

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held in Committee Room 1, City Hall, Plater Way,
Sunderland on Tuesday 6th December 2022 at 4.30 p.m.**

Membership

Cllrs Ali, M. Dixon, Edgeworth, Fagan, Foster, Laws, Mordey, Reed, Scanlan, D. Snowdon (Chairman), H. Trueman (Vice Chairman) and Warne.

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Report of the Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator (copy herewith).

Part C – CCFA/Members Item/Petitions

No items.

E. WAUGH,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance,
Civic Centre,
SUNDERLAND.

28th November 2022.

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CITY HALL on TUESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2022 at 4.30 p.m.

Present: -

Councillor D. Snowdon in the Chair

Councillors Ali, Dixon, Edgeworth, Fagan, Laws, Mordey, and Reed,

Also in attendance: -

Mr James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

Ms Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive, Sunderland BID

Mr Stephen Savage, Assistant Director of Regulatory Services, Sunderland City Council

Councillor Linda Williams, Portfolio Holder Vibrant City, Sunderland City Council

Members of the Press

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Foster, Scanlan, H. Trueman and Warne.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October 2022

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October, 2022 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October 2022 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Business Improvement District (BID) – Annual Update

The Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with progress on the work of the Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive, Sunderland BID presented the report along with PowerPoint presentation on the work of the BID, providing information on what had been delivered so far and the key projects for 2022/23 and was also on hand to answer Members queries.

Councillor Laws thanked Ms Appleby for the report commenting that there appeared to be a lot going on within the City. Councillor Laws referred to the Street Ranger and enquired if only one was enough to tackle the different challenges and issues that would occur, possibly over more than one working pattern.

Ms Appleby advised that they did originally have two street rangers but lost one staff member due to the time schedules, however they had managed up to now with one Ranger who was a brilliant member of the team. They were looking at contracting someone else in but at present, they were doing alright.

Stephen Savage, Assistant Director of Regulatory Services also advised that due to the problems in Sunniside there had been an increased Police presence with an additional four Officers providing more security, making people feel safer and they had some excellent feedback and had been welcomed by businesses and residents.

Councillor Laws referred to the Communications on some of the events as there was a great deal more of events took place than he was aware of and commented that as a number of the events were geared towards families, if we had engaged with Schools in promoting these.

Ms Appleby advised that they did advertise with schools, along with Raring to Go and the Sunderland Echo. It was difficult to get the cut through on Social Media so communications was key and it was about how they used social media along with different ranges of media such as radio for example.

Mr Savage commented that they had engaged with Metro Radio as it was important to extend their reach beyond their boundaries. Ms Appleby advised that as the City developed there was a need to spread our message wider and using the Empire Theatre statistics, these showed that they were getting much more visitors from Teesside for example.

Councillor Edgeworth referred to the figures on safety within the City Centre and commented that this was encouraging and enquired, with Tesco closing, if there were any discussions about Supermarkets opening later at night within the city centre, as many residents were requesting this.

Ms Appleby advised that this wasn't within her remit but she believed the Bridges and the Local Authority would be talking to people on this.

In relation to Councillor Edgeworth's query over lessons learned on the Sunderland Food Festival, Ms Appleby advised that they shouldn't have used Plot 12 and the engaging of a contractor hadn't worked as well as hoped so there had been a lot of learning for all of us.

Councillor Dixon enquired as to how the great number of businesses worked with the BID, if this was done by Committee and if the relationship was one of “us and them” in terms of the sizes of businesses.

Ms Appleby informed that the smaller businesses didn't pay the levy but still received a service as good will but they had to find a balance between those and the levy payers. There had been a City Centre Traders Association in the past but these had not met a whole amount since before Covid. At the moment, there was a Board which had the Leader and Deputy on along with a range of different businesses.

Ms Appleby added that they were looking at potentially increasing the rateable threshold to be a levy payer and then forming an independent group, the BID would then work with individual businesses. This happened currently in other areas such as Ipswich and Cambridge. Ms Appleby commented that she felt the service levy payers received was a very good one and what they gained access to was quite significant.

In response to Councillor Dixon's enquiry over the Council's financial support, Ms Appleby advised that they received a £40,000 grant and then the Council was also a levy payer.

Councillor Dixon referred to the extension of Restaurant week city wide and queried if it had been a slight disappointment that some well-known restaurants didn't buy in. Ms Appleby informed that there were now 56 restaurants on board now. The offer wasn't as strong in the City Centre when it first started and the whole of the City offer was important and it was disappointing if some businesses didn't want to take part but as they start to see the benefits they do start to get on board. Ms Appleby informed that Newcastle also had these issues and had taken them ten years to get to the point they were at now.

In response to Councillor Dixon's query over the feeling of the pocket of businesses around the Cinema at Sunnyside, Ms Appleby advised that the feeling was the area would come back into its own as the City Centre developed. There was interest from other organisations and new restaurants etc.

Councillor Dixon informed that he had attended a recent business event at the Stadium of Light and enquired if any links had been made with the club since their change of ownership. Ms Appleby advised that the Chief Operating Officer of the Club was on the BID Board and the Club were keen to engage, were much more supportive and had a much stronger relationship than the previous owners.

Mr Savage advised that they had monthly conversations with the Chief Operating Officer and they helped advertise the whole area, not just the club. The working partnership and dialogue was excellent now.

Councillor Dixon enquired if Officers felt the to link the University with the City Centre could be improved upon, something which he believed worked very well in cities such as Leeds for example where there was a vibrancy between the City Centre and its students.

Ms Appleby commented that she felt there needed to be more quality student accommodation on offer in order to improve upon this. The university had some

amazing courses on offer now along with the medical school to attract students from further afield and we needed to develop more of an offer to help keep students in the City.

Councillor Ali commented that he felt the efforts made over the City Centre had to be a long term project and the fight was to change peoples perception of Sunderland and those that would only go to Newcastle for example. Councillor Ali added that Sunderland had faced the additional issue of its functions being spread out across the City and he felt the increased restaurant offer was the definite way to progress forward as these would attract people into the Centre that wouldn't normally come. Councillor Ali enquired as to the status of the recent announced restaurants such as the Botanist and Rio.

Mr Savage advised that the Botanist was aiming for an Easter opening, the Hotel, the firsts week in December, things were happening but had just slowed down due to Covid etc and Rio was expected to be looking at next Summer to open.

Ms Appleby commented that she felt there was a more of a need to connect the City Centre up to the offer of the Seafront rather than focussing on comparing ourselves to other regions as we had a completely different offer to give.

Councillor Ali agreed, commenting that once successful places such as the Botanist opened, others would follow and enquired what thoughts had been given about the larger department stores for the City.

Ms Appleby advised that the larger department stores tended to be situated mainly in central London and the South East and even brands such as Selfridges were thinking about their operating model now but she would love to see such brands as IKEA providing a more localised offer.

In response to Councillor Ali's suggestion of the Debenhams site being used like the Gate in Newcastle, Ms Appleby advised that the Crowtree site was proposed for that type of offer of leisure/auditorium.

Councillor Ali raised the concern of Convenience stores in the City that were really suffering and enquired if there was anything being done to bring these fringe businesses into the BID. Ms Appleby advised that they needed to be within the boundary of the BID but requested that if this was the case, that Councillor Ali help them engage with these businesses.

Councillor Ali referred to the Bridges and the spaces getting rented out which he felt were all the same offer such as Cards shops and queried if there was any way to help smaller businesses into the Bridges. Ms Appleby advised that there wasn't much empty spaces in the Bridges and they were working with the Business Investment Team looking at empty properties, around the Mackies Corner area etc, where there were reasonable rents so it was not just all focussed in the Bridges. Councillor Ali wished to acknowledge the brilliant job being done by the team so far.

Councillor Reed wished to raise the view of the geographical lop-sidedness of where the events were taking place, with most being around Keel Square and queried why areas such as Park Lane weren't utilised more. Ms Appleby advised that Keel Square had been designated as a Public Space whereas Park Lane required Road

closures, which attracted a lot of negative comments from the public when this occurred. Ms Appleby advised that Park Lane was a great space but it was not easy to organise events around.

Mr Savage advised that the new traffic scheme planned would pedestrianize Park Lane for the better and would help allow more events to take place as a result.

Councillor Reed informed that there were five businesses within St Michaels Ward and Park Lane area that he knew had said they would all love for Park Lane to be pedestrianized. Mr Savage advised that plans were being considered and discussions were ongoing.

Councillor Reed enquired if the BID acted as a collective voice of businesses or if consultations were carried out. Ms Appleby advised that it depended on the subject, Holmeside for example, consultation was carried out with the Street Ranger delivering leaflets and the BIDs Manager took feedback so there was a process that needed to be worked through.

In response to Councillor Reed's enquiry on if the BID embarked on Capital Projects, Ms Appleby advised that they had not applied for funding for that so far but it was not to say they wouldn't in the future. It wasn't a massive fund but they could potentially look at grants for Capital Projects depending on what people wanted.

Councillor Reed enquired what the thought process was behind the criteria for Events and did this include reach or growth for example. Ms Appleby advised that thought was given to what works in Sunderland, what had worked before and what was working elsewhere. Research was carried out with the consumer to find what they wanted also so there was a whole range of different things taken under consideration.

Councillor Reed enquired if they worked with the Councils East Sunderland Area Committee, which covered the City Centre. Ms Appleby advised that they probably did not work with the Area Committee as much as they would like or should do and this was definitely something they needed to look at.

Councillor Mordey wished to thank the Officers for a brilliant presentation and commented on how far the City had moved forward in the last 10-12 years and how Ms Appleby being in post over the last 5-6 years had really driven that growth and that the Team had a real passion for the City Centre. Councillor Mordey added that he was really excited about the future and that he did not think it would take another 12 years to see another significant improvement but when it did, it would be phenomenal.

Ms Appleby commented that 2024 would be key with some really big developments such as the Culture House coming to fruition and other types of operators coming on board we were starting to have different conversations, opening up new opportunities which was a massive change.

Mr Savage advised that the perspective had changed just over the last 6-9 months with the ambition looking forward was just incredible.

The Chairman thanked Ms Appleby for her attendance and for sharing such a positive report/presentation.

Having discussed the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the Committee considered and discussed the progress so far and its comments be noted.

Events – Update Report

The Assistant Director of Regulatory Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an update on the Events held in the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Stephen Savage, Assistant Director of Regulatory Services presented the report and was on hand, along with the relevant Portfolio Holder, Councillor Linda Williams to answer Members queries.

Councillor Edgeworth enquired if there was plans for engagement with residents on the vision going forward such as a Let's Talk for example and with the cancellation of the Air show whether they would ask for suggestions for replacements.

Councillor Williams commented that they needed to recognise the wider boundaries that the City had and they as Councillors needed to get into the communities to find out what their residents wanted, to look at work of the Area Committees and what they were doing as they had the best links to their people.

Councillor Edgeworth referred to the decision of cancelling the air show and queried the reasons and how these were released to the public. Councillor Williams advised that the City Plan included environmental considerations therefore the Carbon usage had to be taken into account, however this wasn't the only consideration. The Air show had been a very expensive event to put on and had accounted for around 70% of the events budget. Councillor Williams also advised that over the last 30 years, around 10 years had been affected by the weather so there was an element of a risk factor and it was now about how we managed all these factors, how we met the City Plan targets alongside the City's events.

Councillor Edgeworth commented that if more detail had been given as to the budgets and included as the reason for cancelling, the public could have accepted these reasons more, but the using of carbon omissions as the main reason will have been a shock to the public and Councillor Edgeworth enquired if officers could talk through the decision making on carbon usage and how much carbon was expected to be saved etc as there were no figures included in the reason given at the time, which gave the perception that this had just been an excuse.

Councillor Williams commented that the cancellation of the air show had been a difficult decision to take and however it had been justified it would have been seen as an excuse. Mr Savage added that it was important to take residents views on board also as to what events they wished to see the airshow replaced with and this could lead to an increased level of smaller events.

Councillor Fagan commented that if reasons had been clear that money was tight then people would've appreciated the decision more and enquired if consideration had been given to reducing the amount of days the air show ran over, to meet in the middle, as people were devastated this event had been cancelled which raised the profile of the City.

Mr Savage advised that to mobilise for one day would probably be two thirds more expensive than running the event for three or four days due to the infrastructure that was needed.

Councillor Fagan referred to the Illuminations event and enquired if surveys were carried out on this as the comments she had received from people were that they were finding the event tired and unvaried, especially when they were paying to attend now.

Councillor Williams disputed that the illuminations were unvaried as they had to hire in the lights now so they were different themes each year and it depended on which residents were spoken to as she had received feedback which had been positive about the new themes.

Mr Savage commented that at present the event was £3 per head. If there was to be an increased offer then the cost of the ticket would also have to increase which would further antagonise residents therefore a balance was needed between delivery and quality. Mr Savage also advised that surveys would be carried out once this years event had finished. In further response to Councillor Fagan's enquiry, Mr Savage advised that the Illuminations cost in the region of £150,000-£200,000 to put on.

Councillor Fagan commented on the new focus seemingly being on attracting sporting events to the City, and as the Council could not say when these would take place or what time of day, they could result in road closures, as the cycling events had for example and had also brought large entourages. These would have included large carbon footprints and whilst would not compare with the Air shows, Councillor Fagan queried if the Council was giving consideration to each of the events and their carbon footprints.

Mr Savage agreed that the Cycling event had created a number of obstacles and in the future more consideration would be given to these and the economic impacts whilst trying to find a balance against the raising of the City's profile.

Councillor Williams advised that there was a need to consider all events on their carbon footprint going forward.

In response to Councillor Reed's enquiry Mr Savage advised that their definition of a profile event was the triathlon that took place, something that gained the City a profile nationally.

Councillor Reed questioned if the Council were putting all eggs in one basket with sporting events that may not come and needed to be bid for, such as the Rugby or Triathlon's, in place of the air show which happened every year.

Mr Savage advised that the annual cost was different for one off events rather than pillar events and it was important to have Sunderland specific events such as summer streets etc and to develop our own identity.

Councillor Reed enquired if the Air show was run at a loss for the Council but if it had been positive financially for the local businesses. Mr Savage advised that the cost to run the air show was around £600,000 to £700,000. Ms Appleby informed the Committee that absurdly, the airshow killed the trade for City Centre businesses during it's run.

In response to Councillor Reed's enquiry, Mr Savage advised that there was no ability to "de-risk" the event. It was a four day festival and they couldn't obtain that level of revenue needed from vendors as they couldn't take such a risk due to the weather considerations. Ms Appleby advised that sponsorship was incredibly difficult to obtain also.

Councillor Reed referred to the recent attendance to this Committee by Catherine Auld in relation to Carbon reduction measurers and that this decision hadn't been mentioned therefore enquired if the decisions would be made on a case by case basis or had this calculation been made by the Leadership.

Councillor Williams advised that their had been a review within the Senior Team which had resulted in a fresh take and fresh sets of eyes with more Health focussed Officers taking over different responsibilities therefore making more environmentally and economic focussed decisions. Mr Savage advised that decisions would be made with regards to carbon neutrality but also had to factor in the risk and cost to the Council.

Councillor Reed commented that as the Council did not record Carbon capture, he found it difficult to believe that the Leaderhip had the statistics available to make such a decision over the air show and also commented that with the intention to hold more local events in Wards then there needed to be more help to groups who would be organising these. Councillor Reed informed of a local group which had been charged recently during their preparations and felt that unnecessary obstacles had been put in their way by the Council.

Mr Savage advised that for 2023/24 they were working with people in order to facilitate and help reduce costs and that if Councillor Reed gave him the details of the local group mentioned he would look at this further.

Councillor Laws commented that given the information supplied, the cancellation of the air show was probably the right decision, with jets travelling around 25 miles during the show and their carbon omissions on top of the costs to run the event, Councillor Laws enquired if the £600,00 to £700,000 cost was to be saved, if this would be allocated into other places.

Councillor Williams advised that they did not know what the budgets for events would be as yet but some would already be going into the Triathlon events already scheduled. Mr Savage advised that the £600k-£700k cost was based on 2019 figures, and since then the events budget had been reduced alongside costs having gone up so it was more of a squeeze. If the air show had gone ahead then there would be very little money for anything else to be implemented.

Councillor Laws commented that if there were any funds to be reallocated he would like to see these be given to the Area Committee's to look at producing new events whilst also helping the existing events they fund.

Councillor Williams agreed and pointed to the Houghton Feast events which had been a bargain in terms of the turnout that achieved and provided local entertainment.

Councillor Laws advised that there was massive potential in Washington to deliver in areas other than the City Centre. Councillor Laws also referred to profile events and queried what impact the Netflix show, Sunderland 'Till I Die had upon the City.

Mr Savage advised that internationally, he felt the show had a significant affect upon the City and that events going forward would include the 50th anniversary of our cup final win. Mr Savage also commented that such shows, whilst giving the City a profile can sometimes also be a risk, reputationally, but he did not feel that was the case in this instance.

Councillor Mordey referred to the Air show and commented that any change was difficult when something beloved was taken away but he accepted the reasons of aiming for carbon neutrality. However some websites and forums had angry postings and Councillors were stating they had received complaints, therefore enquired if Officers had been passed information of such complaints by Members, with a response requested to the residents.

Mr Savage advised that he was not aware of any such requests to follow up on directly but he couldn't say whether this had gone directly to the Chief Executive.

Councillor Mordey agreed that if they could partner with the Area Committee's in future that this was the way forward as they already had a model that worked and the key was to provide good community events and if the groups could get 5-6 years continuous funding to get off the ground this would be the way forward.

Councillor Dixon commented that he usually liked to be positive where he could but did feel that the Council could be better at advertising its events and queried if Nissan had ever provided sponsorship. Ms Appleby advise that Nissan had not provided any sponsorship and they were approached regularly.

Councillor Dixon commented that residents appeared to oppose parking at the seafront recreation park and it didn't seem to get used and enquired if it could be utilised more. Mr Savage advised that Cliffe Park was preferred for the way it was structured.

Councillor Dixon referred to the City's previous world cup bid and enquired if they had their time again, if they would have done more homework before committing money to the bid. Mr Savage advised that at that time, each Council had been required to commit £250,000 and that going forward in the future those commitments were no longer required and that it would be a massive decision not to bid now.

Councillor Ali commented that he had a great deal of nostalgia for the Airshow and that whilst they may tend to initially see things from the residents point of view he

was mindful that children nowadays were not as keen on attending the event and as a Councillors view he could understand the decision as the event wasn't profitable anymore. However Councillor Ali commented that there was a need to find something to replace the event with, for the businesses who would be losing out due to this decision and enquired if there was anything that could be done in those 4 days as a replacement that would benefit those businesses.

Mr Savage advised that the aim was to put on smaller but more frequent events as a replacement.

In response to Councillor Dixon's suggestion, Mr Savage advised that there absolutely was a need to focus more on multicultural events and to pick up more on those.

Councillor Laws suggested events tied into the Afghan and Ukrainian integration schemes, this was an opportunity not just from an economic perspective but also gave an angle to help with integration to the community.

The Chairman commented that he would like to see more sponsorship and see the City get behind some of these events and hopefully this would change over the next few years. The Chairman thanked Councillor Williams and Mr Savage for their presentation.

Having discussed the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the Committee received and noted the report.

Annual Work Programme 2021-22

The Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated), to provide options, provide support and advise Members on the development of the scrutiny work programmes for 2022/2023

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer presented the report for Member's information

Councillor Mordey informed the Committee of the breaking news of the proposed film studios at the former Pallion Shipyard site and suggested that this be added to the workplan for more detail to come forward.

In response to Councillor Edgeworth's query over an update on Public Transport, Mr Diamond advised that this was still on the work plan and that he would speak with Mark Wilson as to when this update could be expected.

Councillor Dixon wished to place his thanks on record to Steve Wearing in Licensing for the detailed information he had provided on reduction of taxi drivers statistics which would have involved a great deal of work.

4. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme for 2022-2023 be noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members Support Co-ordinator submitted a report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28-day period from 12th October, 2022 (copies circulated).

(For copy report and notice – see original minutes).

Mr Diamond reminded Members to get in touch if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

5. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting

(Signed) D. SNOWDON,
Chairman.

Item 4

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION

BUSINESS CENTRES UPDATE

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To provide Members with the current position on the Council's three business centres - Evolve Business Centre, Sunderland Software Centre and Washington Business Centre - including an overview of the progress post pandemic, the current challenges, financial and occupancy information and an update on progress in relation to the operational management of the centres.
- 1.2 The report follows previous reports to Scrutiny Committee, the latest of which was for the meeting held on 7 December 2021. Previous reports were brought to Scrutiny Committee on 11 February 2020 and 18 November 2018.
 - 1.2.1 As an overview:
 - Section 2 provides background on the context within which the Business Centres are operated.
 - Section 3 gives an overview of each of the Business Centres including a mini case study of one business from each centre.
 - Section 4 sets out the financial and occupancy position in relation to each of the centres.
 - Section 5 summarises progress in relation to the revised operating model.
 - Section 6 provides a short conclusion.

2. Background

- 2.1 Sunderland City Council has three business centres which are managed in-house by a dedicated team, which is part of the Council's Business Investment Team. These centres are Evolve, Sunderland Software Centre and Washington Business Centre.
- 2.2 The business centres are intended to provide more than just office, workshop and hybrid employment space. Their purpose is to contribute to the diversification and growth of the economy in Sunderland by ensuring that there is a supply of appropriate spaces and infrastructure to meet demand for high quality small and growing businesses. Each of the business centres provides differentiated services targeted at a specific market sector to generate specific economic benefits.
- 2.3 The business centres are part of a wider offer across the North East. They are one component among a wide range of interventions intended to increase Sunderland's competitiveness in both attracting high quality jobs and businesses to Sunderland and supporting economic development within the city.

3. Overview of Business Centres

3.1 This section gives a brief overview of each of the business centres.

3.2 **Evolve** was completed in 2006, a £10m investment, part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It provides 32,000 square feet of high-quality accommodation including incubator space for small firms, with scope to accommodate companies in a range of office sizes to meet the needs of individual businesses. Office sizes currently range from 180 to 4,048 square feet. Prior to the pandemic Evolve performed well in terms of rental income and occupancy and supported multiple companies to grow.

Key facts:

Number of employees based at Evolve ¹	140
Number of new jobs created during 2022/23	10
Number of businesses expanding during 2022/23	3

Mini case study:

Evolve Assessment Solutions Limited

Evolve Assessment Solutions Limited offer an online assessment platform aimed at business leaders and business psychologists. They offer the development of bespoke psychometric products covering a range of assessment models widely used in business these include personality questionnaires, cognitive ability testing, 360-degree appraisal.

Evolve Assessment Solutions Limited took a small 2-person office in 2019. During the pandemic the company continued to grow and in 2022 they took on more than double the original size of office space and now have 7 employees. The product they have is growing in demand as companies search for cost effective solutions which take the effort out of recruitment, selection and performance management.

<https://www.evolveassess.com>

3.3 Since 2006 Evolve has provided a home for over 70 companies that have created approximately 500 jobs. A number of businesses based in Evolve over the years have spun out new companies, gone on to be acquired by larger companies, or grown into workspace elsewhere in the wider city economy.

3.4 **Sunderland Software Centre** was completed in 2012, a £9m investment, part funded with European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It provides 37,582 square feet of high-quality incubator space with scope to accommodate companies in offices that range from 130 to 2,000 square feet. The Centre has taken longer than expected to reach its projected targets, with historic occupancy and rental incomes below anticipated levels. Prior to the pandemic, Sunderland Software Centre achieved 75% as its maximum

¹ As at end of October 2022.

occupancy. Occupancy fell to 33% at its lowest point. Whilst not achieving the levels of occupancy originally anticipated, it has provided a high-quality environment for technology focused companies with much needed, flexible workspace in a part of the city centre that has suffered from a lack of new office space.

- 3.5 During 2021 Sunderland City Council took the decision to rent 48% of the building on a three-year lease (with the option to extend for a further two years) to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support DWP objectives of providing additional support to those left unemployed as a result of the pandemic. The letting required significant adaptation of the Software Centre building. DWP took up occupancy in May 2022, increasing both the occupancy and income levels and thereby turning around the financial performance of the centre. However strategic planning and development work will be needed to ensure the current position is maintained beyond the current lease agreement.
- 3.6 With the development of The Beam and other office buildings as part of the wider Riverside Sunderland development, there is now the prospect of an improving wider market environment which may assist in attracting more businesses into the City, allowing Sunderland Software Centre to operate more competitively with increased occupancy and rental incomes.

Key facts:

Number of employees based at Sunderland Software Centre ²	120
Number of new jobs created during 2022/23	12
Number of businesses expanding during 2022/23	2

Mini case study:

Teeny Weeny VR

Teeny Weeny VR took an office in Sunderland Software Centre in 2020. The company provides virtual reality (VR) headsets to support and enhance the learning experience of SEND (special educational needs and disabled) children. The idea came from the founder's own experience. The VR headsets provide exciting and immersive experiences including travel attractions, providing a calming influence for anxiety and a non-threatening way of escape. The Company has been successful in obtaining grant funding to develop the product which is marketed to schools, as well as individuals. The company is currently small but has potential for real growth.

<https://teenyweenyvr.com>

- 3.7 **Washington Business Centre** was completed in 2014, a £6m investment funded by the Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) and ERDF. It provides 42,557 square feet of high-quality accommodation including 13 workshops, 7 hybrids and 24 offices. Workshops range from 735 to 1,639 square feet, hybrids from 190 to 1,394 square feet and offices from 496 to 1,398 square feet. There is consistently strong demand for the workshop and hybrid

² As at end of October 2022.

facilities, whereas it has been more difficult to achieve higher occupancy for the offices.

Key facts:

Number of employees based at Washington Business Centre ³	146
Number of new jobs created during 2022/23	12
Number of businesses expanding during 2022/23	3

Mini case study:

BPP Visual Limited took up space in Washington Business Centre in 2014, the year it opened. They provide a one stop design, print, manufacture and installation service. They worked with a range of high-profile clients including Airbus, Rolls Royce, Balfour Beatty, Tarmac, Transport for London, HS2 and Nissan providing visual management products to support the management of systems and processes. During the pandemic they provided signage for the nightingale hospitals and expanded their print products to include social distancing signage, and their manufacture products to include perspex screening. Whilst the work force has increased minimally though putting their own products into action they are able to work smarter and manage a larger order book.

<https://www.bppvisual.com>

4. Financial and Occupancy Performance Information

- 4.1 This section sets out the overall position for the business centres for 2021/22 and projections for 2022/23, as well as financial and occupancy information in respect of each individual business centre.
- 4.2 All of the business centres are still impacted operationally by the coronavirus pandemic and are now dealing with the challenges of buildings which are all ageing and the rising costs of utilities. There has, despite the external economic environment been an increase in enquiries for new accommodation, requests for meeting room hire are going up and we have had a small number of businesses converting from enquiry to occupancy. This has both improved and stabilised the performance of all the centres after what has been a turbulent couple of years. Occupancy across all three centres has improved the overall financial position. Part of the management of the business centres has been listening to the needs of businesses as they operate within a post pandemic new normal. The accommodation offer has been developed to be more flexible in order to match a range of hybrid working arrangements. These evolving requirements have also created opportunities for stimulating new occupiers and lettings as business owners readjust their current business models. Many companies have returned to their office bases as they miss the benefits of face-to-face interaction and collaboration. There is however a much greater mix of operating models than there was before the pandemic with some businesses operating a hybrid/blended approach to working, some

³ As at end of October 2022.

back to office working full time and others wanting a more diversified virtual tenancy offer.

- 4.3 The overall financial position for all business centres for the financial year 2021/22 is summarised below.

	Budget (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
Expenditure	1,590,525	1,701,109	(110,584)
Income	1,454,457	1,081,621	(372,836)
TOTAL	(136,068)	(619,488)	(483,420)

As set out earlier in the report the 2021/2022 financial position was adversely affected by the continuing impact of the pandemic on businesses and use of the business centres. The deficit for 2021/22 was funded as part of the overall council outturn.

- 4.4 The 2022/23 projected position across all three business centres is as follows:

	Budget (£)	F'cast (£)	Variance (£)
Expenditure	1,512,034	1,556,092	(44,058)
Income	1,454,457	1,482,881	28,424
TOTAL	(57,577)	(73,211)	(15,634)

The 2022/23 projection (using financial information to end of October 2022) is forecasting a small deficit against budget. The forecast is a much-improved position from 2021/22, mainly due to the DWP occupancy at Sunderland Software Centre.

- 4.5 The individual business centres' financial positions and occupancy performance are detailed below.

4.6 Evolve

- 4.6.1 Evolve continues to be impacted the most of all three centres from a financial perspective. In the period during and post pandemic it has lost businesses, some of which have chosen to work fully from home, others which have moved to virtual tenancies, and others which unfortunately have gone into administration. The occupancy level reduced from 98% at the end of the financial year 2019/20 down to 69% at the end of October 2021, however during 22/23 the position has improved, and the occupancy stands at 78% at the end of October 2022. The reduction in occupancy has resulted in reduced rental income. The maintenance costs for the centre have also increased significantly due to the age of the building and its systems, which has resulted in significant overhead increases which will continue to be a challenge.

4.6.2 Evolve has attracted three new small businesses this year and also had three companies upscale. The income from meeting room hire is 2.5 times greater comparing the period April to October 2021 to April to October 2022, as businesses increasingly require either in-person or hybrid (in-person and virtual combined) meetings. The team continues to develop other opportunities to increase income. Rental rates of £27.00 a square foot (inclusive of rent and service charge) have been upheld since April 2021. The team is also looking at opportunities to reduce expenditure. Evolve continues to benefit from reductions in utilities costs, due to having LED lighting installed since 2020, PV panels and battery storage have been installed in 2022 and we will start benefitting from solar power and a resultant saving on utilities during 2023. Evolve has also had an air source heat pump installed in early 2022 which heats the centre's hot water and replaces the old gas boilers. Evolve was also one of two test locations as part of the council's Low Carbon innovation project developed with the Digital Catapult which sought to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. The recommendations identified within this project has resulted in a reduction in the use of gas and resultant cost savings and provided for monitoring of the air quality.

4.6.3 It is anticipated from the number of enquiries for office space that occupancy levels will continue to increase during the remainder of 2022/23 and into 2023/24 which will improve income levels.

4.6.4 The financial position for Evolve for 2021/22 was as follows:

2021/22	Budget (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
Expenditure	653,244	725,547	(72,303)
Income	700,082	553,918	(146,164)
TOTAL	46,838	(171,629)	(218,467)

4.6.5 The projected financial position for Evolve for 2022/23 is as follows:

	Budget (£)	F'cast (£)	Variance (£)
Expenditure	599,083	632,847	(33,764)
Income	700,082	551,474	(148,608)
TOTAL	100,999	(81,373)	(182,372)

The overall position has shown a slight improvement due to a reduction in forecast expenditure. Projected income is slightly less than the 21-22 actual.

4.7 Sunderland Software Centre

4.7.1 Sunderland Software Centre has seen a very significant financial improvement during 2022/23, wholly due to the DWP renting 48% of the space.

- 4.7.2 Occupancy at Sunderland Software Centre increased from 34% at the end of October 2021 to 73% at the end of October 2022. The business centre continues to be relatively quiet, but more companies have returned to office-based working and there has been an upturn in enquiries for office space.
- 4.7.3 Base rate rents for new tenants at SSC has been increased from April 2021 to £14.00 sq. ft with a service charge of £8.00 sq ft. Expenditure has been reduced by £90,000 per annum by remodelling the security provision and savings are being achieved on utilities costs due to LED lighting installed in 2020 with PV panels and battery storage due to be installed in early 2022.
- 4.7.4 Sunderland Software Centre has attracted two new businesses during 2022/23 and continues to look for other opportunities to increase income appropriately whilst ensuring that occupancy of the centre remains attractive and a viable location for businesses. Significantly, the Council entered into a 5-year lease agreement for 18,000 sq. ft of space within the centre to be rented to the DWP as part of the Government's activity to facilitate post Covid recovery. This service has been operational since May 2022 and is providing much needed support to residents who may have lost their jobs during the pandemic. The lease income is circa £400,000 per annum in rent. The DWP have their own separate entrance on Laura Street. The time-limited lease was agreed as an exception to allow this important work by DWP to take place within Sunderland Software Centre in parallel to its core function which remains focused on supporting business start-up, growth and innovation to grow the city's software and technology sector.
- 4.7.5 There has been an increased number of enquiries and occupancy levels are currently 73% at the end of October 2021). We also have two companies who have upsized and taken additional space in the centre demonstrating business growth and business investment.
- 4.7.6 The financial position for Sunderland Software Centre for 2021/22 was as detailed below:

2021/22	Budget (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
Expenditure	604,367	628,847	24,480
Income	410,690	211,229	(199,461)
TOTAL	(193,677)	(417,618)	(223,941)

- 4.7.7 The projected financial position for Sunderland Software Centre for 2022/23 is as follows:

Budget (£)	F'cast (£)	Variance (£)
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Expenditure	594,783	606,274	(11,491)
Income	410,690	568,379	157,689
TOTAL	(184,093)	(37,895)	146,198

The projected financial position for 2022/23 is significantly improved from previous years.

4.8 Washington Business Centre

4.8.1 Of the three business centres, Washington Business Centre has emerged from the pandemic as the least adversely affected financially, although it now faces the challenges of higher utilities costs (particularly for the workshops some of which have high energy usage because of the nature of the work being performed). The diversity of the accommodation (offices, workshops and hybrids) differentiates it from the other business centres. The workshops and hybrids always have high levels of occupancy. Historically, the offices have been hardest to let at the centre and whilst occupancy of the offices fell during the pandemic we are now receiving increased enquiries for larger spaces, which will increase occupancy. Washington Business Centre has attracted 2 new businesses during 2022/23, with another two companies moving in before the end of the financial year.

4.8.2 Occupancy at Washington Business Centre was at 64% at the end of October 21 and is at 68% at the end of October 2022. Savings are being realised on utilities due to LED lighting being installed in 2020 and PV panels and battery storage installed in 2022. Despite the energy saving improvements we have still to factor in rising utilities costs.

4.8.3 The financial position for Washington Business Centre for 2021/22 was as follows and shows a deficit.

2021/22	Budget (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
Expenditure	332,914	346,716	13,802
Income	343,685	316,474	(27,211)
TOTAL	10,771	(30,242)	(41,013)

4.8.4 The projected financial position for Washington Business Centre for 2022/23 is as follows:

Budget (£)	F'cast (£)	Variance (£)
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Expenditure	318,168	316,971	1,197
Income	343,685	363,028	19,343
TOTAL	25,517	46,057	20,540

The projected financial position for 2022/23 is an improvement from last year.

5. Progress in relation to the revised operating model

5.1 It was agreed in 2019 to review the operating model of the Council's Business Centres and explore opportunities to consolidate various aspects of delivery. A third-party specialist was appointed to support this process. We have continued to work alongside the third-party specialist since this time. Significant changes and improvements have been implemented to the management and operation of the business centres. These include:

- The introduction of regular monthly strategic management meetings between Centre Management and the third-party specialist to look in depth at all aspects of operation, and to pool and share good practice. This has led to the standardisation of systems and procedures across all three centres, more flexible deployment of staff and more effective use of time as staff can carry out responsibilities in relation to any of the centres wherever they are based, and more effective joint working increasing the team's ability to retain business from external enquiries (for office or meeting space) within the three business centres.
- Reshaping the staff team roles and responsibilities, including front of house at Sunderland Software Centre and Evolve, creating one central dedicated team and introducing a single line management reporting structure.
- Working to improve the visibility and promotion of the Business Centres through the development of new websites and letting processes. Dedicated business centre websites went live in December 2021.
- During 2022/23 the support has been concentrated on marketing and promotion through our social media channels, Twitter, and LinkedIn in as well as providing content for the websites to grow our followings and promote all the facilities and services the business centres have to offer.

5.2 Significant progress has been made despite the residual impact of the pandemic, managing the impact of rising utilities costs, as well as the increasing maintenance costs associated with the ageing of the buildings. It is anticipated that both the economic impact and the financial performance of

the business centres can be significantly improved during the 2023/24 financial year.

- 5.3 There are also expected to be different opportunities for the business centres in terms of supporting business growth. Many employers are being encouraged to adopt more flexible working practices, to support better work-life balance, as well as to contribute to carbon reduction by cutting down on commuting and reducing pressure on the road network as confidence increases in public transport post pandemic. The relationship between home and office workplaces is changing. This provides opportunities for the business centres, which have high-quality meeting and collaboration spaces and are located in close proximity to a range of residential neighbourhoods, to bring together communities of like-minded businesses and offer distinctive opportunities to enhance the business centre service offering across Sunderland.
- 5.4 Overall, the aim of this continuing programme of improvement work is to ensure that each of the business centres achieves the maximum economic impact for Sunderland, as the wider region seeks to recover from the impact of the pandemic as well as effectively managing the impact of rising utilities costs. The team will continue to measure economic impact and benefit. There are opportunities to build on performance to date, with ongoing benefits each year to be captured in terms of jobs created, spin-out businesses and growing companies.
- 5.5 The approach will continue with a programme of enhanced marketing and social media as well as enquiry handling, with a very strong approach to both customer relationship management and identifying economies of scale. With standardised operating procedures in place, a continued focus on increasing income and reducing expenditure, and a programme of support scheduled to continue until December 2022, the impact should result in increased performance, significantly enhancing centre management for the 2023/24 financial year. Close interaction with the wider Business Investment Team remains important in making the business centres a location of choice for new and growing companies across the city.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Whilst the business centres operated at an overall loss during 2021/22 the current projection for 2022/2023 is for a significantly reduced deficit. Wider economic benefits to the city through supporting companies to grow and provide high quality jobs will continue to be generated.
- 6.2 The ongoing improvement programme, with a focus on improved marketing will continue to raise awareness of the centres and what they have to offer. This should increase enquiries, and resultant lettings, feeding through into and improved financial position across all three business centres.

- 6.3 During a challenging external economic environment, our business centres continue to provide the capacity and resources to support local business growth. There is a real opportunity to maximise improved staff resources within the new team structure to increase business occupancy and growth. The business centres have historically provided significant economic value to the city and can continue to do so as they adapt to the new and emerging requirements of businesses in what is to be a further period of economic challenge.

7 Recommendation

- 7.1 The Committee are asked to consider and comment on the report.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2022

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - UPDATE

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on a range of environmental issues affecting the city and the plans for the future.

2. Background

- 2.1 In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee agreed to receive an update on a range of environmental issues in the city.
- 2.2 These issues include consideration of the current position with regards to:-
- refuse
 - fleet
 - depot development
 - local services by area
 - weedkilling pilot
 - bereavement services
 - preparation for response to winter weather
 - service improvements, social media and resident feedback

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Marc Morley (Director of Environmental Services) will be in attendance to provide a progress report and answer any questions from members.
- 3.2 A copy of the presentation is attached.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the update report on environmental services within the city.

Environmental Services update

Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

6th December 2022

1

Lasting Impact of COVID-19 on Services

Most of Environmental Services are back to pre COVID-19 processes and procedures

The volume of waste collected is heading back to pre-COVID-19 levels

Roker and Seaburn Beaches became more significant public spaces during COVID-19, which has involved more deployment of staff to the area

Fleet consist of a very small team and are still working in an agile fashion to prevent the spread of the infection

2

Refuse - Pallion Household Waste & Recycling Centre

- ▶ Work on a new HWRC at Pallion began in December 2020 and opened earlier this year
- ▶ The new site cost circa £5m
- ▶ The site runs on a booking system basis, with residents of Sunderland currently able to apply for a free permit that will grant them access to the site
- ▶ Saint Vincent De Paul have been selected to operate the Reuse Shop on site



3

Refuse - Side Waste Policy



From January 31st 2023, side waste will no longer be collected.

Over the last few months we have been communicating with residents through social media, stickers on bins and educational visits from our Waste Assessment Officers who offered advice on how to better manage waste.

4

Refuse/Fleet - Electric Vehicle

- ▶ Refuse Electric RCV has been operating for 17 months and is used daily collecting an average of 1179 bins
- ▶ Fleet have introduced 24 new refuse collection vehicles to the service this year



5

Fleet - Procurement Updates

- ▶ Fleet are experiencing long delays in the procurement of vehicles, plant and parts due to Covid and the war in the Ukraine.
- ▶ **Current Procurements**
 - ▶ 4 x Grab wagons
 - ▶ 2 x Gully Vehicles
 - ▶ 6 x Bulky Waste Collection Vehicles
 - ▶ 24 x refuse collection vehicles
 - ▶ 1 x Drainage van pack vehicle
 - ▶ 3 x drop side tippers
 - ▶ 1 x Nissan leaf
 - ▶ 17 x Grasscutters
 - ▶ 10 x compact sweepers
- ▶ **Future procurements in the next 12 months**
 - ▶ 14 x Cars
 - ▶ 3 x Diggers
 - ▶ 1 x Forklift
 - ▶ 42 x Grasscutters
 - ▶ 9 x Gritters
 - ▶ 1 x Scrubber
 - ▶ 2 x Sweepers
 - ▶ 5 x Tractors
 - ▶ 7 x trailers
 - ▶ 35 x Trucks up to 3.5 ton
 - ▶ 28 x Trucks 3.5 ton to 7.5 ton
 - ▶ 56 x Vans up to 3.5 ton.

6

Fleet - Workshop Updates

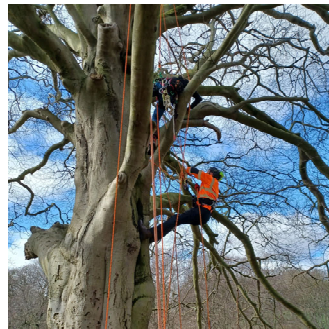
- ▶ Phase 1 of the new Fleet Workshop was completed on 31st October
- ▶ Phase 2 began on 14th November
- ▶ The new workshop will allow us the opportunity to expand our range of services
- ▶ We will have greater operational control as less work will be contracted out and instead will be undertaken internally



7

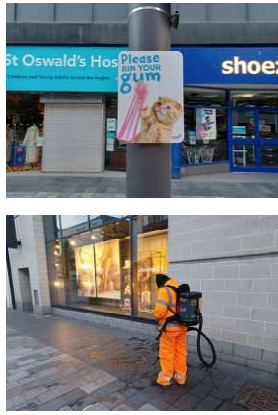
Local Services - Arbour

- ▶ This year the Council published its first Tree Policy. This policy brings all our tree management approaches together into one document.
- ▶ Working alongside colleagues in Economic Regeneration and Landscape Design we have planted 16,674 trees this year
- ▶ In addition to our Tree Policy, we have developed a 5-year rolling plantation management programme.
- ▶ Key procurement activities have taken place to aid the service including a tree inventory system and easier engagement with contractors



8

Local Services - City Centre



- ▶ A multi-functional workspace has opened in High Street West
- ▶ We are currently running a chewing gum removal & behavioural change programme, funded by Keep Britain Tidy.
- ▶ Electric Street Cleaning Barrows have been rolled out across the City Centre to improve cleansing standards.

9

Local Services - Coalfields and Washington

- ▶ Washington Area Staff are now located within the new Parsons depot alongside Fleet.
- ▶ Washington Village in Bloom group were awarded 'Best In Show' at Northumbria in Bloom and Gold awards in Britain in Bloom
- ▶ Fatfield War Memorial has been cleared and is now tidied on a regular basis
- ▶ A wildflower meadow was planted at Herrington County Park.

10

Local Services - East and West

- ▶ Sunderland East area have secured £85,000 in Levelling Up funding to transform Barley Mow Park by March 2023
- ▶ Sunderland East team are working on a plan to enhance their shopping areas, including Grangetown and Ryhope.
- ▶ West area have replaced free-standing litter bins to green park bins as well installing new and updating existing seating within their parks and green spaces
- ▶ A fruit orchard and wildflower garden has been planted at Silksworth Recreational Park.



11

Local Services - North and Resorts

- ▶ Roker Park received funding to renovate their water features, which includes the Boat Lake, Ravine Pond & Waterfall and Fairy Dell Waterfall.
- ▶ Upcoming improvements of Roker Park's Bandstand and the Lodge are expected, dependent on securing funding.
- ▶ Hylton Castle Grounds are now open for the public, this project is part of English Heritage.
- ▶ Roker and Seaburn won the Blue Flag award for the 8th consecutive year.



12

Local Services - Local Environmental Quality Monitoring

- ▶ This year saw the handover of the LEQ inspections from Enforcement to Local Services.
- ▶ Local Services have continued to monitor and inspect each area City wide on a quarterly basis, breaking these inspections down into manageable ward areas.
- ▶ This monitoring will provide a consistent, citywide service standard.

13

Local Services - Weed Killing and our use of Glyphosate

- ▶ A Council Motion was passed on 24th March 2021 which agreed that an action plan would be produced to eliminate the use of pesticides, inclusive of Glyphosate within no more than 3 calendar years
- ▶ A pilot took place from 1st April - 30th September of this year, in which we tested alternative treatments to Glyphosate
- ▶ The pilot allowed us to monitor the impact of not using glyphosate and evaluate alternative methods.
- ▶ We continued to update residents of progress via our website. Signage was placed across the city inviting residents to provide us with feedback on the pilot through our Let's Talk Weeks page



14



Bereavement Services

- ▶ Digital Improvements across Bereavement Services include a new visual webpage and a Memorial Product Catalogue
- ▶ Digital Cemetery Maps are also in development
- ▶ Bereavement Services administration system redevelopments have also been made
- ▶ 44 memorial benches have been sponsored since May



15

Bereavement Services

- ▶ Cemetery regulations have been improved
- ▶ The deadline for removal of unauthorised grave items was 31st October 2022
- ▶ Remedial works to cemetery lawn sections are ongoing.
- ▶ Staff have been trained to test the safety of memorials across the city



16

Winter Maintenance



- ▶ A service resilience plan has been implemented to cover any issues that may arise over the winter period including COVID-19
- ▶ We currently have almost 14,000 tonnes of salt split between our Houghton and Pallion stores.
- ▶ We have 10 new road sensors across the city that will detect road surface temperatures in real time - this will help officers to identify localised cold spots across the city.

17

Service Improvements

- ▶ Local Services are trialling a solenoid system which will allow for water systems to be remotely flushed, making Legionella inspection regimes more efficient.
- ▶ Smart litter bins have been installed and are currently being trialled within the North Area and City Centre
- ▶ Goss has been rolled out across each area within local services, replacing MS Dynamics
- ▶ Environmental Services have reviewed and developed their training matrices, risk assessments and safe working procedures alongside Health & Safety.
- ▶ Wellbeing mentors are in place across the service to offer support and guidance to colleagues.
- ▶ An apprenticeship programme has been established across Local Services. These apprenticeships have allowed us to give current members of staff the opportunity to learn and develop their skills as well as recruiting new staff members to the service area.

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Service Improvements

- ▶ Bereavement Services are working with Funeral Directors to identify service improvement measures and areas of joint working
- ▶ Bereavement support charities are holding 'pop-up' cafés at Sunderland Crematorium each quarter for shared experiences, company and grief support.
- ▶ Fleet have introduced a new 'Pre Use Vehicle Check' application which allows for drivers to electronically carry out their vehicle checks, replacing the paper system.
- ▶ Improved compliance monitoring is taking place within the Fleet department

19

Use Of Social Media



Social Media has been used throughout the services, with staff members working closely with the Communications department to share area improvements



Resident feedback has been gathered through out Social Media channels in relation to a number of service including the let's talk weeds, wildflower gardens.



Refuse have continued to utilise social media to share messages regarding side waste and contamination

20

Resident Feedback

- ▶ “The new HWRC is a lot better and easier to use than the Beach Street Site. I much prefer coming here”
- ▶ “Thanks for the attention to detail and exceptional customer service on installation of a memorial bench”
- ▶ “I’m very impressed with the speed and efficiency of the grass cutting in my area”
- ▶ “Our refuse crew are brilliant. They do a great job in all kinds of weather and they were superb during COVID”
- ▶ “Staff who cut back bushes at Hemsley Court did a great job, it looks very smart”
- ▶ “I wanted to congratulate the teams involved in creating the many wildflower meadows across the city. They provided a real pop of colour and habitat for many insects. The signage on why you weren’t getting rid of weeds was also excellent.”

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2022

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT CO- ORDINATOR

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report sets out the current work programme of the Committee for the 2022-23 municipal year.

2. Background

- 2.1 The work programme is designed to set out the key issues to be addressed by the Committee during the year and provide it with a timetable of work. The Committee itself is responsible for setting its own work programme, subject to the coordinating role of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 2.2 The work programme is intended to be a working document which Committee can develop throughout the year, allowing it to maintain an overview of work planned and undertaken during the Council year.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that the Committee can undertake all of its business and respond to emerging issues, there will be scope for additional meetings or visits not detailed in the work programme.
- 2.4 In delivering its work programme the Committee will support the Council in achieving its corporate outcomes.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The current work programme is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The work programme is intended to be a flexible mechanism for managing the work of the Committee in 2022-23.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note the information contained in the work programme.
-

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

REASON FOR INCLUSION	14 JUNE 22 – (INFORMAL MEETING)	12 JULY 22	27 SEPTEMBER 22 (REARRANGED)	11 OCTOBER 22	8 NOVEMBER 22	6 DECEMBER 22	10 JANUARY 23	7 FEBRUARY 23	7 MARCH 23	4 APRIL 23
Policy Framework/ Cabinet Referrals and Responses			Statement of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licence Policy (Steve Waring)							Scrutiny Annual Report
Scrutiny Business	Remit and Work Programme of Committee	Refugee Provision (Graham Scanlan) Port Visit – Arrangements (Matthew Hunt)	Housing Strategy/ Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy – Consultation (Graham Scanlan)	Annual Low Carbon Progress Report (Catherine Auld)	Sunderland BID (Sharon Appleby) Events (Stephen Savage)	Business Centres (Catherine Auld) Environmental Services Update (Marc Morley)	Cycling Infrastructure – Update (Mark Wilson) Culture Sector and the Local Economy (Rebecca Ball) Housing Strategy (Graham Scanlan)	Housing Provider Consultation (Gentoo) (Other Housing Providers)	Siglion (Neil Guthrie/Anthony Crabb) Future High Street Fund Programme (Neil Guthrie/Anthony Crabb) UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Catherine Auld/James Garland)	Annual Road Safety Report E Scooter – Pilot Feedback Accessibility (Stephen Dixon) City Heat Network Projects - Update
Consultation Information and Awareness Raising		Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22

Public Transport Update (Mark Wilson) – TBC
Homelessness Strategy (Graham Scanlan) - TBC

NOTICE OF KEY DECISIONS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Holding the Executive to account is one of the main functions of Scrutiny. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive (as outlined in the Notice of Key Decisions) and deciding whether Scrutiny can add value in advance of the decision being made. This does not negate Non-Executive Members ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.
- 2.2 To this end, the most recent version of the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions is included on the agenda of this Committee. The Notice of Key Decisions is attached marked **Appendix 1**.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In considering the Notice of Key Decisions, Members are asked to consider only those issues where the Scrutiny Committee or relevant Scrutiny Panel could make a contribution which would add value prior to the decision being taken.
- 3.2 In the event of Members having any queries that cannot be dealt with directly in the meeting, a response will be sought from the relevant Directorate.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To consider the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Agenda

Contact Officer : Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer
0191 561 1396
James.diamond@sunderland.gov.uk

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Notice is given of the following proposed Key Decisions (whether proposed to be taken in public or in private) and of Executive Decisions including key decisions) intended to be considered in a private meeting:-

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
221006/742	To consider proposals to Lower the Age Range at Thorney Close Primary School	School Organisation Committee of Cabinet	Y	10 November 2022 (published on the Notice dated 12 October 2022).	N	Not applicable.	School Organisation Committee of Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221006/743	To consider proposal to make Changes to the Link School	School Organisation Committee of Cabinet	Y	10 November 2022 (published on the Notice dated 12 October 2022).	N	Not applicable.	School Organisation Committee of Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220712/722	To seek agreement to the proposed development strategy of the Council's Self and Custom Build Sites.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
220808/732	To seek Cabinet approval to the disposal of South West Lodge, Mere Knolls Cemetery, Dovedale Road, SR6 8LW.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220719/723	To seek approval for the acquisition of Property at Crowtree Road and to grant a lease of the former Crowtree Leisure Centre	Cabinet	Y	During the period 10 November to 31 December 2022.	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221005/738	To seek approval to acquire land from and negotiate to enter into a build contract with MCC Homes Limited in the delivery of 19nos. 1-bed bungalows for supported use at Hylton Road	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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221005/740	To approve the Capital Programme Planning 2023/2024 to 2026/2027.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221005/741	To approve the Budget Planning Framework and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221006/745	Subject to the award of external funding, to seek approval to enter into a funding agreement and delivery arrangements for a proposed Sunderland Advanced Mobility Shuttle	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220725/725	To approve the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Delivery Plan	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
220207/690	To approve the sale of the former Alex Smiles site and to undertake required remedial works.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220621/720	To approve funding options in respect of development at Nile and Villiers Street Sunnyside.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221018/745	To consider a disposal of land at Silksworth Row, Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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221026/747	To provide an update on the disposal of the former Civic Centre site	Cabinet	N	8 December 2022	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221031/748	To seek agreement to sign up to the Mental Health Prevention Concordat.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221031/749	To seek approval for the Financial Assistance Policy	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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221101/750	To consider the outcome of the review of the governance and contract arrangements for Together for Children Sunderland Limited and approve the recommended next steps.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221103/751	To seek Cabinet's endorsement of the Better Care Fund submission and to seek approval to complete a Section 75 agreement (Health and Social Care Act 2012) between the Integrated Care Board and the City Council to cover the Better Care Fund (BCF) services and other integrated care functions. To seek approval for the establishment of collaborative arrangements between the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Sunderland City Council (SCC) for the provision of integrated health and care.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2022	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220524/714	To agree to the grant of an option to sell property at Richmond Street, Sheepfolds, Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2022 to 31 January 2023.	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
220207/691	To approve the acquisition of strategic sites in the Commercial Road Area.	Cabinet	Y	19 January 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220819/734	In respect of the Sunderland Heat Network to provide an update and to seek Cabinet approval for change in delivery approach.	Cabinet	Y	19 January 2023	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
220822/736	To update Cabinet on progress of the New Wear Footbridge ("the Scheme") and seek approval to award the main works contract for the Scheme.	Cabinet	Y	19 January 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221006/744	To approve in principle the establishment of a new police led Road Safety Partnership (Northumbria Road Safety Partnership) embracing the Northumbria Force Area.	Cabinet	Y	19 January 2023	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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221018/746	To consider the acquisition of land and buildings at Cowies Way, Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	19 January 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
221107/752	To authorise the acceptance of potential external grant funding (subject to a successful bid outcome) and subsequent procurement of an external design team to support the refurbishment of Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens.	Cabinet	Y	19 January 2023	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210709/612	To authorise the Executive Director of City Development to deliver the Washington F-Pit Museum Heritage Visitor Centre and Albany Park Improvement project, including the procurement of consultants and contractors.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 19 January to 31 March 2023	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Note; Some of the documents listed may not be available if they are subject to an exemption, prohibition or restriction on disclosure.

Further documents relevant to the matters to be decided can be submitted to the decision-maker. If you wish to request details of those documents (if any) as they become available, or to submit representations about a proposal to hold a meeting in private, you should contact Governance Services at the address below.

Subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of documents submitted to the decision-maker can also be obtained from the Governance Services team City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, or by email to committees@sunderland.gov.uk

***Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker and requests for details of these documents should be submitted to Governance Services at the address given above.**

Who will decide;

Councillor Graeme Miller – Leader; Councillor Claire Rowntree – Deputy Leader & Clean Green City; Councillor Paul Stewart - Cabinet Secretary; Councillor Louise Farthing – Children, Learning and Skills; Councillor Kelly Chequer – Healthy City; Councillor Linda Williams – Vibrant City; Councillor Kevin Johnston – Dynamic City.

This is the membership of Cabinet as at the date of this notice. Any changes will be specified on a supplementary notice.

Elaine Waugh,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance