

At an Extraordinary meeting of the COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 31ST MARCH, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor J. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Anderson, Blackburn, Ellis, A. Hall, Heron, Rolph, D. Smith, Speding, Tate and Wakefield.

Apology for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor D. Richardson.

Declarations of Interest

Item 5 – Local Area Plans – Analysis of Priorities

Councillor A. Hall declared an interest in the report as a member of Gentoo Living, as an employee of Anchor Trust, a School Governor of New Penshaw Primary School and of Our Lady Queen of Peace RC Primary School.

Councillor J. Scott declared a personal interest as a School Governor of New Penshaw Primary School.

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 to make them more responsive to local circumstances and provide a key resource for Front Line Councillors.

Mr. Spooner referred Members to the vision for Area Committees where Members would lead their communities, identifying priorities. He highlighted the importance of engaging partners in the areas to work together with Members to address the priorities and the need for clear, focussed processes which were open, transparent and effective.

1. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted.

Area Committee Governance and Business Processes

Ms. Allison Patterson, Area Co-ordination and Special Programmes Manager, provided Members with a detailed Powerpoint presentation on the Review of Area Arrangements undertaken.

Ms. Patterson advised Members of the objectives of the Review and how those objectives would be achieved. She provided details of the proposed membership and core agenda model for the Area Committee.

In relation to decision making, Ms. Patterson advised that proposals had been drafted for Panel meetings to be held bi-monthly where all Members would attend to discuss SIB/SIP applications and applicants would attend to answer questions. Proposals had been drafted for Area Committee meetings to be held bi-monthly and to be divided into two parts. Part 1 would be a public meeting where the main items would be discussed and partners would attend. Part 2 would be a closed session where decisions on SIB/SIP applications were made and only Members of the Council would be present.

Councillor A. Hall enquired in relation to the open session as to what protocols were to be put in place. In relation to the emergency budget she enquired how this was to be administered and how much money would be allocated to it.

Ms. Patterson stated that it would be a matter for the Area Committee to decide how much money it wished to allocate to a budget for emergencies. However, a suggestion was that 20% of the overall Area Committee budget be allocated to a budget for emergencies and a Citywide approach to the arrangements for the emergency budget would be applied.

With regard to an open session in the meeting for questions from members of the public, this was for discussion with Members and if they wished to take this forward, a procedure for managing this part of the meeting could be drawn up to assist Members.

Councillor Ellis commented that she could see difficulties arising from the proposed membership of the Area Committees.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Ellis as to how the proposed membership and governance arrangements would work, Ms. Patterson advised that there was an expectation that the same governance arrangements would be applied across the City to all five Area Committees. Proposals had been based on discussions held with Members with the aim of working with partners in the areas to deliver services across the area. Members had been working with partners to draw up the area priorities and it was proposed that this would continue. The Area Committee meeting would provide a forum for Members and partners to work together to achieve the priorities identified and to monitor performance; holding the Council and other service providers to account in a more proactive way. Clear terms of reference

would be needed in relation to the Area Committee, the role of Members and partners and concerning voting rights for Members only, for example.

Councillor Tate commented that it was important that protocols were established for working with the Area Forum and partner representatives.

Ms. Patterson stated that suggestions had been made as to the proposed non-voting membership of the Committee, however, she reiterated that it would be up to the Area Committee Members to decide which partners/organisations it felt would be the most appropriate to seek representatives from for that area.

Councillor Rolph stated that it would not be appropriate to have the same organisations providing representatives for all 5 areas as the areas were all different. The Coalfield Area had a Trust School, for example. She added that the College was coming back under local authority control therefore this would no longer be appropriate and although Gentoo was the largest social landlord it was not the only one. If the idea was to mirror the LSP membership in the areas, it might be just as appropriate to have representatives from the business sector. Councillor Rolph added that it was important that with regards to the voluntary sector it was not just the same 'big players' that were involved and care needed to be taken regarding the membership so that it assisted the Area Committee with its work. Councillor Rolph enquired whether any thought had been given to the Area Committee being able to consider major planning applications that would affect the Coalfield Area.

Councillor Wakefield also enquired as to whether the Area Committee would be able to consider local planning applications and commented that thought needed to be given to this.

Ms. Patterson advised that it would be up to the Area Committee to decide on which organisations it felt it was appropriate to seek representatives from to become non-voting Members of the Committee. Advice would need to be sought with regards to the issue of whether the Area Committee could be consulted on planning applications submitted to the Local Authority which affected its area. She clarified that there were no proposals to have a call for projects for funding from the Community Chest budget.

Mr. Spooner advised in response to Members' enquiries that a procedure would be developed for the open session planned for Area Committee meetings along the same lines as the procedure in place for public speaking at the Development Control meetings. It was proposed that the Area Committee budget would be allocated to projects coming forward for funding which met the priorities identified by the Area Committee. It was also proposed that a percentage of the budget, to be agreed by Members, be kept for emergencies. It was important to engage partner organisations in the process to identify area priorities and problem solve. The Area Committee funding would then be allocated to the priorities identified. He stated that once revisions to the Area Governance arrangements had been approved by the Council, it would be appropriate to involve partner representatives.

Councillors Blackburn, Tate and Anderson all referred to the Town Council Charter which the Council had recently agreed to enter into with Hetton Town Council. They

were of the opinion that this would strengthen relationships between the two Councils and they felt that a representative from Hetton Town Council should be a Member of the Area Committee as a partner organisation in the area.

Councillor A. Hall commented that all the Area Fora were organised and funded differently. She enquired whether there was going to be a need for the Fora to be in the same form, how they were to be funded and how the Area Committee was wanting them to operate in the future. She added that it was important to find a way of making sure smaller groups in the community were represented at the Area Committee if there was to be meaningful engagement.

In response to Councillor J. Scott's enquiry concerning the proposal to set a work programme for the Area Committee for the year ahead, Ms. Patterson advised that it was intended that this would take a similar format to that operated by the Review Committees at present. She added, however, that it needed to be sufficiently flexible to allow for inclusion in the programme of issues raised during the year which the Committee may wish to discuss.

2. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted.

Local Area Plans – Analysis of Priorities

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an update on Local Area Plans and the development of priorities for the Coalfield Area.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Pauline Hopper, Area Regeneration Officer, provided the Committee with a presentation detailing the process followed to date to identify the local priorities and pointing out the next steps to be taken to prioritise the list on which the Area Committee would focus its attention during 2009/10.

Ms. Hopper referred Members to the Local Area Plan draft Top Ten Priorities and the Coalfield Priorities Summary. She explained the format of the documentation to the Committee.

Ms. Hopper proposed that an Area Workshop with partners be held to agree the local priorities and how to measure performance against them.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Spooner, Ms. Patterson and Ms. Hopper for their presentations, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that arrangements be made for an Area Workshop with partners to be held to agree the local priorities as detailed above.

(Signed) J. SCOTT,
Chairman.