

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 25 January 2016

PRESENT: Councillor P Dillon (Chair)

Councillors: T Graham, L Caffrey, B Coates, P Craig,
S Dickie, M Hood, H Hughes, K McCartney, J McClurey,
C McHugh, J Simpson and A Wheeler

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors M Graham

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Davidson, K Dodds, J Graham and F Hindle.

24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

25 REVIEW OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE RURAL GATESHEAD - EVIDENCE GATHERING

The Committee undertook its fourth evidence gathering session for the Review of Opportunities to Promote Rural Gateshead, which focussed on the views of academia and local businesses as to the issues which may impact on the future economic growth potential of rural Gateshead.

A Rural Business Panel took place as part of the evidence gathering and was made up by:-

Danny Turner – the owner of Daniels Farm near Crawcrook, who is currently in the process of doubling his egg producing business. In November 2015 Danny opened a new farm shop and Café on the site and has plans for a much wider family offer by extending the facilities currently on offer.

Rae Farmer – the founder of Bounce Back, a social enterprise based in the Chopwell and Rowlands Gill Ward. This specialises in learning opportunities to promote well-being and overcome domestic violence, including abuse faced by minority groups. Rae, whose works from home, is also the Director/Founder and owner of Next Steps - learning for life.

(A copy of the questions and responses from the Business Panel are appended to the minutes).

Dr Carmen Hubbard from the Centre for the Rural Economy at Newcastle University also attended the meeting and provided a presentation that highlighted the key issues which may impact on economic growth nationally, regionally and locally.

The presentation highlighted the Rural Growth Review key findings that included:

- Rural economies compare favourably, on several indicators with urban economies
- There are many interdependencies and flows between them
- However there are:
 - Differences, including specific barriers for growth:
 - Poor connectivity and communications (fast broadband, mobile coverage and transport)
 - Suitably qualified rural labour force
 - The importance of SMEs businesses
 - Some advantages:
 - Space for businesses to develop and expand
 - Abundant natural resources on which key rural industries (eg food and drink, tourism and renewable energy) depend

The Committee welcomed the actions for increasing rural productivity within the 10-Point Plan 2015 that include:

- Rural areas fully connected to the wider economy
 - Extensive, fast and reliable broadband services
 - High quality, widely available mobile communications
 - Modern transport connections
- A highly skilled rural workforce
 - Access to high quality education and training
 - Expanded apprenticeships in rural areas
- Strong conditions for rural business growth
 - Enterprise zones in rural areas
 - Better regulation and improved planning for rural businesses
- Easier to live and work in rural areas
 - More housing
 - Increased availability of affordable childcare
- Greater local control
 - Devolution of power

The presentation recognised that maintaining 'institutional capacity' is crucial to delivering economic growth in rural areas and also highlighted the potential funding opportunities for businesses that could be explored through Local Enterprise Partnerships and LEADER Local Action Groups.

The Committee emphasised the need to create successful and resilient local communities to make better use of cultural and heritage assets and the Committee were advised that this could be achieved through greater partnership working as well as building on existing opportunities to attract more funding.

The Committee recommended that work to establish strong support networks for the local economy and that maximising funding opportunities be explored.

RESOLVED - That the views of the Committee on the evidence presented be noted.

26 CASE STUDY - ACCESS TO PUBLIC SWIMMING AND SWIMMING CLUBS

The Committee considered a report that outlined the wider issues of public access to swimming including its value in public health terms and funding.

The Committee were informed of national and local participation levels of swimming, and it was highlighted that whilst swimming continues to be a popular sport, participation is declining rapidly, and there is a shift towards other activities such as exercise classes and clubs.

The Committee received presentations from:

Birtley Amateur Swimming Club

- Established in 1974 as a Teaching and Specialist Lifesaving Club
- 152 Active Swimmers (near capacity) and 25 instructors/officials
- Waiting lists (45 – under 6years) and 49 applications from those aged over 6years
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Accredited

Gateshead and Whickham Amateur Swimming Club

- Gateshead's only competitive club – also deliver learn to swim and masters swimming
- Utilise all five pools in Gateshead
- 255 members (15 male, 8 female, 85 boys and 147 girls)
- 98% live and work in Gateshead

The Committee queried if the reduction in numbers of lane swimmers but an increase in use of the pool for other activities was a concern. The Committee were informed that whilst this is a concern, the issue is around sustainability and as the pools are still being utilised in some way, this is acceptable.

The Committee queried the impact of the increase in charges the Amateur Clubs face to use the pools. The Committee were informed that the level of fee paid by club members is dependent on the level at which they swim and that the clubs will try and manage any potential impact the increase in charges may have on users the best they can.

The Committee queried if there were any recorded reasons as to why swimming has declined. Unfortunately there is no data for the decline locally and within national data it shows there are multiple factors and not just one particular factor that would prevent someone from swimming.

The Committee queried what is being done to engage with public health as it was highlighted that within some parts of the country, a subsidy for swimming is provided by the CCG. The Committee were advised that areas of best practice are being

looked at and it is recognised that there are opportunities to work more closely with Public Health.

It was highlighted that the Council delivers a learn to swim programme which follows the Amateur Swimming Association's Learn to Swim Framework but it is recognised that there is scope to increase the uptake of the Learn to Swim programme. An aquatic plan is being developed and will be in place in 2016. The Committee were also informed that the Council will look at more collaborative working with the swimming clubs for delivery of this programme.

The Committee were informed that the salary for a local authority instructor would be reviewed in order to help to deliver the aquatic plan.

It was also advised that the Council are being proactive and looking at other local authority pools which may be closing and offering our services to their current users.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted and that collaborative working be explored to deliver the learn to swim programme and public health benefits

27 OLYMPIC LEGACY - CASE STUDY UPDATE

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the case study which was considered by the Committee regarding the impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Gateshead.

The Committee were informed that although North East and National averages figures indicate slight increases in participation since 2005/06, it has become evident that since 2012 participation levels are declining.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has released its government strategy for sport in December 2015. It was noted that here will be a focus on people who do not tend to take part in sport, including women and girls, disabled people, those in lower socio economic groups and older people.

The strategy also recognises the important leadership role that Local Authorities have to bring schools, voluntary sports clubs, National Government Bodies, health and the private sector together to forge partnerships, unblock barriers to participation and improve the local delivery system.

The Committee were informed that in direct response to the Strategy, Sport England will produce their new Sport Strategy in March 2016 that will provide direction of how the DCMS strategy will be implemented on the ground, including any funding streams available.

The Committee queried if it was possible to measure if those participating in 1x30 minute sessions had progressed to undertaking more sessions per week however it is not thought it would be possible to capture this information within the Active People Survey.

When the case study was initially considered representatives from Tyne United Rowing Club and Gateshead Victoria Boxing Club attended the meeting of the OSC to discuss how they had benefitted from the Olympic Legacy. The Committee were informed that both clubs continue to achieve results and are looking to expand their current provision.

RESOLVED - The Committee recommended that the work to increase physical activity levels and potential funding opportunities be continued to be explored.

28 REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the Review of Sustainable Travel.

The Committee were provided with an update on each of the agreed actions:

The Committee acknowledges the work already being undertaken by the Council and Partners.

This action focussed on the opportunity to learn from the work of Partners and particularly the work on travel planning development as part of the Go Smarter to Work (GSW) initiative. The programme continues to focus on business engagement at key employment centres.

During 2015 the Newcastle Gateshead GSW delivery team have concentrated on accessing employees within Gateshead. Some of the larger employers include the QE Hospital, the Council and Gateshead College. It was highlighted that within Team Valley, engagement remains difficult however engagement has been successful with 7 key employers.

The Council continues its role as a leader in the adoption of low carbon vehicle technology

The Council fleet now includes eleven Euro VI compliant vehicle, which include refuse/recycling vehicles, minibuses and gritters. The trial of Lightfoot technology, a live in-cab driver behaviour management tool has continued throughout 2015.

The Council continues investment in bus infrastructure, supporting operator investment in new, low-emission vehicles

Design work of phases five and six of the Durham Road Quality Corridor have commenced and will be completed in 2016/17 (construction work is yet to be scheduled).

Go North East has continued to invest in low carbon emission vehicles. A joint bid by the Council, Newcastle City Council, Nexus and Go North East was successful in securing funding from the Department for Transport's Clean Bus Technology Fund in August 2013.

Major Infrastructure schemes should be monitored to assess their impact on alternative routes

The Highways England works on the A1 continue to have an impact across the

network. All major routes are monitored by the Tyne and Wear UTMC Centre which provides updates to the travelling public via social media.

Partners should co-operate to ensure effective enforcement of parking, bus priorities etc

The enforcement camera car is an ongoing initiative, used to enforce restrictions at schools and bus stops. In 2015 a total of 962 penalty charge notices have been generated as a result.

The provision of real-time information should be progressed as quickly as possible, and should be made available as widely as possible

Whilst the project is progressing, real time bus information data from operators has been slow to be released but trials are ongoing with Arriva and Stagecoach.

Innovative ticketing arrangements should be considered to complement infrastructure investment

The North East Smart Ticketing Initiative is progressing well with smart tickets are now generally available on most forms of public transport in the North East.

POP Pay As You Go was officially launched on 2 November 2015 and is available to use on Metro, certain bus services and the Shields Ferry.

Further work should be undertaken to address the image of cycling with secondary school pupils

The Bike It and FEAT 1st projects are to be extended and have been integrated in the Schools Go Smarter legacy programme.

The Committee were informed that work on each action will continue and:

- Work will continue to develop the business case for the proposed Park and Ride at Eighton Lodge
- The Council will continue to investigate new funding opportunities for sustainable travel initiatives, infrastructure, low emission vehicles etc either on its own or through partnership working

The Committee commented that it is not felt that real time information has progressed satisfactorily and re-iterated that not all people using public transport have access to a smartphone.

The Committee requested that all Councillors be kept up to date with regard to any phased opening/completion of the works to the A1.

Queries were also made to the restrictions on use of the bus lanes and whether Private Hire Vehicles (with a paying fare) should be able to use the lanes. The Committee were informed that currently within the regulations, taxi only extends to Hackney Carriage vehicles, however if this were to be enforced there would be a cost implication to change the signage across the borough.

RESOLVED – The Committee were satisfied that sufficient progress had been made against agreed actions, with the exception of real time information.

29 REVIEW OF ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report seeking its views on the effectiveness of the review of Domestic Energy Management/Fuel Poverty and the three case studies undertaken in 2014/15, including the subsequent monitoring of actions arising from the Committee's findings.

The case studies were used to examine:

Dog Fouling – the level and impacts of dog fouling and how Waste Services and Grounds maintenance are responding to the problem and reviewing how the service can be provided differently

Metrocentre Recruitment Model – the Council's joint working with intu Metrocentre and Jobcentre plus and case studies of employers who have utilised the recruitment support

Olympic Legacy – the physical activity levels of adults in Gateshead, both pre and post London 2012, including the views of two local sports clubs and how they have benefitted from the legacy.

The report summarised the key issues and findings for each case study.

The Committee was also asked to note that a draft work programme for 2016/17 is being prepared and that this will be set by the Committee at its meeting in April.

- RESOLVED:
- i) That the Committee was satisfied that potential review topics identified for 2016/17 will be considered for inclusion in the work programme
 - ii) The Committee was satisfied with the review monitoring process carried out so far
 - iii) The Committee was satisfied with the effectiveness of the case studies undertaken so far