

Item 2

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

AREA 1 FORUM

Village Hall,
Byers Green.

Monday,
27th October 2003

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor J.M. Khan (Chairman) – Sedgefield Borough Council; and

Councillor R.S. Fleming	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. B. Graham	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B.M. Ord	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Smith	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. C. Sproat	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor K. Thompson	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor W Waters	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor E Foster	-	Durham County Council
M. Fordham	-	Sedgefield Primary Care Trust
Acting Inspector D. Wray	-	Spennymoor Police
S.A. Fleetham	-	Spennymoor Town Council
J. Graham	-	Spennymoor Town Council
E. Summerson	-	Spennymoor Town Council
J. Smith	-	Tudhoe Community Centre
M. Khan	-	Local Resident
E. Hodgson	-	Local Resident
J. Readman	-	Local Resident

Apologies: Sedgefield Borough Council

Councillors Mrs. A. M Armstrong, A Gray, M T B Jones, and G W Scott

Local Resident

D. Gordon

AF(1)17/03 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1st September 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

AF(1)18/03 POLICE REPORT

Acting Inspector D. Wray was present at the meeting to give details of the crime statistics for the Spennymoor area. Copies of the statistics were circulated at the meeting. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the reduction of crime in the Tudhoe Moor area and the introduction of a new Beat Officer.

With regard to concerns raised in a previous meeting it was noted that the use of skateboards in Spennymoor Town Centre had been monitored through the use of CCTV, as well as the area being patrolled

by a Beat Officer. There had been one reported complaint in October and no damage was evident. The police officer informed the Forum that their concerns had been noted and would continue to monitor the situation.

It was noted that the previous high levels of anti-social behaviour had reduced and it was explained that the high levels were probably due to the time of year and school holidays.

Concern was expressed over the level of crime in Middlestone Moor, particularly around the Community Hall on the nights of Wednesday and Thursday. It was requested that an Officer patrol the area. The Forum was informed that the area's Beat Officer and Community Safety Officers were working together to tackle anti-social behaviour problems.

Acting Inspector D. Wray was thanked for his presentation.

AF(1)19/03 BOROUGH COUNCIL UPDATE

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R.S. Fleming, attended the meeting to give an update on issues facing the Council since he had become Leader.

Members of the Forum were informed that the Council was restructuring and that on 7th November 2003, Council would consider the appointment of Heads of Department and Senior Officers. It was explained that the restructuring was taking place to enable departments, dealing with similar areas be brought together and managed under one Director. It was hoped that the restructure would save time and provide a much more effective service.

It was explained that in the Autumn of next year a referendum would take place, were the public would have to vote on whether they wanted to move to a Regional Government and, secondly, whether they would want a single unitary authority for the County or a re-division of the County into three unitary authorities which would amalgamate the existing seven district council areas. It was noted that the voting would be carried out through ballots.

The Leader explained that the aims of the Council over the next three years were to provide members of the Borough with clean streets, attractive areas, and decent affordable homes, to increase the prosperity of the area and to put the funds into community safety. It was explained that the Community Wardens, present in Dean Bank and the West Ward, Aycliffe, could be introduced into this area to help people feel safe in the area.

Concern was raised as to whether the Borough Council would be able to put their case forward regarding the decision of moving to Regional Government. It was explained that forums would be arranged in the Spring/Summer of next year to inform and explain to the public the procedures of deciding on what option to vote for.

Councillor R. S. Fleming was thanked for his presentation.

AF(1)20/03 SEDGEFIELD PRIMARY CARE TRUST

Melanie Fordham was present to give a presentation on the latest health matters as well as the figures of recent surveys. (For copy see file for Minutes).

A copy of the annual report was distributed within the Forum as well as the latest "Your Health Matters".

The Forum was informed that targets had been reached for patients seeing a GP within 48 hours. It was hoped that patients needing surgery would wait no longer than 12 months, and outpatients no longer than 12 weeks for their appointment. It was noted that the target for outpatients appointments had been breached three times. For patients waiting in the accident and emergency unit it was hoped they would wait no longer than four hours, while it was hoped an ambulance would reach emergency calls within 8 minutes.

It was noted that Sedgefield PCT in conjunction with the Durham and Dales PCT was currently looking at a number of initiatives with regard to the out of hours services.

It was noted that the Listening Event that had been held in September had been a success, with a number of people attending. The morning had been spent receiving feed back from the public, while the afternoon was spent with the organisers explaining what they hoped to achieve in the future.

It was reported that the Sedgefield PCT had found the public to be satisfied with the service they had received once a Nurse or Doctor had been seen, it was the services before the appointment that patients found unsatisfactory, such as waiting times.

M. Fordham was thanked for her attendance and her presentation.

**AF(1)21/03 DELIVERING THE PREFERRED OPTION –
LARGE-SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER**

Dennis Scarr of Sedgefield Borough Housing and Environmental Health Department, was present to give a presentation on the above.

The Forum was informed that Council, at its meeting on 12th September 2003, had agreed that Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) was the preferred option for the future delivery of the ownership and management of the Council's housing.

It was explained that the Council had submitted its option appraisal study for formal signing off on 9th October 2003. An expression of interest for the 2004 LSVT Round needed to be submitted by mid-November 2003, with the full application being submitted by mid-December 2003. By March next year the Council would be notified on whether they had gained access to the 2004 LSVT Round. If

successful, the transfer must take place by March 2006. The average timescale for a transfer was twelve to eighteen months from being given access to the round. Formal consultation on the transfer would happen 6 months after the ballot.

Access to the Transfer Round would be 'selective,' based upon a range of factors, with 21 key data requirements set out by the transfer guidance that needed to be included in the application form.

The role of the Members and Tenants would be to monitor the development and delivery of the project and ensure that the Council influenced and informed the development of the new landlord and its business plans.

Borough Councillors would also be chosen to represent the Council on the Shadow Board and would monitor the delivery of promises made to tenants.

It was pointed out that an Independent Tenants Advisor as well as financial consultants would need to be appointed, with the development of a business plan that for the next thirty years that would include investment details. A contract between the Council and the new landlord would need to be developed, as well as a new Tenancy Agreement and formal offers to tenants.

With regard to the choice of Landlord, it was noted that the Council could choose from the following:

- A local housing company that was identifiable as part of Sedgefield Borough
- Not for profit Company
- A charitable organisation
- Industrial Provident Society

The landlord could also be part of an existing group structure or part of a larger group where the stock would be absorbed or a 'stand alone' independent Sedgefield Borough based local housing company.

It was noted that prior to the ballot extensive consultations must be undertaken if a successful outcome was to be achieved. The consultation would include the issue of newsletters, public meetings, the setting up of a mobile exhibition unit showing the types of work to be undertaken and front line briefings.

It was explained that tenants would receive a copy of the offer document prior to the ballot-taking place. The document would include promises to tenants, naming them the 5 R's:

- Rights,
- Rents,
- Repairs and Improvements,
- Representation and,
- Regeneration.

The promises must be deliverable with progress monitored. The ballot itself would be independently run and a simple majority of tenants voting would be required for the transfer to proceed.

D. Scarr was thanked for his presentation.

AF(1)22/03 COMMUNITY CARE FORCE CENTRE

The Forum was invited to have a tour of the Community Care Force Centre at Chilton to have any queries answered. An attendance list had been distributed for those Members of the Forum wishing to attend. Date and time for the Tour would be arranged through E. Anderson. Those attending would be informed of arrangements at a later date.

AF(1)23/03 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday, 15th December 2003, at Spennymoor Town Hall, Committee Room, at 6.30 p.m.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Sarah Billingham, Spennymoor (01388) 816166, Ext. 4240

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