

At a meeting of the EAST SUNDERLAND AREA COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 30th JANUARY, 2012 at 5.30p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Ball in the Chair

Councillors Forbes, E. Gibson, Kay, McClennan, T. Martin, Mordey, Scanlan and Wood

Also Present:-

Alison Aisbett	- Advice Services Development Manager, Sunderland Council
Craig Briggs	- Acting Inspector, Northumbria Police
Keith Carruthers	- District Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Andrew Carton	- Connexions/East Locality Manager, Sunderland Council
Hazel Clark	- East VCS Representative
Leanne Davis	- Associate Policy Lead for Community Safety, Sunderland Council
Nicola Hawyes	- Community Delivery Support Officer, Sunderland Council
Pauline Hopper	- Area Officer, Sunderland Council
Matthew Jackson	- Governance Services Officer, Sunderland Council
Janet Johnson	- Deputy Chief Executive and Area Lead Executive, Sunderland Council
Vivienne Metcalfe	- Area Community Coordinator, Sunderland Council
Helen Peverley	- Area Response Manager (City Centre), Sunderland Council
Nicky Rowland	- Area Response Manager (East), Sunderland Council
Jeremy Wicking	- Media Officer, Sunderland Council

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillors Emerson, Errington and Maddison along with Paula Hunt and Ian Warne

Declarations of Interest

Item 3 – Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group

Councillor Kay declared a personal interest as a member of the Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group.

Community Chest

Councillor E. Gibson declared a personal interest as a Council appointed Governor of Mill Hill Nursery.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 14th November, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th November, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Community Action in East Sunderland: Identifying New Issues and Agreeing Actions (2010/11 Work Plan)

National Citizen Services

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed the Committee of the National Citizen Service which was an initiative designed to contribute to the development of sustainable communities. Sunderland had been chosen by charity Catch 22 to pilot the scheme.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Pauline Hopper presented the report and advised that the report author Paul Power was not in attendance. It had been intended that he would be bringing a group of young people to the Committee however they were not yet ready to attend so would be coming to a future meeting. Ms Hopper agreed to take any questions back to Mr Power.

Councillor Wood queried how the pilot scheme would be funded.

Councillor McClennan stated that the pilot scheme should not cost the council as Catch 22 should be paying for it.

Ms Hopper advised that she would report back to Mr Power who would then be able to respond to the queries.

2. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Process for the Review of Local Area Plans for 2012

The Chairman moved that this item be deferred to the March meeting of the Committee to allow a more detailed report to be submitted to the Committee.

Members agreed with this motion to defer the item to the next meeting of the Committee.

3. RESOLVED that the item be deferred to the March meeting of the Committee to allow a further, more detailed report to be produced.

Community Action: Reviewing Progress and Agreeing Next Steps

Tackling Crime

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress against the agreed actions in the Work Plan for 2011/12, on behalf of the Crime Task and Finish Group.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Acting Inspector Craig Briggs presented the crime figures for the area and advised that all key crimes had shown a decrease.

Councillor Wood queried the figures in the table at paragraph 3.2 and was informed by Acting Inspector Briggs that it was likely that one of the sets of figures would be a projection; he agreed to check with headquarters and report back. He also agreed that the figures would be provided in a clearer format in the future.

The Chairman expressed concerns over the number of incidents in Ryhope. She referred to a resident who had lived in Ryhope for 40 years who had been forced to move out of their house due to being targeted repeatedly by vandals.

Councillor T. Martin stated that he had seen an article on the news relating to the introduction of a new system where if people had been victims of crime more than 5 times the police would give priority to incidents involving them. Acting Inspector Briggs advised that Northumbria Police operated a system which saw victims prioritised if they were victims twice in a 6 month period.

Keith Carruthers then presented the Fire statistics and advised that there had been a reduction overall in the number of deliberate fires however there had been an increase across Hendon and Millfield. He stated that the reduction could be related to the amount of snow there was last winter. He also drew Members attention to the definitions of Primary and Secondary fires detailed at paragraph 4.2 of the report. In response to a query from Councillor McClennan he added that primary fires were more serious although there were still risks from secondary fires; there were more secondary than primary

fires and the majority were caused by anti social behaviour. The CLG estimated that a secondary fire cost around £2,000 to tackle.

Councillor McClennan queried whether there was a correlation between the bin collection days and the fires involving bins. Nicky Rowland advised that the weekends seemed to be the most problematic due to people leaving rubbish in back lanes over the weekend.

Councillor Kay queried the term loose refuse and was advised by Mr Carruthers that it was anything from loose bags left outside back gates or next to bins through to fly tips.

In response to a query from Councillor Forbes Ms Rowland stated that the fire service provided information which was then used to work out where waste was coming from and then how to tackle the issue could be addressed. There was a need to ensure that the back lanes were free from waste which was a difficult task in some areas. When people did not have a wheelie bin there was a need to provide them with a replacement to prevent rubbish from being dumped in the back lane. The Chairman added that it could be appropriate to charge for replacement bins where people have left them out repeatedly.

Councillor McClennan congratulated the fire service for their hard work. There had been a major fire which had been dealt with very well and it had been good to see the partnership working with the cleansing team arriving shortly after the fire had been put out.

4. RESOLVED that the updates from Northumbria Police and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service be noted.

Cleaner and Greener Streets – Walk and Talk Programme

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on progress made against the agreed actions within the Work Plan for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Helen Peverley and Nicky Rowland, Area Response Managers for the City Centre and East Area, presented the report and provided the Committee with feedback from the walk and talk sessions which had taken place to date.

Ms Peverley presented the update on the city centre walks and advised that the whole city centre had been covered by two sessions. The main issues affecting the area were the appearance of commercial properties; litter in shrub beds; the condition of barriers which needed painting and repairing; and the amount of graffiti, especially in prominent and difficult to access locations. There had been a lot of work done to remove graffiti however there was some that the service had not been able to remove as it was too dangerous to get

access to it. She also advised that the City Centre Traders Association was planning to hold its own walk and talk sessions.

Ms Rowland then provided the Committee with the update from the East Area sessions. In Millfield there had been 2 sessions and a total of 23 issues had been identified. Hendon had seen 2 sessions as well which had identified 35 issues; there had been work carried out in the Sans Street area which had been funded through the budget allocated to the walk and talks. There had only been 1 session in St Michael's which had lead to 15 issues being raised. In Ryhope there had been 2 walks and 39 issues had been identified; there had been wild flowers planted along Toll Bar Road. Doxford had seen 2 walks with 11 issues raised.

Councillor Mordey commented that this was one of the best projects he had seen; there was work going on in Hendon on a daily basis and the issues were being looked at closely. He queried what would happen with any unspent funds at the end of the year and was informed by Ms Hopper that the money would be able to be carried forward into next year.

Councillor Kay commented that he felt that the programme had been a success; there had been issues identified which normally would not have been noticed. He was surprised however, that Members had not been informed of the activities involving the schools.

Councillor McClennan commented that there was an issue with the condition of the paving in Mowbray Park, this was the city's flagship park and the disgusting state of the paving slabs detracted from the impression of the park. There was a real need to ensure that the park was at its best especially as it was likely to be used a lot as part of the Sunderland in 2012 and Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

Councillor Mordey commented that in summer there were families of rabbits in Mowbray Park, he appreciated the need to control the population but felt that they should be allowed to breed more. He also advised that there were regularly complaints from residents about seagulls; he felt that there was a real need for there to be control of the seagull population.

Ms Peverley advised that there were discussions underway with Norma Johnston, Assistant Head of Street Scene, with regard to possible courses of action to tackle the seagull problem. She agreed to report back to the Committee on this matter.

Ms Peverley then went on to inform the Committee of the work around the Love Where You Live Campaign. She advised of the work that had been carried out in various locations around the area, as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report and also advised that Mowbray Park was to feature highly in the Olympic celebrations and the flowerbeds in the park would be supporting the Jubilee celebrations. It was proposed that there would be a series of events taking place across the city leading up to the Olympics which would be

commencing with a spring clean which would be taking place across the whole of the city.

Councillor Mordey stated that he felt it was important that information on these events be shared with the VCS networks.

Councillor Forbes stated that there was a need to ensure that the weeds were removed from the flowerbeds.

5. RESOLVED that:-
 - a. The updates on the Cleaner and greener Priority be noted
 - b. The benefits of the walk and talk programme and the Love Where You Live campaign and how they can complement the work plan be given consideration.

Employment, Enterprise and Welfare Rights – Update on First Tier Contracts

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the agreed actions on the Employment, Enterprise and Welfare Rights priority and provided an update on the 1st tier contracts.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Alison Aisbett, Advice Services Development Manager, presented the report and advised that 1st tier was the less complex work, there were also services for people who had more complex needs. 92 percent of the advice requested was in relation to Benefits and welfare rights.

The main base for the advice provided by Sunderland Advice Service was at the Age UK premises on Stockton Road in the City Centre. However there was also outreach provision to ensure that residents who were unable to travel were still able to access the facilities. Increase in demand for the service had increased over the last year as a result of the current welfare reform proposals. Demand for advice on debt and loan management was now required by more people.

SAS had put forward a bid for funding for the next 2 years to continue providing local 1st tier services. There would be work undertaken to identify suitable locations for face to face contact to take place and Members were asked for any suggestions.

Councillor T. Martin commented that the Age UK facility on Stockton Road was easy to access being close to Park Lane Interchange.

Councillor Mordey stated that there was a need for the provision to be locally based as people were unlikely to want to travel for advice and may not even be capable of travelling.

Councillor E. Gibson added that there was a need to be out in the community even if it was only for half a day each week.

Councillor Kay stated that it would be useful to have information detailing where the existing customers have come from as this would help to inform the identification of locations for the outreach work. Ms Aisbett advised that there was ward and postcode information which she would provide to Members.

Councillor McClennan asked how the East Area compared with the other areas in the city and also queried whether it could be possible to link the advice service in with the Councillors ward surgeries.

In response to Councillor Mordey Ms Aisbett advised that there had been profiling work done to find out how the benefit reforms would affect the city. There was information on a ward basis relating to the potential debt levels for residents. The potential providers who had submitted tenders had identified where the thought would be the most suitable location for advice sessions to be held. Given that there would be thousands of people affected by the changes it was proposed that there would be clinics held for people who were in similar situations to attend together.

Councillor McClennan stated that the effect of the changes to the single person housing benefits needed to be looked at. Ms Aisbett stated that everyone in the city who would be affected had been contacted and asked to approach the advice service; there had not yet been any responses.

Councillor T. Martin expressed concerns over money lenders; there was work being done to tackle illegal loan sharks however there was still a problem with the 'pay day loans' companies who charged huge amounts of interest. Ms Aisbett advised that there was a month of action commencing on 1st February which would see the council working with the police to tackle illegal loan sharks. She advised that the pay day loan companies were not illegal as they published their interest rates and were regulated by the FSA. There was a need to educate people as to alternative sources of money such as credit unions which did not charge extortionate interest levels.

6. RESOLVED that:-
 - a. The Committee support the delivery of advice in a locally responsive way through the first tier contract process.
 - b. Further updates on the work and outcomes achieved, particularly in light of welfare reforms, be received.

Change in the order of business

The Chairman stated that the Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group item be discussed at this time to allow the presenting officer to leave to attend another commitment.

Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the Eden Vale and Thornhill Project Group's action plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Richard Parry, Area Officer for the West Area, presented the report which detailed the progress made on the joint work between the East and West Area Committees to tackle the difficulties experienced in the Eden Vale and Thornhill areas. There were a number of initiatives being provided in the area by a number of providers however there was insufficient co-ordination between them. It was because of this an action plan had been produced to identify the issues and then prioritise the actions needed to be undertaken to tackle the issues. The action plan showing the identified actions and the work done to date was attached to the report along with the Communications Plan for the project group.

Councillor Kay stated that he was delighted by the progress that had been made; he had not expected there to have been so much progress made in such a short period of time. Councillor Scanlan agreed and added that the residents were delighted by the work; they had previously been tortured by the problems in the area.

7. RESOLVED that:-
 - a. The progress update be received and noted.
 - b. The Committee endorse the Communication Plan.

Meet Your Councillor Events

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the Meet Your Councillor Events which was an agreed action on the 2011/12 Work Plan under the Youth and Teenagers Priority.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Andrew Carton, Locality Manager (East), presented the report and advised that the Meet Your Councillor events had been part of a pilot involving six Councillors from the East Area and members of Sunderland Youth Parliament.

The Councillors and Youth Parliament Members had attended surgeries for young people held in Schools and Youth Clubs within that Councillor's ward. There was information for the young people in attendance on the role of Councillors and there was an opportunity for the young people to provide their thoughts on their neighbourhoods and raise any issues they had.

Since then feedback sessions had been held and it was proposed that there would be a rolling programme introduced with 2 events taking place each year.

Councillor Mordey stated that he had been involved in the pilot; it was an excellent opportunity for young people to have their say on matters which affected them.

Councillor Wood stated that there was a need for regular surgeries to be held.

8. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Free School Meals – Maximising Take-up

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the free school meals action which was a part of the 2011/12 Work Plan under the Youth and Teenagers Priority.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Andrew Carton, Locality Manager (East), presented the report and advised that there had been changes to the way the free school meals were delivered with parents being required to opt out of the system rather than opt in as it was previously.

Families could save £1.80 per day for primary school children and even more for secondary school children should they take up their entitlement to free school meals. In addition to helping the families there would be benefits for the school as well as the Government's new Pupil Premium saw schools receiving extra funding based on the number of pupils who were receiving free school meals.

Councillor T. Martin stated that not only were there financial benefits but also health benefits; if children were having school meals then they would be getting a nutritious meal at lunchtime.

9. RESOLVED that the action taken towards increasing the uptake of free school meals be noted and an update on the success of the campaign be received.

Work Plan 2011/12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the work plan for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Hopper presented the report and advised the Committee that there were no updates on any of the priorities beyond the updates which had been provided in the other Committee reports.

10. RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

Community Chest and Strategic Initiative Budget (SIB) – Financial Statement and Proposals for Further Allocation of Resources

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the allocation of SIB and Community Chest funding to support initiatives which would deliver activities against the priorities for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Pauline Hopper, Area Officer presented the report, taking Members through each application and answering questions from Members upon them.

Ms Hopper advised that there were 9 Community Chest proposals which were recommended to be supported. There were 4 applications for SIB funding.

Councillor Mordey stated that at the Community Chest Panel meeting there had been discussions around the possibility of delegating the decision making powers for Community Chest to the Ward Members at the panel meetings. He asked that a report be brought to the Committee on this matter.

Councillor Wood agreed that this would be worth examining.

Ms Hopper advised that such a change would require the Council's Constitution to be changed. Ms Johnson added that this was something that would be looked into and information on the feasibility of such a change would be provided.

Councillor Kay commented that the Constitution already provided the Area Committee Chairmen with some delegated powers; he suggested that it could be possible for them to make the decisions outside of the Committee using these powers.

11. RESOLVED that:-
 - a. the financial statements as set out in annex 1 and 3 of the report be noted;
 - b. approval be given to the 9 proposals for funding from the Community Chest totalling £5,760 from the 2011/2012 budget as set out in annex 2 of the report;
 - c. The 4 applications for SIB funding as set out in annex 4 of the report be approved.

Influencing Practice, Policy and Strategy

SOS Bus

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which offered Members the opportunity to be consulted on plans and strategies relevant to the area.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Leanne Davis, Assistant Policy Lead for Community Safety, presented the report and advised that the Local Alcohol Profiles for England showed that Sunderland was performing poorly with regard to a number of measures relating to alcohol. There had been a 39 percent increase in the number of males admitted to hospital for alcohol related reasons. For alcohol related admissions of under 18 year olds Sunderland was in the top 5 percent worst nationally. For binge drinking the city was in the top 5 percent worst and within the top 15 percent for harmful drinking.

This was a major concern and to tackle the problem there was a number of interventions being developed; one of these was the SOS Bus which would be based in the city centre on Friday and Saturday evenings to provide for people who were vulnerable or under the influence of alcohol.

Councillor Wood stated that the 39 percent increase in hospital admissions was staggering; he asked over how long a period this increase had been recorded. Ms Davis advised that the increase had been over a significant length of time.

Councillor Kay stated that Park Lane seemed to be the most obvious location for the bus. He also expressed concerns around funding and Ms Davis advised that there were financial constraints and as such the Primary Care Trust was not able to provide long term funding for the initiative.

The Chairman commented that the bus should be used on Bank Holiday Mondays as well.

Janet Johnson, Area Lead Executive, advised that there needed to be care taken with promoting the service. While it was excellent that support for people was being provided it was possible that there could be a negative impression of the city created.

Councillor Forbes commented that this was addressing the symptoms rather than the cause of the problem. There was a need to educate people about the dangers of excessive drinking.

Councillor T. Martin stated that the low figures for Hendon were excellent. He felt that this was a brilliant scheme which he supported fully. He felt that there should be health information available on the bus.

12. RESOLVED that:-
 - a. The content of the report be noted.
 - b. Feedback be offered on the proposal.

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

(Signed) E. BALL,
Chairman.