

# SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## AREA 4 FORUM

Hackworth Suite,  
Shildon Sunnydale Leisure Centre,  
Middridge Lane,  
Shildon.

Tuesday,  
14<sup>th</sup> January, 2003

Time : 6.30 p.m.

**Present:** Councillor J. G. Huntington (in the Chair) and  
Councillors V Chapman, D. M. Hancock and Mrs. I. Smith.

**Shildon Town Council**

Councillors P. J. Garnett, P. Quinn and B. Younghusband

**Durham County Council**

Councillor J. Quigley

**Durham Constabulary**

PC M. Lawton and Inspector F. Moore

**Sedgefield Primary Care Trust**

K. Vasey

**In**

**Attendance:** Miss M. Ferguson - Sedgefield Borough Council  
R. A. Scougall – Sedgefield Borough Council  
Miss C. L. Todd - Sedgefield Borough Council

There were eight members of the public present.

**Apologies: Sedgefield Borough Council**

Councillors Mrs. L. Smith, B. Stephens and F. Timmiss

**Sunnydale Residents Association**

A. G. Bowman, J. Kirkbride and K. Mully

**Sedgefield Primary Care Trust**

N. Porter and D. Bowles

**New Shildon Residents Association**

Mrs. C. Thompson

**AF(4).17/02 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2002 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

**AF(4).18/02 POLICE REPORT**

P. C. Mandy Lawton was present at the meeting to give details of the crime statistics for the Shildon area.

Members noted that the crime statistics were as follows :

<u>Type of Crime:</u>	<u>December 2001/02</u>	<u>December 2002/03</u>
Dwellinghouse burglary	17	4
Vehicle crime	13	15
Criminal Damage	19	29
Anti-social Behaviour	85	67
Domestic Violence	24	18

Noted that as a result of an operation to tackle vehicle crime 5 arrests had been made.

It was explained that within the area there had been a recent spate of shed burglaries resulting in 2 arrests.

With regard to domestic violence it was noted that there was a special unit operating at Spennymoor Police Station that worked in conjunction with organisations such as the Borough Council in order to try and resolve this issue.

Members queried whether there was any mechanism in place for victims of crime to claim compensation from the person/persons who was charged with committing the crime. It was explained that this could be dealt with via court proceedings.

Concern was expressed regarding the possible increase in the precept for Durham Constabulary – 2003/04. PC M. Lawton and Inspector F. Moore agreed to speak to the Chief Superintendent to seek clarification on the increase. It was agreed that details regarding this issue would be reported back to the next meeting.

It was reiterated that the crime figures had increased as a result of the Home Office changing the method of recording incidents.

#### **AF(4).19/02 DECENT HOMES GUIDANCE FOR COUNCIL PROPERTIES**

R.A. Scougall attended the meeting to give a presentation in relation to the Decent Homes Guidance for Council properties that had been issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to all local authorities.

It was explained that the DTLR had issued a document to ensure that all social housing met standards of decency by 2010. It was noted that one third of the stock needed to achieve the standard by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004.

It was noted that a decent home was one that would meet the following four criteria :-

- It met the current statutory minimum standards of housing.
- It was in reasonable repair.
- It had reasonable modern facilities and services.
- It provided a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

It was reported that the current fitness standard had been in place for many years and had been set in the 1960s and further amended in the 1980s. The Government intended to move to a statutory standard based on the new housing health and safety rating system.

With regard to “is the property in a reasonable state of repair” It was noted that dwellings failing on this point would be those where either:

- One or more key building components were old and needed replacing (where key means external components, electrics and gas heating source) or
- Two or more building components were old and needed replacing.

The key building components were walls, roof structure and covering, windows/doors, chimneys, gas and central heating boiler/gas fires and electric's. It was pointed out that key and other building components must be both 'old' and 'in poor condition' to fail the standard. A component was defined as 'old' if it was older than its expected or lifetime standard. The standard lifetimes were those used in the calculation of the Major Repairs Allowance for Local Authorities.

It was explained that a dwelling was not considered to be decent if it lacked three or more of the following :-

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

It was explained that dwellings failing the standard of providing a reasonable degree of thermal comfort were those where the occupants were unable to heat their houses to a reasonable level. It was explained that DTLR had informed the Council on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2002 that the calculation would be based on the condition of properties to provide thermal comfort rather than previous fuel poverty calculation e.g. (effective insulation and efficient heating).

It was explained that Sedgefield Borough Council had a SAP rating of 58 compared with a national average of 44.

Specific reference was made to the effects of the Decent Homes Guidance on the Council's future housing Capital Programmes.

It was explained that 39% of the Council's properties currently fell into the non-Decent category compared with the national average of 46%.

It was noted that the Council needed to ensure that all property records were up-to-date and were maintained regularly.

The Council would in the coming months need to decide what its priorities were in terms of housing stock and whether it was necessary to divert resources away from the Tidy Estates Initiative towards achieving the Decent Homes standard.

Members of the Forum queried whether the decent home standard guidance applied to Private Landlords. It was explained that the guidance only applied to Local Housing Authorities and Registered Social Landlords.

It was explained that the kitchens in Harrison Close bungalows had never been changed. It was noted that previous programmes dealt with properties by the number of years built.

The Forum was informed that if a component was in a 'poor' condition work would be undertaken to make it serviceable.

It was queried whether there was any scope for work to be carried out to private properties. Grants for improvement works were available through the Home Improvement Agency.

The Chairman thanked R.A. Scougall for his presentation.

#### **AF(4).20/02 HOUSING PORTFOLIO - TIDY ESTATES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVE**

Consideration was given to a schedule detailing schemes that had been completed, schemes that had already been supported or approved by the Forum together with pending schemes. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members noted the schemes that had been completed since the last meeting of the Forum.

During discussion of the completed schemes particular reference was made the following:-

#### **AF4/52 – Renew fencing and raise height at rear of bungalows, Harrison Close to prevent access by youths.**

The Forum was informed that there was still some outstanding fencing work to be carried out in this area. This work would be implemented in the near future.

#### **Supported/approved schemes:**

#### **AF(4)/39 - Dusk til dawn lighting/higher gates/robust fencing, Rowan Avenue, Shildon**

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Senior Housing Manager had carried out a site visit to assess this scheme. It was felt that the lighting should be monitored and the fencing works deferred for the moment.

- AF(4)/38** - Investigate for possible solution to problem of youths climbing onto nest of garages and causing nuisance, Tynedale Walk, Shildon. A Works Instruction had been sent on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2002 and a start date was awaited.

### **Pending Schemes**

- AF(4)/11**      **Closure of disused cut – 60, Holly Hill, Shildon**  
Noted that the closure was legally completed on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2002. The Forum was informed that it would cost £1,500 for a fence to be erected. The Forum agreed to support the scheme.

- AF(4)/16**      **Additional Car Park, Hackworth Close Bungalows, Near Shildon Court**  
The Forum agreed that the scheme should remain on the pending list until further information on the Museum was received.

- AF(4)/61**      **Request for rose beds to grassed area opposite no. 11 and no. 6 Elm Drive adjacent to car park.**  
Noted that a design had been produced for this scheme. However the design left a large area of grassed open space which could be used by youths playing football. The Forum requested that the design be reassessed.

- AF(4)/62**      **Tidying up of parking area, cut back overgrown grass, etc, parking area at Elm Drive (unadopted).**  
It was noted that the area was unadopted and therefore Sedgefield Borough Council was not responsible for any maintenance work. The Forum was informed that Property Services had visited the site. However, it was limited as to what could be done. Environmental Services, however, may deal with the overgrowth. This work would need to be funded from the Tidy Estates budget. The Forum agreed that detailed costs should be brought back to the next meeting of the Forum.

Particular reference was made to the available allocation for 2002/03 which totalled £7,622. The Senior Housing Manager reiterated the importance of spending the allocated budget before the end of the financial year.

Members of the Forum were requested to consider any small environmental schemes that could be carried out during the remainder of the 2002/03 financial year.

### **AF(4).21/02 SEDGEFIELD PRIMARY CARE TRUST – PROGRESS REPORT**

Members of the Forum were informed that D. Bowles and N. Porter from Sedgefield Primary Care Trust were unable to attend the meeting.

It was agreed that feedback regarding the issues that were raised at the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2002 would be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum.

**AF(4).22/02 SEDGFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP – BOARD MEETING**

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Sedgfield Borough Local Strategic Partnership Board Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2002 that had been submitted to the Forum for information. (For copy see file of Minutes).

**AF(4).23/02 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2003 at 6.30pm in the Hackworth Suite, Shildon, Sunnydale Leisure Centre.

**AF(4).24/02 PRE-SALTING OF ROADS**

Members of the Forum expressed concern regarding the County Council's decision to cut its winter maintenance budget by £400,000 to meet under funding for key services for children and old people. Concern was expressed that this meant reducing the percentage of the highway network that was pre-salted.

It was explained that there were salt bins located throughout the area that were for public use.

The Forum agreed that it would be beneficial to invite a representative from the County Council to the next meeting of the Forum to discuss this issue.

**AF(4).25/02 SHILDON RAILWAY VILLAGE**

A letter was submitted to the Chairman of Area 4 Forum requesting clarification regarding a mention in the Town Crier on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2003. "The New Museum car park entrance will be via Station Street". It was agreed that the letter would be forwarded to the Acting Planning Manager for clarification and an appropriate response.

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**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Claire Todd, Spennymoor 816166, Ext. 4240