
Report to

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

6th February, 2008

Report of

Councillor David Skinner

Title

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

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10th 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 Structure of the Charity**

The Coventry and Warwickshire Groundwork Trust is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The governing documents are its Memorandum and Articles of Association, which were last amended at the Annual General Meeting of the members of the company on 11 September 2003.

Coventry City Council is a company member.

3.2 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees comprise the trustees of the Board in accordance with the Charities Act 1993, who are also directors of the company in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. The Board is made up of nominated and co-opted members. Co-opted trustees are co-opted by the Board to broaden the skills base of the Board or to secure specialist expertise.

Coventry City Council has three nominees on the Board of Directors notably Councillor David Skinner, Councillor Brian Patton and Carl Pearson, Head of Regeneration.

3.3 Organisational Structure

The Board of Trustees delegates certain decision-making powers to its Finance and Programmes Committee. The Board retains authority for the overall strategy and policy of the Trust and approves the Strategic Plan and annual Business Plan. A Board trustee chairs the Finance and Programmes Committee and its members are appointed by the Board. Terms of Reference for the Committee set down their delegated authority from the Board and specify specific limitations on their authority for matters which the Board reserves to itself.

3.4 Relationship within the Groundwork Federation

Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire is a member of the Federation of Groundwork Trusts and subscribes to Groundwork's vision of a society made up of sustainable communities which are: vibrant, healthy and safe; respect the local and global environment; and where individuals and enterprise prosper.

The Federation recognises, however, that individual Groundwork Trusts are independent charities, and although they have similar objects to the Federation, limited to their own geographical areas, they each determine their own strategy and programmes to achieve their core purposes.

Groundwork UK distributes funds from the Government (Communities and Local Government) to Groundwork Trusts in England.

3.5 Objectives and Activities

The Trust's charitable objectives as set down in the 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.

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.

3.6 Significant Activities in the Last Year

Project activities included:

- Building Sustainable Communities - the completion of the five year ERDF programme in the Radford Diamond, Charterhouse, Stoke Heath and Bell Green, which involved capacity building, skills development and environmental improvements
- Your Neighbourhood Matters – A programme devised by various partners including the City Council's Neighbourhood Management Teams, Whitefriars Housing and the Police. The Trust was asked to undertake capacity building initiatives to engage local communities in decision-making. The programme is funded through the Neighbourhood Element of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund and neighbourhood Renewal Fund

- Green space improvements through the City Council's Liveability Fund
- Implementation of a way marked trail in north Warwickshire known as the Quarryman's Walk, funded through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund
- Active Meadowlands in Radford – Football Foundation support for coaching and sports activities with the local community especially young people
- New facilities at Barras Heath and Eagle Street, funded through the Barclays Spaces for Sport programme
- The Trust undertook various activities to engage disaffected young people. These included 'RAPP' (Retention, Achievement and Progression Project), an Alternative Curriculum Programme with Henley College funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, and 'BASS' (Boosting Ability through Sight and Sound) supported through the National Lottery's Community Fund
- School ground improvements to support educational attainment
- A heritage project with local schools known as Past on Your Doorstep, which examined the history and ecology of the Coventry Canal. This was funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Essential skills training including numeracy and financial literacy was embedded in much of the Trust's work with local communities.
- In collaboration with the other three Groundwork Trusts in the West Midlands, the Trust also provided environmental advice, support and training to small and medium sized enterprises, improving their environmental performance and competitiveness.

3.7 Contribution to Local Strategic Initiatives

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) and the European Sub-Regional Group. The Trust is also represented on the Board of CovWise Ltd (ILM).

The Trust has also supported the work of the City's Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement. The Executive Director devotes significant amounts of time to attending and supporting the following:

- Coventry Partnership Board
- Coventry Partnership Theme Group Leaders and Advisors
- Coventry Partnership – Leader of the Environment Theme Group (supporting preparation of the Climate Change Strategy, Local Development Framework Core Strategy, etc)
- Executive Group of the Community Safety Partnership

The Executive Director also serves on the Play Strategy Board and helped the City Council secure £790,000 for developing new play facilities. The Executive Director has also been asked by the City Council to serve on the Board overseeing the preparation of the Green Space Strategy.

3.8 Principal Funding Sources

The Trust's draft audited accounts for 2006-2007 indicate that the Trust's total income was £1,563,000, a decrease of £101,000 against 2005-2006 levels. The total funds carried forward to finance work in 2007-2008 are shown as £523,323.

3.9 Looking Forward

Over the last six months the Board has been discussing the Trust's future. This has been prompted by growing concern in the public and voluntary sector that the next few years are likely to be financially challenging for everyone involved in regeneration activity. Whilst the Trust is currently in a reasonably strong financial position, the Board are anxious to ensure that we take the right steps to remain so in the future.

Towards this purpose the Board agreed an action plan at its meeting in July 2007. This identified the key thematic work areas to be developed, a revised organisational structure, and various other proposals around marketing, evaluation and Board membership. These elements will now be worked up and incorporated in the Business Plan for 2008-09 and beyond.

The proposed key thematic work areas, subject to further development work and investigation of funding sources, can be summarised as followed:

Thematic Area	Potential Activities in 2008-2009
Skills and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to support the development and sustainability of community and voluntary groups • First steps learning by embedding essential skills learning within other regeneration activities • Thematic learning around specific topics such as financial literacy, improving health, understanding the benefits and tax system and creative media.
Children and Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving natural play provision • Developing tomorrow's environmental caretakers, including school ground improvements and celebrating heritage and diversity • Building skills to enhance the employability of young people at risk of exclusion or those that are not in education, training or employment e.g. bush craft courses • Youth Works – tackling youth crime and nuisance • Improving health and tackling obesity • Tackling anti-social behaviour, community cohesion and exclusion through sports
Communities and Green Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement: engaging local people in decision making about how to improve their local neighbourhood • Multi-media initiatives using film, music and photography to help people articulate their ideas and concerns • Physical green space improvements including public art installation, landscaping business premises, multi-use games areas, pocket parks, orchards, woodlands and way marked trails • Supporting and improving service provision to, for example, help increase recycling rates, developing street warden's schemes or introduce healthier lifestyles
Sustainable Development and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental education to business, schools and local communities • Eco-schools • Support to the construction industry • Advice on achieving low environmental impact and carbon neutral development

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 Councillors Skinner and Patton are the Coventry City Council's representatives on Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire. During the period November 2006 to October 2007 inclusive, five meetings were held, and both Councillor Skinner and Councillor Patton attended the five meetings.

Carl Pearson also facilitated an away day for Groundwork management and staff as part of Groundwork's strategic review.

- 5.2 There is no remuneration associated with the appointment.

List of background papers

Proper officer:

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper	Location
Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies	CH59