

Sunderland City Council

Item 2 (ii)

At an EXTRAORDINARY MEETING of SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL held in the CROWTREE LEISURE CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on WEDNESDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor T. Martin) in the Chair
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor N. Wright)

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|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|------------|
| Councillors | Allan | M. Forbes | Miller | D. Trueman |
| | Anderson | Foster | Old | H. Trueman |
| | Ball | Francis | Padgett | Tye |
| | Bell | E. Gibson | D. Richardson | P. Walker |
| | Blackburn | P. Gibson | Scaplehorn | P. Watson |
| | Bonallie | Gofton | J. Scott | S. Watson |
| | Charlton | G. Hall | Shattock | Williams |
| | Copeland | Heron | P. Smith | A. Wilson |
| | M. Dixon | Kay | Snowdon | Wood |
| | Emmerson | Kelly | Speding | A. Wright |
| | Essl | MacKnight | Tate | |
| | Fletcher | McClennan | Timmins | |

In Attendance: Members of the Panel:-

Councillor P. Watson, Canon Stephen Taylor, Dave Smith, Kay Blyth and Louise Robson.

Also Present:

Sunderland City Council

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|-------------------|--------------------|
| Mike Foster | Allison Clarke |
| Stuart Douglass | Pauline Blyth |
| Lee Stoddart | Stuart Cuthbertson |
| Alan Caddick | Liz St. Louis |
| Jan Elstob | Lynda Brown |
| Ron Odunaiya | Dan Hattle |
| Ben Winter | Allan Jones |
| Henry Cumbers | Helen Paterson |
| Sarah Reed | Elaine Waugh |
| Janet Johnson | Keith Moore |
| Vince Taylor | Sonia Tognarelli |
| Mike Poulter | Philip Foster |
| Bev Poulter | Colin Curtis |
| Stephen Pickering | Sal Buckler |
| Sue Stanhope | Andrew Seekings |
| Deborah Lewin | George Blyth |
| Les Clark | Helen Lancaster |
| Fiona Brown | Charlotte Burnham |

Colin Clark
Neil Revely
Keith Lowes
Nigel Cummings

Sarah Abernethy
Meg Boustead
Kate Cuthbert

Representatives of the Following External Organisations

City Hospitals
Hetton Town Council x 2
GO-NE
Sunderland Arc x 2
NHS South of Tyne and Wear
Tyne and Wear City Region
Sunderland Community Furniture
South of Tyne and Wear Primary Care Trust
North of England Refugee x 2
Parkinson's UK
Sunderland Partnership
Sunderland College
Sunderland Youth Parliament x 6
Sunderland Samaritans
East Training Education and Community
Development Trust
Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust x 2
Sunderland Cardiac Support Group x 4
St. Mary's and St. Peter's Community Project
Northumbria Police x 2
Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum
Penshaw Community Association x 2
National Union of Teachers
Long Street Action Group x 2
Sunderland North Family Zone x 2
Colliery Media CIC x 2
Friends of Hylton Dene
Groundwork
Age UK Sunderland
Sunderland Centre for Voluntary Services
Tyne and Wear Local Authorities
Jobcentre Plus
SCPN
Headway Wearside
Sunniside Partnership
Sunderland Carers' Centre
Victim Support x 2
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Hendon Young Peoples Project x 2
Sunderland Black and Minority Ethnic Network
Representatives of Community Spirit

And also – Members of the public

Notice

The Notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

Welcome by the Mayor

The Mayor, Councillor T. Martin, welcomed those present to the City Council's ninth Annual State of the City Event. He welcomed all guests, Council Members and Ambassadors for the City then briefly outlined the Programme for debate.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Cuthbert, P. Dixon, Ellis, L. Martin, Morrissey, I. Richardson, Rolph, D. Smith and Wakefield.

State of the City Event

The debate was facilitated by Richard Moss, Political Editor, BBC North East and Cumbria. Richard welcomed those present and advised that the Panel for the evening comprised:-

Councillor P. Watson (Leader of Sunderland City Council), Canon Stephen Taylor (Chair of Sunderland Partnership), Dave Smith (Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council), Kay Blyth (Temporary Chief Superintendent, Northumbria Police) and Louise Robson, Chief Operating Officer, NHS South of Tyne and Wear).

Keynote Speech – What the City Council Does for You

Councillor P. Watson, Leader of the Council.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor P. Watson, presented a Keynote Speech at this, his third State of the City Event, as Leader of the Council. In his address he referred to his blog where he had spoken during the course of the year about the vitally important role of local people in the City's decision making process, and how the Council could only make the right, often tough, decisions if it was informed about what people want and need. He explained that what people say would absolutely count and thanked people for taking the time to participate.

He firstly explained that in key roles, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor not only represented the Council, but the entire City in a multitude of ways during the course of the year. Then he went on to explain the role of the Cabinet, the Area Committees and the Council's Scrutiny Committees.

He remarked that there were undoubtedly tough times ahead for the Public Sector and indeed everyone. It would be no small feat to continue to deliver excellent services in the face of potentially significant budget reductions come the Spending Review in October, but the Council was committed to do this, and it was something the City Council had been planning for over the past two years.

A very prominent development had been the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships, designed to bring Local Authorities and the business sector together on an equal footing, to provide strategic leadership in the local area and to develop the right conditions for business success and economic growth. Sunderland had joined forces with South Tyneside to develop a LEP proposal which was submitted to the Government on the 6th September.

The Leader assured that despite these challenges and changing times 'behind the scenes' services would go on and the Council would continue to empty bins, clean the streets and deliver the rest of the 700 services to the best of their ability.

He then went on to introduce his fellow Cabinet Members:-

- Councillor Florence Anderson – Deputy Leader of the Council
- Councillor Dave Allan – Resources Portfolio
- Councillor Jim Blackburn – Attractive and Inclusive City Portfolio
- Councillor Bryan Charlton – Prosperous City Portfolio
- Councillor Celia Gofton – Customer Care and Responsive Local Services Portfolio
- Councillor Mel Speding – Healthy City Portfolio
- Councillor Henry Trueman – Sustainable Communities Portfolio
- Councillor Denny Wilson – Safer Communities Portfolio

Footage was then played of the Area Committee Chairs explaining the different priorities in each of the areas and how they worked with Partners and their local communities to achieve the required outcomes.

Councillor Kelly (Washington Area Committee priorities):-

- Children and Poverty
- Employment and Sustaining return to work
- Health and Well-Being – including teenage pregnancies, alcohol misuse and anti-social behaviour

Councillor D. Richardson (Coalfield Area Committee priorities):-

- Youth Provision – e.g. Phoenix Project
- XL Youth Village and bus

Councillor Ball (East Sunderland Area Committee priorities):-

- Youth Provision
- Play Provision
- XL Youth Village and bus
- Safe Environment – installation of 3G cameras

Councillor Bell (North Sunderland Area Committee priorities):-

- Health
- Anti-Social Behaviour – Crime and Disorder
- Environmental issues
- Seafront

Councillor P. Gibson (West Sunderland Area Committee priorities)

- Child Poverty
- Traffic and Parking Problems
- Youth Provision
- Enhancing Street Scene
- Health and Well-Being

Scrutiny Committee Chairs then explained the work that they undertook, and their key priorities:-

Councillor Tate (Management Scrutiny Committee):-

- Helping the Council through the economic downturn
- Protecting Vulnerable People
- Managing other Committees

Councillor P. Stewart (Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee):-

- Apprenticeships
- Accommodation for 16-19 year olds

Councillor Miller (Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee):-

- Speed limits – piloting 20 mph zones
- Green issues – Allotments
- Making Sunderland a place where people want to both live and work

Councillor Walker (Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee):-

- Health and Equality
- Patients suffering malnutrition
- Out of Hours Service provision

Councillor S. Watson (Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee):-

- Culture and Art
- Local History and Sustainability of City
- Social Housing

Councillor R. Heron (Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee):-

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- XL Youth Village
- Violent Crime – including the introduction of Polycarbonate Glasses

Councillor Mordey (Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee):-

- Low Carbon Economy – solar panels, electric vehicles, wind turbines
- Economic Masterplan
- Review of Working Neighbourhood Fund

Questions

Richard Moss advised the meeting that questions had been posted on the City Council's website. Of these, the three most popular had been selected and would be answered prior to the open debate:-

What are you doing to improve the City Centre?

The Leader of the Council responded by advising that the City Centre was one of the Council's key priorities. The Economic Masterplan would be launched in October which placed improving the City Centre as a key aim. Notwithstanding the economic climate, the redevelopment process had been very complicated and despite no visual signs of progress, significant work was going on behind the scenes. During 2009/2010 the Council had provided an additional £1 million for initiatives to support City Centre businesses through the economic downturn. The aims were to increase footfall and dwell time within the City Centre, and to bring an enhanced sense of vibrancy to the area. 72% of residents said events in Sunderland were good or very good.

What plans do you have to deal with the pressure ahead regarding the inevitable cuts that our community will face?

Councillor P. Watson responded advising that the Council had been planning for the last 18 months in anticipation of what were forecast to be the most stringent public spending cuts faced by Local Government for generations. The Council was transforming the way it worked to become both more efficient and more effective in

how it delivered frontline services. He went on to say that tough choices would need to be made about future services to be provided. Frontline services would be safeguarded as much as possible but with a need to prioritise and consider different ways of delivering services in the future to make sure that services for the most needy were delivered in the most effective way. The Government's Spending Review would be announced on 20 October and would set out in detail Government Departmental Spending Plans and the extent of cuts in grants to Local Government and other agencies.

What are the plans for the Vaux site?

In response, Dave Smith explained that agreement had now been reached with Tesco for the public sector to purchase the site from them. It was expected that the site would transfer in no later than four years time, however this could be sooner. Funding to buy the Vaux site had been secured from HCA and was underwritten by the Council to enable the purchase to progress as quickly as possible. Infrastructure needed to be developed to integrate the site with the rest of the City Centre and to make the site attractive to the private sector to develop. The Council had therefore started the preliminary design work for this, to understand in greater detail what they needed to do next.

He went on to say, looking positively at Vaux, there were not many cities in the UK who now had such a significant site at the heart of the City which could be used to stimulate the City's economy.

Questions – Open Debate

Health

What is the future for Crowtree Leisure Centre?

The Leader responded that there were no plans in the short term for Crowtree Leisure Centre although due to the central location of the facility, there would be some medium term plans developed in the future. Alternative provisions would be available for those using the leisure centre.

What indications are there of the proposed changing structure of the NHS?

In response Louise Robson made reference to the NHS White Paper, Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS which had asked organisations to respond with a view of whether they felt the direction and implementation of proposal were appropriate.

Do Public Health test the quality of the air around Houghton Quarry?

The Leader advised that the Quality of Air was monitored by the Environment Agency.

Councillor D. Wilson, Safer Communities Portfolio acknowledged the problems associated with the landfill site and agreed to discuss the issue with the resident who had raised this question after the meeting, to see if he could assist them in any way.

Does the Council have any plans to re-build Crowtree Leisure Centre elsewhere in the City?

In response the Leader advised that the City already had facilities at Stadium Park and also the Silksworth Community Pool, Tennis and Wellness Centre. Wellness Centres were also located in areas across the City. Additional facilities would however be considered in the future.

Are there plans for a changing room on the seafront for those with complex needs?

Councillor D. Wilson advised that yes, these proposals were being considered as part of the Seafront Strategy.

Safety and Crime

For many years requests had been made for traffic calming measures on a particular estate in Houghton, and the Panel was asked if anything was likely to be done.

The Leader responded to the question by advising that 20 mile per hour zones were part of the work programme of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee and therefore the policy would be rolled out across the City in the future, targeting particular areas of concern.

Kay Blyth asked that the resident forward her his details and agreed to notify the Neighbourhood Teams to try and enforce some traffic calming measures in that particular area.

Can the Chief Superintendent explain why people were allowed to walk around the City Centre carrying alcohol during the last two concerts held at the Stadium of Light?

In response Kay Blyth commented that she had not been made aware of this problem despite debrief meetings being held after both events, however she would ensure that this would be planned for in future as part of licensing enforcement activity. Overall, the recent concerts had generated a huge income for the City and levels of crime had generally been low.

If anti-social behaviour can be a problem in the City why do so many new pubs/clubs open in the City Centre?

Councillor P. Watson responded advising that the Council was required to comply with the law which had now changed, whereby licences were now granted on merit and not maximum numbers.

The Chief Superintendent added that they make recommendations to the Council's Licensing Committee and also monitor premises across the City and work closely with the Local Authority. In addition, they adjust policing resources according to need by, for example, having more officers on the street on particularly busy nights in the City Centre.

Is it a policy of City Council to block access to services, in particular Trading Standards?

The Leader of the Council was disappointed to hear of this complaint and advised that Councillor D. Wilson would take details after the meeting and look into the issue.

Will the Council be cleaning up the broken glass at Roker Retail Park?

Councillor P. Watson advised that the Retail Park was subject to private ownership however the Council would respond by ensuring standards were reached.

Will the role of Park Keepers be reinstated due to the amount of anti-social behaviour in Thompson Park?

In response, the Leader of the Council advised that, due to the strain on resources, it was not possible to have a dedicated member of staff assigned to each of the Parks, however a team of staff did tour the parks every day.

Kay Blyth agreed that feeling safe within neighbourhoods was especially important and urged residents to contact their neighbourhood Policy Teams if they had witnessed anti-social behaviour.

Canon Stephen Taylor added that numerous parks had volunteers to look after them, for example 'Friends of Barnes Park', and emphasised the opportunity for neighbourhoods to take pride in their own areas with volunteer strategies.

Attractive and Inclusive

Although the City should be congratulated on the fabulous displays and also the beautiful beach, can something be done with the park at Allendale Road?

The Leader commented that the park would certainly be looked at. The Chief Executive went on to thank participants for both their comments and challenges and acknowledged that the Council got some things right and some things wrong. Where areas could be improved, the City Council aimed to respond to the needs of the people.

Could traffic calming measures be introduced at Barnes Park?

Kay Blyth responded by advising that they did use a formula to determine areas which needed traffic calming measures and that Police Officers were also on patrol throughout the day and the night. The Leader added however, that traffic officers would re-visit the area to make an assessment.

Councillors in East Durham were campaigning against litter/glass and under age drinking and had, as a result, issued Fixed Penalty Notices. Is this something Sunderland would consider applying to offenders?

Councillor P. Watson explained that the City Council used the powers they were given and had increased resources for reinforcement, however believed it more important to change the activities of these people, to be proud of their City rather than issue fines.

Prosperity

Is Sunderland losing out on a huge opportunity with the City of Adelaide Ship going back to Australia?

The Leader responded advising that it was an aspiration for the ship to be located at Sunderland, however the bid was successful for Australia to berth the City of Adelaide. This was unfortunate for the City, however best endeavours had been used.

What are the plans for the seafront?

Councillor D. Wilson explained that plans were ongoing. A bid for 'Sea Change' money had been made and the consultation process had also begun with over 2,000 responses to date.

Are there any plans to develop the Dock area?

Councillor P. Watson stated that a Director of the Port had recently been appointed, therefore a remediation programme would be rolled out for the Port but also new business generated to completely change the status of the Dock.

What can the City Council do to attract tourism?

Canon Stephen Taylor responded to the question advising that both the Museum and Winter Gardens were extremely well used sites and the recent concerts held at the Stadium had also attracted significant numbers of people to the City. The touring shows were also highly promoted, as again the theatre attracted many people to the area.

The Leader also referred to an article that appeared in the Sunderland Echo and emphasised that tourism had increased by 3% within the City, despite the recession. Work would continue to attract people to Sunderland working in Partnerships across the region.

Close of Event

The Mayor then closed the debate and thanked people for attending. He then moved, and it was agreed, that the content of the debate would be circulated to partner agencies and would be taken into account by the Leader of the Council in proposing the budget and policy framework to the Council for the coming year.

(Signed) T. MARTIN,
Mayor.