

At a meeting of the WEST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY, 2ND APRIL, 2009 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Arnott, Old, J.B. Scott, P. Watson, S. Watson and A. Wilson.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors L. Martin, Morrissey and T. Wright.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 5th February, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 5th February, 2009 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the number of burglary dwellings as detailed in the final paragraph of page 1 being amended to read 24.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Presentation from Northumbria Police on Crime Rates Relating to the West Sunderland Area

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Sergeant Kevin Jones who advised that there had been a decrease of 4.7% in overall crime compared to the same period the previous year.

Violent crime had reduced by 9.9%, vehicle crime by 4.2%, criminal damage by 8.9% and burglary other than dwellings by 9.7%. Unfortunately there had been a 14.1% increase in burglary dwellings. This had largely been due to a number of unsecured properties. A local media campaign had been undertaken to remind people of the importance of locking their doors properly.

Councillor P. Watson advised that the Committee used to receive the crime statistics, broken down by Ward, with their agenda papers and that this had been very useful. Sergeant Jones advised that he would speak to Acting Inspector Robinson to see if this could be reinstated. He believed that Acting Inspector Robinson had until recently been the representative at the Washington Area Committee where it had been the practice to receive a verbal rather than a written report.

There being no further questions for Sergeant Jones, the Chairman thanked him for his presentation and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted.

Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS)

Consideration was given to a report of the West Area LMAPS (copy circulated) on issues discussed at meetings of the LMAPS covering South Hylton, Ford Estate, Pallion, Pennywell, Springwell, Plains Farm, Grindon, Barnes and Thorney Close held on 13th January and 17th February, 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) 2008/09 Ward Based Community Chest

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) on 18 projects recommended for support from the 2008/09 Community Chest Scheme in respect of the Barnes, Pallion, Sandhill and St. Anne's Wards.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Arnott referred to the Community Chest grant of £1,837 to Plains Farm and Humbledon Community Initiative proposed by the Barnes Ward. He advised that the Organisation was facing a financial crisis and wished to submit an application for support from the Committee's SIB budget. He asked for agreement for the Organisation to submit an application to the Committee for consideration at its first meeting of the new municipal year in July. Councillor P. Watson stated that as he understood it, organisations did not need to seek the Committee's permission before making a bid and that they should be advised to submit an application in the usual manner.

4. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 18 projects recommended for support from the 2008/09 community Chest budget with a total value of £11,344 as detailed in Annex 1 to the report.

Community Leadership Programme: Review of Area Arrangements – Current Position and Next Steps

Mr. Phil Spooner, Community Leadership Programme Manager, provided Members with a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation on the importance and benefits of strengthening Area Governance through the Area Committees which would in turn become more responsive to local circumstances and provide a key resource for front line Councillors.

In particular Mr. Spooner highlighted the importance of engaging partners and outlined possible steps to achieve both a strategic and a practical engagement.

In conclusion he advised that Members' views would be taken on board and used to update the Area Committee Chairmen and Cabinet. The agreed approach would then be discussed with the LSP before details of the pilot approach were finalised for implementation.

Mr. Spooner, having addressed comments and questions from Members, the Chairman moved that the Area Committee endorse the proposal to adopt a pilot approach, and it was:-

5. RESOLVED accordingly.

Area Committee Governance and Business Processes

Ms. Allison Patterson, Area Co-ordination and Special Programmes Manager, provided Members with a detailed PowerPoint presentation which updated the Committee on the review of Area Arrangements. Members were advised that the objectives of the review were to introduce robust governance arrangements and business processes as a pre requisite to delivering responsive services which met the public's needs and aspirations at a local level. In addition it aimed to deliver Community Leadership Programme Benefits in support of the achievement of the Programme Outcomes.

Each of the five Area Committees would have its own Local Area Plan. There would be greater partner engagement at Area Committee meetings and a 'fit for purpose' agenda. The Area Committee would hold bi-monthly panel meetings to discuss SIB/SIP applications where applicants would attend to answer questions. These would be followed by bi-monthly Area Committee meetings which would include a closed session to discuss competitive bids. Ms. Patterson advised that there had been mixed feelings about this point when the presentation had been made at other Area Committees.

Councillor Arnott referred to the revised process for SIB allocation and stated that he very much valued the Area Committee sitting in full session and would not be in favour of closed sessions. He also expressed concern that a "filtering panel" was to be established and that the Area Committee's priorities would be linked too closely to the Council's priorities and as such would limit the independence of the Area Committee's decision making.

With regard to the priorities, Ms. Patterson advised that they would be the priorities that the Area Committee had agreed itself as being important for its own area. With regard to the panel she advised that the term was possibly confusing. It would not be a sub-committee of the Area Committee and would in fact comprise the full membership of the Committee.

With regard to the issue of the closed sessions, Councillor P. Watson agreed that there was merit in open meetings. He stated, however, that the driver behind the closed meetings was that of commercial confidentiality. As the

Area Committee budgets increased and in order to obtain the best value for money it would not be appropriate to expect organisations to display their financial and business affairs in public.

Councillor Arnott replied that he accepted that there may be occasions when the issue of commercial confidentiality might arise, however, in the past at the Area Committee this had rarely been the case. He stated that closed sessions, if adopted, should be done so as a reserve position rather than the norm.

6. RESOLVED that the presentation be received and noted.

Local Area Plans – Analysis of Priorities

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on the Local Area Plans and the development of priorities for the West Sunderland Area. The Local Area Plan draft Top Ten Priorities were included as Annex 1 to the report, together with the West Priorities Summary which was attached as Annex 2.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

To complement the report, Mr. Richard Parry, Area Regeneration Officer, provided Members with a PowerPoint presentation which highlighted how the local priorities had developed and the ongoing process of reviewing and refining them. With regard to the next steps, Mr. Parry advised that an Area Committee workshop would be held with partners to agree:-

- i) performance measures against priorities; and
- ii) the Local Area Plan.

With regard to the ranking of priorities, Councillor S. Watson stated that where partners held different views to those of residents, priority should be given to residents' views.

7. RESOLVED that approval be given to the Local Area Plan Priorities as detailed in Annex 1 and Annex 2 to the report.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) D. FORBES,
Chairman.