

At a meeting of the WEST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL, on WEDNESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2023 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Laverick in the Chair

Councillors, Ayre, Crosby, Dunn, Edgeworth, Haque, Haswell, Hunter, Mullen, Nicholson, O'Brien, Peacock, G. Smith, P. Smith, Tye and Watson.

Also Present:-

John Anderson	Diversions Activities Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Vicky Gamblin	Head of Operations, Gentoo
David Noon	Principal Democratic Services Officer, Sunderland City Council
Steven Passey	Neighbourhood Inspector, Northumbria Police
Gilly Stanley	Partnership & Community Resilience Manager, Sunderland City Council
Paul Wilson	Director of Finance, Sunderland City Council
Scott Wilson	Station Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Burnicle and McDonough.

Declarations of Interest

Item 2b Report of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Tye made an open declaration in the item as Chair of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 28th June, 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Report of Northumbria Police

Inspector Passey presented a report of Northumbria Police (copy circulated) which updated members on key performance information in relation to the Sunderland West area.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman thanked Inspector Passey for his report and invited questions and comments from Members.

Councillor P. Smith referred to the issue of motorcycle disorder stating that it showed no sign of going away and people would not report it. Inspector Passey replied that it was important that people reported issues as intelligence was a valuable part of Police planning.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Crosby regarding potential plans from the Government to ban dangerous dogs, Inspector Passey replied that he was not aware of any issues in West Area with regard to dog attacks. Councillor Peacock added that whilst there had been no harm to people, he was aware that there had been incidents of dog on dog attacks in King George's Playing Fields. Inspector Passey replied that such incidents should be reported to the Police who would investigate for any potential offence, taking action if appropriate or signposting to the most appropriate Partner agency.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chair thanked Inspector Passey for his report and it was:-

2. RESOLVED the report be received and noted.

Report of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Station Manager Scott Wilson, together with John Anderson, Diversionary Activities Manager, presented a report of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS), (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on the Service's performance indicators for the period 4th June to 22nd August 2023 and the TWFRS's community involvement activities including the Safe and Well Targeting System, the Prince's Trust, the Darker Nights Campaign and the possibility of a funding bid to support the Phoenix Project.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chair thanked Mr Wilson and Mr Anderson for their report and invited questions and comments from Members.

Councillor Tye reiterated his previous concerns regarding the growing trend of people who believed it was acceptable to attack 'Blue Light' Officers attending the scene of a fire. He condemned such behaviour and made a direct plea to parents and carers to ensure they always knew the whereabouts of the young people in their care and to take responsibility for their actions (questions should be asked if a child returned home smelling of smoke for example). Firefighters were there to help and protect communities and to be faced with the prospect of assault whilst carrying out their duties was completely unacceptable.

Councillor P. Smith stated that it was not acceptable that the Committee was still having to discuss issues regarding the former Farringdon Hall Police Station site. She believed that problems would continue until the building was demolished and the site developed. Councillor Peacock advised that the Council's Planning and Highways Committee had recently approved proposals to develop the site but acknowledged that it would not in itself guarantee a speedy resolution to the current issues.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Hunter, Mr Wilson advised that a hotspot was defined as 5 or more fires occurring in a cluster within the specified area. Councillor Hunter additionally raised concerns over reports that increasing numbers of vapes were being dumped by pupils into school sanitary bins however providers were refusing to empty the bins because of the fire risks involved.

Councillor Haswell noted the increase in the number of fires in Pallion. He referred to the extra work being undertaken by the Council's enforcement team in respect of waste and asked whether the Fire Service had noticed if this was starting to make a difference. Mr Wilson advised that he had just return from leave but would run a report on the matter following the meeting. The Service did not feedback to the Enforcement Team as a matter of course but it was something that he would be happy to do.

Councillor Peacock offered his congratulations to Mr Wilson on speed of the Service's response times which were to be applauded. He asked if Mr Wilson could offer any reasons why the overall North East figures for fires were so high compared to the national figure. Mr Wilson having replied that he would investigate and report back, Councillor Tye suggested that it would probably show a link to those areas with the highest rates of multiple deprivation.

With regard to Mr Anderson's presentation on the Service's Community engagement activities, Councillor P. Smith stated that the Phoenix Project was one of the best schemes to have ever operated in Sunderland and regretted its lost through a lack of funding.

There being no further questions or comments for Mr Wilson and Mr Anderson, it was:-

3. RESOLVED the report be received and noted

Report of Gentoo

Vicky Gamblin, Head of Operations, Gentoo Group presented a report, (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on current Gentoo developments, projects and priorities for the period June 2023 to September 2023 together with a schedule of the planned investment and renewal programme for 2023/24

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman thanked Ms Gamblin for her report and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

In response to enquiries from Councillors Peacock and Mullen regarding issues concerning concrete fencing slabs and a rat infestation respectively, Ms Gamblin asked the Councillors to send the details to her via email and confirmed that she would investigate.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Crosby, Ms Gamblin briefed the Committee on action taken following the development of a sinkhole between properties in Thorney Close. Councillor Edgeworth thanked Ms Gamblin for the provision of the emergency accommodation.

Councillor Mullen reiterated his previously raised concerns regarding the attitude of the Home Housing Group towards its properties in the West Area which he believed displayed a sheer lack of interest. Councillor Edgeworth and Councillor Tye supported Councillor Mullen in voicing these concerns.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chairman thanked Ms Gamblin for her attendance and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Report of the West Area Voluntary and Community Sector Network

The Network submitted a progress report (copy circulated) which briefed members on issues pertinent to the Committee and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chair advised that in the absence of a member of the network to present the report, the Committee were asked to note the information it contained and that if they had any questions, they should be directed to Ms Stanley, in the first instance, who would seek an answer from the Network and report back.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

West Area Committee Delivery Plan 2023-2026

Councillor Haswell, Chair of the West Area Neighbourhood and Community Board presented a report (copy circulated) which provided an update of progress against the Area Committee's Area Plan priorities for 2023-2024.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Edgeworth asked if it was true that the operation of the Walk and Talk Budget was being reviewed, asking who was involved and how could Members feed in? The Chair advised that discussions were being held with the Area Chairs about the matter and that she would feed Members comments into the meetings.

Councillor Mullen asked if it was being suggested that the Walk and Talk Budgets were to be removed? Mr Wilson and Ms Stanley confirmed that the position was under

review with Senior Officers of the Council. Councillor Mullen stated that he was astounded by the prospect that the Committee was to lose the budget and asked Mr Wilson to bring his concerns to the attention of the Chief Officers Group.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Haque, Ms Stanley confirmed that she would email him the current balance in respect of the Barnes Ward Walk and Talk Budget.

Councillor Crosby referred to the Warm Spaces programme for winter 23/24 and asked if an evaluation of the previous year's venues had been undertaken. Ms Stanley advised that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) had undertaken a review and were looking to address any gaps in provision across the city.

There being no further questions, the Committee enjoyed a short video presentation detailing the 2023 Area Committee Event held in Barnes Park.

The Chairman having thanked Councillor Haswell for his report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the progress and performance update with regard to the West Area Committee Area Plan 2023- 2026 be received and noted, and
- ii) the progress update with regard to Sunderland City Council Service Plans - Area Priorities, be received and noted

West Area Budget Report

The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities submitted a report (copy circulated) in respect of the above matter.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Gilly Stanley, Partnership & and Community Resilience Manager, presented the report highlighting the Committee's financial statement, together with details of projects approved under delegated powers for support from the 2023/24 Community Chest budget.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Area Committee's funding statement as detailed in paragraphs 2.1 and 3.1 of the report be received and noted; and
- (ii) the approval of the Community Chest applications from the 2023/24 budget as detailed in Annex 1 of the report be noted.

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

(Signed) J. LAVERICK,
Chairman.