

At a meeting of the WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE held at THE MILLENNIUM CENTRE, CONCORD, WASHINGTON on WEDNESDAY, 9TH APRIL, 2008 at 6.30 P.M.

Present:

Councillor Sleightholme in the Chair

Councillors Fletcher, Miller, J. Stephenson, W. Stephenson, Timmins, Trueman, J. Walker, P. Walker, Whalen and Williams.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Chamberlin, A. Cuthbert and I. Cuthbert.

At this juncture the Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that this would be the last Area Committee for himself and Councillors J. Walker and W. Stephenson as they were standing down as elected Members. He thanked fellow elected Members and Officers for their support and hard work over the last 7 years and hoped that the good work of the Area Committee would continue.

Councillor J. Walker took the opportunity to address the Committee upon his imminent retirement and also gave thanks to fellow Members and Officers of the Council. He wished the succeeding Chairman every success. Councillor W. Stephenson also addressed the Committee and echoed the sentiments of Councillor Walker.

Sheila Davison, Chief Executive, Bridge Project, gave thanks on behalf of the Washington community for the terrific and invaluable work the Committee had carried out under the Chairmanship of Councillor Sleightholme in financially supporting community projects in the Washington area.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, 6th February, 2008

1. RESOLVED that the Minutes of the last meeting held on 6th February, 2008 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Notes of the Washington Pride Meeting held on Friday, 29th February, 2008

2. RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Washington Pride meeting held on Friday, 29th February, 2008 be received and noted.

Presentation from Northumbria Police on Crime Rates relating to the Washington Area.

Sergeant Ken Robinson was in attendance and detailed crimes committed in the Washington Area for the period April 2007 – March 2008:-

	March 07	April 08	% Change
Total crime		4310	+2% (from 06/07)
Criminal Damage	1316	1197	-9%
Violent Crime	1002	895	-10.7%
Vehicle Crime	365	582	+59.5%
Burglary – Dwelling	211	194	-8.1%
Burglary – other than Dwelling	220	207	-5.9%

Sergeant Robinson advised that the license review hearing for the Groove Nightclub was due to conclude that day but he was currently unaware of the outcome.

Currently, of major concern to residents and partner agencies was the issue of the unauthorised encampment of travellers/ gypsies in Washington and Sergeant Robinson advised that a number of locations were being examined to provide a permanent site for travellers. Sergeant Robinson would keep the Committee updated on this issue.

The antisocial behaviour in Donwell and Albany would be the focus of police attention in the next few weeks.

In response to a question from Councillor W. Stephenson, Sergeant Robinson advised that vehicle crime was currently on the decrease. The rise had been caused by a criminal travelling into the area who was currently in jail. This had impacted on the figures quoted.

3. RESOLVED that the presentation be received and noted.

Minutes of the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group held on 29th January, 2008 (copy circulated) was submitted.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

4. RESOLVED that the Minutes of the LMAPS held on 29th January, 2008 be received and noted.

Sunderland's 15 Year Commissioning Framework for Adult Social Care

Neil Revely, Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services, gave a PowerPoint presentation on Sunderland's 15 Year Commissioning Framework for Adult Social Care.

(For copy presentation – see original Minutes)

Mr. Revely advised the Committee that the strategy set out a comprehensive vision and approach to deliver services to meet the projected changing needs of Sunderland's population over the next 15 years.

Users of Social Care had advised that they wanted personalised services that met their individual needs, supported a healthier independent life, had a greater focus on prevention and better support for those with high level needs.

Mr. Revely advised that the framework was being shared with a range of stakeholders including Area Committees as part of the consultation process.

The vision for the framework was outlined as follows:-

- universal services will be developed to meet needs of individuals and communities;
- every citizen will have access to good quality accommodation of their choice;
- information and services will be provided locally by well-trained staff;
- individuals will have control over decisions which affect them; and
- investment and productivity will meet the demands and deliver better outcomes.

The framework would have five key aims:-

- to empower people to identify, choose and control the support or care they need to live as they want;
- for every person to have the support to live independently in their own home and community;
- to work with partners to improve access to services and opportunities for all sections of the community, in order that people lead fulfilling lives;

- to enable people to access a range of early and preventative interventions that prevent or delay decreasing independency; and
- to deliver outcome-based commissioning that provides people with the services they value most, alongside ensuring that they are cost effective.

Turning the 15 year vision into reality would be achieved through the development of a series of 3 year delivery plans, setting out projects that will meet the aims and linking the framework to the Local Area Agreement planning cycle. Mr Revely stated that it was envisaged that the final draft Framework would be submitted to Cabinet for approval during April 2008.

Councillor Timmins commented that an important aspect of the strategy was the emphasis on prevention, promotion of independence, choice and integration.

Councillor Williams questioned how many extra care properties would be made available and was advised that the number of properties required in the City were still being addressed.

5. RESOLVED the contents of the presentation be received and noted.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of the performance of the Benefits Section in the processing of new claims for the period 1st April, 2007 to 31st January, 2008.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

Steve Atkinson, Benefits Manager, presented the report stating that now the problems with processing claims had been resolved, the speed of processing had increased considerably to approximately 14 days.

Inevitably this would impact on the year end statistics although it was unclear whether the annual target would be met.

A publicity exercise for take-up would coincide with the issuing of the 2008/2009 Council Tax bills.

Mr. Atkinson advised the Committee that from 7th April, 2008 Housing Benefit in the private rented sector was changing with the introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the idea being to simplify the rules and allow tenants more freedom – both financially and to choose where they live.

Following a comment from Councillor Miller, Mr. Atkinson advised that it would have been difficult to send information packs out to Members prior to 7th April as consultation was still taking place and he apologised for this.

The Chairman, having thanked Mr. Atkinson for his report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Washington Millennium Centre

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise the Area Committee on the success of the redeveloped facility and partnership working at Washington Millennium Centre and the impact this has had on the local community.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

Mr. John Rostron, Sports Services Manager, Washington Millennium Centre, presented the report.

Mr. Rostron advised the Centre had achieved a great deal in the last 12 months and had overcome a number of challenges on the way, the number of users had grown to levels that now meant the Centre was moving towards a self sustaining position. The Centre was achieving approximately 1000 visits per week.

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Bowes Railway Feasibility Study Recommendations

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report to receive an update on the feasibility study that was commissioned and funded by the local councils with funding £8,000 from Washington's Strategic Initiatives Budget and £4,000 from Gateshead Council.

(For copy Report – see original Minutes)

Ms. Jane Hall, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism presented the report and outlined the key challenges, immediate priorities, options for development and next steps.

Councillor Miller queried the timescale for the delivery of the Conservation Management Plan and was advised that the decision was down to the Management Board.

Councillor W. Stephenson commented that there appeared to be two options for Bowes Railway:

- (i) close the site;
- (ii) commit to long term major funding and development.

He stated that site security would also need to be improved as it had been vandalised and there were a number of health and safety issues.

8. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Northern Children's Book Festival

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of the Northern Children's Book Festival which was held from 5th-17th November 2007 culminating in the Gala Day at Crowtree Leisure Centre on Saturday, 17th November, 2007.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

Jane Hall, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism, presented the report.

9. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Attainment Outcomes for School Children living in Washington in 2007

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide a summary of National Curriculum Assessments for primary and secondary school children living in Washington.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

10. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Development of Local Area Plans

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report to provide Members with an update on the development of Local Area Plans.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

Sue Bartlett, Area Regeneration Officer, presented the report and advised following a report to Members in September 2007 on the development of a Local Area Strategy, further consultation was taking place. To ensure further consultation and to ensure full alignment with the 'Sunderland Strategy', the emphasis had changed to the production of an Area Profile as a precursor to identifying the priorities that will form the Local Area Plan.

Members agreed to forward further comments to Sue Bartlett.

11. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Regeneration Issues Report: Feedback on Projects Previously Funded through Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB)

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide information to the Area Committee on expenditure from the Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) on projects it has previously funded.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

Lisa Boyd, Team Manager, On Track, was present on behalf of the organisation to address any comments or questions from Members.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Boyd for attending the meeting.

12. RESOLVED that the feedback report be received and noted.

Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) Regeneration Issues Report

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) on the proposed allocation of SIB funding to support the following initiatives of benefit to the area:-

- (i) Washington Cricket Club grounds and facilities;
- (ii) Echo Schools Project;
- (iii) International Friendship Festival Sound Programme;
- (iv) Youth Development Project (Millennium Centre);
- (v) YIP parenting pilot;
- (vi) Washington Pride Website Feasibility Study.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

Sue Bartlett, Area Regeneration Officer, presented the report and tabled an amended report regarding the contribution to the Washington Pride Website Feasibility Study which included an additional £3,000 for administration costs, bringing the total grant contribution to £9,881.

Therefore, the applications for funding before the Committee were requesting a total of £76,601 from the 2008/9 budget. Should the Committee grant these requests this would leave £200,939 to allocate.

The Chairman introduced representatives from the projects who were present to address any comments or questions from Members.

Councillor Miller requested more details in relation to North Washington YIP Parenting Pilot and requested that consideration of the item be deferred pending this information. Councillor P. Walker seconded this proposal.

The Chairman, having thanked everyone for their presentation, it was:-

13. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) £8,000 as a contribution from the 2008/9 budget for the development of Washington Cricket Club grounds and facilities;
- (ii) £12,500 as a contribution from the 2008/9 budget for the city-wide bid for the Eco Schools Project;
- (iii) £9,500 as a contribution from the 2008/9 budget for the International Friendship Festival Sound Programme;
- (iv) £16,720 as a contribution from the 2008/9 budget for the Youth Development Project (Millennium Centre);
- (v) £9,881 as a contribution from the 2008/9 budget for the Washington Pride Website Feasibility Study.
- (vi) that £20,000 as a contribution from the 2008/09 budget for the North Washington YIP Parenting Pilot be deferred pending further information.

Strategic Initiatives Budget: 2007/08 Ward Based Community Chest

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to bring forward 23 recommendations relating to 2008/2009 Community Chest Scheme.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

14. RESOLVED that approval be given to the 23 projects recommended for support from the 2007/08 budget as detailed in Annex 1 to the report.

Strategic Initiatives Budget: Ward Based Community Chest – Return of Unclaimed funding from Previous Years

The Chief Executive and City Treasurer submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided details of the unclaimed Community Chest Approvals and requested agreement that the funds be returned to the Community Chest budget for reallocation.

(For copy report – see original Minutes)

In accordance with Section 100(B) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman agreed by reason of the special circumstances that the report be considered as a matter of urgency as there would not be another opportunity to consider the matter until the next meeting in July 2008.

Members noted that funds to be returned were the unclaimed approvals from 2005/2006 and the carry over of the unallocated Community Chest budget from 2007/2008. The total amount was £16,061.

15. RESOLVED that the funding be returned to the Community Chest budget.

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

(signed) D. Sleightholme