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**Report to**  
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

25<sup>th</sup> October, 2006

**Report of**  
**Councillor David Skinner**

**Title**  
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – **Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire**

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### **1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2005, the Cabinet approved a process of reporting back to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on the work of those outside bodies appointed to by the City Council. This report sets out details of the work of Groundwork over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Groundwork Coventry & Warwickshire continues to provide a distinctive and effective contribution to regeneration, working with people and communities in the City, and it is recommended the City Council should continue its support and continue membership of its Board.

### **3 Information on Work of Outside Body**

#### 3.1 Objectives and Activities

The Trust's charitable objectives as set down in our Memorandum and Articles of Association are:

- to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in the Coventry and Warwickshire area
- to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for those living in or working in or resorting to the City of Coventry or County of Warwickshire
- to advance public education in environmental matters and other ways of better conserving, protecting and improving the same wheresoever.

In the past year the Trust has continued to articulate these objectives through three themes:

- For people – creating opportunities for people to learn new skills and take local action
- For places – creating better, healthier and safer neighbourhoods
- For prosperity – helping businesses and individuals fulfil their potential

These themes help to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action. The Trust does this by getting residents, businesses and other local organisations involved in practical projects that improve the quality of life, bring about regeneration and lay the foundations for sustainable development. Every year the Trust delivers projects in neighbourhoods blighted by high unemployment and crime levels, poor public health, run-down housing and public spaces, neglected waste ground and struggling businesses. These projects are organised into local, regional and national programmes embracing six themes:

### **Communities – Building stronger neighbourhoods**

The Trust makes a long-term commitment to supporting specific neighbourhoods and to work closely alongside other organisations and existing initiatives to help improve the quality of life for people living there. The Trust provides training and support to help get people more involved in making decisions about where they live and to understand the benefits that sustainable development can bring. The Trust also helps people improve the appearance of their streets, parks and estates. It also encourages them to lead healthier lifestyles, get to know other people in their area or work with their neighbours to reduce crime and fear of crime.

### **Land - Connecting people with their surroundings to create sustainable parks, towns and streets**

The Trust helps local people turn derelict land and waste ground into attractive and valuable spaces from community gardens to new parks and leisure facilities. The Trust works to ensure that local people are fully involved in planning and designing these new public spaces. It also helps people find out more about the local history and culture of their area and encourage them to appreciate the natural environment, for example by building cycleways along canals or footpaths connecting towns with the adjoining countryside.

### **Employment and Skills – Training for work and stimulating enterprise**

The Trust helps people develop their skills and experience by working on regeneration projects in their own neighbourhoods, including the development of their essential skills. The Trusts also supports training through bodies such as CovWise, an 'intermediate labour market' company which pays those taking part a wage while they work on a wide range of activities from learning construction skills to recycling computers.

### **Education – Learning, citizenship and sustainability**

The Trust works in schools and with adults to illustrate how our individual actions can make a big difference to our own immediate surroundings and the global environment both now and in the future. The Trust helps schools make better use of their grounds to improve educational attainment, and establish links between schools and local businesses. The Trust also develops programmes to improve students' awareness of their local environment, including local culture and heritage. Groundwork also aims to educate people to act more responsibly with regard to energy, waste, water and transport and to respect local places and other people.

### **Business – Integrating the economy and the environment**

Groundwork helps local businesses and other organisations stay competitive and successful by improving their environmental performance. The Trust does this by offering practical advice, environmental reviews, waste and energy audits and by helping businesses to work together more to cut down on their costs. The Trust has also developed a number of 'green business parks' where it helps companies improve their business practices and the local environment at the same time. The Trust has entered into a joint venture with the other three Groundwork Trusts in the West Midlands to offer a range of 'environmental business services' (EBS) across the region.

## **Youth – Realising the potential of young people**

The Trust involves young people in a range of activities designed to bring them into contact with other people in their community and to increase their own confidence and self-esteem. The aim is to get young people interested in the place where they live and to help them play a full and active part in society. The Trust does this by encouraging them to take part in practical activities such as making videos about life in their neighbourhood, arts initiatives, or sports development. Most of these activities are specifically targeted in areas where there are high levels of crime to harness young people's energy and diverting them away from anti-social behaviour.

### **Objectives for the year**

The key strategic objectives for the year were to:

- prepare and implement a three year strategy to define the role and niche of the Trust in the future in the light of the changing external environment.
- deliver a series of holistic programmes across the six Groundwork strategic areas of communities, youth, education, land, business and employment
- develop new activities and submit funding bids to build on the existing programmes
- to contribute to local strategic initiatives

### **Significant Activities during the year**

In relation to these objectives, Trust activity over the course of the year included:

- To prepare and implement a three year strategy

The aim was to set out the vision for where Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire will be by the year 2009, and the steps that need to be taken in order to get there. The Plan concluded that the world in which the Trust operates is rapidly changing and it must anticipate and adapt to these changes to be fit for the purpose, and to secure long-term future. The Strategic Plan sets out four key aims for the Trust:

- to build a strong reputation
  - to have outstanding project delivery
  - to be financially sustainable
  - be an employer of choice
- To deliver a series of holistic programmes across the six Groundwork strategic areas of communities, youth, education, land, business and employment

The Trust rolled forward and delivered a range of programmes. Examples include:

- Motiv8
- Financial literacy
- Bedworth Heath

Motiv8 delivered structured activities to young people at risk of exclusion who were accessing alternative curriculum programmes. The aim was to re-engage them through various activities and then sign-post them to further education, employment and training. Partners included local schools, Connexions, Youth Service and the Education Action Zone. Young people were referred to the programme by various agencies, and took part in structured activities such as:

- environmental based work, including OCN level 1 accredited woodland survival skills course
- community arts activities
- music technology
- digital media and film making workshops
- sports and outdoor pursuits

Every beneficiary was encouraged to gain accreditation through the Profile of Achievement scheme. This involved planning and review systems and aimed to improve their basic skills in numeracy and literacy. Outputs were recorded against specific targets set for each group around development of new skills appropriate to need, as well as the official recording of qualifications achieved by each group. The Trust achieved a 75% success rate delivering POA and OCN accreditation.

Another programme undertaken by the Trust was Financial Literacy. The Basic Skills Agency were looking for six organisations to take part in a pilot project developing Financial Literacy and linking it to Skills for Life. Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire was chosen as a member of the community and voluntary sector. The Trust subsequently carried out research, developed resources, recruited participants and delivered programmes. The project targeted groups from existing high priority neighbourhoods and developed their financial literacy skills. It also entailed developing basic skills literacy provision amongst all project staff at the Trust.

The project was designed to make understanding, accessing and learning about financial literacy fun, relevant and appealing to a wide cross section of the community. For instance the Trust met with parents of pre school age children who want help with wading through information about Child Trust Funds, young asylum seekers who need help with both the language used by banks and financial institutions and the customs and services available, parents of older children who want help with record systems for managing finances and many more. The Trust has also worked with a number of individuals some of whom have a huge range of difficulties including major literacy and numeracy difficulties. One community group wanted some help with using IT to keep track of their group finances.

The Trust was also commissioned by Building Sustainable Neighbourhoods (a regeneration partnership established by Warwickshire County Council) to draw up an Environmental Master Plan, which comprised a vision for the green spaces and derelict sites in the Heath ward in Bedworth. The area is at the edge of the town of Bedworth, next to farmland and fields and old mining pits. The area is made of 1960's Coal Board houses with a strong connection to mining and newer dwellings. The area has mainly suffered from a lack of maintenance and has deteriorated over the years. The Environmental Master Plan introduces general improvement concepts and proposes various improvement schemes.

- To develop new activities and submit funding bids to build on the existing programmes  
In accordance with the recommendations in the PAR Report the Trust created a new post entitled 'Strategic Business Manager' to focus on development work, though there were delays in backfilling this position.

New activities that secured funding include:

- Green Space Improvements (Liveability Fund)
- Supporting Skills in Numeracy (Basic Skills Agency)

- Active Meadowlands – Coaching (Football Foundation)
- Quarrymans Trail - Phase 2 (Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund)
- Your Neighbourhood Matters – Communities Making Things Work (Neighbourhood Element of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund)
- Building Sustainable Communities – Phase 2 (Neighbourhood Renewal Fund)
- RAPP – Alternative Curriculum Programme (Neighbourhood Renewal Funding)
- Boosting Ability through Sight and Sound (Community Fund)
- Spaces for Sport (Barclays)

In collaboration with the other three Groundwork Trusts in the West Midlands, the Trust also created a "virtual unit" to deliver environmental business services (EBS) across the region. This regional EBS Team is supported by a core central team based at Groundwork Birmingham who co-ordinate activity, source funding and manage programmes.

- To contribute to local strategic initiatives in the sub-region

The Trust continues to contribute to local strategic and policy initiatives such as the: Coventry-Nuneaton Regeneration Zone (including the Resource Advisory Group, Coventry Strategic Programme Area, and the Nuneaton and Bedworth Strategic Programme Area) European Sub-Regional Group.

The Trust was also represented on the Board of CovWise Ltd (ILM).

However a large number of new Government initiatives have been introduced over the last twelve months with regard to Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. For the moment these mainly impact on Coventry but will probably affect Warwickshire in due course. The Trust now devotes significant amounts of time to attending and contributing to the associated working groups i.e.

- Coventry Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for the city)
- Coventry Partnership Theme Group Leaders and Advisors
- Coventry Environmental Theme Group (which the Trust leads)
- Coventry Equalities and Communities Theme Group
- Coventry Safer and Stronger Communities block of the Local Area Agreement
- Coventry Partnership – Commissioning Group for Cleaner, Safer and Greener projects

In addition the Trust led the Environmental Inequity Study for the sub-region.

#### **Principal Funding Sources**

Total income for the year of £ 1,653.966 shows an increase of £262,263 against 2004/05 levels; of which £165,135 was derived from a joint venture with three other Groundwork trusts in the West Midlands area.

## **4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment**

- 4.1 The City Council benefits directly from the work Groundwork undertakes with people and communities in Coventry. Groundwork raises awareness of environmental and regeneration issues, directly involving people in making improvements in their own community and brings in additional resources.

## **5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment**

- 5.1 The City Council's representatives are Councillors Skinner and Patton. In the last twelve months there have been 5 meetings. Councillor Skinner has attended the one meeting that has been held since his appointment in May 2006 and Councillor Patton has attended 4 of the 5 meetings.
- 5.2 Members receive no remuneration for the appointment.

### List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

#### **Description of paper**

**Location** CH61

Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies