report on the project. The post would be advertised as for one year subject to further funding. If next years budget was approved and the

recruitment had not been completed at that time then the advert could be changed to say that it was a two year post.

8. RESOLVED that:-

- a. The financial statements set out in tables 1, 2 and 3 be noted
- b. Approval be given to request for funding from the Neighbourhood Fund, as set out in section 2.3 and annex 1, of:-
  - i. £2,000 to SCC for the East Private Landlords Roadshow Campaign
  - ii. £10,000 to Love, Amelia to appoint a Project Co-ordinator
  - iii. £115,145 to SCC for the East Enforcement Project
- c. The 15 approved Community Chest grants from the 2021/22 budget, as set out in Annex 2 be noted.

**Planning Applications – For Information Only**

Current Planning Applications relating to the East Sunderland Area for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 were submitted for Members information only (copy circulated).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

9. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) E. GIBSON,  
Chairman.