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Iain Phillips      Chief Executive

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16<sup>th</sup> May 2006

Dear Councillor,

I hereby give you Notice that a Meeting of the **REGENERATION COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, CROOK** on **WEDNESDAY, 24<sup>th</sup> MAY 2006** at **6.00 P.M.**

### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2006 as a true record – copies previously circulated.
3. To consider the Regeneration Department Service Plan 2006/07.
4. To consider the Management Programme for Bishop Auckland Town Centre.
5. To consider and respond to proposals for the future allocation of European Structural Funds.
6. To consider progress made in delivery of the Capital Programme 2005/06 and 2006/07.
7. To consider proposals for the Bracks Farm Business Park – capital project.
8. To receive an update on the programme of works within the Dene Valley Renewal Area.
9. To receive a Risk Register update.
10. To consider the proposed Housing Grants Policy 2006.
11. To consider an appeal against repayment of a housing grant. \*
12. To consider such other items of business which, by reason of special circumstances so specified, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

\* It is likely that item 11 will be taken in the closed part of the meeting in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Yours faithfully



**Chief Executive**

Members of this Committee: Councillors Bailey, Mrs. Brown, Dobinson, Ferguson, Grogan, Hayton, Mrs Jones\*, Laurie, Mews, Mowbray, Murphy\*, Nevins, Perkins, Mrs Seabury, Stonehouse, Townsend and Zair.

\*ex-officio, non-voting capacity

Chair: Councillor Townsend

Deputy Chair: Councillor Mowbray

TO: All other Members of the Council for information  
Management Team

**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**24 MAY 2006**

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration  
**REGENERATION DEPARTMENT SERVICE PLAN 2006-2007**

**purpose of the report**

1. To present to Members for endorsement the Regeneration Service Plan for 2006/07 (Annex 1).

**RECOMMENDED**

1. That members endorse the Regeneration Service Plan and receive further reports on implementation through the year.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Strategic Director for Environment and  
Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Robert Hope

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## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

24 MAY 2006

### Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration **BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME FOR 2006/7**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To consider the programme of activity for the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Management Initiative for 2006/07.

#### **background**

2. The Council has implemented Town Centre Management Initiatives in Bishop Auckland for the last 5 year with resources largely drawn from the SRB5 programme. In the budget for 2006/07 the Council has "mainstreamed" this activity with an allocation of £70,000.
3. This report puts forward a programme of activity for the coming year.

#### **town centre management in bishop auckland**

4. The following statements on vision, objectives and role for Town Centre Management were defined by the Town Centre Forum in the Town Centre Strategy in 2000 and re-confirmed through the work undertaken by RED BOX in the Urban Renaissance Master Plan exercise. These are as follows:-.

##### Vision

- *'To restore Bishop Auckland's role as a vibrant and attractive market town for all communities of Wear Valley and South West Durham, building on the heritage and character of the town centre to enhance its competitiveness as a place to shop, work, visit and live.'*

##### Objectives

- To strengthen retail competitiveness.
- To enhance quality of built environment.
- To diversify mix of land uses and activities.
- To provide a clear and consistent marketing strategy.
- To facilitate a genuine partnership between public, private and community sectors in order to manage change effectively.

5. In defining the role of the Town Centre Manager the Forum and the Council were clear in ensuring that activities undertaken had a business and economic focus, and defined the role to include:-
  - To manage, co-ordinate and generate resources for the necessary improvements to the town centre.
  - To achieve collaboration and joint working between all town centre stakeholders.
  - To take steps to further stimulate business performance.
  - To effectively market and promote the area to encourage inward investment and increased usage.
  - To keep a watching brief on the interests of the town centre, above all acting as a champion for Bishop Auckland.
  
6. The post of Town Centre Manager was created by the Town Centre Forum in 1991 and funded via a bid to the Single Regeneration Budget with matched money from WVDC. The existing incumbent, Derek Toon, took up post on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2003.
  
7. The achievements of the role have been identified by the Town Centre Forum as:-
  - *Forging links with virtually every business in town*
  - *Facilitating the rebirth of the chamber of trade*
  - *Being instrumental in reducing the number of empty shops*
  - *Setting up a town website*
  - *Being proactive in encouraging the use of technology by businesses*
  - *Assisting in bringing new developers into the town*
  - *Encouraging and working for the successful staging of many events which have contributed positively to the image of the town*
  - *Running a Marketing and Promotions Group which has been very successful in promoting the town(particular successes include the Food Festival)*
  - *Working with Red Box on plans for the town*
  - *Facilitating the Urban Renaissance project*
  - *Being a very significant factor in the climate of renewed optimism in Bishop Auckland.*

### **the town centre forum**

8. The Town Centre Management activity provides critical support and reports to the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum. The Forum meets every two months and has representatives from all areas of the Town Centre, including:-
  - Local MP
  - Wear Valley District Council
  - Durham County Council
  - The Civic Society
  - Bishop Auckland Business & Traders Association

- Traders – independent and national
- Police
- Bishop Auckland Community Partnership
- Bishop Auckland College
- Licensees
- Local Transport companies
- The Voluntary Sector

The constitution of the Forum is attached for information as Annex 2.

9. The Town Centre Manager is the only executive member of the Town Centre Management team. The other team members are volunteers. The majority of this volunteer work is in the organisation and management of the events programme that is co-ordinated by a Marketing & Communications Sub Group of the Town Centre Forum. The Sub Group meets monthly.

**the proposed programme for 2006/7**

10. To repeat the key tasks in the role of Town Centre Manager:-

1 Business performance:	To take steps to further stimulate business performance.
2 Marketing:	To effectively market and promote the area to encourage inward investment and increased usage.
3 Joint working:	To achieve collaboration and joint working between all town centre stakeholders.
4 Champion:	To keep a watching brief on the interests of the town centre, above all acting as a champion for Bishop Auckland.
5 Manage resources:	To manage, co-ordinate and generate resources for the necessary improvements to the town centre.

1. Business performance and development

11. A key task for 2006/7 will be for the TCM to continue to facilitate the development of businesses in the town centre, and to work with others including:-

- Economic development and planning staff at WVDC.
- Business advisers at the Wear Valley Development Agency.
- Private sector business development businesses such as Walker Hall Associates and Access For Business.

12. Key areas of activity include:-

## **trader visits**

13. A major part of the TCM's time over the past 30 months has been taken in walking the town centre and visiting the traders in their premises in order to learn about their concerns, issues and ideas and, talk about e-business and collect input for the website. Over 340 businesses have now been visited at least once and 97 remain to be visited. This task will continue.

## **www.bishopaucklandtown.org**

14. A key driver of business performance improvement is the town website. Town centre businesses must become proficient in trading in the 'e-economy'. The website is intended to provide businesses with a risk free and cost free entry to the world of e-commerce. It is not there to compete against web design companies; rather the hope is that it will generate business for them.
15. The town website was commissioned from The Imagine Group, a subsidiary of Walker Hall Associates, in January 2005. It became operational in March 2005. Since then, it has been developed and populated by the TCM to the point where it has over 1,600 pages. Usage is growing steadily to the point where the site is receiving over 40,000 page hits per month.
16. The website (which is fully DDA compliant) contains pages for, among other things:-
  - All businesses and other organizations in the town centre.
  - All events notified to the TCM.
  - News items.
  - A full list of vacant properties.
  - Details of the town centre management, councilors and MPs.
  - Minutes for BATCF meetings.
  - Historical facts and figures.
  - Hundreds of images both contemporary and historical.
17. The website will be kept up to date and accurate, therefore, a key activity for the TCM for 2006/7 will be to maintain the accuracy, immediacy and comprehensiveness of the website. While the design was 'leading edge' a year ago, it is now looking dated. Funding for 2006/7 is proposed to be used to produce a 'Version 3' of the website, to include:-
  - A more modern look and feel – similar to that for the Durham Dales project website.
  - A more sophisticated navigation system.
  - A 'jobs wanted' and 'jobs offered' page.
  - More accessible image galleries.
  - A directory of businesses by location.
  - E-cards.
  - An improved Client Management System.

### **vacant commercial properties database**

18. The number of vacant commercial properties in the town centre has dropped from 66 in November 2003 to 41 in November 2005. The ideal would be, of course, nil empty properties. Since these properties were listed on the town website, a number of queries have been received both by the TCM and by the agents and properties have been filled. The use of the database is a positive way TCM has been able to link up business enquiries with space availability.
19. The TCM will continue to maintain the vacant commercial properties listing on the website.

### **infrastructure developments**

20. A number of major and key infrastructure developments are likely to take place in 2006/7. These include:
  - The Theatre Corner development including the statue of Stan Laurel.
  - The Newgate Centre extension and development of the Bus Station.
  - The OK Depot development.
  - The Urban Renaissance Fund project in the Market Place and the Bondgates.
21. It is hoped that work will start on all of these projects in 2006/7. The TCM will work with the developers and the Council to ensure these developments are successful, particularly in areas which add value to the development. Proposals such as facilitating consultation, signage etc.

### **the town market**

22. A key task for the TCM in 2006/7 will be to work with the Licensing Manager and Markets Manager at WVDC to attempt to reinvigorate the market.
23. The past few years has seen the steady decline of what was a major market in the region. The Licensing Manager has already investigated the purchase of new stalls and has indicated that he is looking at a variety of new market formats including bringing a Farmers' Market back and introducing a 'bric-a-brac' market as well as wider uses of the Market Place.
24. The TCM will work with WVDC to 'market the market' with the objective of restoring it to the vibrant, profitable and comprehensive event it used to be.

### **2. Marketing and Events**

#### **the marketing strategy**

25. The Town Centre Forum has an agreed marketing strategy which, for the past two years, has been focussed on a series of events. The objective of these events was defined in June 2004, on the launch of the Marketing Strategy, by the then Chairman of the Forum, Derek Foster MP:



***'To bring into the town 100,000 new visitors via a series of 10 annual events.'***

26. This objective has driven the Marketing Subgroup for the past two years and will continue to do so for 2006/7. A series of events are being developed in conjunction with partners including the Council. The events that will be repeated from 2005/6 are:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • The Wear Valley Food Festival             | Easter Saturday, 15 <sup>th</sup> April 2006. |
| • 'Celebrate the 1940s' event               | June 2006. *                                  |
| • Classic & Vintage Car Show                | July 2006.                                    |
| • Teddy Bear's Picnic & Beach Party         | August 2006.                                  |
| • Motor Show                                | 10 <sup>th</sup> August 2006. *               |
| • Christmas Lights Switch On and Procession | December 2006.                                |

(\* - Events for which the TCM is the project manager)

27. New events proposed include:-

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| • The wedding event                         | June 2006 |
| • Regular craft fairs in the Newgate Centre | Quarterly |
| • Music concerts in the Market Place        |           |

28. The TCM will continue to work with the highly effective Marketing Subgroup of the Forum to deliver the current series of events and to develop new events, as a means of achieving Derek Foster's challenge.

## **publicity and pr**

29. The TCM and the Marketing Subgroup has developed a good working relationship with the reporters on the Northern Echo and Weardale Advertiser. From a position two years ago, when it seemed only bad news was being reported, now there are many more good news stories reported. The TCM will continue to work with the local press to ensure good news stories continue to receive maximum publicity.

## **advertising**

30. During 2004/5 and 2005/6, with funding from DCC and WVDC, a marketing programme for the town has been developed working with Walker Hall Associates. This has included:-
- The town house style manual was produced.
  - A new logo and strap line: '*Bishop Auckland – County Durham's best kept secret*', were developed.
  - The town website was developed.
  - Two 16 page supplements were produced in conjunction with the Northern Echo.
  - Various advertisements for events were funded.
31. A key activity for 2006/7, dependent on funding, will be a 'quantum leap' in the amount of paid advertising done for the town. Activities could include:
- Continuing the bi-weekly advertisements for the website – the '*Find it on...*' campaign.
  - More prominent events advertisements in the Echo and other local papers.
  - Generic Bishop Auckland advertisements in publications such as the CDC Yearbook and the Northern Echo Leisure Guide.
  - Radio advertising with Durham FM.
  - Bus advertising.
  - A reprint of the town map.
  - A reprint of the Attractions brochure.
  - A 'Shop in Bishop' brochure subject to the interests of BABTA.
  - An Events brochure – similar to that produced for Crook.

## **3. Joint working**

32. An ongoing task for the TCM in 2006/7 will be to administer and report to the two key Forums of Town Centre Management. These are:
- The Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum – meets every two months.
  - The Marketing Subgroup of the BATCF – meets monthly.
33. The TCM will continue to attend and contribute to the other key forums that influence the town centre. These include:
- The Business & Traders' Association. \*

- The Bishop Auckland Licensees Association.
- The Civic Society meetings and committee.
- The Wear Valley Disability Access Forum.
- The Wear Valley Community Safety Task Group.
- The Heritage Line Community Partnership.
- The Forum for Business.
- The Durham Dales Working Group.

(\* The management of this group, run by the TCM, for the first 18 months of its operation has now been handed over to a steering group of traders. The TCM will, however, continue to attend meetings.)

34. The TCM will also work on a one-to-one basis with the other key people active in the town centre. These include, among many others:

- Members of the BATCF such as the Manager of Auckland Castle, the Manager of the Newgate Centre, the chair of BABTA, etc.
- Executive staff in all departments at WVDC.
- DCC departments such as The Highways and Estates Departments and the manager of the Shop Front Renewal Grants initiative.
- The Police on issues of crime and public safety.

4. Championing Bishop Auckland – and other activities

#### **a watching brief – litter and graffiti**

35. Various poster campaigns including the ‘Bin It’ campaign have been tried and WVDC have supplied a number of new waste bins. A key task of the TCM in the coming year will be, in conjunction with the relevant organisations, such as WVDC, to attempt to ensure that:-

- The town is litter and graffiti free.
- The chewing gum is removed from roads and pavements.
- Pavements and roadways are safe and well maintained.
- Empty properties are maintained.
- Town centre crime such as pick pocketing and shoplifting is minimised.
- The ‘Boy Racer’ problem is solved.
- The late night drinking issue does not affect other areas of our evening economy.

#### **a watching brief – access**

36. As a result of the award winning Access Audit performed by Wear Valley Disability Access Forum in 2004, improvements were made to the paths, car parks and roads in the town centre. The TCM will work with WVDAF to ensure that the programme of improvements to access is continued.

#### **car parking**

37. The TCM will work with WVDC to expand the availability of car park slots in the town centre where this is possible. The TCM will also work with the BABTA to expand the use of the Carpark Cashback scheme.

### **christmas lights**

38. The deterioration of the Christmas lights after three years use means that full refurbishment is necessary this year. Because of the early failure of some of the lights because of technical problems, the suppliers, Turnocks, have agreed to do the refurbishment at much reduced cost. Nevertheless, the cost of the refurbishment will be approximately £6,850. The TCM will attempt to raise this sum from the traders who originally sponsored the lights on a £200 for two years sponsorship basis. If this fails, new sponsors will be sought. In the event of the full sum not being raised, a contingency figure has been included in the budget.

### **financial resources 2006/7**

39. A £70,000 budget would be allocated as follows:-

<sup>1</sup> Salary, travel, training, etc.:	£40,000
<sup>2</sup> Rent, catering, hospitality, stationery, telephone, etc.:	£6,000
<sup>3</sup> Marketing, publicity and events:	£20,000
<sup>4</sup> Website development and maintenance:	£4,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£70,000</b>

#### **Notes**

- 1 The salary figure relates to full time working by the TCM.
  - 2 The TCM has already moved to a smaller office saving approximately £1,000 P/A.
  - 3 The cost of a new marketing programme will be discussed with Walker Hall Associates and this figure is a contingency figure for the refurbishment of the lights. It is included in case the full cost cannot be covered via trader sponsorship.
  - 4 The maintenance cost is approximately £400 per annum, the rest is development of 'Version 3'.
40. Town Centre Management as implemented has had a great impact on the town, in achieving new business developments, a re-invigorated traders' association and a feeling of confidence in the town. The resources the Council has been able to apply to the task have been limited.

## 5. Manage resources

41. The TCM will continue to work with the Town Centre Forum to implement the town centre strategy and the actions defined in this plan. The TCM will continue to manage the budget for the project, producing bi-monthly progress reports and agreeing major items of expenditure with the Forum.

### **conclusion**

42. The 2005/6 financial year saw the consolidation of the role of the TCM. It also saw the continuing development of a number of major initiatives including the events-driven marketing programme, the town website and the resurrection of the Business & Traders Association.
43. The activities of the TCM, however, were much curtailed when the restricted funding available was used up. In particular, lack of funding, both public and private, meant that the marketing programme, launched and developed so successfully in the previous year, had to be postponed. The role of the TCM in the second half of the year effectively became one of caretaking and other zero or low cost activities.
44. It is hoped that 2006/7 will see the reinstatement of an active marketing initiative supporting a programme of events to bring visitors into the town, and that the TCM can build on the success of the town website and use it to help businesses in the town become more active in the e-economy.

<b>RECOMMENDED</b>	1	That the budget allocations are agreed.
	2	That the activities proposed are implemented to achieve an Action Town Centre Management Initiative.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

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Strategic Director for Environment and  
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Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Derek Toon  
Bishop Auckland Town Centre Manager  
Tel: 01388 606764

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REGENERATION COMMITTEE

24 MAY 2006

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration  
**FUTURE ALLOCATION OF EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS**

**purpose of the report**

1. This report seeks to inform the Regeneration Committee of the current consultation on the future allocation of European Structural Funds within the UK, and seeks endorsement of the Council's response.

**background**

2. The new European Structural Funds programme will run from 2007-2013. Under this programme the UK Government is required to submit a National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) which establishes the broad priorities for Structural Funds in the UK. A consultation draft of this document has been issued by the Government, inviting comments by 22 May.
3. The North East will not receive an allocation directly from the European Union, but instead will be given an allocation decided by the UK Government under the 'Competitiveness' strand, according to criteria laid out within the NSRF. This allocation will include resource from both the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).
4. In respect of the ERDF, the proposals indicate that every region will be given an allocation. This will reflect the Government's commitment to make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English regions and over the long term reduce the persistent gap in growth rates between the regions. Each region will then develop its own regional programme, based around national strategic priorities, but with regional flexibility.
5. The ERDF priorities for England are:
  - Promoting innovation and knowledge transfer;
  - Stimulating enterprise and supporting successful business;
  - Ensuring sustainable development, production and consumption; and
  - Building sustainable communities.

In contrast, Wales and Scotland's priorities have been formulated to allow support for infrastructure projects, notably lacking from the priorities for England.

6. For ESF, there will be a national programme with regional funding allocations, likely to be based on employment rates, worklessness and skills levels.
7. The ESF priorities for England are:-
  - Extending employment opportunities; and
  - Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce.

Once again the priorities in Scotland and Wales appear to offer more flexibility to tackle the particular problems facing the North East and Durham. In particular: progressing people to better quality and better paid jobs; increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity; and improving skills levels.

8. A key issue within the draft NSRF is the alignment of European Structural funds with national sources of funding, both at a strategic level – alignment with the Regional Economic Strategy, and at a practical level, pre-matching European resource with, for example, Single Programme, Local Enterprise Growth Initiative and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.
9. This system of alignment has already been tested by the ESF Co-financing system, managed by the Learning and Skills Council and Job Centre Plus. These two organisations have pre-matched European resource with their own funds, and provide full funding towards project applicants.
10. This approach could reduce bureaucracy, as applicants would only need to approach one funding body and meet one set of monitoring requirements. However, it could also result in less funding flexibility, leaving only those areas eligible for both funds supportable in the future and decreasing the range of activities which can currently be supported by external funding. Aligning European funding with national funding sources and strategies may also lead to replacement of national funding with European resource, potentially leading to a reduction in the overall investment in the region.
11. A key concern for County Durham and Wear Valley is that there is an increasing demand for national resources to be focused towards the Northern Way priorities, leading to a focus on the city-regions of Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley, potentially leaving County Durham and Wear Valley as the poor relations. Alignment of European funding with national resources removes another opportunity for the District.
12. The attached annex 3 provides the proposed County Durham Economic Partnership response to the questions raised in the NSRF consultation document, addressing the issues raised above.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That the Committee consider and endorse this report and the attached annex 3 response to the Government's consultation on the future of European Structural Funds.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Strategic Director for Environment and  
Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Alan Weston  
Principal Regeneration Officer  
Ext 387

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## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

24 MAY 2006

### Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/6**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To update Members of the progress made in the delivery of the Capital Programme 2005/6 and seek endorsement to the financial re-profiling and continuation of projects in 2006/7.

#### **introduction**

2. The Economic Regeneration team has been responsible for the delivery of a number of schemes within the Wear Valley District Council 2005/6 capital programme. Virtually all of these schemes use the WVDC resources to lever in substantial amounts of external funding to deliver the larger regeneration scheme.
3. The securing of external funding often requires a lengthy application and assessment process, which can lead to unanticipated delays to the start of projects. This often means that projects do not fit within a single financial year but straddle over 2 or more years.
4. Given the annualised nature of many of the external funding sources secured for these projects this means that resources have to be claimed within the year identified or be lost from the project, with obvious implications upon WVDC budgets.
5. This often means that projects have to be re-profiled and that the WVDC contribution cannot be spent in the year originally envisaged when the capital programme is put together some months in advance of delivery.
6. This has been the case with each of the following projects which have been developed or started in 2005/6, and on which, in most cases, some expenditure has been incurred. However, this has meant that the contribution originally envisaged from WVDC to be spent in 2005/6 has not been fully achieved but the underspent amount is required to meet contract commitments and external funding grant conditions.

	<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>2005/6 Original WVDC Budget</b>	<b>2005/6 Revised WVDC Budget</b>	<b>2005/6 Actual Gross Spend</b>	<b>2005/6 Actual WVDC Spend</b>	<b>2006/7 WVDC Spend Estimate</b>	<b>Notes</b>
C066	Bracks Farm	£145,000	£145,000	£0	£0	£145,000	See separate report
C082	Innovation House Extension	£100,000	£66,000	£883,786	£41,994	£58,007	Delayed start to the project. Construction started October 2005 and will be completed June 2006. WVDC & ERDF to be used to fund contract commitment and meet funding contract conditions.
C087	Crook Commercial Renaissance	£50,000	£50,000	£531,020	£0	£100,000	£100,000 consists of £50,000 underspent in 2005/6 plus £50,000 allocated in capital programme for 2006/7. Re-profiling funding and extending the project into 2006/7 has enabled additional Single Programme and NRF resources to be secured. WVDC (& DCC in-kind) resources will be used to fund contract commitment and meet revised funding contract conditions in 2006/7.
C088	Low Willington Business Park	£50,000	£150,000	£144,780	£98,385	£51,615	Joint project with Durham County Council. Increase in WVDC budget agreed at previous committee (18.01.06). Delayed start to construction due to late confirmation of funding package. WVDC resources to be used to meet our funding commitment to the project to DCC and also enable DCC to meet the funding contract conditions.

C089	South West Crook Industrial Estate	£350,000	£250,000	£594	£594	£249,406	Reduction in WVDC 2005/6 budget and carryover agreed at previous committee to enable increase in the budget for Low Willington (see above and committee report 18.01.06). Negotiations are still continuing over the delivery of this scheme with the private sector developer. WVDC resources in 2006/7 will enable the continuation of discussions to deliver this proposal.
C093	West Auckland Improvement Scheme	£20,000	£20,000	£0	£0	£60,000*	£60,000 consists of £20,000 underspend in 2005/6 plus £40,000 allocated in 2006/7. Failed to secure match funding in 2005/6 to implement scheme. Now to be incorporated into larger project and re-submitted.

## conclusion

7. The changes identified above have been necessary to ensure that all available external funding secured has been claimed and that the project can be delivered within the overall budget for the project.
8. However, this means that it has not been possible to achieve the level of WVDC expenditure budgeted for within the financial year, although it is still anticipated that the projects will still remain within budget over the project lifetime. Therefore endorsement of the carry forward of under-spent resources in 2005/6 into 2006/7 for the above projects is required to continue the delivery of the above schemes.
9. As identified above, Wear Valley District Council has, in securing external funding for the delivery of the above projects, signed contracts with funders confirming contributions from our own funding. This is a condition of them offering the remainder of the money and failure to spend the level of resources identified as WVDCs contribution may result in Single Programme or ERDF resources being withheld.
10. In addition the financial re-profiling of the projects identified above will provide the resources in 2006/7 to enable the existing outstanding contract commitments to be met.

## RECOMMENDED

1. That Members note and endorse the financial re-profiling of the projects identified above.
2. That Members receive update reports at the end of each quarter on the progress on each project within the capital programme to include both brief financial reports and progress to achieving outputs required by the external funding bodies.

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
Robert Hope  
Strategic Director for Environment  
and Regeneration  
Ext 264

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**Author of the report**  
Alan Weston  
Principal Regeneration Officer  
Ext 387

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## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

24 MAY 2006

### Report of Strategic Director for the Environment and Regeneration **BRACKS FARM BUSINESS PARK - CAPITAL PROJECT**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To outline the current position in relation to the Bracks Farm capital project and seek endorsement of the Management Team's agreement to retain £140,000 capital budget for use in 2006/07.

#### **background**

2. Bracks Farm Business Park is a proposal to develop a high-spec, high-tech business park on a green-field site to the north of Bishop Auckland. The site is the most prestigious within Wear Valley and has an important role to play in the areas' economic diversification by providing larger office accommodation to ensure that the area has a pipeline of types and sizes of premises required by modern businesses. The development has significant potential to attract larger scale inward investors, provide growth space for existing businesses and perhaps capitalise upon some of the spin-offs from other nearby developments.
3. In total the site provides for 23 acres for immediate development with the potential to provide office accommodation ranging between 1,500 and 200,000 sq. ft. The first phase of speculative units are to be delivered by Priority Sites (a partnership between the Royal Bank of Scotland and English Partnerships) and provide units between 1,500 and 2,500 sq. ft. leading to the creation of circa 50 jobs. The lack of similar premises within the Bishop Auckland area and the number of multi-unit occupiers within Wear Valley Business Centre – Innovation House confirms the demand for this type of premises.
4. There have been delays in the development of the site following the extremely protracted negotiations between the developer and Church Commissioners who are the landowners. This has meant that the £145K Council capital budget allocated to the project for 2005/06 has not been fully spent - £5k has been spent to date. A point has now been reached where the developer expects to start on site in quarter 1 of 2006/07 and we need to secure the funding for use in this financial year to ensure key elements of the infrastructure can be delivered.

**conclusion**

5. Because of unforeseen delays it has not been possible to deliver the project during 2005/06 as planned. However the project remains a key project for Wear Valley and one that we should continue to fund.

**RECOMMENDED**                      1            The Committee endorse Management Team's agreement to the retain the remaining £140,000 capital funding allocated to Bracks Farm for the future development of the site in 2006/07.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Strategic Director for the Environment &  
Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

John Parnell  
Principal Economic Development Officer  
Ext 307

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**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**24 MAY 2006**

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration  
**UPDATE ON PROPERTY ENHANCEMENT SCHEME TO HIGH STREET, ELDON  
LANE AS PART OF THE DENE VALLEY RENEWAL AREA**

**purpose of the report**

1. To update committee on the current programme of work to the High Street in Eldon Lane as part of the Dene Valley Renewal Area.

**background**

2. In 1999 the Secretary of State declared the Dene Valley as a designated renewal area. Since this time a considerable focus has been placed on the Dene Valley to secure its long term future and to make the Dene Valley a place where people want to live and enjoy.
3. As committee are aware there has been a significant focus on Randolph Street through an environmental facelift scheme in the summer of 2005. This phase of the scheme has successfully drawn to an end and the scheme has proven to be extremely successful.
4. Accent Regeneration, through extensive consultation with customers highlighted and developed a brief programme of intervention to further secure the future of the Dene Valley and to make further improvements. Regeneration Committee have previously agreed to the contents of that report.

**current position**

5. Following the Accent Regeneration report and from feedback obtained at an open event in September 2005 it was highlighted that the High Street should see the next phase of improvement works. The type of work that would see the greatest impact to the High Street is:-
  - Replacement of Rainwater Goods
  - Replacement of Fascia Boards
  - Replace defective roofs
  - Replace defective and dangerous chimney stacks
  - Re-point or re-render properties

- Supply and install uPVC windows and doors
  - Renew boundary walls
  - 2 properties are to benefit from a full Major Repair Grant to eliminate the internal defects to the properties.
6. The aim of carrying out this type of work is for two main reasons, firstly we are replacing defective items to ensure that further deterioration of these properties does not occur. Secondly as this is the main street running through the Dene Valley, the improvements will make a positive impact to the public who drive through or visit the area.
  7. Since November 2005 the Private Sector Housing Team have been working with customers to encourage them to be part of the scheme. Out of 21 properties that were highlighted to benefit from the work a total of 18 have agreed to be involved in the scheme. It is envisaged that the remaining 3 will opt into the scheme at a later stage.
  8. Vest Construction have been awarded the contract to carry out this work, the site was set up at the beginning of March 2006. The scheme is scheduled to run for a total of 16 weeks with a completion date due for early August 2006.
  9. The next stage in this process is to look at the next area of targeted intervention. The Accent Regeneration report has highlighted that Spencer Street and Brook Street should be targeted next, this will be further explored and discussed with customers.

### **financial implications**

10. The contract sum for the scheme at High Street was submitted at £253,000, however, this amount is based on a full uptake of the scheme, at present a small number of customers have opted out of the scheme and therefore savings will be made.
11. The budget for 2006/07 was reduced from £300,000 to £200,000 this will significantly reduce the amount of improvement work that can be carried out as part of the next phase of works. The 2006/07 scheme will therefore be reduced to fall within this budget.

### **legal implications**

12. There are legal implications when carrying out an extensive contract. Advice and guidance has been sought from the Council's Legal Section.

### **human resource implications**

13. There are no Human Resource implications other than staff resources.

### **i.t. implications**

14. There are no I.T. Implications.



### **crime and disorder implications**

20. There are crime and disorder implications relating to this scheme. The anti-social behaviour that occurred surrounding the Randolph Street Scheme was managed very well and it is hoped that this will continue through this scheme. The Wear Valley Street Wardens and Police have been informed of the scheme and their presence will be increased over the contract period.

### **monitoring**

21. The Dene Valley Renewal area schemes are monitored by the Principal Housing Strategy Officer.

### **conclusion**

22. The Dene Valley Renewal Area continues to gain momentum and this next phase of work should address not only the housing defects but ensure a positive appearance to customers passing through the village.
23. The next phase of intervention will be looked at and considered and a recommendation reported back to committee.

### **RECOMMENDED**

1. Committee note the contents of this report and endorse progress on the Dene Valley HRA scheme.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

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Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Richard Roddam  
Principal Housing Strategy Officer  
Ext 514

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**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**24 MAY 2006**

Report of the Strategic Director of Resource Management  
**RISK REGISTER UPDATE**

**purpose of the report**

1. To inform Members of the progress in managing the risks of the Regeneration Department.

**background**

2. Members will see that the Service Plan for the Department includes an analysis of the main risks facing the department. This report seeks to give assurance to Members of the management of those risks.
3. A key line of enquiry within the Use of Resources assessment, relates to the extent to which risks are managed and Members are kept informed of their management. The table below shows the risks as agreed within the Service Plan and progress in managing them. This report will be presented to Members at every other committee cycle to demonstrate ongoing improvement in the area of risk management.

<b>Type of risk</b>	<b>Risks to the Department</b>	<b>Actions to minimise</b>	<b>Progress to Date</b>
Political	Reduction/change in priority accorded to tasks	Have contingency work programme available	No change in priority proposed.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction in resources available to service.</li> <li>▪ Availability of external funding.</li> <li>▪ Reduction in economic performance of District leading to reduction in demand on service (building rates).</li> </ul>	Scale back programme, seek partners. Pro-active approach to external funding regimes.	Current resources meet demand for service. Demand (initiated by building industry) remains high but performance has been maintained.

Type of risk	Risks to the Department	Actions to minimise	Progress to Date
Social	Ageing population	Need to ensure flexibility of response in relevant service areas. Impact on DFG's etc to be monitored.	Resources currently meet demand. New ways of working with HIA under consideration.
Technological	Computer failure	Have adequate back-up in place	No current problems (paper system remains relevant)
Managerial/ Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of staff/no replacement.</li> <li>▪ Middle management capacity.</li> </ul>	Use PD Grant constructively. Restructuring of service.	Staffing levels being maintained. One vacancy to be advertised but currently covered by agency staff.
Financial	<p>Reduction in resources</p> <p><b>Revenues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Failure of revenue bids to budget to fund additional staff.</li> <li>▪ Environmental resources limited.</li> <li>▪ Reliance on external funds to support mainstream service activity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Capital</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scale of projects reduced.</li> </ul>	<p>See "Economic" above.</p> <p>Use of Planning Delivery Grant.</p> <p>Seek external assistance.</p>	<p>See Managerial/ Professional above.</p> <p>Capital Programme still subject to funding bids at present.</p>
Legal Partnership/ Contractual	Role of potential partnerships of Eastgate/Coalfield Housing SPUs.	Ensure proposals are soundly/legally based.	Partnership arrangements still in process of development.
Physical	Lack of office accommodation/cramped working conditions.	Negotiate space elsewhere	Currently being addressed as part of Council restructuring.
Legislative/ Regulatory	Increase in demand on strategy planning/building control facilities leads to more complaints.	Extra resources required to ensure effective service delivery.	Resources currently available are keeping pace with demand.
Environmental	Flood risk assessment more onerous	Follow set procedures (with Environment Agency)	Joint approach with neighbouring districts being considered.

<b>Type of risk</b>	<b>Risks to the Department</b>	<b>Actions to minimise</b>	<b>Progress to Date</b>
Competitive	External Building Control providers	Building Control runs at surplus (on fee paying service). Cut back in non-fee activities if service demands decrease.	Building fee rate still competitive and demand for service remains high.
Customer/citizen	On-going support for partnerships including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic based partnerships</li> <li>▪ Town Centre Forum</li> <li>▪ Increasing public involvement in planning/development issues.</li> </ul>	Build on existing capacity of community network to continue partnership arrangements. Increased focus on customer care.	Current resources are adequate to meet demands.

**conclusion**

4. From the above table it can be seen that risks are currently being managed. No real problems exist at present but continued monitoring of service demands will enable the department to respond to any change in circumstances

**RECOMMENDED**

1. That Members note the report.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

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**Author of the report**

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Strategic Director of Resource Management/Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration  
Ext 227/264

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## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

24 MAY 2006

### Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration **HOUSING GRANTS POLICY 2006**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To seek Committee's approval to the new Housing Grants Policy (Annex 4) in line with the 2004 Housing Act and Regulatory Reform Order.

#### **background**

2. The Regulatory Reform Order was introduced in 2002 to give Local Authorities more flexibility in the grants that they delivered to their customers. The Order was seen as a major step forward as it allowed the grant process, and grants available, to be tailored to prevailing circumstances. Assistance could therefore be based more closely on the actual needs of an area, taking into account geography, and the age and design of the housing stock.
3. The strategy set out here has grasped those freedoms and flexibilities to develop a more robust and comprehensive Private Sector Housing Grants Policy. The policy has been developed in full consultation over the past 12 months with staff, customers and the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency, and furthers our private sector housing commitment.
4. The 2004 Housing Act introduced the new Housing Health and Safety Rating System which has been incorporated into this policy.

#### **the policy**

5. There have been some major changes to this policy in line with recommendations by the recent Housing Inspection and in line with good practice. A number of the grants have now been removed as they have not been used for a number of years and will not be used in the future, this gives a greater focus on meeting the Decent Homes Standard in the Private Sector and meeting the needs of our customers with disabilities

#### **disabled facility grants**

6. The policy surrounding Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) remains broadly the same. The delivery of DFG's is a statutory function and therefore the Private Sector Housing Team will continue to ensure value for money is achieved. This type of grant is focussed towards our customers within the Private Sector.

7. The Government's Audit Commission Housing Inspectors highlighted that it is very vague and not good practice to be unable to give customers a timescale as to when their adaptation will be completed. We agree with this and have introduced 2 prioritisation categories. The prioritisation category will be determined by Durham County Council's Social Care and Health Occupational Therapists and will be based on their professional opinion.
- Urgent – work will commence on an urgent case within 1 month from approval date.
  - Routine – work will commence on routine cases within the statutory 12 months from approval date, however we will aim to achieve this within 6 months.
8. The demand for DFG's has increased significantly over the past year, this is for a number of reasons but mainly due to customer awareness that this type of grant is available. In addition with an ageing population the demand for this type of grant will continue to increase. By setting these prioritisation categories customers will be better informed of when they can expect the work to commence thus easing any worry or anxiety that can be caused. However in the past towards the end of the financial year when budgets become fully committed, work has been put back until the next financial year. This will not be able to continue as these targets will need to be met.

#### **public sector adaptations**

10. Public Sector Adaptations are specifically there to assist customers within properties managed by Dale and Valley Homes but owned by the Council.
11. Demand for Public Sector Adaptations has increased dramatically over the last year, we have now introduced a waiting list to successfully manage the demand and to keep customers better informed of their case.
12. The Government's Audit Commission Housing Inspectors raised concerns relating to a lack of targets and timescales for this type of grant. Again we agree with this and have introduced targets and a more robust prioritisation system. The priorities are as follows:
- Urgent - Work will commence within 1 month of receiving full valid application.
  - Priority 1 – Work will commence within 2 months of receiving full and valid application.
  - Priority 2 - Work will commence within 4 months of receiving full and valid application/
  - Priority 3 - Work will commence within 6 months of receiving full and valid application.

The prioritisation category will be determined by Durham County Council's Social Care and Health Occupational Therapists and will be based on their professional opinion

### **major repairs**

13. In the past we have made available two types of repair grant, these being for major and minor works. Central Government are placing a much greater focus on properties meeting the Decent Homes Standard and therefore the need to make available Minor Repair Grants is no longer a requirement nor is it good use of resources. The full thrust of the repair grant will be to solely assist in meeting the Decent Homes Standard which includes rectifying hazards that are highlighted through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. By using our full capital allowance on Major Repairs only it will assist us in achieving government targets for the future.
14. It is proposed that any applicant that has an approved application will still be eligible for a Minor Repair Grant, however any new applicant will no longer be able to apply for this type of grant. Any application that we currently are in receipt of but have not yet been approved will be contacted to give them the opportunity to apply for a new major repair grant if they think that they may still be eligible.
15. If a customer sells or disposes of their home within a 5 year period from work completing they must repay the full cost of the grant plus compound interest. This is irrespective if the owner sells the house a day after work has been completed or a day before the 5 year period has ended. This policy amends that criteria and is based on a repayment term that is more fair to the customer. The repayment periods are outlined below:
  - Property sold within first two years – Full grant repayable
  - Property sold third year – 75% to be repaid
  - Property sold fourth year – 50% to be repaid
  - Property sold fifth year – 25% to be repaid

### **group repair schemes**

16. The repayment terms for the group repair scheme has been amended and will follow the repayment schedule outlined in point 14.

### **other grants**

17. The use of Relocation Grants and Landlords Discretionary Renovation Grants have not been used by customers for the past few years. Therefore these two types of grant aid have now been removed.

## **financial implications**

17. The main financial implications are through the reduced income via the repayment of grants. Last year we reclaimed in the region of £35,000 through grant repayments, the new method of reclaiming costs will see this figure reduce by approximately one third.

## **legal implications**

18. The Council has a legal implication to review the Private Sector Grants Policy on a yearly basis, this was outlined in the Regulatory Reform Order 2002.
19. The Freedom of Information Act and Human Rights Act have also been considered and have not been breached.
20. It is a legal duty to adopt the 2004 Housing Act, this policy will adopt those changes. A part of the Act it is a legal duty to ensure Category One Hazards are rectified.

## **RECOMMENDED**

1. That Committee approve the new Private Sector Grants Policy.

## **Background information**

This policy has been developed taking into account the Regulatory Reform Order, the 2004 Housing Act and through feedback and analysis over the past 2 years.

---

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### **Author of the report**

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ANNEX 1

draft

# REGENERATION

## Department

## Service Plan

## 2006/07

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You can get a copy by ringing 01388 761946 and asking for the Community Involvement Team, Housing Services Department.

এই নথিটি নিম্নলিখিত ভাষাগুলিতে পুনরায় রচনা করে দেওয়া যাবেঃ  
বাংলা, ক্যান্টোনিজ, হিন্দি, পাঞ্জাবি, উর্দু এবং ওয়েলশ।

本文可以提供下列語種的版本：  
孟加拉語、廣東話、印地語、旁遮普語、烏爾都語和威爾士語。

इस प्रलेख की निम्नलिखित भाषाओं में प्रस्तुत किया जा सकता हैः  
बंगाली, कॅन्टोनीज़, हिन्दी, पंजाबी, उर्दू और वेल्श।

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ:  
ਬੰਗਾਲੀ, ਕੈਂਟੋਨੀਜ਼, ਹਿੰਦੀ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਉਰਦੂ ਅਤੇ ਵੈਲਿਸ਼।

اس دستاویز کو درج ذیل زبانوں میں پیش کیا جا سکتا ہے:  
بنگالی، کٹونیز، ہندی، پنجابی، اردو اور ویلش

Gall y ddogfen hon gael ei hatgynhyrchu yn yr ieithoedd canlynol:  
Bengaleg, Cantoneg, Cymraeg, Hindi, Pwnjabeg ac Wrddw.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Statement by the Chair of Regeneration**

*We expect in 2006/07 to build further on an extremely busy year in 2005/06, including record numbers of Planning and Building applications, the initiation of Local Development Framework, and progressing major developments in the regeneration of Town Centres and Weardale.*

*While the establishment of the Department has been increased to meet the bulk of these tasks, national shortages of staff have meant that some vacancies persist which could affect performance.*

*As Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership I am struck, too, by the good relationship we have managed to foster with the members of the Local Strategic Partnership, which can only bode well for future collaborative working.*

*Nevertheless, much remains to be done and I look forward to further improvements as the Service Plan is implemented and refined.*

### **Statement by the Director of Regeneration**

*2005/6 was a very active year and one in which considerable service improvement and success was achieved.*

*In the planning and building control service performance improved despite record numbers of applications and pre-application inquiries. All Government targets for determining planning applications were achieved and building control was able to maintain its on request site inspection service despite some staff shortages. Work on the Local Development Framework has progressed with completion of key stages of work in line with Government targets, and the Planning service is now available on-line.*

*Work on the Dene Valley Housing Renewal Programme continued and Crook Market Place Enhancement was undertaken. Consultation on the Eastgate and Bishop Auckland town centre renaissance scheme has paved the way for applications for planning permission and funding.*

*Of notable success is the Council's involvement with Easington, Derwentside and Sedgefield Councils in being awarded £10.2m of Government money to implement a Local Enterprise Growth Initiative to increase business and entrepreneurial activity in the deprived communities of the district. This was awarded as part of a national competition between 88 eligible areas. Our joint bid was one of only 10 awards.*

*Much of this work continues into 2006/7 and is described in this service plan. The coming year presents a further extensive programme of activity to meet the Councils and LSP's objectives and presents great challenges for the department for deliver.*

## **DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE**

### **Activities**

- 2.1** The Council's Regeneration Service covers 10 main areas of work – forward planning; development control and enforcement; conservation; building control; housing improvement grants; contaminated land; environmental policy; land reclamation; economic development and tourism, and regeneration initiatives – comprising both statutory and discretionary services:-

### **Statutory**

#### *Local and Forward Planning:*

- Strategic and Regional Plans
- Structure Planning (including waste and minerals)
- Local Plan (Local Development Framework) Preparation
- Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Site Development Briefs and Project Implementation
- Conservation Policy and Listed Buildings
- Conservation Area Appraisals and Enhancement Programmes
- Information Collection and Analysis
- Transport Plans
- Monitoring Policy Performance and Effectiveness

#### *Development Control and Enforcement:*

- Planning and Pre-application Advice
- Determination of Planning Applications
- Determination of Listed Building and Conservation Area Applications
- Advertisement Regulations
- Planning Appeals
- Response to Searches
- Environmental Assessments
- Planning Enforcement
- Tree and Forestry Regulations.

#### *Conservation Area Protection and Enhancement*

#### *Building Control and Regulation:*

- Determination of Building Regulations and Building Inspection Notices
- Disability Access Issues
- Enforcement of Building Regulations
- Dangerous Structures Requirements
- Demolition Notices

#### *Private Sector Housing*

- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Private Sector Housing Enforcement
- Local House Condition Survey.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation/Licensing
- Housing Strategy
- Home Improvement Agency

*Contaminated Land Strategy.*

## **Discretionary**

### *Environmental Policy and Protection:*

- Town Centre Strategies and Development
- Local Agenda 21
- North Pennines AONB
- Environmental Improvement Schemes
- Land Drainage Strategies and Projects

### *Land Reclamation and Enhancement*

### *Private Sector Housing Improvement*

- Renovation and Home Repairs Grants
- Housing Renewal Areas
- Public Sector Adaptations

### *Economic Development and Tourism*

- Economic Strategy Formulation and Implementation
- Inward Investment and Business Formation
- Industrial Land and Property development
- Financial Incentives to Business
- Business Support and Advice
- Tourism Strategy Formulation and Implementation
- Promotion and Marketing
- Task Force Activity
- Market Towns
- Settlement Renewal Initiative
- Local Enterprise Growth Initiative

### *Regeneration Initiatives and Programmes*

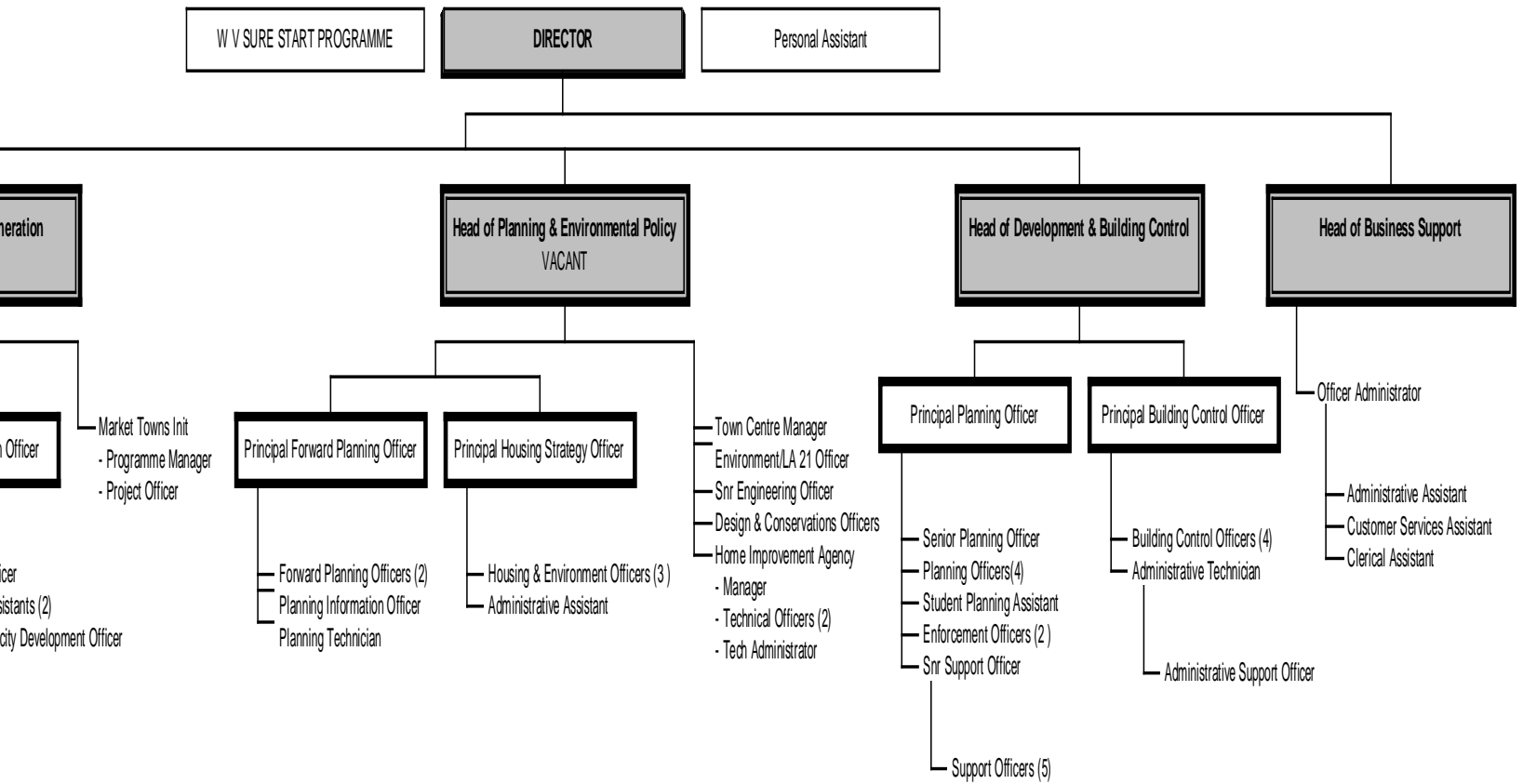
- SRB6 Evaluation
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- European Programmes
- Community Development and Support

- 2.2 Staff Development and Training is undertaken to improve the Department's ability to carry out its role, and to enable staff to progress individually in terms of experience, responsibility and career progression.

## **Staff**

- 2.3 To deliver these services the Department has been structured in three divisions led by Heads of Service. In addition a Business Support Unit provides administrative and financial support to the department. The following structure indicates the number of posts currently identified (at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2006) in each section:-





2.4 In addition to the above core staff, the following officers, funded externally, are part of the Departmental staffing structure and support and develop specific aspects of the Service Plan:

- Wear Valley Lifelong Learning Co-ordination
- Community Capacity Development Worker (1)
- Bishop Auckland Town Centre Manager
- Coundon/Leeholme Settlement Renewal Initiative Project Worker and Administrative Support
- Stanhope and Crook Market Towns Co-ordinators and Administrative Support (2.5).

### Training

2.5 Staff training and development is continually monitored. At present the department is specifically resourcing the training of planning and support staff to gain additional professional qualifications.

### Financial resources

2.6 The financial resources available to deliver the Regeneration Service for year 2006/07 are presented below:-

Table 1

Section/cost centre	Budget 2006/7			Issues
	Expend	Income	Net Cost	
<b>Revenue</b>				
Building Control	240,856	220,200	20,656	Fee income is high because of high demands on service because of building boom.
Economic Development	633,094	343,564	289,530	
Planning	847,249	452,862	394,387	Increased fee income from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2005. Additional PDG from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2005 £126,812.
Private Sector Housing	286,844	60,867	225,982	
Reclamation/ Conservation	95,468	0	95,468	

Section/cost centre	Budget 2006/7			Issues
	Expend	Income	Net Cost	
Regeneration	442,011	358,951	83,060	In subsequent years income from SRB and external programmes may be lost. Includes NRF
Tourism	127,357	47,123	80,234	Includes "Mine Host"
Business Support	190,591	0	190,591	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,783,475</b>	<b>1,483,567</b>	<b>1,379,938</b>	
<b>Capital</b>				
Housing Renewal	820,000	120,000	700,000	Includes DFGs, Private Housing Sector Grants and Dene Valley HRP
Conservation & Enhancement	1,267,000	900,000	367,000	Includes Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance and Car Parking Improvements and Crook Enhancements.
Economic Regeneration Development Schemes	4,365,000	3,700,000	665,000	Includes Bracks Farm, Low Willington and Innovation House Schemes.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,451,000</b>	<b>4,720,000</b>	<b>1,732,000</b>	A ratio of 1:3 of Council to external funding.

- 2.7 This years capital programme, as detailed in the Action Plan, involves some major economic schemes, including Innovation House extension and new business units at Low Willington. These are very dependent upon external funding. This programme will be monitored quarterly.

## Equality and Diversity

- 2.8 Like every part of the Council, the Regeneration Service Department is committed to treating all people equally with dignity and respect. The Regeneration Service Department fully supports the removal of all barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability. We are committed to ensuring that Council services are easily accessible by all irrespective of where they live, disability, age, gender, race, religion or sexuality.

## Assets Evaluation

- 2.9 The Department's main asset is its staff and consequently personal and vocational training is integral to the 2006/2007 Service Plan to ensure that the service provided remains courteous and professional at all times, with a commitment to improvement.
- 2.10 The major physical assets controlled by the department are industrial land and property. Much of this is also in joint ownership with Durham County Council. Service Plan targets are set for the occupancy of such industrial land and property in order to make best use of Council's assets. The assets are:-

Asset Area/ Floorspace	Ownership	Services provided by Asset
Dales Centre, Stanhope 7 units totalling 208 <sup>2</sup> m	WVDC/DCC	Retail/Craft Units
South Church Enterprise Park 10.4 hectares (not developable)	WVDC/DCC	Industrial Land
South Church Enterprise Park 9 units totalling 1254 <sup>2</sup> m	WVDC/DCC	Industrial Units
Innovation House 17 units totalling 770 <sup>2</sup> m with Phase II, 43 units at 1657 <sup>2</sup> m	WVDC	Business Centre
Low Willington Industrial Estate 10.4 hectares (not developable)	WVDC/DCC	Industrial Land
Low Willington Industrial Estate	WVDC/DCC	Industrial Units
Crook Business Centre	WVDC/DCC/ ONE	Business Centre
Crook Industrial Estate	WVDC	Industrial Land
Tow Law Industrial Estate	WVDC	Industrial Land

### 3 REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR 2005/06

#### Development Control

- 3.1 The Department provides all the statutory services required of the Council to **control development** in a way which reflects both the aims and objectives of the Council and the professional vision and understanding of the Department's staff. In pursuing the effective control of development the Department has to try to meet the needs of two different and often conflicting client groups. These groups are on the one hand the existing community, who require residential amenity and the District's environment to be protected, and on the other hand, builders and developers, who seek to realise the investment and development potential of land and buildings. Reconciling such conflicts requires a high level of skill, understanding and commitment on the part of staff. Demand on the service is shown below.

	2002/03	2003/4	2004/5	2005/06
Applications received	743	1012	1011	1047
How many applications decided	708	874	851	899
Approved	673 (95%)	803 (94%)	782 (92%)	848 (94%)
Delegated	581 (82.5%)	791 (92.7%)	777 (91.3%)	831 (92.4%)
Appeals	18	13	14	18
Appeals Approved	4	5	6	8

- 3.2 The **Development Control Service** is an entirely statutory function, which involves the processing of various different types of applications including those involving listed buildings (there are over 570 in the District), Conservation Areas (20), preserved trees and advertisements as well as those for new building. This level of demand on the service has remained high and in 2005/6 1047 applications were received. The introduction of a new scheme of **delegation of decisions to officers** in 2001 and further modifications agreed in 2002 and 2003 has brought the Council more in line with the national target of 90% of all applications to be delegated. In 2005/6 92% of decisions have been delegated to officers.
- 3.3 In 2003/04, of **applications decided**, 94% resulted in approval compared to a national approval rate of 84%. This fell to 92% in 2004/05. The national approval rate for 2004/5 was 83%. The percentage approved in 2005/06 was 94%. Of those that were refused only a small percentage were the subject of **appeals** to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Appeals can take the form of written representation, informal hearings or public inquiries. In 2005/06, 8 appeals have been allowed out of 18 decisions issued by the Planning Inspectorate.

3.4 The **Government regularly monitors the performance of local authorities in processing all planning applications in an efficient and speedy fashion.** The method of monitoring such performance changed in 2002/03. Previously local authorities were encouraged to reach a target of processing 80% of all applications within an 8-week period. From 2002/03 Government targets have been set for specific categories of applications as follows:-

- major applications ( 60% in 13 weeks),
- minor applications ( 65% in 8 weeks) and
- other applications ( 80% in 8 weeks).

Year	Percentage of all applications determined	
2002/03		
• Major applications	48% (60% target)	13 weeks
• Minor applications	47% (65% target)	8 weeks
• Other applications	74% (80% target)	8 weeks
2003/04		
• Major applications	61% (60% target)	13 weeks
• Minor applications	78% (65% target)	8 weeks
• Other applications	89% (80% target)	8 weeks
2004/5		
• Major applications	59% (60% target)	13 weeks
• Minor applications	57% (65% target)	8 weeks
• Other applications	73% (80% target)	8 weeks
2005/6		
• Major applications	61% (60% target)	13 weeks
• Minor applications	72% (65% target)	8 weeks
• Other applications	88% (80% target)	8 weeks

3.1 Prior to 2001/02 the Council performed below the national average. As a result the Government established the Council as a Standards Authority for 2003/04, setting **a target of deciding 55% of minor applications in 8 weeks in 2003/04.** As can be seen from the above table there was significant progress made in 2003/04, and all national targets were exceeded. Because of the tremendous improvement in performance within the Planning service, the Council was awarded by the ODPM the third highest Planning Delivery Grant in the region.

3.2 In 2004/05 it was not possible to meet the Government targets due to staff turnover and other staffing issues. However, the targets were met in the period measured between 1 October 2003 and 30 September 2004, and the Council was awarded again the third highest Planning Delivery Grant in the region.

3.3 Due to the fall in performance on minor applications in the year to end of June 2005 the Council was once again designated a Planning Standards Authority by ODPM for the 2006/07 financial year. As can be seen, however, from the figures for 2005/06, performance has once again improved and **all** targets have been achieved.

- 3.4 **Enforcement** of planning decisions is an important element of the Council's work. In recent years a number of high profile cases have been handled resulting in legal action. The introduction and monitoring of an enforcement procedure in 1998 has helped improve the process. However, continued monitoring and improvement of the procedure are required. An additional temporary enforcement officer was recruited and took up appointment in June 2005. A scoring system has been introduced and an advice note is available so that the public can understand how this works. Also the iPlan Complaints has been developed to help improve efficiency and record keeping. The Department is active in the County Durham Enforcement Officer Group.
- 3.5 The Trevor Roberts review recommendations for the enforcement service have been adopted and cases are now categorised which have specified timescales for action.
- 3.6 Trevor Roberts Associates have produced a procedure manual for use by all staff (planners, support officers, enforcement officers).
- 3.7 **Building Control** forms a specialist part of the Regeneration Department, with its professional staff geared to meet the needs of developers, architects and the public at large.
- 3.8 The Building Regulations are concerned primarily with the safety of buildings and the health of people living in and around them. The Building Control section vets all plans for new building work requiring approval under the Building Regulations. In addition, once building work has commenced, inspection at various stages by the Department's staff is required to ensure that it is being carried out in the proper manner. Part P of the Building Regulations was introduced 1 January 2005 and this required electrical work to be approved by the local authority.
- 3.9 The building control staff also undertake enforcement with respect to the Building Regulations, as well as a wide range of ancillary services such as considering various types of licences for building use, to ensure that they are suitable for the purpose proposed. Inspectors also attend the Magistrates' Court in connection with Means of Escape and Structural Fire Precautions to all licensed premises. The section also co-ordinates matters relating to access for the disabled and provides a major contribution to the work of the Wear Valley Access Forum.
- 3.10 The integration of Planning and Building Control staff within one department enables a comprehensive service to be offered to builders, developers and members of the public on a "one-stop shop" basis. The Department also co-ordinates with other departments of the Council, external agencies and statutory undertakers with regard to the future development of the District.

## **Achievements in 2005/06**

- 899 planning applications determined of which 94% approved.
- 61% of major applications determined in 13 weeks.
- 72% of minor applications determined in 8 weeks.
- 88% of other applications determined in 8 weeks
- 527 building control applications (full plans) and building notices determined.
- 59% of all building control applications (full plans) considered in 5 weeks.
- Implemented e-Gov. software to enable submission of planning applications on-line.
- Implemented public access to enable the public to view planning applications and comment on-line.

## **Economic Regeneration**

- 3.13 The Council undertook work on an Economic Futures Strategy. The first phase baseline research was completed.
- 3.14 The concept put forward for the creation of a renewable energy village on the site of the Lafarge Cement UK works at Eastgate was supported by the majority of respondents following a comprehensive pre-planning consultation exercise carried out during the summer of 2005. The redevelopment plans will be amended following the consultation and work progressed to submit an outline planning application for the redevelopment by Autumn 2006. The site has the potential to be developed into the UK's first renewable energy village, incorporating geothermal energy, bio-mass, wind power, hydro-electricity and solar energy. The redevelopment plans for the site include a high spec mixed use development incorporating recreation, tourism, housing and high tech business development.
- 3.15 The evaluation of the Coundon and Leeholme Settlement Renewal Initiative (C&LSRI) and Stanhope and Crook Market Town Initiative (S&C MTI) by EKOS Consulting, for County Durham Economic Partnership, acknowledged the importance of both programmes. The report highlights that the Coundon & Leeholme SRI has had considerable success with very modest resources made available from the Single Programme funds and that the S & C MTI has secured a total of £1.8m into the two areas, supporting 28 projects to date.
- 3.16 A comprehensive business support service to improve inward investment, relocations and new business start-ups and expansions is provided and marketing activities, building on the 'Locate Wear Valley' brand, continue to increase the awareness of Wear Valley as an investment destination offering opportunity, flexibility and an outstanding quality of life. The database of available business premises has been linked to the Council's website allowing on-line search of the database and the automated collection of the enquirer's contact details.
- 3.17 The Council has been successful in accessing resources to increase entrepreneurial activity in deprived communities. Wear Valley District Council with other eligible districts in County Durham (Derwentside, Easington and Sedgfield), submitted a joint 'round 1' bid for Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) funding. The aim of the initiative is to



remove the market failures in an area to enable private sector business (start-ups, growth or new investment) to be the key driver of the regeneration. The bid entitled “Enterprising Communities – transforming the local economy of East and West Durham” focuses upon raising enterprise and entrepreneurial activity in the most employment-deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in the 4 local authority areas. The bid was assessed nationally and the DTI announcement in January 2006 the success of the bid. The Council, in partnership, has received £10.2m over the next 3 years, one of only 10 bids agreed in the country.

- 3.18 A tourism awareness Familiarisation Weekend for national coach operators and tour organisations was hosted by the Council with return coach business already being achieved, and a one-day Familiarisation tour was held in July for One NorthEast’s Tourism team.
- 3.19 A second tourism information distribution day was held, and again supported the second annual food festival at Auckland Castle. Both events were successful and plans are currently well under way for a third year.
- 3.20 The Council is heavily involved with the planning stages of the emerging Area Tourism Partnership and also with the newly launched Walney to Wear Cycle Route.
- 3.21 In order to assist the promotion of the district, the Visit Wear Valley Guide and Walk and Cycle Guide, were produced and distributed nationally and internationally. Working with the Market Towns Initiative Team a DVD has been produced to raise awareness of the District as a visitor attraction.
- 3.22 We continued to develop and implement a range of new projects including:

**Achievements in 2005/06**

- Funding approved and works started on a £1.395m extension at Innovation House to create a further 26 ‘Start-up’ office units and create 43 new jobs.
- Joint working with DCC to complete feasibility work. Funding applications have been submitted to create 1,547 sqm of high spec office accommodation at Low Willington.
- This year has delivered 200 sqm of office accommodation at Coundon Industrial Estate with the conversion of redundant workspace that had been vacant for over 10 years. Good prospects of additional space in subsequent years working with private sector developers at South West Crook, Wolsingham, West Auckland and other sites to bring forward high quality office and industrial development.
- Negotiations with Priority Sites to develop Phase I of the Bracks Farm 2,000sqm office development at Bishop Auckland are at an advanced stage with a planned start date of May 06.
- Success is being awarded resources to implement a Local Enterprise Growth Initiative.

- Local Supply Chain pilot project 'Wear Valley Interbiz Network' developed in partnership with the Wear Valley Development Agency to encourage collaboration and inter-trading between local business across the District.
- Wolves Lair launched – a competition to encourage young people to learn more about the world of business.
- The 'Mine Host' pilot project was launched, targeted at improving the tourism product in Weardale. It has exceeded output and outcomes targets.
- Feasibility work continuing to establish the viability of the restoration of the historic Auckland Castle Park as a major visitor attraction as an integral part of the Urban Renaissance programme for Bishop Auckland.
- Major public realm environmental and building improvements in the retail heart of Crook Town centre to increase the economic viability of the town and the wider hinterland it serves.

3.23 The Council completed a major town centre urban design based master plan for Bishop Auckland. Undertaken by independent consultants (Red Box) and subjected to public consultation and endorsement, the plan will be the basis of an application for ONE NorthEast funding for implementation beginning in 2006/07. The Plan identifies key development opportunities and proposals for enhancement.

### **Planning & Environmental Policy**

3.24 The enactment of The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Bill in September 2004 heralded the introduction of a new regime of development plan preparation. As a result the review of the current Wear Valley District Local Plan is being translated into the production of a new style Local Development Framework (LDF) for the District. Transitional arrangements have been put in place by which the existing Local Plan policies will be 'saved' until at least September 2007, whilst the LDF is being prepared.

3.25 A Local Development Scheme, (LDS) the project plan of the first round of Local Development Documents (LDDs) given priority for production over the next 3 years has been formally approved by ODPM and came into force on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2005. This document is scheduled to be reviewed at the end of March 2006. A draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which outlines how and when the Council will engage the community, stakeholders and other third parties in LDD production and in the development control decision making process has been produced and has undergone 2 rounds of public consultation. The SCI has been submitted to the ODPM for approval on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005, in accordance with the target date set out in the LDS. In relation to this, the department is continuing to develop partnership arrangements with the other Durham districts and Planning Aid North to implement a project aimed at introducing planning into local schools.

3.26 The district's first Urban Capacity Study (UCS) was undertaken and the findings ratified by a partnership panel comprising of officers and representatives of the local and national social and private housing sectors. The UCS was published in September 2004 and is currently under review. The results of this study will inform the LDF products.

- 3.27 A monitoring framework to evaluate the performance of existing adopted planning policies and the progression of LDF production has been developed. In relation to this the Council's first "new style" statutory Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) has been prepared covering the period 2004/05. This document was submitted to ODPM within the statutory deadline given.
- 3.28 The department is working in partnership with Sedgefield Borough and Teesdale District Councils with regard to securing two posts to carry out work on the mandatory Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of all forthcoming Development Plan Documents (DPDs) produced by the three councils. Pre-sub mission consultation and participation processes relating to key issues and options are to be implemented imminently which will inform the production of the 4 proposed Development Plan Documents (DPD's) which will form part of the LDF.
- 3.29 Other areas of joint working which will inform the LDF include the department's involvement in, with the other Durham districts in relation to, implementing an initial Housing Market Assessment (HMA). Completion of this work will ensure that new LDF policies are tailored with the full understanding of the local housing market as well as assisting in securing future external funding. In addition work is underway in conjunction with Community Services Department upon the production of an Open Space Strategy, in accordance with PPG 17 requirements.
- 3.30 During the past year the district has experienced an increase in brownfield housing development from 46.51% to 52.87.5%. This improvement is attributed to the fact that as legally greenfield committed sites have been complete or consent expired and greater emphasis on brownfield development continues in the decision making process.
- 3.31 The Dene Valley Housing Renewal Programme has continued to gain momentum and its overall impact is now beginning to be realised. The implementation of the scheme is now completed by the Regeneration Department and this has resulted in a much more focussed and dedicated service being delivered. The extensive environmental works has made a significant improvement to the overall appearance of Randolph Street, this type of programme will continue throughout the Dene Valley area.
- 3.32 In 2006/07 a full review of the Housing Grants Policy will be undertaken to further reflect the needs of the District as a whole. The focussing of grant assistance in a pragmatic way will ensure that those who are most vulnerable will receive housing grant assistance to enable them to live comfortably in their home.
- 3.33 Through the 2004 Housing Act, the implementation of the "Houses in Multiple Occupation" (HMO) agenda has been addressed and implemented throughout the District. This will further raise the standards of HMO.

## Achievements in 2005/06

- Adoption of a Local Development Scheme setting out the priorities and timescales of Local Development Documents (DPDs) over the next 3 years.
- Development of a Monitoring Framework to evaluate adopted planning policy performance.
- Preparation and submission of other Councils first “new style” Annual Monitoring Report within the statutory deadline.
- Preparation, consultation and submission of draft SCI for ODPM approval.
- £109,835 of grant assistance resulted in 14 properties in Bishop Auckland Town Centre under the Commercial Building Improvement Scheme
- Agreement with owners allowing Council to trial long stay parking to upper roof level of the Newgate Centre Car Park.
- Progress with existing and new regeneration projects undertaken in partnership with Groundwork West Durham and various Community Partnerships and organisations. Approximately 20 projects, some in final stages of completion others in their infancy.
- Council approval to expand pay and display parking operation into Crook.
- Completed extensive environmental works at Randolph Street in the Dene Valley.
- Adopted Housing Grants Policy in line with the Regulatory Reform Order and applied it throughout the District.
- Adopted and implemented Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.
- Successfully identified the need to reduce the number of empty properties throughout the district, this resulted in expanding the NRF funded project and in 2005/06 brought back to use over 50 properties.
- Worked closely with and supported Private Sector Landlords through their Landlords forum.
- Reviewed and implemented the 2004 Housing Act, this has involved preparation to implement the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and Houses in Multiple Occupation policy.
- Over £500,000 spent on improving the quality of homes within the private sector to our most vulnerable customers.

## 4 PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

4.1 In order to achieve the initiatives suggested in the Service Plan the Department works in partnership with a whole range of outside organisations. The key partners include:-

- ONE North East
- Government Office for the North East
- Durham County Council
- Wear Valley Development Agency
- Groundwork Trust
- Bishop Auckland College
- Durham Rural Community Council
- Countryside Agency
- Other Local Authorities
- Local Chambers of Commerce/Trade
- 2D Voluntary Sector for Wear Valley and Teesdale
- Resident and Community Groups.
- Planning Aid North

4.2 The nature and purpose of the departments partnership involvement is presented below:-

Name of Partnership	Purpose	Specifying/monitoring arrangements
Wear Valley Local Strategic Partnership (and sub groups)	To enable main public service providers to establish and agree common approach with the community to co-ordinate service delivery in the district.	Monitoring of LSP/NRF activity undertaken at board and sub-group level.
County Durham Strategic Partnership	To provide strategic approach for LSP activities	
County Durham Economic Development Strategy	To agree and deliver an economic strategy for County Durham as sub-regional partnership for the Regional Economic Strategy and agree allocation of ONE Single Programme.	Activity programmed by 3 year Investment Plan set against ONE NorthEast target. Activity monitored quarterly at Strategy Steering Group.
European Objective 2 Partnership (and sub groups)	To agree strategy and implementation of European programmes within County Durham	Activity programmed by EU Delivery Plan monitored quarterly by GONE.
Market Towns Partnerships for Crook and Stanhope	To agree and delivery programme to achieve economic development in identified towns in the ONE initiative	Market Towns Action Plans included within County Economic Strategy Investment Plan. Monitoring quarterly by local, and sub-regional partnerships and ONE NorthEast.

Name of Partnership	Purpose	Specifying/monitoring arrangements
Weardale Task Force (Eastgate Development sub group)	To agree and deliver an integrated regeneration programme for Weardale in the wake of the closure of major sources of employment	Activity agreed in Delivery Plan. Monitoring by Task Force and Eastgate sub-group.
County Durham Regeneration (SRB5/6) Partnership	To agree and delivery SRB 5/6county – wide programme	Activity agreed in Delivery Plan. Monitored by GONE quarterly and by Sub-Regional partnerships.
South Bishop Auckland SRB Partnership	To finalise SRB 6 programme in Bishop Auckland area and provide sub-district forum for LSP matters	Complete SRB6 evaluation.
Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum	To deliver SRB 6 programme and this centre strategy in Bishop Auckland town centre	Activity agreed within strategy (currently under review) and monitored by Forum (quarterly) and by report to Regeneration Committee.
Dene Valley Housing Renewal Area Partnership	To agree and deliver programme of housing renewal in Eldon Lane, Bridge Place and Coundon Grange	Monitoring undertaken by Department and report to Regeneration Committee
Coundon Settlement Renewal Initiative	To agree and deliver settlement renewal programme in Coundon and Leeholme	SRI Action Plan included within County Economic Strategy Investment Plan. Monitoring quarterly by local and sub-regional partnership, and by ONE NorthEast.
Regional Spatial Strategy Management Group	To manage and direct the production of the RSS. to agree policy and content of the RSS	Strategy currently under preparation. Monitoring of progress by NEA and report to Regeneration Committee.
County Planning Working Group (Structure Plan, Mineral Plan, Work Plan Monitoring)	To give direction to the production of county-wide plans and strategies.	Plans currently under preparation. Monitoring reports to Regeneration Committee.
Local Transport Plan Partnership	To agree strategy and implementation plan for transport development and use in County Durham.	Programme activity agreed for 2001/2006. Monitored by Partnership and submission of Annual Progress Report to GONE. Programme 2006/11 currently under preparation.
West Durham Rural Transport Partnership	To work with local communities to identify and delivery sustainable transport solutions for West Durham	Activity agreed by partnership to influence LTP. Monitored by partnership.

Name of Partnership	Purpose	Specifying/monitoring arrangements
County Durham Local Agenda 21 Forum	Discussion forum for environmental and LA 21 matters	Activity promoted for implementation by local groups (including LSP Environment Group)
North Pennines Partnership	To agree and deliver North Pennines Management Plan	Programme activity agreed to Management Plan in March 2004. Annual monitoring report agreed by Partnership and reported to Regeneration Committee.
Groundwork West Durham	To manage and deliver environmental, education, environmental training activities	Programme activity agreed by Board (continual process) and monitoring by Board on quarterly basis. Schemes within the district receive prior approval by Regeneration Committee.
West Durham Rural Pathfinder	To experiment with and test ways of: 1) achieving more joined up delivery of services in rural areas; 2) innovation in rural development and delivery of services; 3) better prioritisation of resource.	Steering Groups and Task Groups established.  Action Plans being developed.
EAGA Partnership	To manage and deliver energy efficiency measures to appropriate private sector households on behalf of the Government.	Activity promoted and managed by partnership and monitored annually.
NEA (National Energy Action)	To develop and promote energy efficiency services to tackle fuel poverty and instigate projects that benefit the local environment.	A partnership driven activity with the assistance of utility companies monitored annually and reported to Regeneration Committee.

## 5 CUSTOMERS

### Key customer groups

- 5.1 All aspects of the Department's work interact with the community, who either receive the service at first hand through, for example, the control of development, or via direct consultation and joint working with community groups and organisations to develop and deliver projects and initiatives.

### How we engage with customers and citizens

#### Development Control

- 5.2 The development control service has many customers:-

- Applicants/agents
- Local residents
- Businesses
- Consultees.

- 5.3 In 2003/4 a survey was undertaken to identify the level of satisfaction amongst applicants and agents. A satisfaction level of 90% was achieved from a 100% survey with a 61% response rate.

- 5.4 In 2005/6 sample surveys were undertaken inviting the views of objectors and residents. In 2006/7 it is proposed to carry out continuous surveys of applicants and other users of the service to identify strengths/weaknesses in the service to customers. It is also proposed to establish a Planning Service User Panel to obtain more informal views on service delivery.

- 5.5 The Statement of Community Involvement for the LDF process included an explanation as to how third parties may be involved in the decision making process in relation to planning applications.

#### Building Control

- 5.6 The building control service has as its customers:-

- Applicants/agents
- Builders.

- 5.7 In 2006/7 it is proposed to carry out continuous surveys of applicants, agents and builders to gauge the level of satisfaction with how their applications have been vetted and the building work has been checked on site.

#### Planning and Environmental Policy

- 5.8 All aspects of Planning and Environmental Policy work are subject to consultation with the local community stakeholder and statutory bodies including local plan/development plan preparation and the production of individual site development briefs. The public have the opportunity and are encouraged to influence the content of such work. Means by which the Council proposes to facilitate this be set out in the Draft Statement of Community Involvement.



5.9 The development and implementation of the Council's housing renewal programme in the Dene Valley has been undertaken through a formal consultative framework involving landlords, tenants and the Dene Valley Community Partnership. In 2005/6 consultation was undertaken to determine the scale and nature of works to Randolph Street in Dene Valley. A survey of recipients of grants for private sector housing improvement (disabled facilities, renovation and home repairs grants) was undertaken in 2003/04 overall levels of satisfaction in the service high, including satisfaction levels for works undertaken on DFGs and Renovation grants shown as 100% and 91% respectively, and 100% satisfaction level with the service offered by the Council.

5.10 Further consultation is taking place through the production of a Masterplan for Coundon to inform the delivering of the Coalfields Housing Regeneration Programme.

**Economic Regeneration**

5.11 On-going work to enable direct engagement of the community in economic regeneration programmes. Coundon and Leeholme SRI; Crook and Stanhope MTI, Bishop Auckland Town Centre, through establishment of a Town Centre Forum, Wear Valley Forum for Business and on the redevelopment plans for Eastgate Cement Works.

5.12 Consultation was undertaken on the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Master Plan in 2005/06.

5.13 During 2005/6 detailed consultation/community engagement will take place on the Eastgate Masterplan.

5.14 Current views of customers and citizens is summarised below.

Subject	Who was consulted	Key findings	Action taken and links to this Service Plan
<b>Forward Planning</b>	Consultation with the public stakeholders and statutory bodies on proposals for engaging third parties in the planning process.	Detailed comments made which impact on LDF production	Draft SCI amended wherever possible to accommodate view. Influence on decision making by council
<b>Building Control</b>	Customer Survey of applicants for Building Regulations approval	Continual survey (100%) of all applicants and builders.	Influence on delivery of service
<b>Development Control</b>	Consultation and neighbour notification on planning applications	On-going /continual consultation process	Influence on decision making by Council
	Customer survey of applicants and agents for planning permission	Survey of applicants/agents.	Influence on delivery of service. Proposal to establish a Planning User Panel.
	Sample surveys of objectors and local residents.	Surveys of objectors to planning applications and of local residents notified about applications.	Influence on delivery of service.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Who was consulted</b>	<b>Key findings</b>	<b>Action taken and links to this Service Plan</b>
<b>Environmental Protection and Enhancement</b>	Consultation on Crook Town Centre Enhancement Scheme	Further stage for consultation to focus on Hope Street.	Modifications to design to reflect public concerns before implementation.
	Review of Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy involving consultation by external consultants (Red Box Associates) on town centre master plan proposals.	Detailed comments on master plan.	Modifications to emerging strategy and master plan. Draft strategy presented for public comment and prioritisation of projects agreed.
	Further consultation on Housing Renewal area environmental enhancement scheme in conjunction with Dene Valley SRI process.	Priority established for next phase of scheme	Consultants commissioned to undertake mid term review of Housing Renewal Area. "Facelift" scheme agreed for Randolph St. Reported to Regen Comm. 9 Jan 05.
<b>Regeneration/Economic Development</b>	Programmed consultation on Coundon as part of the Coalfield Housing Renewal Programme.	Detailed comments on proposals.	Comments reflected in programme development.
	Consultation on the draft master plan for the Eastgate renewable energy model village.	On-going consultation on implementation and redevelopment plans for Eastgate	Results incorporated into revised master plan and planning application.
	Consultation through the WV "Forum for Business" an Economic Policies and Strategies.	Deliver Plan developed through Forum.	Continued consultation on implementation.
	Consultation with economic development stakeholders/Forum for Business on LEGI proposals.	Endorsement of programme.	Endorsement of bid for submission to DTI

5.13 Consultation and engagement activities planned for 2006/7 are as follows:-

<b>Subject and purpose of consultation</b>	<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Proposed methodology</b>
Bishop Auckland Town Centre Master Plan proposals	All	Public exhibition meeting
Set up Planning "Focus" Group	Representatives from all sections of the public	Regular focus group forum.
Eastgate Cement Works Redevelopment	Wear Valley Residents	Workshops/exhibitions and meetings.
Coundon Master Plan	Coundon Residents	Workshops/exhibitions/ through Coundon/Leeholme Community Project.
Eldon Lane – Re-appraisal of Housing Renewal Programme	Property owners and Dene Valley Residents	Through Dene Valley Community Partnership / Parish Council
Economic Futures Consultants	Forum for Business	Meetings and workshops.
On-going Forum for Business	Forum for Business	Meetings
Development Plan Documents (LDF)	All third parties	As per proposals set out in draft SCI use of established Community Partnerships.
Development Control Satisfaction Surveys	Planning applications, consultees	Bi-annual survey
Building Control Satisfaction Surveys	Building Control applications	Questionnaire survey

## **6 INSPECTION RESULTS**

### **Planning Service (2004)**

- 6.1 The Planning Service was subject to a “light touch” Best Value Inspection by the Audit Commission in September 2004.
- 6.2 The Audit Commission considered the service to be a good service (two stars) with promising prospects for improvement. On 3 November 2004 the Regeneration Committee agreed an Improvement Plan. Implementation of the plan is on-going.
- 6.3 On 30 September 2004 Trevor Roberts Associates submitted their report entitled “A review of Development Control Procedures in Wear Valley District Council”. The report has made recommendations in respect of staffing levels, managerial responsibilities, changes to procedures and the role of Members in the planning process. Consultants produced an on-line Procedure Guide for use by staff, which incorporates the recommended changes to procedures. A Protocol on Planning has been agreed which incorporates this recommendation.

### **Regeneration Service**

- 6.4 The whole of the Regeneration Service is currently subject to a Best Value review that commenced in 2006 and will be completed by Summer 2006.

### **Planning Administration (January 2006)**

- 6.5 An initial audit review of the administration of planning applications concluded that 6 out of 10 recommendations previously made during audit had been implemented. Those outstanding did not relate to high risk areas.

### **Planning Enforcement (February 2006)**

- 6.6 An internal audit review of planning enforcement concluded that the section is improving the way in which enforcement queries are handled. A substantial backlog, however, still exists from previous years. Regeneration Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2006 resolved to give low priority to old cases. The review also concluded that adequate controls are in place to ensure complaints are logged and dealt with as soon as possible and testing of complaints revealed no specific problem areas.

### **Improvement Grants (March 2006)**

- 6.7 An internal audit review of private sector housing renewal grants concluded that the administration of improvement grants, in general, was good with adequate internal controls. Several risks were, however, identified during testing and it was recommended that these were addressed as soon as possible.

## 7. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### Development and Building Control

PI	Description	2004/5 actual	2005/6 actual	2005/6 target	2006/7 target	2007/8 target	Comments/ Resources
BV109	a) Major applications determined within 13 weeks.	64.71%	60.71%	60%	60%	60%	National target
	b) Minor applications determined within 8 weeks.	57%	72.42%	65%	70%	70%	
	c) All other applications determined within 8 weeks.	73%	88.35%	80%	80%	80%	
BV111	Percentage of applicants/agents satisfied with the service received.	Not surveyed	66%	85%	75%	80%	Sample surveys undertaken in 2005/6. Full survey planned for 2006/7.
BV204	% of appeals allowed against the authorities decision to refuse planning applications	43%	44.44%	25%	25%	25%	New indicator for 2005/6.
BV205	Quality of service checklist	83%	88%	83%	88%	88%	New indicator for 2005/6.
LP-R5	Percentage of householder applications determined within 8 weeks	77%	90.67%	80%	85%	85%	Local target
LP-R8	Percentage of industrial/economic applications determined within 8 weeks	65%	77.78%	80%	80%	80%	Local target
LPI 6	Percentage of applications vetted and approved within 5 weeks.	56%	59%	70%	75%	85%	Local target
LPI 7	Percentage of inspections undertaken in one working day.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Local target
LP-R12	Percentage of alleged breaches responded to within 15 working days.	69%	83.47%	100%	100%	100%	Local target

## Economic Regeneration

PI	Description	2004/5 actual	2005/6 actual	2005/6 target	2006/7 target	2007/8 target	Comments/ Resources
BV-EC2	Proportion of the working population who are unemployed and claiming benefit.	3.1%	3.3%	3%	2.8	2.6%	Local target
BV-EC17 (a)	Total number of investment enquiries dealt with per annum	107	158	120	120	120	We aim to help at least ** per year Staff shortages in Q1 and Q2 affected numbers
BV-EC17 (b)	Number of re-locations and re-investments annually as a result of "inward investment"	8	8	8	10	12	
BV-EC17 (c)	Number of jobs created and safeguarded from firms moving to, or re-locating within, the area following "inward investment" enquiries.	37	78.5	50	60	70	We aim to help at least ** per year Although on target with no. of re-locations, BV-EC17(b) no. of employees less than previous year.
BV-EC19	Number of new business start-ups assisted/receiving financial assistance.	8	20	14	16	18	We aim to help at least ** per year No. of start-ups receiving assistance low. Financial incentive scheme ended Dec. 04.
LPI 1	Respond to workspace enquiries within 3 working days	90%	100%	90%	100	100	
LPI 2	Process grant applications within 8 weeks	100%	100%	95%	100	100	
LPI 3	Jobs created through business grants & other assistance	217	110.5	50	60	70	We aim to help at least ** per year.
LPI 4	Occupancy rates of WVDC (or jointly owned) factory units & workshops	85%	85%	85%	90	95	
LPI 5	Issue at least 10 press releases	16	23	15	18	20	

## Planning and Environmental Policy

PI	Description	2004/5 actual	2005/6 actual	2005/6 target	2006/7 target	2007/8 target	Comments/ Resources
BV64	Number of private sector dwellings that have been vacant for more than six months as at 1st April 2004 that are returned into occupation during 2004/05 as a direct result of action by the local authority.	56	53	60	30	35	NRF funding ceased for 2 dedicated officers.
BV106	Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land.	48.5%	%	60	65	70	Improved trend now evident.
BV200	(a) Does Council have a development plan (or alterations to it) that has been adopted in the last 5 years and the end date of which has not expired?	No	No	No	No	No	New indicator 2005/06
	(b) If 200a is 'no', are there proposals on deposit for an alteration or replacement, with a published timetable for adopting those alterations or the replacement plan within three years?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	
	(c) Did the local planning authority publish an annual monitoring report by December of the last year?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Planning and Environmental Policy cont'd

PI	Description	2004/5 actual	2005/6 actual	2005/6 target	2006/7 target	2007/8 target	Comments/ Resources
BV216	(a) Number of 'sites of potential concern', within the local authority area, with respect to land contamination				534		New indicator mid 2006/07
BV216	(b) Number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of the land is necessary, as a percentage of all 'sites of potential concern'.				0%		New indicator mid 2006/07
BV219	(a) Total number of conservation areas in the local authority area.	20	20				New indicator 2005/06
	(b) Percentage of conservation areas in district with an up-to-date character appraisal.		0%				New indicator 2005/06
	(c) Percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals.		0%				New indicator 2005/06
LP-ES9	Private sector housing adaptation expenditure as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2005 as a proportion of the Council's budget for the service	109.92	100	100	100	100	Budget fully spent
LP-ES10	Number of private sector housing adaptations awarded.	70.27	69	70	75	80	



## 8. DEPARTMENTAL/CORPORATE MAPPING

8.1 This section maps the activities undertaken in the Service against the Council Plan.

Objective	Priority number	Description of priority and key actions
Environment	2a	Produce a Development Strategy for the District as part of the Core Strategy DPD. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce Development Strategy through a cross cutting corporate approach during 2006.</li> <li>Incorporate a clearly developed approach to using Housing as a regeneration tool (including a balanced housing market and affordable housing).</li> </ul>
	2c	Deliver the Weardale Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver and monitor projects</li> <li>Deliver Wolsingham Business Park (WVDC lead) with first business units open 2006/7.</li> <li>Progress the development of the Eastgate Cement Works.</li> </ul>
	2e	Develop standards for environmental design by type <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production, promotion and implementation of design standard.</li> </ul>
	2g	Local Development Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt first round of Local Development Documents by July 2008</li> <li>Produce Statement of Community Involvement.</li> <li>Complete community consultation/engagement and statutory consultation process.</li> </ul>
	2j	Input into Local Transport Plan Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the data from the mapping exercise to influence the Local Transport Plan in line with the needs of Wear Valley citizens</li> </ul>
	2k	Contaminated Land Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete first stage strategy (identifying extent and scale of contamination).</li> <li>Commence in-depth site investigation and remediation programme.</li> </ul>
Economy	3a	Development a longer-term District Economic (Futures) Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-appraisal of existing approach</li> <li>Identification of strategy economic priorities for District.</li> <li>Establish clear links between the economic strategy and Development Strategy.</li> </ul>
	3e	Infrastructure Development Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver development proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wolsingham Steelworks</li> <li>Bracks Farm</li> <li>Innovation House Phase II</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	3f	Business Support Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full integration of Area Brokerage Model into business support activities in Wear Valley.</li> </ul>

## 9. PEST AND SWOT ANALYSIS

9.1 A Pest and Swot analysis is provided for the 3 key areas of service activity.

### PEST analysis

#### Development and Building Control Service

Issue	Action
<b>Political</b> 1 Development Control Committee. 2 Best Value targets set by Government and Local performance indicators agreed by Council.	1 Monitor compliance with Protocol on Planning 2 Aim to meet targets.
<b>Economic</b> 1 Competition with NHBC/Carillion 2 Planning application/Building Regulation fees.	1 Market the service highlighting the good points. 2 Planning fees increased last year. Building Control fees increased for 2006/7.
<b>Sociological</b> 1 More community involvement in consideration of significant applications. 2 Neighbours wanting more say in planning decisions.	1/2 Comply with publicity requirements for all applications / implement Statement of Community Involvement.
<b>Technical</b> 1 iPlan, iBuild, Complaints, Public Access, Portal, Submit a Plan. 2 GGP/EGGP. 3 National Land and Property Gazetteer.	1 Develop usage of the systems 2 Encourage use of eGGP. Continue to develop overlays/input new info. 3 Ensure all existing and new properties are included.

#### Economic Regeneration

Issue	Action
<b>Political</b> 1 Exclusion of District from the "Northern Way" city regions could potentially further marginalise District.	1 Work to maximise opportunities from the Northern Way and promote rural agenda.
<b>Economic</b> 1 Weak economy linked to increasing globalisation in the manufacture of goods and provision of services affects job creation and retention. The lack of physical infrastructure necessary to attract growth industry sectors and of industrial sites on premises, is a real weakness in achieving a sustainable economy.	1 See Priority Key Tasks in Action Plan.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Sociological</b> 1 High unemployment levels and pockets of extremely high levels of deprivation.	1 Direct linkage to activities identified in Service Plan Action Plan.
<b>Technical</b> 1 Potential for new and renewable energy sources in District an asset.	1 Direct linkage to Service Plan Action Plan.

### Planning and Environmental Policy

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Political</b> 1 Impact of legislation e.g. Regulatory Reform Order and Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. 2 Decent Homes standard applying to private sector housing. 3 Brownfield development requirement/PPG3. 4 Emerging RSS	1 Provision of Private Sector Housing Policies programmed. Local Plans team to be configured and joint working arrangements to be explored to undertake key aspects of LDF. 2 Action through Grants Section and Home Improvement Agency. 3 Monitor closely and ensure amendment to policy is adhered to. 4 Represent Council's interest at EiP.
<b>Economic</b> 1 Alteration of funding regimes. 2 Closure of major employers in the district. 3 Housing market variations. 4 Global and regional shifts in the economy. 5 Low take up of industrial allocations.	1 Make adequate provision for continuation. 2 Ensure suitable sites allocated for new business development in LDF. 3 Ensure action is targeted at worst areas. 4 Keep change under review and assess impact on land use and implications. 5 Review allocations/make changes. Address in development strategy directions.
<b>Sociological</b> 1 A declining and ageing population. 2 High indices of multiple deprivation. 3 Supporting People agenda. 4 Crime. 5 Holiday/second homes in Weardale.	1 Assist environment improvement schemes, housing, business to attract incoming population. 2 Tackle worst housing problems as a priority 3 Continued work through HIA. 4 "Liveability" ideas incorporated into planning and development ideas. 5 Make provision for affordable homes.

Issue	Action
<b>Technical</b>	
1 Changes in staff availability.	1 Structure tasks to support some part time working.
2 Renewable energy targets.	2 Prioritise through staff appointments.
3 Home working	3 Adopt enabling approach to maximise benefit for Council and employees
4 Scientific solutions to deal with contaminated sites.	4 Ensure contaminated sites plotted correctly in first instance.
5 Poor access to District	5 Utilise Local Transport Partnership to lobby for better solutions.
6 Heavy Workloads	6 Seek additional staff.

## SWOT analysis

### Development and Building Control

#### STRENGTHS ANALYSIS

##### Strengths

- 1 Pre-application advice available.
- 2 Accessible staff through duty officer system and direct dialling.
- 3 Planning decisions are made in a fair and transparent way
- 4 High level of delegation to officers (over 90%).

##### Actions to optimise

- 1 Follow and maintain procedure manual
- 2 Ensure all staff have appropriate training.

#### WEAKNESS ANALYSIS

##### Weaknesses

- 1 Lack of incentives for staff to stay. No staff retention and recruitment policy.
- 2 Inability to attract and recruit new staff.
- 3 Inexperienced support team and junior planning officers.
- 4 Enforcement is reactive not proactive.
- 5 Image of Planning Service.

##### Actions to improve

- 1 Develop retention/recruitment policy
- 2 Implement proposals to attract/retain experienced staff.
- 3 Provide for training and professional development.
- 4 Increase the number of staff working in enforcement.
- 5 Emphasis on customer care improvements.

#### OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

##### Opportunity

- 1 Analysis/recommendations of Trevor Roberts Associates.

##### Actions

- 1 Implement recommendations.
- 2 Follow and maintain procedure manual.

#### THREATS ANALYSIS

##### Threat

- 1 Staff retention/Inability to attract/recruit staff.

##### Action to turn into opportunity or neutralise

- 1 Develop recruitment/retention policy.

## Economic Regeneration

<b>STRENGTHS ANALYSIS</b>
1 Excellent, motivated individual staff members with a wealth of experience and skills
<b>Actions to optimise</b> Continue to utilise strengths of team to achieve Department's objectives.
<b>WEAKNESS ANALYSIS</b>
1 Regeneration initiatives dependent on securing external funding for implementation. Need greater Council flexibility to apply these as required by external funders. Existing projects and initiatives heavily reliant upon external funding. Diminished funding resources will undermine the team's ability to continue existing high impact initiatives without additional resources and flexibility.
<b>Actions to improve</b> To be addressed by ongoing staff liaison and via Economic Development and Liaison Officer meetings.
<b>OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS</b>
1 Team's experience from diverse background allows questioning of activities, encouragement of best practice, establishment of clear objectives and focusing on achievement of targets
<b>Actions</b> Reflected in Action Plan.
<b>THREATS ANALYSIS</b>
1 Reliance upon short period fixed term contract employees linked to external funding requirements.
<b>Action to turn into opportunity or neutralise</b> Maximise opportunities to nullify threats.

## Planning and Environmental Policy

<b>STRENGTHS ANALYSIS</b>
1 Development planning recognised as a key activity 2 Importance of environment as a principal factor in future success of the District is recognised 3 Private sector grants service – good strategic policies, very good customer feedback from end user questionnaires. 4 Successful HIA, achievement of Quality Mark award and 100% positive feedback from clients questionnaires. 5 Good and motivated individual members of staff. 6 Partnership and community working.
<b>STRENGTHS ANALYSIS</b>
<b>Actions to optimise</b> 1 Prioritise work on Local Development Framework. 2 Further emphasis on implementation of environmental schemes, e.g. West Auckland. Need for further staff assistance in order to prioritise. 3 Ensure adequate resources for private sector grant. 4 Re-look at Private Sector Grants policy to determine ways to target vulnerable households. 5 Produce statement of Community Involvement as part of LDF.

## **WEAKNESS ANALYSIS**

- 1 Recruitment, retention and staff development.
- 2 Staff in section spread across the Civic Centre/Old Bank Chambers.
- 3 Acute staffing resource problems leading to unattainable workloads, PI failures, low morale and failure of statutory functions.
- 4 Reliance on external consultants for key elements of the work, resulting from a relative lack of internal expertise.
- 5 No contingency planning for staff shortages etc.

### **Actions to improve**

- 1 Appointment of key support staff; better training progression.
- 2 Resolve accommodation difficulties.
- 3 Progressively develop better systems.
- 4 Limit reliance on consultants as far as possible.
- 5 Undertake rationalisation of tasks to accord with staff availability. Prioritise actions more effectively.

## **OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS**

- 1 New planning system/review of local plan gives scope for fresh approach and motivation of staff
- 2 Maximisation of bids for external funding.
- 3 Increased partnership working with adjacent district councils.
- 4 Regulatory Reform Order proposals for private sector housing service.
- 5 Take lead role in development of Home Improvement Agency (HIA) services.
- 6 Introduce the 2004 Housing Act and use as opportunity to further develop section and services.

### **Actions**

- 1 Extend view of implications of new planning system more widely to staff and members.
- 2 Adequate staff to be available to ensure bids are timely, comprehensive and well-founded.
- 3 Maintain good working relations with nearby district councils.
- 4 Use RRO to target needs of District in a more pragmatic way.
- 5 Establish HIA services on new base.
- 6 Fully implement 2004 Housing Act.

## **THREATS ANALYSIS**

- 1 Reduction in staff levels/staff changes.
- 2 PCT not fully committed to HIA development.
- 3 Legislative changes.
- 4 Alterations in funding regimes.
- 5 Sickness and stress levels.

### **Action to turn into opportunity or neutralise**

- 1 Retain lead role working closely with/through HIA Manager.
- 2 Present new Planning Act as major opportunity for Council to change its approach to planning in a positive way.
- 3 Anticipate change so that provision can be made in good time.
- 4 Ensure good inspection results are maintained and constructive criticisms are acted upon.

## 10. RISK ANALYSIS

Type of risk	Risks to the Department	Actions to minimise
Political	Reduction/change in priority accorded to tasks	Have contingency work programme available
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction in resources available to service.</li> <li>▪ Availability of external funding.</li> <li>▪ Reduction in economic performance of District leading to reduction in demand on service (building rates).</li> </ul>	Scale back programme, seek partners. Pro-active approach to external funding regimes.
Social	Ageing population	Need to ensure flexibility of response in relevant service areas. Impact on Dig's etc to be monitored.
Technological	Computer failure	Have adequate Business Continuity Plan in place
Managerial/ Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of staff/no replacement.</li> <li>▪ Middle management capacity.</li> </ul>	Use PD Grant constructively. Restructuring of service.
Financial	<p>Reduction in resources</p> <p><b>Revenues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Failure of revenue bids to budget to fund additional staff.</li> <li>▪ Environmental resources limited.</li> <li>▪ Reliance on external funds to support mainstream service activity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Capital</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scale of projects reduced.</li> </ul>	<p>See "Economic" above.</p> <p>Use of Planning Delivery Grant.</p> <p>Seek external assistance.</p>
Legal Partnership/ Contractual	Role of potential partnerships of Eastgate/Coalfield Housing Sups.	Ensure proposals are soundly/legally based.
Physical	Lack of office accommodation/cramped working conditions.	Negotiate space elsewhere
Legislative/ Regulatory	Increase in demand on strategy planning/building control facilities leads to more complaints.	Extra resources required to ensure effective service delivery.
Environmental	Flood risk assessment more onerous	Follow set procedures (with Environment Agency)
Competitive	External Building Control providers	Building Control runs at surplus (on fee paying service). Cut back in non-fee activities if service demands decrease.
Customer/citizen	<p>On-going support for partnerships including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic based partnerships</li> <li>▪ Town Centre Forum</li> <li>▪ Increasing public involvement in planning/development issues.</li> </ul>	<p>Build on existing capacity of community network to continue partnership arrangements.</p> <p>Increased focus on customer care.</p>

## 11. EMERGING GROWTH AND SAVINGS PROPOSALS

11.1 The department reviewed its existing (2005/06) budgets and considered:-

- Potential growth savings which would enhance service delivery;
- Potential capital provision;
- Potential savings.

11.2 The table below sets out the revenue growth, capital growth, capital grant and savings/cost improvements submitted as part of the 2006/07 budget process.

<b>CAPITAL AND REVENUE GROWTH BIDS 2006/07</b>		<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>2006/07 Value £</b>	
<b>Capital</b>			<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
1.	Car Parking Improvement Programme	P Dunn	100,000	92,000
2.	West Auckland Improvement Scheme	R Hope	40,000	40,000
3.	Fieldon Bridge Development – Phase 1	A Weston/ S Dawson	20,000	20,000
4.	Renewing Weardale Strategy – Wolsingham Business Park	A Weston/ S Dawson	50,000	50,000
5.	Private Sector DFGs			204,000
6.	Contaminated Land	I Bloomfield	100,000	96,000
7.	Major and Minor Repair Grants	R Roddam	296,000	200,000
8.	Public Sector Disabled Adaptations Grant	R Roddam	160,000	174,000
9.	Dene Valley Renewal Area Budget	R Roddam	296,000	200,000
10.	Building Enhancement Scheme	A Weston/ S Dawson	50,000	48,000
11.	Stanhope Town Hall	A Weston/ S Dawson/ T Kalmanovitch	20,000	
12.	Renewing Weardale Strategy - Eastgate	A Weston/ S Dawson	50,000	48,000
13.	Bishop Auckland Town Centre	R Hope	1,000,00	100,000
14.	Economic Development Fund			30,000
15.	Positional Accuracy (PAI) Tool	C Dillon	21,000	20,000
<b>Schemes carried forward 05/06:</b>				
	B A Tourism Renaissance			12,000
	Crook Renaissance			50,000



<b>CAPITAL AND REVENUE GROWTH BIDS 2006/07</b>		<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>2006/07 Value £</b>	
Revenue			<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
<b>16.</b>	Market Towns Initiative Crook & Stanhope	S Dawson	35,000	35,000
<b>17.</b>	Settlement Renewal Initiative – Coundon & Leeholme	S Dawson	20,108	20,108
<b>18.</b>	Dangerous Structure Call Out Charge	P Dunn	2,600	
<b>19.</b>	Technical Assistant	P Dunn	29,000	
<b>20.</b>	Town Centre Management – Bishop Auckland	A Weston/ R Hope	70,000	70,000
<b>21.</b>	Regeneration Initiatives	A Weston/ S Dawson	40,000	40,000
<b>22.</b>	Home Energy Efficiency Assistant	I Bloomfield	18,000	
<b>23.</b>	LA21 Budget	I Bloomfield	4,000	
<b>24.</b>	Empty Property Officer	R Roddam	35,758	
<b>25.</b>	Training (Additional)	Various	15,000	
<b>26.</b>	Conservation and Environment Officer	C Dillon	Gross Net	36,255 18,128
<b>27.</b>	Forward Planning Officer	C Dillon		33,000
<b>28.</b>	Additional Local Development Framework (LDF) Production Costs (inc Rural Housing Enabler)	C Dillon		71,700
<b>29.</b>	Aerial Photography Update	C Dillon		2,700
<b>Savings</b>				
<b>30.</b>	Tourism Grants	S Dawson	1,900	1,900
<b>31.</b>	Economic Incentive Grants	A Weston	5,000	5,000
<b>32.</b>	Local Development Framework	C Dillon	1,500	1,500
<b>33.</b>	Community Capacity Builder Post	S Dawson	30,000	30,000
<b>34.</b>	Capitalisation of element of economic development fund	A Weston	30,000	30,000
<b>35.</b>	Other Private Sector Housing	R Roddam	20,000	20,000
<b>36.</b>	Dales Centre subsidy	S Dawson	10,000	10,000

## 12. MAKING THE PLAN WORK

- 12.1 The following identifies the data monitored by the Department both for the purpose of BVPI monitoring and for activity based monitoring.

### Development and Building Control

Indicator	Description	Report	Frequency
BV 109	(a) Major applications determined within 13 weeks. (b) Minor applications determined within 8 weeks. (c) All other applications determined within 8 weeks.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
BV 111	Percentage of applicants satisfied with the service received.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
BVPI 204	Planning appeals.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Quarterly
BVPI 205	Quality of Planning Services Checklist	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Yearly
LP-R5	Percentage of householder applications determined within 8 weeks	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
LP-R8	Percentage of industrial/economic applications determined within 8 weeks	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
<b>Building Control</b>			
LPI 6	Percentage of applications vetted and approved within 5 weeks.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
LPI 7	Percentage of inspections undertaken in one working day.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
<b>Enforcement</b>			
LP-R12	Percentage of alleged breaches responded to within 15 working days.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
LPI 8	Percentage of alleged breaches of building regulations responded to within 2 working days.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly

## Planning and Environmental Policy

Indicator	Description	Report	Frequency
	Number of grant applications by category	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly (April/October) Quarterly Twice Yearly
BV 64	Number of private sector dwellings that have been vacant for more than six months as at 1st April 2004 that are returned to occupation during 2004/05 as a direct result of action by the local authority.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Quarterly Twice Yearly
	Number of housing completions	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly
BV 106	Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly
	Land available for housing development	Dept M.T	Quarterly
	Shopping use patterns	Dept M.T	Quarterly
	Land available for industrial development	Dept M.T	Quarterly
BV 200a	Plan Monitoring : Development Plans	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly  Regeneration Committee
BV 200b	Plan Making : Milestones	C.M.Team Dept M.T	Annually
BV 200c	Publication of Annual Monitoring Report by Dec 04	C.M.Team Dept M.T	Annually
BV 216a	Number of 'sites of potential concern' within the local authority area, with respect to land contamination.	C.M.Team Dept M.T	Annually
BV 216b	Number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of the land is necessary, as a percentage of all 'sites of potential concern'.	C.M.Team Dept M.T	Annually
BV 219a	Total number of conservation areas in the local authority area.	C.M.Team Dept M.T	Annually
BV 219b	Percentage of conservation areas in district with an up-to-date character appraisal.	C.M.Team Dept M.T	Annually
BV 219c	Percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals.	C.M.Team Dept M.T	Annually
LP-ES9	Private sector housing adaptation expenditure as at 31 March 2005 as a proportion of the Council's budget for the service.	Dept M.T	Annually
LP-ES10	Number of private sector housing adaptations awarded.	Dept M.T	Annually
LPI 9	Proportion of complaints made about housing defects in the private sector investigated within 5 working days.	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly
LPI 10	Proportion of full applications for Renovation Grant assistance determined in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 months</li> <li>• 6 months</li> </ul>	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly
LPI 11	Proportion of full applications for Disabled Facilities Grant assistance determined in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 months</li> <li>• 6 months.</li> </ul>	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly
LPI 12	Proportion of applications for Home Repair Grant assistance determined in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 months</li> </ul>	C.M.Team Via MSU Dept M.T, Members	Twice Yearly

	• 6 months		
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## Economic Regeneration

Indicator	Description	Report	Frequency
BV-EC2	Proportion of the working population who are unemployed and claiming benefit.	DMT Members	Annually
BV-EC17(a)	Total number of investment enquiries dealt with per annum	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
BV-EC17(b)	Number of re-locations and re-investments annually as a result of "inward investment"	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
BV-EC17(c)	Number of jobs created and safeguarded from firms moving to, or re-locating within, the area following "inward investment" enquiries.	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
BV-EC19	Number of new business start-ups assisted/receiving financial assistance.	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
LPI 1	Respond to workspace enquiries within 3 working days	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
LPI 2	Process grant applications within 8 weeks	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
LPI 3	Jobs created through business grants & other assistance	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
LPI 4	Occupancy rates of WVDC (or jointly owned) factory units & workshops	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly
LPI 5	Issue at least 10 press releases	Dept. M. T.	Quarterly

### 13. ACTION PLAN FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

#### ECONOMIC REGENERATION 2006/07

**OBJECTIVE 3: ECONOMY - The Council will enable the development of a continuously improving economic infrastructure and environment in Wear Valley.**

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To develop a longer-term District Economic (Futures) Strategy based on analysis of economic prospects and economic attractiveness of Wear Valley.	Director of Regeneration	Stage 1-baseline assessment of the district; mapping of future scenarios with a preferred option; broad guidance of future investment projects – complete.  Stage 2-preparation of a vision; overall development of strategy and investment programme. Awaiting outcome of LEGI bid.	Unemployment rate  Economic activity rate  Business formation and survival rates	Within budget
	Sue Dawson	Continue to work with 'Forum for Business' to develop new products, services & strategies	Ongoing	Staff resources
To deliver economic aspects of rural pathfinder	Sue Dawson	Continue to work with WDRP Steering Group to develop and implement the Rural Pathfinder pilot project in SW Durham	Pathfinder Programme 2005/07	Staff resources
To ensure that sufficient premises and land are readily available for business development	Project team to develop secure resources, manage and monitor delivery of projects.	Identify future development sites to be developed in the medium term  Investigate the potential of public/private sector partnerships for speculative build on serviced sites	Ongoing	Within budget

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
		Bracks Farm	Phase 1 (20,000 sq ft B1 office accommodation and 50 jobs). Ongoing – start on site Q1 2006/7	Priority Sites development
		Low Willington	1,547 m <sup>2</sup> of office accomm. (joint project with DCC). Start on site March 06	£2m WVDC £50K NRF £250K
		Innovation House Extension	1,508 m <sup>2</sup> of office accommodation. Completion end July 06.	£1.5m WVDC £100K
		Wolsingham Business Park – acquisition of land, site clearance & provision of infrastructure, opening up 1.833 hectares of employment land. Development options being explored with private sector.	Ongoing – Mar 07	Final costs to be determined (NRF, ERDF, Single Prog).  Industrial Development Grant.
		South West Crook Business Park - Investigate the options of developing office accommodation.	Ongoing	Final costs to be determined
		Continue to work with landowner and explore funding opportunities to invest in infrastructure development on the Fieldon Bridge site.	Ongoing	External funding resources being sought to facilitate this.
	John Parnell	Speculative Workspace Development Programme to encourage development of programmes identified in the floorspace study and those falling outside mainstream funding.	March 07	Funding to be secured

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
	John Parnell Graham Jonsson	Industrial Estate Enhancement Scheme including broadband provision at key sites.	March 07	Funding to be secured
	Graham Jonsson	Site investigation, West Auckland to open up employment land	March 07	Funding to be secured
To encourage business investment in the District	John Parnell/ Graham Jonsson	Improve marketing and promotion of Wear Valley as business location using findings from economic futures research  Full integration of Area Brokerage Model into business support activities in Wear Valley	On-going	Within budget
	John Parnell/ Graham Jonsson	Continue 'Property Liaison Group' to ensure flow of information with Commercial Agents and Developers.	Ongoing. Quarterly meetings	Staff resources
	Graham Jonsson	Further develop marketing strategy, using new promotional materials, to attract investors to the District capitalising on the "quality of life" the district has to offer.	Ongoing	WVDC/NRF/staff resources
	Graham Jonsson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote development site availability</li> <li>▪ Use new enquiry system and develop proactive marketing strategy</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Part of marketing strategy (WVDC/NRF)
	John Parnell/ Graham Jonsson	Work with other agencies such as CDDC and ONE to promote Wear Valley as a destination for 'quality of life' businesses.	Ongoing	Staff resources

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To improve Business Birth rate survival rates and the competitiveness of existing business	John Parnell	Monitor the effectiveness of the Business Support Network for County Durham, to ensure the service offers a high quality, comprehensive and accessible programme of business support for all industry sectors including tourism throughout the District	Ongoing	Monitor Business Support Programme in Wear Valley. Resources available through WVDA.
	John Parnell	In conjunction with WVDA continue to offer a tailored package of financial support to encourage Start-ups, improve the competitiveness of existing businesses and to encourage business investment and relocation into WV.	Ongoing	Monitor & approve applications from the WV Business Support Prog. NRF/WVDC/Single Programme
	John Parnell	Develop 'Biz Fizz' initiative, which has operated successfully in other parts of the region, into WV to encourage Community Enterprise and Business Start-up.	March 07	Secure funding LEGI funding
	John Parnell	Promote and encourage the sharing of best practice and supply chain development (LSP 4.3)	March 07	Secure funding LEGI funding
	John Parnell	Encourage better take up of the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme throughout the district  Encourage existing providers of 'Young Enterprise' & 'Graduates into Enterprise' to be more pro-active within the District. Following completion of Skills Audit, Action plan for improvement being developed between Economic and Learning thematic groups.	Ongoing	Staff resource
To increase entrepreneurial activity in deprived communities to increase economic development and growth.	Sue Dawson/ Alan Weston	Implement LEGI proposals. Develop delivery plan and agree proposals for workstreams.	3 year programme	LEGI resources secured



Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To develop Tourism potential throughout the District	Mike Richardson	<p>Improve marketing and promotion of WV as a visitor destination.</p> <p>Develop and implement a programme of promotion &amp; marketing; including internet marketing; promotion of local attractions, events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update and reprint "Visit Wear Valley" guide</li> <li>▪ Update &amp; reprint Walking/Cycling leaflet</li> </ul> <p>Continue successful events calendar at Tourist Information Points.</p>	<p>Ongoing – March 06</p> <p>March 07</p>	<p>WVDC/NRF</p> <p>Staff resources</p>
		Evaluate performance of pilot project to improve the quality of the District's Tourism Product- 'Mine Host'. After which determine continuance	March 07	Within budget
	Mike Richardson	<p>Evaluate performance of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote and support 'supply chain' developments; Farmers Markets; North Pennines Food Promotion, Food Links Project with Teesdale District Council</li> <li>▪ Local Food Links project underway. Farmers Markets on-going. After which determine continuance</li> </ul>	March 07	Within budget
	Mike Richardson	Encourage and support new tourist developments and attractions.	Ongoing	Staff resources
	Mike Richardson	Work with other bodies such as One NorthEast and DCC to feed into and fit with County Durham Tourism Strategy and Regional Tourism Framework and development of ATP.	March 07	
To implement area based regeneration programmes	Avril Hamilton	<p>To implement Coundon &amp; Leeholme Initiative (SRI).</p> <p>Yr 5 of 5 year initiative to reverse the effects of high levels of economic deprivation in partnership with the local community and assist in establishing a vibrant and sustainable community.</p>	Ongoing -March 07	Core funding from ONE NorthEast Single Programme.

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
	Tisha Kalmanovitch	To implement the Market Towns Initiative in Crook & Stanhope (Year 4) to help restore the market towns as sustainable, economically viable service centres for their hinterland communities and to develop potential economic drivers (e.g. tourism in Weardale) within the target area.	Ongoing - March 07	Core funding from ONE NorthEast Single Programme.
To implement the North of England European funding Programme to assist the economic, social and environmental regeneration.	Ross Cowling	To continue to develop and assist with the implementation of the prioritised Community Economic Development	Ongoing	Staff resources
	Dawn Egglestone Mark Rowland Ross Cowling	To continue to access European resources to assist in economic activity within the District.	Ongoing	Staff resources
To implement the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy – Action Plan, in Partnership with other agencies and local communities.	Alan Weston (In association with the LSP Manager & Chairs of the respective thematic groups)	To continue to manage and administer the NRF Programme to ensure that WVDC as ‘Accountable Body’ meets all its requirements and commitments to the LSP in relation to service delivery and to GO-NE in relation to monitoring and audit trails.	Ongoing	NRF/Staff resources
	Alan Weston	To continue to assist with the development, appraisal and implementation of projects within the NRF Programme.	Ongoing	NRF/Staff resources
	Dawn Egglestone Mark Rowland	To continue to assist with the implementation and monitoring of existing projects within the Programme.	Ongoing	NRF/Staff resources
	Alan Weston	To continue to assist the development of the LSP and prepare and begin to implement the exit and succession strategy for NRF	Ongoing	NRF/Staff resources

<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Key Tasks in next 3 Years</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
To maximise the opportunities for public sector regeneration investment.	Economic Regeneration Team	To continue to work with funding partners to identify and develop new projects, and maximise the funding opportunities to bring about regeneration initiatives in the area.	Ongoing	Staff resources
	Economic Regeneration Team	To identify new funding opportunities as successors to SRB/SRI/MTI etc and ensure that Wear Valley is in a position to capitalise upon these opportunities.	Ongoing	Staff resources
	Dawn Egglestone Mark Rowland Ross Cowling	To continue to assist with the implementation and monitoring of existing projects funded through Single Programme and any other funding sources successfully brought to the area to undertake regeneration activity.	Ongoing	Staff resources
	Economic Regeneration Team	To continue to work in partnership with other stakeholders to influence service delivery and ensure that maximum benefit can be derived from other projects being implemented in the district eg Leader+, North Pennines Partnership, Mineral Valleys etc.	Ongoing	Staff resources
	Sue Dawson	YR3 of 3 Continue to support the work of North Energy Associates and the Energy for Enterprise Scheme and encourage the take up of this initiative in the district.	Ongoing	Staff resources

**OBJECTIVE 4: ENVIRONMENT - *The Council will aim to secure new public and private investment to improve the built and natural environment.***

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
Review Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy	Bob Hope Project team to be established to develop, manage and monitor delivery of projects.	Review existing strategy and integrate Council led activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying new development opportunities and planning policies</li> <li>environmental enhancements</li> <li>measures to prevent anti-social behaviour</li> <li>street cleansing</li> <li>promotion and marketing</li> <li>Urban Renaissance activities</li> <li>Traffic and parking improvements</li> </ul> (Review activities Mar 06 and produce new plan to deliver improvements) Bishop Auckland Renaissance – to seek significant improvement to the environmental quality of public spaces & buildings & to identify & promote critical development opportunity proposals. Two elements.	Integrated approach with clear activities, responsibilities, timescales and resources developed by target date  Town centre “health check” to be formulated from retail consultancy  Ongoing – Mar 08	Capital programme
	Alan Weston	<u>Tourism Renaissance</u> Stage 2 – 2006 and beyond – implement tourism renaissance project. <u>Urban Renaissance</u> 2006 – 2008 Develop projects to implement Urban Renaissance Action plan	Phase 1 HLF bid 2006/07	Potentially £5.1m - £2.1m Heritage Lottery Funding, £0.7m Single programme & £2m Single Prog Urban Renaissance. WVDC £300K.
Deliver the Weardale Strategy	Director of Regeneration	Deliver and monitor key flagship projects. Priority progress the re-development of the Eastgate Cement Works  Stanhope : continue to implement the MTI programme on behalf of the Stanhope MTI Steering Group in order to revitalise the area, both economically and socially.	Projects delivered to timescale and budget according to project plans  Planning application submitted by Autumn 2006.	Capital programme

ACTION PLAN FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

**PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY 2006/07**

**OBJECTIVE 1: POPULATION -** *The Council will use its statutory powers, resources and influence to help create a balanced, vibrant and growing population across the whole of Wear Valley District.*

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To produce a new plan (LDF) to cover period 2006-2021.	C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparatory work for the Local Development Framework "Core Strategy" (Development Plan Document) including housing/leisure/commercial/transport needs.</li> <li>▪ Preparation of Core Strategy Document (Development Strategy)</li> <li>▪ Preparation of Proposals Map</li> <li>▪ Preparation of Statement of Community Involvement</li> <li>▪ Produce "Development Control" DPD, Housing DPD and Action Area Plan for South and East Bishop Auckland</li> <li>▪ Sustainability Appraisal/Environmental Assessment of DPD documents.</li> </ul>	In accordance with LDS timetable for individual LDF documents	Local Plan budget / Staff resources
To monitor the implementation and effectiveness of planning policies and development land availability.	B Magraw C Dillon R Roddam C Dillon C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To develop and implement a monitoring framework and prepare an Annual Monitoring Report.</li> <li>▪ Monitor the National Land Use Database on brownfield land development opportunities.</li> <li>▪ Review, update and publish housing and industrial land availability and housing completion schedules.</li> <li>▪ Provide data to input into the Council's Housing Investment Programme.</li> <li>▪ Monitor the Housing Land Availability.</li> <li>▪ Review of Urban capacity Study</li> </ul>	Base date 31 March for publication in July (annually)	Salary costs
	C. Dillon/ other planning officer	To prepare development briefs and concept statements for important housing and employment sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development brief for 'The Hollow'</li> <li>▪ Other sites as required</li> </ul>	2006/07	L. P. budget
To make full representations on the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East of England	B Hope/ C. Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute/engage with Regional Spatial Strategy Working Groups.</li> <li>• Contribute to Structure Plan Monitoring Group</li> </ul>	Continuing 2006/7	Salary costs

**OBJECTIVE 2: ENVIRONMENT - *The Council will aim to secure new public and private investment to improve the built and natural environment.***

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To make full representations to the County Council during any revision of the Minerals and Waste Local Plans and comment on any other Plans of neighbouring authorities on Policies which may affect the District.	C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Comment and assist when necessary Durham County Council with revision production of the Waste Local Plan.</li> <li>▪ Comment on the Local Development Frameworks neighbouring authorities when consulted.</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2006/7	Salary costs
To work with Durham County Council in partnership to produce and monitor the implementation of the Annual Local Transport Plan and the Local Transport Partnership.	C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mapping of transport issues in the District to inform LDF and LTP.</li> <li>▪ Promote the implementation of District schemes agreed within the Local Transport Plan.</li> <li>▪ Facilitate the Council's involvement in the Local Transport Partnership.</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2006/7	Salary costs Local transport plan budget via County Council and Local transport Partnership
	C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To contribute to the implementation of the West Durham Rural Transport Development Fund.</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2006/7	Contribution to Rural Transport Partnership (£2,000)
To lobby and respond to Government and other agencies when consulted on draft strategies, advice and consultation	C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider and comment upon consultations received.</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2006/7	Salary costs
To work with other Departments to assist in meeting corporate goals.	C Dillon R Roddam	Assist in the preparation of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the Housing Investment programme,</li> <li>▪ Economic Development Strategy,</li> <li>▪ Coalfield Housing Study</li> <li>▪ Open Space strategy and</li> <li>▪ Sports Action Strategy.</li> <li>▪ Development and maintenance of departmental IT systems and e-gov agenda.</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2006/7	Salary costs

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To contribute to the Council's Community Strategy.	C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assist in the preparation of the Council's Community Strategy.</li> <li>To assist in transforming the Council's community strategy into a sustainable Community Strategy and link it to the emerging LDF</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2006/7	Salary costs
Implement the Council's environmental protection policies and monitor adherence.	D Townsend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor number of planning applications approved consistent with Local Plan Policies.</li> <li>Monitor number of applications approved contrary to Local Plan Policies. (Measurement to be included in Development Control Annual Report.</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2005/6	Salary costs
Wear Valley District Local Action 21 Strategy.	I Bloomfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Local Action 21 strategy and monitor Council's environmental performance with aim of significantly improving performance by 2006.</li> <li>Contribution to the Liveability Strategy</li> <li>Production of Local Action 21 Monitoring Report.</li> <li>Production of revised strategy</li> </ul>	Mid 2006 Ongoing Mid 2005	Salary costs; LA 21 Budget
	C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assist in the review and implementation of the North Pennines AONB Management Plan</li> <li>Attendance on North Pennines AONB Partnership.</li> <li>Assist in the preparation of a North Pennines AONB Supplementary Planning Document.</li> </ul>	Ongoing 2005/6 2006	Salary costs
To facilitate environmental improvement within the District.	P. Dunn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To manage Environmental Improvement Budget to implement improvement scheme.</li> <li>Monitor total financial assistance received from external sources.</li> <li>To work with GWD to achieve 5 environmental improvements a year</li> </ul>	March 2006	Environmental improvement budget/assistance from external sources
To develop HLF bid for Auckland Palace Park	A. Weston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in the implementation of the Bishop's Park management plan over a 5 year period.</li> <li>Submit Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the implementation of the Bishop's Park Landscape Restoration Management Plan in conjunction with the Church Commissioners.</li> </ul>	Ongoing; formal bid mid 2005	External funding (English Heritage/European Funding) plus Council owned buildings and salary costs. Capital budget approval.
To implement programme of reclamation of derelict land.	P. Dunn/ I. Bloomfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of identification and remediation stages of Contaminated Land Strategy</li> <li>Production of Reclamation Strategy and implementation of reclamation programme.</li> <li>Maximise grant available to derelict land scheme.</li> </ul>	Mid 2006 From early 2006	Salary costs; Capital programme allocation; Government grant

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To develop and implement projects under the Minerals' Valley Project.	P Dunn/ C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To work in partnership with English Nature and Groundwork West Durham in the implementation of projects related to the Mineral Valleys Project.</li> <li>▪ Liaison on implementation of individual schemes</li> </ul>	Continuing 2005/6	Salary costs; capital programme allocation
To ensure that the Council's policies, particularly with respect to Listed Building and Conservation Areas, are adhered to.	D Townsend  V Robson/ C Dillon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitor number of listed building and conservation area consents granted and endorsed by GONE (measurement in Development Control Annual Report).</li> <li>▪ Commence programme of Parish Plans.</li> </ul>	Annual return (early 2006)  Continuing. Aim to complete 1 plan in 2005	Salary costs Local Plans Budget
To develop Urban Renaissance proposals for Bishop Auckland Town Centre	R Hope D Toon B Harris  B Harris via County Council	<p>Implement Comprehensive Improvements in Bishop Auckland Town Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review and consult on a Town Centre Strategy Plan.</li> <li>▪ Continue the North Bondgate/Market Place building improvement grants.</li> <li>▪ Under take public realm improvements to North Bondgate and Newgate Street.</li> <li>▪ Continue North Bondgate/Market Place building improvement grants.</li> <li>▪ Continue shop front improvement grants elsewhere in the town centre.</li> <li>▪ Continue Newgate Street improvements.</li> </ul> <p>Implement town centre gateways improvements.</p>	April 2005 Continue 2005/6  Continue 2005/6  "            "  "            "  "            "	Capital budget via Urban Renaissance budget



Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To improve housing quality in the District	R. Roddam	<p>To collect and maintain information to assist area improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Carry out phased works to High Street, Eldon Lane.</li> <li>▪ Implement Council's obligations under the Eldon Lane declared renewal area.</li> <li>▪ Carry out risk assessment of houses in multiple occupation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Desk top study</li> <li>▪ Fieldwork period</li> <li>▪ Implementation period.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Collate statistics for assessing the proportion of long-term vacant properties brought back into use resulting from Council action.</p>	<p>Complete early 2005 Mid 2005</p> <p>Quarterly/Annually</p> <p>Quarterly/Annually</p>	<p>Capital allocation/salary costs</p> <p>Continuation of empty property scheme.</p>
	R Roddam	<p>To fully implement the 2004 Housing Act.</p> <p>Introduce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Houses in multiple occupation licensing</li> <li>• Housing Health &amp; Safety rating system.</li> </ul>	Introduce early April 2006	Capital Programme Allocation.
To carry out phased property improvements to target areas.	R. Roddam/ S. Wild	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Carry out group repair schemes in the Eldon Lane, Coundon Grange and Bridge Place Renewal Area.</li> <li>▪ Carry out demolition of properties in renewal area if required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Declare clearance areas</li> <li>▪ Acquire properties and/or instigate compulsory purchase powers.</li> <li>▪ Demolition of properties and restoration of land.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Subject to outcome of study report.</li> </ul>	Spring 2006	Capital allocation
To provide financial assistance by way of grants to eligible household to repair, adapt and improve their homes.	R. Roddam/ S. Wild	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide Disabled Facilities Grants</li> <li>▪ Provide grants in line with RRO and Housing Act 2004.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Capital allocation

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To develop and support the Home Improvement Agency and to operate an effective and efficient in-house agency service for potential grant applicants.	S. Wild R Roddam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set up fully functioning unit.</li> <li>▪ Develop ancillary services i.e. handyperson service.</li> </ul>	Continuing	Capital Allocation
	R. Roddam	To respond to complaints. Investigate initial response to complaints within 5 working days	Continuing	Salary costs
	M. Mallen R Roddam	Facilitate a vibrant private rented sector by encouraging responsible landlords. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to facilitate and encourage Wear Valley Landlords Association.</li> </ul> Arrange 6 no. meetings per annum.	Continuing	Capital allocation/NRF
	R Roddam	Fully implement and monitor the powers outlined through the Regulatory Reform Order.	Continuing	Salary costs
	R Roddam	Carry out and fully implement a Sustainability Index mapping exercise to better inform future policies.	August 2006 On-going. Review Sept 2006	Salary costs
	R Roddam	Introduce Landlord Accreditation Scheme to further promote responsible landlords.	December 2006	

ACTION PLAN FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

**DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING CONTROL 2006/07**

**STATUTORY FUNCTIONS**

<b>Priority Outcome</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Key Tasks in next 3 Years</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
To deal with planning applications as speedily as is compatible with ensuring that the correct decision is made.	Principal Planner DC Officers DC Support Team Head of Dev & Build Control	To continually monitor the procedures carried out within the Department and to bring forward improvements to the service, where necessary, in dealing with applications in order to minimise delays in the process. To choose according to criteria when to negotiate and when not. To have strict checks before validating applications.	In 2006–7 achieve the following percentages of applications determined:-  Major 60% BVPI 109 (within 3 weeks) Minor 65% BVPI 109 (within 8 weeks) Other 80% BVPI 109 (within 8 weeks) Householder 80% LP1 P1 (within 8 weeks)	Salary costs.
	S Harris/B Magraw Principal Planner DC Officers DC Support Team Head of Dev & Build Control	To use Crystal Report and iPlan to monitor the performance of the service.	Throughout 2006/07.	Salary costs. Capital budget through PDG.
	Head of Dev & Build Control	To review implementation of scheme of delegation.	On-going.	Salary costs
	Principal Planner DC Officers	To provide opportunities for pre-application discussions with applicants to ensure compliance with planning standards and policies, and to encourage good design and high standards of development.	On-going	Salary costs
	Principal Planner DC Officers	To continue to give priority to applications when jobs or inward investment into the District are involved.	On-going	Salary costs

Priority Outcome	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
	Principal Planner DC Officers DC Support Team Head of Dev & Build Control	To carry out customer satisfaction survey by means of questionnaire to be sent to all applicants/agents. To carry out customer satisfaction survey by means of questionnaire to be sent to all consultees. To carry out customer satisfaction survey by means of questionnaire to be sent to all objectors. To carry out survey by means of questionnaire to be sent to non-respondents. To improve service in response to comments received.	On-going	Salary costs
	Principal Planner DC Officers Head of Dev & Build Control	To establish a stakeholder user panel. To identify areas of the service in need of improvement and make changes accordingly.	Throughout 2006/7	Salary costs
	Principal Planner	To undertake a benchmarking exercise with good performing district planning authorities. To identify areas of the service in need of improvement and make changes accordingly.	On-going	Salary costs
	Philip Lewis Diane Bowron Joanne Grant Andrea Lee	To maintain procedure manual	Throughout 2006/7	Salary costs
	Head of Dev & Build Control	Produce an Annual Development Control Report.	End of June each year	Salary costs
	Head of D&BC Planning Info Officer	To develop and maintain Public Access SX3 so that the public can view and comment on planning applications, and find useful planning information, on-line.	Throughout 2006/7	Salary costs/capital budget through PDG
	Head of Dev & Build Control	To carry out annual tour by Committee.	June each year	Salary cost
To maintain and where possible improve the quality of the Building Control Service	Principal Building Control Officer BC Officers	To continually monitor the procedures carried out within the Department and to bring forward improvements to the service where necessary, to ensure a quality and speedy service is provided.	Throughout 2006/07	Salary cost

Priority Outcome	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
	Administrative Technician	Continue to develop use of the iBuild system, to enable improvements to be made to the administrative procedures and to monitor performance of the plan vetting/inspection services.	Throughout 2006/7.	Salary cost/capital budget through PDG
	Principal Building Control Officer	To keep a Procedure Manual up to date. To ensure correct procedures are followed. To ensure consistency of approach at all stages.	Throughout 2006/7.	Salary cost
	BC Officers	To carry out all statutory inspections within the prescribed period.	Within one working day.	Salary cost
	Administrative Technician	To carry out customer satisfaction surveys by means of a questionnaire to be sent to all applicants/agents, and builders for both the plan vetting and site inspection services.	Throughout year	Salary cost
	Principal Building Control Officer BC Officers	To provide opportunities for pre-application advice on Building Regulations, Means of Escape and Access for the Disabled.	Throughout year	Salary cost
	BC Officers	To revisit sites within 3 months of last inspection.	On-going	Salary cost Monitoring
To ensure that the Planning and Building Control legislation is complied with in the District.	Planning Enforcement Officer Principal Planner Principal Building Control Officer	To investigate speedily alleged breaches in planning or building control and in accordance with agreed procedures.	On-going	Salary cost

Priority Outcome	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
	Planning Enforcement Officer Principal Planner Head of Dev & Build Control	To continually monitor and review the planning enforcement procedures and bring forward improvements where necessary to ensure a speedy service.	Throughout 2006/7.	Salary cost
	Planning Enforcement Officer Principal Planner Support Officers	To develop and make full use of iPlan (Complaints) to assist in the administration and monitoring of the enforcement service.	Throughout 2006/7	Salary cost/capital budget through PDG
	Administrative Technician Principal B C Officer	To develop and make full use of iBuild to assist in the administration and monitoring of the enforcement service.	Throughout 2006/7	Salary cost
	Planning Enforcement Officer Principal Planner DC Officers Principal Build Control Officer BC Officers	To exploit opportunities for the development and building control sections to assist one another in the investigation of enforcement cases. To promote closer working links with the Environmental Health Enforcement Officer.  List of plans approved.	Throughout 2006/7	Salary cost
	Planning Enforcement Officer Principal Planner Principal Build Control Officer	To serve appropriate notices, following up where necessary with prosecution.	On-going	Salary cost
	Planning Enforcement Officer Principal Planner	To keep Members informed on planning enforcement cases.	Weekly list to be sent to all Members.	Salary cost

## DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT

To provide for staff development and effective internal communication

Priorities	Lead	Key Tasks in next 3 Years	Timescale	Resources
To assess, provide and monitor staff training and development of all staff	Heads of Service	Undertake Departmental Service Plan/Personal Development Plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop Training Plan</li> <li>▪ Introduce mentoring programme for new/in-experienced staff</li> <li>▪ Support training programmes for staff including personal and professional training)</li> <li>▪ Develop team approach to major developments</li> </ul>	Annual	Within budget
To continue to monitor and develop progress at Business Unit level	Heads of Service	Departmental Service Plan	Annual	Within budget
To monitor and evaluate sickness absence	Heads of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement sickness policy</li> <li>▪ Set sickness target</li> </ul>	Annual	Within budget

## THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN CENTRE FORUM

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum (BATCF) has an important role to play in planning and managing the town centre, which is the focus of the District's commercial activity. The maintenance and improvement of the central area is seen as vital in securing the health and prosperity of the town.
- 1.2 In order to be as successful as possible, the Town Centre must include a range of services and facilities including shops, financial, cultural, entertainment and leisure. In turn, these must be as accessible as possible by a range of transport including cars, buses, trains and other modes including cycling and walking. In addition to the above, the general environment of the town centre must be clean, pleasant and give a feeling of safety to all those who work in and visit it.
- 1.3 The Bishop Auckland Town Centre forum provides a forum to identify issues for the town centre and the businesses working within it. These issues can then be addressed through effective representation at local, regional and national levels. Active members from a wide spectrum give an influential voice and an increased ability to affect the future of Bishop Auckland.
- 1.4 Members of the Forum will have the opportunity to get involved with key marketing activities promoting the town, pursued with the aim of enhancing the vitality of the town, maintaining levels of income, safeguarding the quality of the environment and contributing towards sustainability.
- 1.5 Formal forums bring the benefits of continuity, confidence, communications, commitment and capacity. They are set up to achieve through collaboration what no one partner could achieve on their own.
- 1.6 Traditionally, the responsibilities in the town centre have been divided between the public and private sectors, with the private sector concentrating on individual properties and their business interests and the public sector charged with looking after the public realm. The town centre forum will strive to create a forum between these different interests, harnessing resources, fresh ideas and commitment. It will aim to tackle town centre problems comprehensively, with public and private sectors working in partnership to address the commercial, social, environmental and management aspects of what makes a town centre successful.
- 1.7 The formation of the forum will not replace the existing role of the Bishop Auckland Chamber of Trade within the town centre. The Chamber will continue to represent traders and will be represented on the BATCF. The two organisations will run alongside and be supportive of each other's interests.



## 2. Constitution of the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum

### 2.1 Terms of Reference

“To examine, advise and make recommendations to the appropriate agencies in relation to all aspects of the promotion and management of Bishop Auckland Town Centre with particular reference to issues of the environment, transport, safety, security, promotions, marketing and strategic direction.”

Specifically to:

- a) pursue the aims and objectives of the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy, working to achieve the shared vision through the strategic action points.
- b) set the broad direction for the regeneration of the Town Centre, taking into account the needs of town centre customers, employees, retailers, business interests, freeholders, developers and the local authority.
- c) act as the managing body of the SRB 6 programme and to provide a focus for other funding bids / schemes.
- d) serve as the forum for the Town Centre Management initiative by bringing together cross-sector stakeholders in the town centre to work in forums and co-ordinate their activities towards a common goal.
- e) seek both core and project funding for the furtherance of Town Centre Management.
- f) co-ordinate the activities of all providers of town centre services.
- g) foster a customer care philosophy among all town centre service providers.
- h) regularly monitor and review the implementation of the town centre strategy.
- i) manage the Town Centre Management budget.

### 2.2 Membership

The membership of the Forum shall comprise of:-

▪ Wear Valley District Council	5 members
▪ Durham County Council	2 members
▪ B.A. Chamber of Trade	1 member
▪ B.A. Civic Society	1 member
▪ Key Traders (Boots, M&S, Asda)	4 members
▪ Police	1 member
▪ Bishop Auckland Partnership	1 member
▪ Bishop Auckland College	1 member
▪ Licencees	1 member
▪ Independent retailers	2 members
▪ Local Transport Group (Arriva)	1 member
▪ Housing Association (Durham County)	1 member
▪ Total	21 members

### 2.3 Election of Business Representatives

The Bishop Auckland Chamber of Trade will appoint one of their members as a representative to the Forum.

The national multiple retailers represented in the town centre will have the opportunity to select 4 of their number by postal ballot.

Two independent retailers will be selected by means of a postal ballot to represent the independent trade sector in the town centre.

The Licensed trade will select a member from the Bishop Auckland Licensed Trade Association to represent their interests on the Forum.

#### 2.4 Deputies

Members of the forum shall appoint deputies to attend meetings on their behalf as and when necessary.

#### 2.5 Advice and Support

The Forum shall be advised and supported by such agencies as considered necessary.

#### 2.6 Meetings

Meetings of the Forum shall be held at such place and on such days and at such times as the Forum shall determine. The Chairman may call a special meeting of the forum at any time and at least one public meeting shall be held each year.

#### 2.7 Annual General Meeting

The Town Centre Forum will hold an AGM at the beginning of each year to review progress and future developments. All businesses and stakeholders in the town will be invited.

#### 2.8 Chairman and Vice Chair

The Forum shall at its first meeting in each year appoint a Chairman (from among the Town Centre Business interest representatives) and a Vice-Chairman from among its members, such Chairman and Vice-Chairman to serve for that particular year.

#### 2.9 Secretary

The Secretariat for the Forum shall be provided by Wear Valley District Council's Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration who shall prepare agendas for and minutes of meetings of the Forum.

#### 2.10 Voting

Voting at a meeting of the Forum shall be by a show of hands, and no motion shall be regarded as carried unless a majority of representatives present have voted in favour thereof.

#### 2.11 Quorum

A quorum for a meeting of the Forum shall be five members including at least three from the commercial sector and two from the District Council and business shall not be transacted unless a quorum is present. If a meeting of the Forum becomes inquorate, the meeting shall forthwith stand adjourned.

#### 2.12 Sub-groups

The Forum may appoint one or more Sub-Groups to consider any key priority areas so designated by the Forum which shall meet as and when considered necessary and who shall be empowered to co-opt on their memberships in an advisory capacity, representatives or appropriate outside agencies/emergency services. Such Sub-Groups shall be required to report back to the Forum as appropriate.

#### 2.13 Variation and Revocation of Constitution

No motion to vary or revoke this Constitution shall be discussed or moved at a meeting of the Forum unless notice thereof shall have appeared on the agenda for the meeting of the Forum at which the motion is to be discussed or moved.

#### 2.14 Terms of Reference for Steering Groups

To support the Town Centre Forum and the Town Centre Manager in the execution of their roles.

To investigate town centre issue(s) (e.g. access, transportation, car parking, business, security, environment, events and promotion) and make recommendations to the steering group for prioritised action.

To assist in attracting appropriate development, investment and occupiers to the town centre.

To monitor the progress of the group and seek opportunities for further improvements in relevant areas.

## County Durham Economic Partnership Response to NSRF consultation

County Durham is a predominantly rural county. However, it is also a former coal mining and steel manufacturing area, and faces the same issues affecting other former industrial areas, typified by low levels of employment and high level of worklessness, a significant skills deficit and low aspirations and entrepreneurship.

This industrial heritage has created an unusual settlement pattern within the County. Rather than the usual rural model of a large shire town surrounded by a network of agricultural villages in the rural hinterland, the former industrial settlements in the County tend to accommodate thousands of inhabitants rather than hundreds, yet there is no single settlement within the County with a resident population that exceeds 40,000. This leaves a dispersed resident population, living at a distance from opportunities for employment and education. There also remains a reliance on industry in rural wards where up to 25% of residents are employed in manufacturing industries.

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, more than 30% of the County's residents live in wards that are among the most deprived in the country (this being twice the proportion of any other shire county) and according to DEFRA, four of the seven district council areas within the County fall within the North East's six 'Rural Districts with consistently poor rural economic performance'. ONS figures show that all but five wards within County Durham have an average net household income below the UK median.

We have concerns that, because of these unique circumstances, the opportunity to address the economic issues in County Durham will be adversely affected by the focus on the City Region and Core cities agenda suggested by the NSRF, and by the focus on Environmental Stewardship in the Rural Development Programme for England.

We would like to see greater joining up of these two programmes so that areas like ours do not slip through the net.

### **1. Do respondents agree with the assessment in the draft NSRF of the Economic Strengths & weaknesses of the UK Nations and regions?**

We would agree that the assessment of the National strengths and weaknesses is broadly correct and that where mentioned, disparities between regions are also correctly assessed. However we think that the consultation document could go further to highlight disparities between regions, especially since the Competitiveness funds are intended to address the PSA target of "*making sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English Regions by 2008 and over the long term reduce the persistent gap in growth rates between the regions...*" (Annex A p15).

Intra-regional disparities are also of importance in the assessment of the UK. In Annex A sections 61 to 63 (p17), reference is made to large variations **within regions** in economic performance measured by GDP per capita. This is not taken further however in terms of intra-regional disparities or the factors that contribute to this.

The assessment suggests that income levels in rural areas are above the UK average (Annex A, p21, para 83) whereas, certainly in County Durham, the income in rural areas falls substantially short of UK average.

## **2. Do respondents agree with the proposed priorities for the future convergence and competitiveness Programmes in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Gibraltar?**

### **General**

*The focus on softer issues within England presupposes that the infrastructure necessary for economic growth is in place, and that the next steps are limited to the ERDF priorities of:*

- *innovation and knowledge transfer,*
- *stimulating enterprise and supporting successful business,*
- *sustainable development, production and consumption and*
- *building sustainable communities*

*If these priorities are appropriate for supporting the economies of more successful regions, they are unlikely to meet the needs of those most lagging behind.*

### **ERDF priorities in England**

P13 of Annex A, section 47 specifies ERDF priorities. Scotland includes “developing infrastructure and environmental sustainability” whereas England doesn’t include this priority. Wales has “promoting accessibility and enhancing the environment” as part of its priorities which is also missing from the England priorities.

Given that the economy in our rural areas is in need of investment and that isolation and access to services is a key issues, these should be included in the England Section too.

These priorities are supported by Annex A “Development, Disparities, Weaknesses and Potential Section (p19) which states that “Some rural areas of England have poor access to public transport and low accessibility to centres of economic activity and services, leading to comparatively low levels of productivity.”

### **ESF priorities in England**

P13 of Annex A section 48 specific ESF priorities. Scotland has “lifelong learning” included and Wales has “tackling economic inactivity and improving skills levels”. England has none of these specific priorities.

Evidence of need in the North East is provided in Annex Section 76-78 (p20) which refers to “low participation rates of 16-19 year olds in education &

training. More evidence of need is referenced in that “many of the poorer performing regions have also been affected by high inactivity rates”. Indeed, worklessness and economic inactivity are a priority of the North East Regional Economic Strategy.

**3. Do respondents agree that the proposed priorities include a sufficient focus on the Lisbon Agenda?**

More information is needed on what counts towards the Lisbon Agenda as we understand that the minimum spend is 75% and may even be 85%. Some details regarding the proposed fifteen Integrated Guidelines for Growth & Jobs” would be useful. For example under “labour market and human capital” would development of basic skills be counted?

Also, given that National Single Programme funding currently focuses mainly on infrastructure development in our region, how will this work in practice?

**4. Do respondents agree with the proposals in the NSRF for ensuring consistency between Structural Funds programmes and other EU policies and funding streams, in particular spending under the EAFRD and the EFF?**

We would support the proposal that there should be consistency between Structural Funds and other EU policies and funding streams. However, we need to be re-assured that rural areas will not be sacrificed in the shift towards city regions. Section 109 proposes that EAFRD should be focused on supporting diversification of rural economies at the local level. However, the ERDP appears to be heavily skewed towards supporting land stewardship, not growth of micro-enterprises and encouraging start-ups. This, as currently defined, does not allow sufficient flexibility to address the potential for economic growth through diversification and the growth of tourism as a sector to increase economic performance.

Therefore, we would like to see some evidence that, if the EAFRD is to be the primary source of support for economic development in rural areas, co-ordination between the two programmes is in place so that this area of support does not fall through a gap.

**5. Do respondents agree with the proposed architecture for future programmes?**

We would support the principle of Regional ERDF Programmes but this raises questions as to how regional allocations will be distributed. On what criteria will allocations be made, will there be any sub-regional targeting based on intra-regional disparities, and how will regional programmes be delivered?

*The North East still lacks a clear and accountable governance structure. Whilst plans for an ‘elected assembly’ were rejected in 2004 by the region, it was not necessarily because people in the region did not want a ‘bigger voice’ in national and international forums and better regional leadership. Any*

*delivery body would need to be accountable to its communities in terms of performance and delivery of the objectives of a regional programme.*

The document states that the UK government can allocate funds to **any UK regions** therefore is there an argument that not all UK regions should have ERDF programmes in order to address regional & sub-regional disparities in growth set against UK average GDP? This is also supported on p13 where it states that the long-term objective is to reduce the persistent gap in growth rates between the regions.

*As a person centred programme, a more centralised process for ESF should ensure equality of treatment for individuals across England however regions need to be able to respond appropriately to local priorities. There is concern that a National ESF Programme will not adequately support this principle. We would need to be reassured that there would be flexibility within a National Programme to support this particularly around the provision of opportunities to develop lower level skills & getting people into employment.*

More information would be useful in terms of possible indicators, weightings, ERDF/ESF split etc.

We would support the broad 4 main priorities for ERDF spending but see also response to Question 2 above.

**6. Do respondents agree that the UK's competitiveness allocation should be divided equally between ERDF and the ESF at UK level?**

*Substantial ERDF resource will be required to bring the lagging economies up towards the national average, but overall competitiveness is also dependent on striving towards greater engagement with employment across the board, so an equal split appears equitable.*

Flexibility at a regional level would be welcome with the result aggregated to a national mix of ERDF & ESF. The development of the necessary infrastructure to support job creation and employment opportunities have to be balanced with the needs of employers and with addressing skills shortages and skills levels.

Also of consideration should be the ability to draw down appropriate match funding. Is the UK Government committed to providing suitable public match funding to enable a 50%/50% split?

In County Durham, if the balance were toward ESF then accessibility to available jobs could potentially be an issue hence the need to ensure that adequate access to jobs, to learning, and to transport systems is available through inclusion in the proposed ERDF priorities – see Question 2 response above.

**7. What are the respondents views on how best to allocate ERDF Competitiveness funding across the regions?**

The ERDF is aimed at sustainable growth therefore should be based on developing opportunities. It would be appropriate therefore to base allocations on GDP/GVA/relative growth (to UK/EU15/EU25), possibly also including VAT registrations/business start ups/business survival.

As the Annex p15, section 53 refers to PSA targets to improve the economic performance, should indicators that measure distance from national targets be used to allocate funds?

*Competitive regions shouldn't require grant resource – if an economy is successful, it should be better able to exploit the new loan initiatives proposed by the EU for example JEREMIE (Joint European resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises). Investment needs to be able to take advantage of Assisted Area status therefore some consideration of concentrations of coverage should be made to permit flexible use of the resource. It should focus on lagging regions, to help them grow faster in order to catch up with our most prosperous regions.*

**8. What are the respondents' views on how best to allocate ESF Competitiveness funding across the UK's ESF Programmes?**

We would fully support the principle on p13 that ESF funding policy should focus on increasing the employment rate and develop the skills of the workforce, in particular helping workless people into jobs and improving the skills of people with low or no qualifications.

*It is important than any outputs recognise importance of distance travelled. The very hardest to reach may not even be able to achieve level two, so it is important to allow flexibility and be needs-driven rather than target oriented.*

*We would like to see ESF allocated to regions according to criteria such as number of people in a situation of worklessness etc.*

Similarly to suggestions for ERDF, as the Annex p15 section 54 refers to PSA targets to increase employment rates and raise skills levels, should indicators that measure distance from national targets be used to allocate funds for ESF?



**9. Do respondents have views on how to improve co-ordination between structural fund and domestic funding within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?**

RES's have been developing broadly in line with Community Strategy Guidelines and National Priorities and therefore should be used to direct priorities regionally.

*Alignment of the funds could help reduce bureaucracy, but it will reduce flexibility, allowing only the area between two funds to be funded by both.*

We would suggest that it would be appropriate for there to be one administrative process for **a proportion** of ERDF and Single Programme funds in the future. Aligning the application, approval and monitoring processes **where both funds are to be accessed** would be of great benefit to both project applicants and programme managers.

However, there appear to be major obstacles to achieving this. Specifically the use of private sector funds as match for Single Programme being excluded from Structural Funds regulations. Also, using NRF to bend mainstream services to raise government floor targets whereas EU funding cannot be used to meet to statutory obligations.

*There is a danger that alignment in this way could allow the scaling down of domestic funding and replacement with EU resources, thus resulting in displacement rather than additionality.*

**10. Do respondents agree with the Governments proposal to align ERDF spending with domestic programmes in England? What are respondents views on how best to achieve this?**

Some but not *all* ERDF could be appropriately aligned with domestic funds such as Single Programme but it would not be appropriate to align all ERDF in this way. E.g. Our regional priorities include developing cultural assets which will have a positive effect on the economy. It may be that other sources of funding e.g. Heritage Lottery Funding would be a more appropriate source of match.

Similarly, those initiatives that address local issues could benefit from a streamlining of funding but some flexibility needs to be retained to enable these sorts of programmes to be delivered at a local level without having hands tied by regional bureaucracy. Some alignment with NRF and LEGL would be useful but this would exclude certain geographical areas that may have equally valid needs.

Mention is made of *regional* partnerships in delivering *strategic investments in order to maximise the impact of the funds* but there is no mention of the role of sub-regional partnerships or their role in delivering against strategic objectives. The role of the voluntary & community sector in delivery of services and access to funding to meet local needs should be a consideration.

*There is mention of devolving global grants to intermediate bodies to implement parts of a programme. Could this be used to develop a sub-regional delivery mechanism to deliver local priorities with co-financing from Single Programme?*

- 11. Do respondents agree that ESF delivery arrangements should bring together ESF and domestic employment & skills funding in England to allow organisations to access a single funding stream?**

Co-financing through LSC and Job Centre Plus has been a useful tool in simplifying processes. There is a danger though that it is very much a national policy led approach and has excluded the voluntary & community sector from delivering initiatives at a local level to a large extent.

There is also a danger that, as the focus through the current co-financing agenda on buying a basket of outputs/outcomes, this approach can lead to less flexibility at a local level and towards the achievement of higher level qualifications leaving gaps at the basic skills initiatives end of the market.

- 12. Do respondents agree that greater use of single-stream funding mechanisms would be beneficial in Scotland?**
- 13. Do respondents agree with the Welsh Assembly Government's proposals to ensure greater alignment with domestic strategies for regional development in Wales and a stronger emphasis on larger, more strategic projects?**
- 14. Do respondents have views on how to align domestic and Structural Funds expenditure and how to concentrate funding in Northern Ireland?**

**Other comments:**

#### **Structural Funds in England**

P15 section 50 of Annex refers to South Yorkshire & Merseyside economies having ringfenced "phasing in money". It refers to the fact that their economies have grown and that access to European Funding is having a positive effect on their economies. Their economies have grown past ours in County Durham. Therefore we would request consideration of how targeted funding at a local level could increase the rate of growth to match that of these regions and of the UK as a whole.



## **Regeneration Department**

# **HOUSING GRANTS POLICY 2006**

**The Regeneration Department is**  
committed to providing the  
best possible service to the  
customers of Wear Valley

This Housing Grants Policy will  
be at the heart of furthering our  
commitment

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Wear Valley District Council is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

**We can produce this document in other formats such as Braille, in large print, on audio tape, on CD Rom, or in other languages. You can request a copy from the Marketing and Communications Manager at Wear Valley District Council on (01388) 761 958.**

## Introduction

Wear Valley District Council is committed to ensuring that Grants are available to our customers throughout the District. This policy ensures that those customers that are in most need of assistance receive the help to ensure their homes are brought up to a decent standard, this includes addressing Category 1 Hazards as outlined in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Full details of the Decent Homes Standard is attached as Annex 1.

The Private Sector Housing Team work in very close partnership with the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency (HIA). The HIA have a very important role to play and are an integral part of delivering private sector grants. Both teams are committed to working in partnership for the benefit of all of our customers.

The budget for 2006/07 is as follows:

Repair Grants £200,000

Disabled Facility Grants to Public Properties £180,000

Disabled Facility Grants to Private Properties £204,000

Following the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) 2002 all Councils throughout England and Wales have developed new policies to address the new freedoms and flexibility in administering the Private Sector Renewal. The RRO allows us to look at our customers needs and write policies that will assist instead of being a barrier.

This policy aims to address all key areas surrounding the delivery of the grants service.

- Enable owner-occupiers, to live in a decent home.
- Enable owner-occupiers and private sector tenants to carry out improvements and repairs to their homes.
- Enable people with disabilities or older persons, to remain as independently as possible.
- Provide Home Safety and Crime Prevention measures to customers.

It is the view of the Council that it is primarily the responsibility of the homeowners to maintain their own properties, the council will encourage homeowners to use their available funds to make the required adaptations. However, the council is committed to assisting customers who are not able to make the adaptations or repairs via their own resources.

## Available Grants

The Council has made available a number of different grants, each grant is aimed to target a specific need. The grants that are available are:

1. **Disabled Facilities Grant** – These grants are specifically to help people with disabilities to be able to be more comfortable in their own home, this will be done by adapting their current layout/fixtures to a design that meets the customers needs. Referrals are made from the customers Occupational Therapist for these works.
2. **Public Sector Adaptation Grant** - A public Sector Adaptation Grant is specifically available for 'Dale and Valley' tenants homes. The grant will assist people who have a disability to live more comfortably in their home.
3. **Major Repair Grant** - This grant is used to make significant improvements and/or repairs to a property to ensure it meets the Governments Decent Homes Standard.
4. **Group Repair Schemes** - The Council may develop a scheme with customers to carry out a group of repairs within a designated renewal area.

All of the above grants have an acceptance criteria and some have a points based system, this policy will explain how this process works.

The Private Sector Housing Team believe in being open and honest in its approach, that is why we have made this policy available to all of our customers. If you would like a copy of this document then please feel free to contact us, we will be more than happy to send you a copy in a format that suits your needs.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and based on staff, customer feedback and changes in Government policy we will incorporate any ideas and changes.

## **Section A**

### **Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants**

Under the provisions of Part I of the Housing Grant, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 the Council must make available mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants. This part of the policy sets out the main criteria of the grant and adopts a number of new conditions.

#### **1 Financial Information**

A customer can be awarded a grant to a maximum of £25,000 to complete disabled adaptations to their property.

It is understood that in some cases the grant aid limit of £25,000 may not be sufficient to cover the costs of the adaptation work required. These cases will be looked at individually and the grant can be extended to cover the works required.

Partnership working with Durham County Council Social Care & Health will ensure that minor work will be completed by the 'Man in a Van' scheme wherever possible.

#### **2 Eligibility Criteria**

Any adaptation must be appropriate to meet the needs of the person who has the disability, and is supported by a referral from the Social Care & Health Department, Durham County Council.

It must be reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age, value and condition of the dwelling or building. In reaching a decision on whether or not it is reasonable and practical to award a grant, the following criteria may apply:

- i) Any architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling which may render certain types of adaptations inappropriate.
- ii) The practicalities of carrying out adaptations to properties with narrow doorways, halls and passages or narrow and / or steep flights of steps or stairs. These may make wheelchair use in and around the dwelling difficult, making continued occupation of the dwelling open to question.
- iii) Conservation and planning considerations and restraints.
- iv) The impact on other occupants of proposed works, which will reduce or limit the existing facilities or amenities of the dwelling. In this respect, a material consideration will be whether the property (post adapted) will become overcrowded. Wherever possible, adaptations should be accommodated via internal conversion works, rather than by property extensions. Other occupants will be expected to utilise living rooms and/or dining rooms for sleeping purposes, if applicable.

To reduce grant entitlement in accordance with Section 30 of the Act and Regulations made thereafter (i.e. applicants are subject to a financial test of resources). Successive applications may also qualify for assistance, in respect of the same dwelling and/or the same disabled person, particularly where a medical diagnosis or a persons condition deteriorates significantly.

## **Eligible Works**

### **3. Disabled Adaptation Work**

The type of work that is eligible for adaptation:

- Ensure adequate provision for the customer of key areas of the home, including ease of access to living room, kitchen , bedroom and bathroom. This includes ensuring ease of access to enter and leave the property.
- Ensure that bathing, food preparation, living and sleeping areas meet the customers needs.
- Ensure that the building is safe for the customer and for others within the property.
- Improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the customer or, if there is no existing heating system in the dwelling or any such system is unsuitable for use by the customer, providing a heating system suitable to meet that specific customers needs.

In respect to the works mentioned above, the grant award (if any) shall take into account the medical prognosis of the disabled person, particularly where the prognosis implies degeneration in the short term. In these cases, extensive works may be impractical and alternative measures may be considered which aid the comfort and well being of the disabled person. Where this arises, the full co operation of Social Care & Health Department and the disabled person must be sought.

### **Discretionary Financial Assistance in Lieu of Carrying Out Works**

In cases where it is more cost effective for the disabled person to move to a more suitable property rather than have their current property adapted, discretionary assistance may be available. This assistance is limited to the following criteria being met:-

- i) The current property is not reasonably suitable for adaptation, or the cost of the works exceeds the maximum assistance for mandatory works, or the disabled person expresses a preference to move to a more suitable property.
- ii) The disabled person purchases an alternative property within the Wear Valley district boundary, which is either suitable for immediate occupation or is readily adaptable to meet his or her needs.
- iii) The maximum assistance is limited to £25,000 minus any statutory contribution, or to the cost of providing adaptations in the current property (whichever is the lesser). Assistance above £25,000 will be considered on an individual basis.
- iv) The overall package of assistance comprises: any premium in market value between the current property and the alternative property; reasonable legal fees associated with the sale of the current property and the purchase of an alternative property; reasonable estate agents fees for the sale of the current property; carrying out works to the alternative property, where these are



necessary to meet the customers needs; and reasonable fees for disturbance allowance, including the connection and reconnection of services.

- 4.0 Grant aid will not be paid for works already begun before approval (section 29 of the Act).

The following conditions to grant entitlement are imposed:-

- i) The Council require payment of grant direct to the contractor where the Council is satisfied that the works were completed to a satisfactory standard.
- ii) To require repayment of grant where works are contained in a relevant claim (Section 51 of the Act), that is:-
  - a) an insurance claim, or a legal claim against another person in respect of damages to the premises to which the grant relates,
  - b) a legal claim for damages in which the cost of the works to premises to which the grant relates is part of the claim.
- iii) To require the eligible works to be carried out within 12 months from the date of the approval, or such longer period as may be agreed in writing by the Council.
- iv) That the works are carried out in accordance with such specifications, as may be determined by the Council.

Any action resulting in the enforcement of the above shall allow the applicant, or his beneficiary to be suitably reimbursed for any damage caused by the necessary removal of such equipment. This will be limited to any proportion of contribution made towards the installation of any equipment (based on the value of equipment on its removal). Any breach above will allow the Councils Regeneration Committee to sanction a demand for repayment up to and including any amount of grant paid, including compound interest.

## **5. Notices**

Not applicable to mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants.

## **6. Prioritisation of Applicants**

All Disabled Facilities Grants are based on a referral from the Social Care & Health Department, Durham County Council. The Occupational Therapist will determine if the application should be classed as Urgent or Routine.

### ***Urgent Case***

An urgent case is an application that requires an adaptation to their home as they cannot reside in their property for a period of longer than 1 month if the work is not completed. All urgent cases will be commenced by the contractor within 1 month of grant approval.

### ***Routine Case***

A routine case is for a customer who is in need of a disabled adaptation, however they are able to continue to live in their home without major discomfort or stress. All routine cases will be commenced by the contractor within 6 months of grant approval.

## **7. Insurance and Legal Claims**

In some cases the cost of the works may be covered by a relevant insurance policy or claim against a third party. In the first instance the Council will complete the works at their earliest opportunity in line with the current procedure. However, if the grant applicant receives a payment in respect of the works completed then the applicant will be expected to repay the grant entitlement.

## **Section B**

### **Public Sector Disabled Adaptations**

Wear Valley District Council is fully committed to providing a service which helps to enable its customers remain in their home throughout their life. A customer's needs may change over this period and in some circumstances the customer may require that their property be adapted to meet their needs.

#### **1 Financial Information**

There is no upper grant aid limit for works to Council owned properties. Any work that has a cost of £10,000 or less will be carried out as a routine adaptation and will be completed in line with this policy.

Any work that is expected to go over £10,000 will be discussed with the relevant colleague within the Housing Services Department and the customer to establish if a move to an alternative property may be more beneficial and where appropriate the needs of the disabled occupant will be taken fully into account.

#### **2 Eligibility Criteria**

That the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and is supported by a referral from the Social Care & Health Department, Durham County Council.

It must be reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age, value and condition of the dwelling or building. In reaching a decision on whether or not it is reasonable and practical to carry out the work.

- v) Any architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling which may render certain types of adaptations inappropriate.
- vi) The practicalities of carrying out adaptations to properties with narrow doorways, halls and passages or narrow and / or steep flights of steps or stairs. These may make wheelchair use in and around the dwelling difficult, making continued occupation of the dwelling open to question.
- vii) Conservation and planning considerations and restraints.
- viii) The impact on other occupants of proposed works, which will reduce or limit the existing facilities or amenities of the dwelling. In this respect, a material consideration will be whether the property (post adapted) will become overcrowded. Wherever possible, adaptations should be accommodated via internal conversion works, rather than by property extensions. Other occupants will be expected to utilise living rooms and/or dining rooms for sleeping purposes, if applicable.

### **3. Eligible Works**

#### **Disabled Adaptation Work**

- Ensure adequate provision for the customer of key areas of the home, including ease of access to living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. This includes ensuring ease of access to enter and leave the property.
- Ensure that bathing, food preparation, living and sleeping areas meet the customer's needs.
- Ensure that the building is safe for the customer and for others within the property.
- Improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the customer or, if there is no existing heating system in the dwelling or any such system is unsuitable for use by the customer, providing a heating system suitable to meet the occupant's needs.

In respect to the works mentioned above, the adaptation proposal shall take into account the medical prognosis of the person with a disability, particularly where the prognosis implies degeneration in the short term. In these cases, extensive works may be impractical and alternative measures may be considered which aid the comfort and well-being of the disabled person. Where this arises, the full co-operation of Social Care & Health Department and the disabled person must be sought.

In the event of a property becoming vacant that has previously been adapted, Durham County Council Social Care & Health Department will be contacted to try and seek a referral. If no referral is made within 5 working days the Council will remove the adaptations and revert the property back into its original condition ready to re-let. Every effort must be taken by both the Housing Services Department and Regeneration Department to ensure adapted properties are utilised correctly. In the event of an adaptation being removed from the property efforts will be made to re-use the equipment if practicable.

#### **Limitations to Works**

- i) Work will not be carried out to adapt a customer's property if they have been offered an alternative property that will meet the needs of the customer. When making an offer of an alternative property this will be done in partnership with the Durham County Council Social Care & Health Department.
- ii) Any proposal for an extension to a property will not be granted, instead an internal conversion will be considered if viable. If not viable an alternative property will be considered to meet the needs of the customer.
- v) If the property is not suitable for the required adaptation work an alternative property will be considered to meet the needs of the customer.

### **4. Prioritisation of Applicants**

All customers who are referred by Durham County Council Social Care & Health Department will be given a priority based on the Occupational Therapist Professional opinion. The applicant will be classed as either Urgent, priority 1, 2 or 3.

Wear Valley District Council will aim to complete the work within a set time scale, the time scales are from Wear Valley District Council receiving a full valid application to work commencing on site.

**Urgent** - work to be commenced within 1 month, this will include adaptations relating to hospital discharge, terminal conditions, acute needs and carer breakdown.

**Priority 1** - work to be commenced within 2 month, this will include adaptations relating to toileting, mobility, certain progressive disorders e.g, Multiple Sclerosis and Muscular Dystrophy, severe access problems within the home and/or externally

**Priority 2** - work to be commenced within 4 month, this will include adaptations relating to moderate access problems within the home and/or externally.

**Priority 3** - work to be commenced within 6 month, this will include adaptations relating to bathing and any other non urgent issue e.g. changes of heating systems, where alternative arrangements can be made.

Every effort will be made to ensure that these time scales are achieved to benefit our customers.

## **Section C**

### **MAJOR GRANTS TO OWNER OCCUPIERS AND QUALIFYING TENANTS**

The 2004 Housing Act has outlined considerable changes to the way in which properties are surveyed and to what standard homes should meet in the future. The Decent Homes Standard which incorporates the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) replaces the Government's 'Fitness Standard' and therefore the Decent Homes Standard will form the basis for Major grant allocation.

#### **1. Financial Information**

A grant limit of £20,000 will be made available to a qualifying dwelling. Customers will only receive One major grant award within any 5 year period.

A customer who receives this type of grant assistance will be required to repay the grant plus compound interest if they sell the property within the 5 year period. The amount repayable will be calculated as follows:

- Property sold within first two years – Full grant repayable
- Property sold third year – 75% to be repaid
- Property sold fourth year – 50% to be repaid
- Property sold within fifth year – 25% to be repaid

It is understood that in some cases the grant aid limit of £20,000 may not be sufficient to cover the cost of the meeting the Decent Homes Standard and in these circumstances the Council may give discretion to award grant above this limit. If the Council agree that the grant will exceed the £20,000 limit then regardless of when the property is sold within the 5 year period the full grant amount plus compound interest must be repaid.

#### **2. Eligibility Criteria**

The aim of the Housing Grant Renewal Policy is to ensure properties are assessed to meet the Private Sector Decent Homes Standard. As part of this, work will be approved as outlined as a Category 1 Hazard under the HHSRS. The Decent Homes Standard is attached as Annex One.

To be eligible the customer must have owned and lived in the relevant property for a period of 3 years leading up to the date of application.

Grant assistance will not be available for the conversion of barns, commercial premises or those buildings not banded for domestic council tax purposes, during any time within the previous 10 years leading up to the date of application for grant.

#### **3. Eligible Works**

Properties will qualify for grant aid depending on their condition, and the owners financial circumstances.

The type of work that will qualify for grant aid is those properties that fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard and have Category 1 HHSRS hazards. Annex One Outlines what work will fall into these categories. Any grant award will take into account the age and character of the property.

Any work required within the boundary of the property but outside of the dwelling that is classified as a category 1 hazard will be rectified

Underground drainage – grant aid will only be considered if not covered by the applicants building insurance.

#### **4. Conditions**

**Grant aid will not be paid for works already begun before approval (Section 29 of the Act).**

The following conditions to grant entitlement are imposed: -

- i) That the Council will require payment of grant direct to the Contractor, where satisfied that the works were completed to a satisfactory standard.
- ii) Repayment of grant where works are contained in a relevant claim (Section 51 of the Act), this is: -
  - (a) An insurance claim or a legal claim against another person in respect of damages to the premises to which the grant relates, or
  - (b) A legal claim for damages in which the cost of the works to premises to which the grant relates is part of the claim.
- iii) The eligible works to be carried out within 12 months from the date of grant approval, or such longer period as may be agreed in writing by the Council.
- iv) The Council may determine that the works are carried out in accordance with specific specifications.
- v) That the grant conditions remain in force throughout the period of 5 years, not only on the person who provides the Certificate of Owner Occupation.
- vi) That the amount of grant is repaid in accordance with the sliding scale as outlined in Section 1.
- vii) That the owner notifies the Council of any intention to make a relevant disposal within the 5-year period.
- viii) Adequate building insurance for the property throughout the 5- year period. A copy of the building insurance certificate is to be provided to the Council on an annual basis.
- ix) Payment of grant is conditional upon the Council being provided with an acceptable demand, receipt or invoice for payment for the works and any preliminary or ancillary services or charges.

A relevant disposal means:

- i) a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease, or
- ii) the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at rack rent. It shall be assumed that any option to renew or extend a lease or sub-lease, whether or not forming part of a series of

options, is exercised, and that any option to terminate a lease or sub-lease is not exercised.

Any breach of the above will allow the Council's Director of Regeneration to sanction a demand for repayment up to and including any amount of grant paid, including compound interest as outlined in Section 1.

In determining whether to demand repayment of grant, the Director of Regeneration shall have due regard to the following circumstances that may be relevant in any particular case: -

- (i) Financial hardship – a disposal made following such a change in the financial circumstances of the relevant person that he would suffer financial hardship if all or part of the amount of grant was repaid.
- (ii) Employment – a disposal made to enable a relevant person to seek, or take up, employment or to change the place of his employment.
- (iii) Health and well being – a disposal made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health, or well being, of a relevant person.
- (iv) Provision of care – a disposal made to enable a relevant person to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm, and in need of care which the relevant person is intending to provide.

## **5. Notices**

The following statutory notices may be relevant when reviewing an application for grant aid, and the Council will have due regard to the content of such notices when considering applications for grant aid.

S11 - 2004 Housing Act - Improvement Notices  
S20 - 2004 Housing Act - Prohibition Order  
S28 - 2004 Housing Act - Hazard Awareness Notice  
S40 - 2004 Housing Act - Emergency Remedial Action  
S43 - 2004 Housing Act - Emergency Prohibition Order  
S265 - 1985 Housing Act as Amended – Demolition Order  
S289 - 1985 Housing Act as Amended – Clearance Area

## **6. Prioritisation of Applicants**

A prioritisation form is completed to enable an initial screening of applicants to be carried out. Customer applications will be held in a strict date order,

## **7. Fast Track Repairs**

Fast Track Emergency repairs will be completed when a customer reports a fault that could cause an immediate Health or Safety hazard.

Fast track repairs are only available to our most vulnerable applicants, these are limited to:

- Applicants over 60 years old
- Applicants that are in receipt of a recognised disability related benefit
- Applicants who are or have children under the age of 16 in the property.



The work that can be done on a fast track repair will be highlighted by the Housing and Environment Officer but are limited to:

- Defective Central Heating Systems/Hot Water.
- A structure that is not sound and is at risk of causing an injury to the customer or the public.
- Dangerous electrical wiring or complete failure of electric supply

If an applicant does not fall into any of the above categories, they will be given advice and support where necessary to assist in resolving the defect.

When an applicant reports a repair that is to be fast tracked the Housing and Environment Officer is required to call to the property within one working day to make an assessment of the works that is required. Works will then be issued to the contractor as a matter of urgency.

### **Central Heating**

If in the event of a defective Warm Air or Solid Fuel central heating system failing the grant would only be awarded for a replacement energy efficient condensing combination boiler or if this was not viable a replacement combination boiler would be installed. If the applicant, against the advice of the Housing and Environment Officer, would only have the system repaired and the cost of the repair was less than 50% of the cost of a replacement then the grant would pay for the repair, however, no subsequent grant would be paid within the following five years for works to that applicants heating system. If the repair was in excess of 50% of the cost of a replacement combination system then only a new condensing combination boiler and associated system would be installed in lieu of any repair.

In the event of a property with a failed Warm Air or Solid Fuel Central Heating System being highlighted in an area which does not have piped gas, then an Energy Efficient electric heating system would be installed in lieu of the combination system.

### **Dangerous Structures**

In the event of a dangerous structure being highlighted the Housing and Environment Officer will assist in isolating the area, if the applicant is entitled to grant then the work will be issued to the contractor and works will be carried out as soon as the contractor is available.

### **Dangerous Electrical Faults**

In the event of a dangerous electrical fault or the applicant being without electricity the Housing and Environment Officer will call to the property to ascertain the problem. In addition a detailed electrical report will be obtained from an approved electrical contractor highlighting the works required to repair the fault. The works will only be issued to an electrical contractor that conforms to part P of the 2005 Building Regulations.

### **Other Emergency Repairs**

It is understood that other emergency repairs may occur, if the Housing and Environment Officer has any doubt that the repair may cause any risk to health and safety they must treat it as an emergency fast track repair. Once the property has been visited and assessed if it does not fall into the fast track criteria then the customer will be advised of the Major and Minor repair grants that are on offer and given relevant advice.

**Work must not be undertaken by the applicant until the Council has approved the grant, if any works are started prior to the authorisation by Wear Valley District Council the grant application will be cancelled.**

## **Section D**

### **GROUP REPAIR SCHEMES**

#### **1. Financial Information**

To restrict eligible works to a maximum of £12,000 inclusive of ancillary costs, in respect of any individual premises.

To restrict individual scheme costs to an average of £10,000 or less, inclusive of ancillary costs, for assisted participants.

To restrict the total ancillary costs in respect of any individual scheme to a maximum of 15% of the total scheme costs.

To restrict the costs attributable to tying-in works to other properties to a maximum of 5% of the total scheme costs.

#### **2. Eligibility Criteria**

To restrict schemes to those buildings contained within a declared Renewal Area.

To restrict schemes to those which comply with the secretary of State for the Environment general approval criteria, that is to say:

- i) The scheme relates to four or more houses;
- ii) That at least 60% of the houses to which the scheme relates are affected by lack of reasonable external repair or structural instability;
- iii) That the scheme does not relate to any flats;
- iv) That, if a qualifying building to which the scheme relates includes houses or other premises that are not affected by lack of reasonable external repair or structural instability, their inclusion is necessary in order to give satisfactory visual or structural effect to scheme works on houses that are so affected;
- v) That, having taken into account the following matters, the authority are satisfied that the scheme of group repair is the most satisfactory course of action for remedying the lack of reasonable external repair or structural instability:
  - a) the cost of the scheme works;
  - b) the estimated cost of any other works (excluding maintenance) which may be required to the buildings which comprise or contain the houses of which the scheme relates;
  - c) the estimated cost of any reasonable alternative course of action (including the demolition or renovation of some or all of those buildings) for remedying the lack of reasonable external repair or structural stability.

- d) The benefits reasonably foreseeable (including enhancement of the market value of these buildings after the completion of works), of group repair and such alternative courses of action as may be identified for the purpose of paragraph (c); and
  - e) Such guidance from the Secretary of State in relation to the matters mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (d) above as may then be in force;
- vi) That the authority's estimate of the fees to be incurred in connection with the scheme does not exceed 15% of the cost of the scheme.

To allow schemes to proceed only upon receiving from all those eligible to participate a signed agreement (scheme consent) form to take part as either an 'assisted participant' or an 'unassisted participant'.

'Assisted Participant' means a person who satisfies the following criteria:

- i) He/she has an owner's interest in a scheme property;
- ii) He/she can give the authority access to any part of the building to which it is proposed to carry out scheme works, or have the consent of the occupier to enable those works to be carried out; and
- iii) He/she completes an owner-occupation certificate (that they, or a member of their family, intend to live in the property for five years after completion of the works), a certificate of intended letting (if they intend to let it for that period) or a certificate of future occupation (if they intend to use it as an HMO for that period).

'Unassisted Participant' means one of the following persons:

- i) He/she is a person prevented from being an assisted participant by virtue of Section 64(7) of the 1996 Act (i.e. certain public sector and other bodies);
- ii) He/she is unable to give the necessary certificate required by assisted participants; or
- iii) He/she is not willing to participate but consents to works being carried out to his/her premises so that the works to the rest of the building may be satisfactorily completed.

Assisted participants are subjected to a test of resources, depending upon the type of certificate submitted with their application:

- i) Applicants incorporating an owner-occupier certificate will be subject to a test of resources in accordance with Section 30 of the Act and regulations made thereunder. (Cross-reference to Section B: Discretionary Major Repair Grants to Owner Occupiers and Qualifying Tenants).
- ii) Applications incorporating a certificate of intended letting will be subject to a test of resources in accordance with landlord applications for renovation grants (Cross reference to Section D part: Landlords Discretionary Renovation Grants and Section E: Landlords Test of Resources and Calculation of Grant).

- iii) Depending on the scope of the scheme the Council may require applicants contributions to be paid in advance of work commencing.
- iv) Applications incorporating a certificate of future occupation will be subject to a test of resources in accordance with Section E: Landlords Test of Resources and Calculation of Grant).

Subject to a maximum contribution, in (I) to (ii) above, of 25% of the full cost attributable to works on the applicants property. In addition, in relation to owner-occupier applications, regard must be taken of any statutory contributions made in respect of other private sector grant applications.

Once scheme costs have been agreed with the participants, they become binding. Cost increases after scheme approvals are payable by the authority (without subsidy), subject to being able to re-negotiate fresh scheme consent from the participants affected. Where the final cost of works proves to be lower than the costs agreed with the participants, the authority is liable to pay a proportional refund to the participants in relation to any contribution paid.

### **3. Eligible Works**

The qualifying works in relation to a group repair scheme are identified in Section 62 of the 1996 Act, namely:-

- i) To put into reasonable repair the exterior of buildings, including additional works to other parts of the buildings where it is necessary to give satisfactory effect to such works.
- ii) To render the buildings structurally stable, including works to the structure or to the foundations or other works necessary to give satisfactory effect to such works.

For the purpose of 3.1 (I) above, the exterior of a building means:-

- i) Any part exposed to the elements of wind and rain or otherwise faces into the open air. This includes roofs, chimneys, walls (including the inner leaf of cavity walls), doors, windows, rainwater goods and external pipework; and
- ii) The curtilage of the building including boundary walls, yards, paths and outbuildings. Works outside of the curtilage of the building may be included if necessary to give satisfactory effect to works to put into reasonable repair.

Reference to reasonable repair and structurally stable includes the following:

- i) Those building elements likely to require rebuilding, renewal or replacement within the 30 year period from the date of the property inspection, in the opinion of the inspecting officer.
- ii) Those works necessary to prevent further building movement, as may be specified by a structural engineer.
- iii) Those works necessary to remedy rising or penetrating dampness affecting the exterior walls of rooms within the main dwelling.

#### 4. Conditions

The following conditions apply to assisted participants in group repair schemes:

- i) That the conditions remain in force throughout the time from the date of signifying scheme consent and before the end of the protected period (5 years beginning with the completion date of the works).
- ii) That the owner must pay on demand the balance of the cost if he/she makes a relevant disposal of the premises within the meaning of Section 53 of the 1996 Act and is not an exempt disposal under Section 54 of the 1996 Act, before the end of the protected period.
- iii) That the owner must pay on demand the balance of cost if he/she fails to occupy the premises in the manner stated in the appropriate certificate which accompanied the application (see 2.4 (i), (ii) or (iii)), before the end of the protected period.
- iv) That the owner must pay on demand the balance of cost if he/she fails to comply with a notice requiring a statement showing how the condition in (iii) above is being fulfilled within 21 days of its service.

The conditions above are binding on any person who is for the time being an owner of the dwelling or house, and are recorded as a local land charge.

The conditions above shall cease to be in force, if at any time while a condition of participation remains in force, the authority receives payment of the balance of cost under Section 73 of the 1996 Act.

The Council's Regeneration Committee is authorised to consider the circumstances of the following cases and, for that purpose, either determine not to demand repayment or to demand repayment of such a lesser amount:

- i) Where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the premises before the end of the protected period, and submits a written representation stating the reason why the condition was breached.
- ii) Where an owner fails to occupy the premises in the manner stated in the appropriate certificate which accompanied the application (see 2.4 (i), (ii) or (iii)) before the end of the protected period, and submits a written representation stating the reasons why the condition was breached.
- iii) Where an owner fails to comply with a notice served on him/her requiring a statement showing how the condition in 2.4 (iii) above is being fulfilled, and submits a written representation stating the reasons why the condition was breached.

## **5. Notices**

The following statutory notices may be relevant when reviewing an application for assisted participants in group repair scheme, and the council will have due regard to the content of such notices when considering applications for grant aid.

- S11 - 2004 Housing Act - Improvement Notices
- S20 - 2004 Housing Act - Prohibition Order
- S28 - 2004 Housing Act - Hazard Awareness Notice
- S40 - 2004 Housing Act - Emergency Remedial Action
- S43 - 2004 Housing Act - Emergency Prohibition Order
- S265 - 1985 Housing Act as Amended – Demolition Order
- S289 - 1985 Housing Act as Amended – Clearance Area

## **6 Prioritisation of Applicants/Schemes**

Scheme approval in relation to any individual scheme is dependent upon sufficient private sector renewal budget allocation being available in any financial year.

The Council's Regeneration Committee shall be given delegated powers to determine the manner in which individual schemes within Eldon Lane, Coundon Grange and Bridge Place Renewal Area 2000 are carried out. Before reaching a decision, the committee shall have regard to the following issues:

- i) The current demand placed upon the Council's private sector renewal budget, in particular payments and commitments, and forecasts of financial year end statistics, in relation to activities that incur private sector renewal support grant subsidy.
- ii) The findings of the Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment (NRA) study report of March 1999, in particular those blocks of premises identified in the Implementation Plan and Appendix III of the report. This indicates those blocks for which group repair schemes appear to be the most satisfactory course of action for dealing with the conditions prevalent in the premises.
- iii) The extent, or otherwise, of the willingness of participants to sign up to a scheme consent.
- iv) The likely improvement in the premises attributable to carrying out the works.
- v) The likely visual impact in the premises and the surrounding area attributable to carrying out the works.
- vi) The likely overall impact in the delivery of the aims and objectives of the Renewal Area.
- vii) The views of the Dene Valley Community Partnership.

## Section E

### Provision of Professional, technical and Administrative Services for Applicants.

#### 1. Provision

Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency is a small, locally based not for profit organisation, which has been established to help vulnerable clients tackle their unsuitable housing conditions.

##### 1.1 Working in partnership with the Local Authorities Private Sector Housing Team in the provision of grants, the Agency offers the following services:

- Initial general and impartial advice
- Funding options for non grant eligible work
- Obtaining specialist reports if necessary
- Submitting applications for planning consents and building regulations where necessary
- Assistance in completing complex application forms and carrying out
- test of resources to determine a clients likely contribution towards the
- cost of the works
- Obtaining estimates from reputable and vetted contractors
- Submitting full valid applications to the Local Authority for approval
- Organising commencement of works and supervising the work as it proceeds
- Ensuring satisfactory completion of works
- Preparing contractors payments
- Liaising with the Local Authority grant officers throughout the process.

#### 2 Fees

The Home Improvement Agency charges a fee for the services it offers, which is based on a percentage of the cost of works carried out. This fee forms part of the grant application therefore is not payable by the client.

The current fee levied is 10% (£50.00 minimum) of the total cost of the eligible works, includes VAT where applicable. The Home Improvement Agency receive 8% of the fees and Wear Valley District Council receive 2% of the fees in respect of the services delivered.



## **Section K**

### **PRIVATE SECTOR GRANT APPLICATIONS WHICH REQUIRE DETERMINATION BY THE COUNCIL'S REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

1. Applications that fall outside the scope of the Council's adopted Private Sector Grant Policies
2. Applications from owners or qualifying tenants who are:-
  - (i) Elected members of the Council; or
  - (ii) Full or part-time employees of the Council
3. Cases where the applicant submits a written representation in response to a grant determination, stating his/her exact reasons for being aggrieved at the determination.

## **DEFINITION OF THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

A decent home is one that is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. It must meet all of the following four criteria to be decent.

### **The current statutory minimum standard for housing**

Homes below this standard are those defined as having a Category One Hazard under part 1 of the Housing Act 2004. There are 29 Hazard areas, these are:

1. Damp and mould growth
2. Excess cold
3. Excess heat
4. Asbestos
5. Biocides
6. Carbon Monoxide and fuel combustion products
7. Lead
8. Radiation
9. Uncombusted fuel gas
10. Volatile organic compounds
11. Crowding and space
12. Entry by intruders
13. Lighting
14. Noise
15. Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
16. Food safety
17. Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
18. Water supply for domestic purpose
19. Falls associated with baths etc.
20. Falls on the level
21. Falls associated with stairs and steps
22. Falls between levels
23. Electrical hazards
24. Fire
25. Hot surfaces and materials
26. Collision and entrapment
27. Explosions
28. Ergonomics
29. Structural collapse and failing elements

### **To be reasonable state of repair**

Homes that fail to meet this criteria or those whether either:

- One or more of the key components are old, and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
- Two or more of the other building components are old, and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair.

### **It has reasonably modern facilities and services**

Homes that fail to meet this criteria are those that lack three or more of the following:

- A reasonably modern kitchen (20 years or less)
- A kitchen with adequate space layout
- A reasonably modern bathroom (30 years or less)
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC
- Adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem)
- Adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.

A home lacking two or less of the above is still classed as decent, therefore it is not necessary to modernise kitchens and bathrooms if a home passes the remaining criteria.

### **It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

This criteria requires homes to have both effective insulation and efficient heating.