

Item 2

SEDFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

AREA 2 FORUM

Ferryhill Business and
Enterprise College,
Ferryhill.

Tuesday,
4th November 2003

Time : 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. C. Potts (Chairman) - Sedgfield Borough Council and

Councillor B.F. Avery, J.P.	- Sedgfield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. K. Conroy	- Sedgfield Borough Council
Councillor T.F. Forrest	- Sedgfield Borough Council
Councillor J.E. Higgin	- Sedgfield Borough Council
Councillor A. Hodgson	- Sedgfield Borough Council
Councillor G. Morgan	- Sedgfield Borough Council
Councillor R. Patchett	- Sedgfield Borough Council
J. Wilson	- Audit Commission
Councillor G. Attwood	- Chilton Parish Council
J. Colledge	- Chilton West Residents Association
M. Walton	- Chilton West Residents Association
Councillor A. Denholm	- Cornforth Parish Council
Councillor L. Ord	- Cornforth Parish Council
Councillor G. Porter	- Durham County Council
Sergeant J. Davey	- Durham Constabulary
Councillor J. N. Chaplin	- Ferryhill Town Council
Councillor P. Crathorne	- Ferryhill Town Council
A. Wallace	- Sedgfield Primary Care Trust
P. Forrest	- Local Resident

In

Attendance: I. Brown, G. Darby and Mrs. G. Garrigan.

Apologies: Councillors B. Meek, D.A. Newell and Ms. M. Predki –
Sedgfield Borough Council
Councillor A. Denton – Ferryhill Town Council
S. Gater – Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College
Mrs. S. Slaughter – Sedgfield Primary Care Trust

AF(2).16/03 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

AF(2).17/03 POLICE REPORT

Sergeant J. Davey was present at the meeting to give details of crime figures for the Chilton, Ferryhill, West Cornforth and Bishop Middleham areas.

Members noted that the crime statistics were as follows:

Type of Crime	September, 2003	October, 2003
Dwelling Burglary	13	9
Attempted Burglary - Dwelling	1	2
Burglary – Other	7	9
Theft of Motor Vehicles	3	5
Theft from Motor Vehicle	7	7
Attempted theft from Motor Vehicles	4	0
Theft – General	21	22
Criminal Damage	52	62
Crime – Other	23	27
Youths causing annoyance	86	70
Total Crime :	121	143

With regard to the location of crime, it was noted that there had been 56 reported incidents in October in Ferryhill, 21 in Ferryhill Station/Castles 27 in Bishop Middleham/West Cornforth and 39 in Chilton.

Specific reference was made to the problem of gangs of youths causing annoyance in the Chilton area. It was reported that the anti-social behaviour unit had already been deployed in Chilton and would be deployed in Ferryhill on Friday 7th November 2003.

The Forum expressed concern that the statistics that had been reported to the meeting were not a true reflection of the number of incidents reported. They queried whether all incidents were logged.

Sergeant Davey explained that the Police were obliged to log all incidents and requested that members of the public continue to notify the Police of incidents to ensure that resources were allocated to problem areas. He reported that a Geographical Inspector had been appointed for the Ferryhill and Spennymoor area, and he would be attending future meetings of the Area Forum.

Specific reference was made to the problems of noise and nuisance from fireworks. It was noted that the Police in connection with Durham County Council Trading Standards had inspected all retail outlets selling fireworks within the Borough to ensure that the fireworks being sold, were legal.

Specific reference was made to the fact that the Government had announced measures to curb the irresponsible use of fireworks, which included: banning the use of fireworks during anti-social hours, making the noisiest fireworks illegal and restricting the year round sale of fireworks.

With regard to the problems being experienced in relation to a number of private landlords within the Area 2 Forum area, it was noted that the Government was proposing to bring in legislation that would allow the selective licensing of landlords in low demand areas. It was explained that local authorities would be able to apply to the Secretary of State for permission to implement a registration scheme for a low demand area. The scheme was currently being piloted in five areas within the country, Hartlepool being one of these areas.

The Forum was informed that a number of people had recently been arrested for the possession of heroin and crack cocaine in the Ferryhill area and the Police were currently running the Operation Dark initiative problem to tackle the problem of burglaries.

Reference was made to the proposal to establish two Police Consultative Committees, one based in Spennymoor and one based in Newton Aycliffe. Sergeant Davey agreed to ascertain more information on the new Committees for the next meeting of the Forum.

The Chairman thanked Sergeant for his presentation.

AF(2).18/03 SEDGEFIELD PCT

Annie Wallace was present to give an update on local health matters.

The Forum was informed that "Your Health Roadshows" were to be held at Ferryhill Leisure Centre on 7th November and Shildon Methodist Church Hall on 11th November 2003 between 10.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Free health and diabetes checks, flu jabs for the over 65s, free energy saving light bulbs would be available at the events. Information would also be provided on healthy cooking, medicine management, foot health, energy advice, home security, fire safety and gentle exercise.

It was noted that following the 'Annual Listening Event' held on 24th September 2003 in Ferryhill Leisure Centre, a public and patient involvement draft strategy was in the process of being prepared.

With regard to the proposed new health centre at Chilton, it was reported that no progress had been made regarding the acquisition of the land.

Residents of Chilton gave details of the problems they encountered in trying to see a GP at their local surgery. It was pointed out that in order to see a doctor urgently, patients often had to travel to the Ferryhill Surgery, which was more costly and inconvenient, especially for those people relying on public transport.

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

The Chairman thanked Annie Wallace for her presentation.

AF(2).19/03 DELIVERING THE PREFERRED OPTION – LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER

Ian Brown and Graham Darby from Sedgefield Borough Council's Housing Department attended the meeting to give a presentation regarding the above.

The Forum was reminded that Sedgefield Borough 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 in order to deliver that option, the Council had submitted its option appraisal study for formal 'signing off' to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 9th October 2003 and would submit an expression of interest for the 2004 LSVT Round by mid-November 2003, with the full application being submitted by mid-December 2003. It was pointed out that access to the 'Transfer Round' was 'selective', based upon a range of factors, however no authority had yet been refused access to the round.

It was reported that the Transfer Guidance, issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, set out 21 key data requirements that needed to be included in the application form. The information required included:

- Decent Homes Delivery Plan.
- Value for Money Assessment of LSVT.
- Details of how tenants would be involved in the development of the LSVT proposal.
- Demand information.
- Details on how the LSVT would contribute to wider regeneration.
- Corporate impact assessment, including a change management plan.
- Details on how the Council would deliver its strategic and statutory housing functions.
- Details on how the new landlord would be chosen and how tenants would be involved.
- Liaison details with the Housing Corporation on the transfer.

- Details on how the transfer would strengthen tenant participation arrangements.
- Investment plan for Asset Management standard.
- Details of the programme of Best Value Reviews that would be undertaken post transfer.
- Details of a rent restructuring plan and the transfer price.
- Details of monitoring arrangements for the delivery of promises to tenants.
- Details of proposed use of the useable receipt.

The Council would be notified in March 2004 on whether it had gained access to the 2004 LSVT Round. If it had gained access, 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 could not begin until confirmation on access to the LSVT Round had been received.

The role of the Borough Councillors in delivering the preferred option 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 subsequently the full Board of the new landlord, and would monitor the delivery of promises made to tenants.

It was pointed out that the Council would need to formally appoint an Independent Tenants Adviser and financial consultants and develop a business plan 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 offer to the tenants.

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

- A local housing company that was identifiable as part of Sedgfield Borough.
- Not for profit Company.
- 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 tenants being balloted, extensive consultation must be undertaken if a successful outcome was to be achieved. The consultation would involve 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 staff briefings.

It was pointed out that tenants would receive a copy of the offer document prior to the ballot, taking place. The offer document would contain promises on tenants' rights, rents, repairs and improvements, representation and regeneration. The promises must be deliverable and progress must be monitored. The actual ballot would be independently run and a simple majority of tenants voting was required for the transfer to proceed.

It was explained that if the Council retained ownership of its housing stock and continued to be responsible for the delivery of the full housing service, it would have sufficient resources to meet the 'Decent Homes Standard' by 2010, however not sufficient to deliver the levels of investment identified in the Council's Stock Condition Survey, which went beyond the minimum of Decent Homes to an Assets Management Standard. Stock retention would not attract any additional Government resources and would result in limiting the Council's ability to contribute to the wider regeneration agenda for the Borough.

Issues were raised by the Forum on a number of areas, including the impact on rents, repairs and tenants' rights.

It was explained that rents were now controlled by the Government Rent Restructuring Policy, and they would converge with Housing Association rents by 2012.

The repairs service would continue and levels of capital investment would be significantly enhanced, allowing the delivery of the asset management investment requirements of the housing stock.

The Chairman thanked Ian Brown and Graham Darby for attending the meeting.

AF(2).20/03 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 6th January 2004 at 6.30 p.m. at Chilton and Windlestone Community College.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss G. Garrigan on Spennymoor (01388) 816166, Extension 4237.