

CABINET

Thursday,
1 November 2004
10.00 a.m.

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

AGENDA and REPORTS

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To notify the Chairman of any items that appear in the agenda in which you may have an interest.

3. MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2004. (Pages 1 - 4)

OTHER DECISIONS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO

4. COUNCIL TAX, BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTATION 2005/06 - 2007/08

Report of Director of Resources. (Pages 5 - 10)

ALL PORTFOLIOS

5. CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING - CORPORATE PLAN AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Joint report of Chief Executive Officer and Director of Resources (Pages 11 - 14)

(a) Appendix 1 - Corporate Plan (Pages 15 - 118)

(b) Appendix 2 - Medium Term Financial Plan (Pages 119 - 190)

WELFARE AND COMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIO

6. EXTERNAL/EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

Joint report of Chief Executive Officer and Director of Resources. (Pages 191 - 228)

7. SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING POLICY

Report of Policy Review Group (Pages 229 - 232)

MINUTES

8. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2004. (Pages 233 - 238)

9. AREA 5 FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2004. (Pages 239 - 244)

EXEMPT INFORMATION

The following item is not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 13 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972. As such it is envisaged that an appropriate resolution will be passed at the meeting to exclude the press and public.

KEY DECISION

HOUSING AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIOS

10. SINGLE HOUSING INVESTMENT POT ALLOCATION FERRYHILL STATION DEAN BANK AND CHILTON (KEY DECISION)

Joint report of Neighbourhood Services And Head of Strategy And Regeneration.
(Pages 245 - 254)

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Lead Members are requested to inform the Chief Executive Officer or the Head of Democratic Services of any items they might wish to raise under this heading by no later than 12 noon on the day preceding the meeting. This will enable the Officers in consultation with the Chairman to determine whether consideration of the matter by the Cabinet is appropriate.

N. Vaulks
Chief Executive Officer

Council Offices
SPENNYMOOR
3rd November 2004

Councillor R.S. Fleming (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Hodgson, M. Iveson, D.A. Newell, K. Noble, J. Robinson J.P and W. Waters

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection in relation to this Agenda and associated papers should contact Gillian Garrigan, on Spennymoor 816166 Ext 4240

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Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
28 October 2004

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor R.S. Fleming (Chairman) and
Councillors Mrs. B. Graham, A. Hodgson, M. Iveson, D.A. Newell,
K. Noble, J. Robinson J.P and W. Waters

In Attendance: Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. J. Croft, D.M. Hancock, J.E. Higgin,
M.T.B. Jones, G. Morgan, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, A. Smith, J.M. Smith,
Mrs. I. Jackson Smith, Mrs. C. Sproat and J. Wayman J.P

Apologies: Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong

CAB.81/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.82/04 LOCOMOTION THE NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM AT SHILDON -
OFFICIAL OPENING**
The Leader of the Council made reference to the official opening of the
Locomotion National Railway Museum at Shildon the previous week.
He thanked and congratulated the Director and staff of Leisure
Services Department and all other staff of the authority who had been
involved in the development of the Museum and organising the event.
The Museum had already received more visitors than anticipated and
he hoped that its success would go from strength to strength.

CAB.83/04 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th October were confirmed as a
correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**CAB.84/04 SECOND GENERATION LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT
FOR COUNTY DURHAM**
Consideration was given to a report setting out the progress to date in
developing the Second Generation Local Public Service Agreement
(LPSA 2) for County Durham and the resource implications for
Sedgefield Borough. (For copy see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED: *That the priorities for performance improvement
set out in the draft LPSA 2 Strategy for County
Durham be supported and those priorities be
taken into account in the Council's Corporate
Plan preparation process.*

CAB.85/04 SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP - POST OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REDUCTION CO-ORDINATOR

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval to add the post of Anti Social Behaviour Reduction Co-ordinator for the Sedgefield Borough Crime and Disorder Partnership to the establishment of Neighbourhood Services Department of the Council. (For copy see file of Minutes)

Members noted that funding for the post would be met in full from Durham Constabulary Basic Command Unit resources, which were deployed by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

RESOLVED: That a post of Anti Social Behaviour Reduction Co-ordinator for the Sedgefield Borough Crime and Reduction Partnership be added to the establishment of Neighbourhood Services Section of Neighbourhood Services Department at Scale SO2 on a fixed term up to 1st March 2006.

CAB.86/04 LICENSING ACT 2003 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, together with a draft copy of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. (For copies see file of Minutes)

It was reported that the Licensing Act 2003 transferred responsibility for liquor licensing to Local Authorities and replaced existing legislation relating to the licensing of entertainment and provision of late night refreshment. The transitional provisions were scheduled to commence on 7th February 2005, with the full change to take place in November 2005.

The Act required the Licensing Authority to prepare and publish a Licensing Policy every 3 years, which outlined in detail how the Local Authority intended to approach its various licensing duties when considering any application. Members noted that the Government had recently announced that licensing policies must be published by no later than 7th January 2005.

It was pointed out that the draft Statement of Licensing Policy, attached to the report, had been sent out to various outside bodies and persons for comment as part of the consultation process. The closing date for responses was 29th November 2004.

RESOLVED: That a further report be submitted to Cabinet after the end of the consultation period.

CAB.87/04 ASSET MANAGEMENT: AUTOMATIC BARRIER AT MEMBERS CAR PARK, COUNCIL OFFICES, GREEN LANE, SPENNYMOOR

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval to install an automatic parking barrier at the entrance to the Members' car park, at

the Council Offices, Green Lane, Spennymoor . (For copy see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED *That North East Automation be appointed to install an automatic parking barrier in the sum of £3,838 plus the costs incurred in connecting to a 240v mains supply.*

CAB.88/04 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

The minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 held on 14th September were considered. (For copy see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED: *That the Committee's recommendations be noted and appropriate action be taken.*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

Published on 29th October, 2004

These Minutes contain no key decisions and therefore will be implemented with immediate effect.

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11 NOVEMBER 2004

**REPORT OF THE
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES**

Portfolio: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**Subject: COUNCIL TAX, BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL
PLANNING CONSULTATION 2005/06 – 2007/08**

1.0 SUMMARY

This report sets out proposals for engaging Council Taxpayers in the 2005/06 Council Tax and Budget setting process and the development the Medium Term Financial Plan, covering the period 2005/06 to 2007/08.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that

1. The Council commissions NWA Social and Market Research to undertake a Council Tax and Budget consultation process in respect of the 2005/06 Budget cycle and draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08 as detailed in the report, for a fee of approximately £7,000.
2. That a payment of £30 be made to those Council Taxpayers who fully participate in the Focus Group sessions.

3.0 DETAIL

Background

- 3.1 All local authorities are encouraged to consult Council Taxpayers before reaching decisions on the level of their budgets and subsequent Council Tax charges. The feedback as a result of this consultation is intended to inform the decision-making process, not replace it.
- 3.2 The Council has undertaken Council Tax consultation exercises in each of the last two years and Norma Wilburne Associates, Social and Market Research (NWA), the Councils preferred supplier of market research services, have been commissioned to facilitate the consultation process previously.

Previous Consultations

- 3.3 Previously consultation has been carried out, in the main, by means of small focus groups undertaking a series of meetings at local venues across the Borough. Last years consultation involved three stages:

1st tranche – Plenary meeting at Spennymoor Leisure Centre (Saturday AM)

- information and education to the groups on the Council's Budget setting process, likely resource availability, Group 1 policy outcomes/associated priority services. Group discussions on Council Tax levels over the medium term;

2nd tranche – Local Focus Groups (3 Off)

- information and education to the groups on the Revenue Support Grant settlement and impact on 2004/05 Council Tax levels.
- feedback on requirements of the groups for further information to ensure complete understanding of the process
- the groups collective and individual priorities and aspirations for the medium term for the Borough and, finally,

3rd tranche – Local Focus Groups (3 Off)

- information and education to the groups on the draft budget considered by Cabinet on 8 January.
- Groups' comments and feedback on draft proposals (in line with formal consultation process)

3.4 The 2003/04 consultation process was also a multi stage process:

Quantitative survey

- Self completion, postal survey of Citizens' Panel Members looking at service priorities;

1st tranche - Focus Groups (3 Off)

- informing and explaining the budget setting process and gaining an understanding of participants' initial views and priorities;

2nd tranche of Focus Groups (3 Off)

- allowed the Council to respond to queries from the groups prior to them commenting on draft Council proposals. Both qualitative and quantitative responses were sought from these groups.

3.5 As part of previous consultation exercises, participants have been asked to complete a short questionnaire, providing their feedback on the process. NWA concluded that 'it was generally believed that the budget consultation exercise had worked very well and that the respondents had seriously and maturely considered the issues facing the Council in arriving at recommendations which addressed these issues'.

3.6 Whilst identifying a number of major strengths, a detailed review of feedback has also identified a perceived weakness in the process, centred on the fact that local focus groups have been used extensively in the last two years and, because of the geographical nature of the groups/venues, the discussions and questions raised tended to be more local/parochial issues - at the expense (sometimes) of corporate cross cutting/borough wide issues.

2005/06 Proposals

3.7 Preliminary meetings have been held with NWA to discuss the progress the Council has made over the last year (post CPA) in developing its corporate and medium term financial planning frameworks. It is important that the consultation process this year addresses not only the 2005/06 Budget/Council Tax setting process but also obtains input/feedback on the draft Medium Term Financial Plan

2005/06 to 2007/08 – including priority investment areas and key actions over that period.

- 3.8 This years exercise, whilst retaining a geographical representation overall, should address the overall, strategic requirements of the Borough as a whole. NWA recommend that local groups meeting in large plenary sessions and then breaking into their smaller groups during the proceedings could best achieve this. Given that the Council's Medium Term Plan is nearing completion and that this has been formed from previous consultation exercises, the opportunity also exists to consult on the service development priorities for action within this.
- 3.9 In a change to previous years, where my staff, and I have solely undertaken the consultation, NWA has suggested that, if possible, representatives from the major General Funded spending departments (Neighbourhood Services, Leisure Services and Regeneration) responsible for the provision of services set out their proposals / priority actions over the medium term. This would allow these service heads to be questioned on their future spending or service improvement plans and for the groups to discuss their own priorities for action and these priorities to be reported on as part of the consultation process.
- 3.10 NWA propose that the consultation exercise is again a multi stage process, but that two meetings are held at a single large, central venue (Council Offices suggested) and break out into smaller, geographically recruited, groups as part of the 'education' process. Specifically:

1st Meeting

- 3.11 Provisionally agreed for late November/ early December at the Councils Green Lane Offices. This session will again be led by the Director of Resources and key finance staff, who will set out the Council's current financial situation and the annual budget setting process, together with the constraints and opportunities facing the Council. In a break from previous years, this would also include some indication of likely three-year Council Tax increases.
- 3.12 The meeting will introduce the concept and content of the Council's Corporate Plan and make specific links to the Community Strategy. Following a question and answer session to allow for clarification of these issues the meeting will break down into geographically based 'task groups' who will each be addressed by a service head. It is proposed that the issues and key plans to be discussed with the representatives identified above are sent out as part of the pre-information pack to participants. This would also assist in the development of a questionnaire for distribution following the meeting. In this way the overall and individual priorities would be discussed and quantified.
- 3.13 The meeting would reform, over a buffet lunch, to discuss the issues raised during the 'task group' meetings, questions still to be answered and then I will outline 'what happens next' in terms of the consultation process. It would be beneficial if the service heads made themselves available at this time for informal contact with the group members.
- 3.14 Because of the amount of information to be disseminated it is proposed that this first meeting will be scheduled for 3 hours on a Saturday (e.g. 9-45/12-45) including the buffet lunch.

2nd Meeting

- 3.15 Provisionally scheduled for early January 2005, this meeting will also take place at the Council's Green Lane Offices. In this case a shorter meeting, circa 2:00 hours, is anticipated. Again the meeting will mainly be held in plenary session.
- 3.16 This meeting would allow the Council to answer any outstanding queries that may have been raised and would then go on to address the group's priorities and aspirations for the Borough over the medium term. Finally the group would review the decisions that need to be made by elected members and seek to compare these with their own views.

Recruitment

- 3.17 It is important for the groups to be as 'representative' of the population of the Borough as is possible - with small samples of people - and that the opportunity to be involved is offered to as wide a cross-section of people as possible. Participants should be 'representative' in respect of the geography and demography of the Borough.
- 3.18 A weakness of the previous consultation exercises was that the composition of the groups themselves tended to be from the older population. In order to achieve a better balance, invitations to express an interest in being involved will be sent to a random sample of previous consultation attendees and this will be supplemented with a wider mailing to a random selection of households (500) from the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF), which gives all private postal addresses in the Borough. In addition an invitation will be issued through the October edition of 'Inform' and targeted invitations will be made to selected under-represented groups e.g. young people and members of the Black and Minority ethnic community.
- 3.19 The policy adopted during the 2004/05 consultation exercise whereby 50% of the previous years consultees were invited to attend again was felt to be helpful. Not only did it give some continuity to the proceedings it enabled informal support to be provided within the groups by those with experience of the process to the inexperienced. It is proposed that random invitations will be issued to previous attendees to try to achieve 50% attendance.

Incentive Payments

- 3.20 A small incentive of £30 per head, to cover any out-of-pocket expenses that may be incurred by those members who complete the process will be offered to members of the Focus Groups.
- 3.21 A full written report on the outcome of the consultation will be prepared by NWA for consideration during the formal budget consultation process, commencing in January 2005.

4.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The total cost of undertaking the consultation process, which is not expected to exceed £7,000, can be accommodated from within the 2004/05 Budget Framework.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Detailed discussions have been held with NWA and the proposals set out in the report reflect consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of previous consultation exercises.

6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 No other material considerations have been identified. The outcome of this process will inform both the Corporate and Medium Term Financial Plans, which will be published in June 2005.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report and the outcome of the consultation exercise itself will be subject to the normal Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and form part of the Councils approved Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

None

Contact Officer: Brian Allen (Director of Resources)

Telephone No.: 01388-816166 ext. 4003

E-Mail Address: ballen@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s): Not Ward Specific

Background Papers:

Council Tax, Budget and Medium Term Financial Planning Consultation – Report to Cabinet 16 October 2003

Budget Framework 2004/05 – Report to Cabinet 19 February 2004 (Consultation Feedback)

NWA Council Tax Consultation Proposals 2005/06 – 08 October 2004

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item 5

REPORT TO CABINET

11 NOVEMBER 2004

JOINT REPORT OF CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

All Portfolios

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING **CORPORATE PLAN AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out for Cabinet's consideration the rationale underpinning the development of the Council's first Corporate Plan (CP) and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which the Council committed to preparing in its High Level Action Plan (HLAP) as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process in November 2003.
- 1.2 The report recommends Cabinet's consideration of these draft documents prior to their formal consideration by Council on 26 November 2004 and their subsequent publication in December 2004.

2 RECOMMENDED

It is recommended that Cabinet considers the draft Corporate Plan (Appendix 1) and Medium-Term Financial Plan (Appendix 2) prior to their formal consideration by Council on 26 November 2004.

3 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Background

- 3.1 The Council underwent an external onsite CPA in November 2003. CPA extends the principle of Best Value and its primary emphasis on efficiency savings by focussing on corporate strategic capacity and co-ordination.
- 3.2 During and following CPA, a HLAP was prepared and then refined summarising the key issues and actions that the Council needs to address in the medium-term in order to meet the challenges set out in its own corporate CPA self assessment. Included in this was a commitment to prepare two key strategic documents (by the end of 2004), which the Council and the Audit Commission both recognised as being

critical to the future planning of the Council's work and its related financial resources – a CP and a MTFP.

Corporate Plan

- 3.3 The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's ambitions and priorities for the future. It helps to determine where and how the Council can best use its limited resources to provide quality services and value for money over a three-year period and across all areas of the Council. Importantly, it is designed in a way that will enable the Council to check the rate of progress it is making towards the achievement of its goals.
- 3.4 This document replaces the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and in doing so represents a significant shift from Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) compliance to customer-focused and needs-based quality service provision by establishing the way forward for service provision and investment over a three-year period and pulling together a strategic vision for the full range of Council activities

Medium-Term Financial Plan

- 3.5 The MTFP supports the CP by establishing an overarching framework for the Council's financial strategy and annual capital and revenue budgets, over the same three-year period. It sets out how available financial resources will be allocated across Cabinet Portfolios and services in accordance with corporate priorities.
- 3.6 In the future, the MTFP will be key to the preparation of annual budgets. It will allow changing resource and service levels to be planned in a structured and measured way through the effective forecasting of financial resource availability and by balancing this against improvement and investment needs and Council priorities.

Workforce Plan

- 3.7 The Council is also committed to preparing a Workforce Plan during 2005, setting out how it will manage its human resources. This plan will set out how the Council will build capacity into the workforce and develop employee skills and competencies to meet Corporate Ambitions over the medium-term.

Publication Arrangements

- 3.8 In accordance with the Council's CPA HLAP, these two strategic documents will be formally published and posted on the Council's website in December 2004 following approval by Full Council. Updated versions of both plans will then be published and posted on the Council's website in June 2005 and annually thereafter.
- 3.9 The first Workforce Plan will also be published in June 2005 and like the CP and MTFP, annually thereafter.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The publication of these plans will not result in any direct additional financial costs to the Council. Forecasts of the additional levels of financial investment required to progress identified priority service areas are set out in the MTFP.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 These two strategic plans have been developed in order to help elected members, managers and employees focus on corporate ambitions whilst ensuring the delivery of continuously improving day-to-day services. Consequently, they have been prepared in full consultation with Cabinet Members (via the informal Leader's meeting) and with Directors and Heads of Service via a series of presentations, interactive workshops and information requests.
- 5.2 The plans' contents have also been informed indirectly by other external consultations with customers, partners and other stakeholders.

6 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cabinet should note that both documents are currently being checked/refined and that minor changes to statistics and narrative may be incorporated into the versions presented to Full Council.

7 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

Responsibility for these key strategic plans rests with Full Council. As such all Elected Members will be afforded the opportunity to comment and suggest amendments prior to formal approval and there are no Overview & Scrutiny implications.

8 LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan
Appendix 2 – Medium-Term Financial Plan

Contact Officers: Alan Boddy/Paul Darby
Telephone No: (01388) 816166 Ext. 4500/4510
Email Address: aboddy@sedgefield.gov.uk
pdarby@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s)

Proposals are not ward specific

Background Papers

Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Self-Assessment

November 2003

Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Sedgefield Borough Council

Report of the Audit Commission – March 2004

Post Inspection Revised High Level Action Plan

March 2004

CPA High Level Action Plan Update

October 2004

Government Comprehensive Spending Review

HM Treasury – July 2004

Gershon Efficiency Review – Releasing Resources To The Frontline

Independent Report Commissioned by HM Treasury – July 2004

Budget Framework 2004/05

February 2004

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN



2004/2007

November 2004

Quality Services For Local People
“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

FOREWORD

Welcome to Sedgefield Borough Council's first Corporate Plan. This new and important document pulls together the challenges facing Council services in the medium term and sets out for the first time detailed objectives and priorities over a three-year period. The plan also responds to issues raised through last year's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), which formally rated the Council as "Good". In particular it provides a focus for real and meaningful performance management arrangements.

We are committed to working closely with staff and trade unions and to developing modern and user-focused ways of working that will ensure we put our policies into action. By working under the guidance of this plan, every department of the Council will have a clear, corporate approach to the development and implementation of Council policy, using it as a touchstone for day-to-day service delivery. Importantly, it will assist us in our drive towards becoming an "Excellent" Council.

Alongside the Community Strategy, this plan will also encourage greater participation from residents and promote partnerships with other organisations. By continuing to work in a sustained, planned and resourced manner, and with the new senior management and departmental structures in place, we can look forward to providing further improvements in service quality and delivery.

This plan will underpin the Council's commitment to the provision of quality local services. It will guide the way we work and it will challenge us all – elected members, managers, employees and trade unions. However, and perhaps more importantly, it will help us to remain focused and committed in meeting the challenge of achieving our strategic vision of "a healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities".

Preparing this Corporate Plan has been both challenging and exciting and we would like to thank all who contributed to its development. With this plan now in place we believe that the Council can look forward to the future with optimism and confidence.

[Councillor R S Fleming](#)
[Leader of the Council](#)

[Mr N Vaulks](#)
[Chief Executive](#)

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SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH

There are a number of factors that will influence the Council's work over the next three years. Changing demographics, the local economy, government priorities, deprivation levels and local community safety and environmental concerns all contribute to the way in which the Council develops and prioritises its services. As well as providing services for today, it is important that the Council and its partners plan services over the medium to long-term.

a regional perspective

Sedgefield Borough is situated in the South of County Durham in the North East of England. The Borough contrasts modern and developing business and industrial areas, with a mix of rural and former colliery settlements. The Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWGS) identifies two city regions within the North East. Sedgefield Borough has been identified as part of the Tees Valley Region. The NWGS prioritise the city regions for future economic growth and ensuring that the fundamental conditions are in place to support this objective will be a key driver of our plan. Strategically located for good access to both the Tyne and Wear and Teesside areas, Sedgefield is well placed to access many of the facilities in the North East, while also offering great potential for further development. This is evidenced through major projects such as NetPark and Locomotion, the National Railway Museum in Shildon, both of which

demonstrate the Borough's contribution to the region.

a declining and ageing population

With a resident population of 87,271 and covering some 21,700 hectares, the majority of the population (78%) lives within the four towns of Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Shildon and Ferryhill, which provide the main focus for employment, shopping and leisure. These centres contrast with a range of small historic villages and coalfield communities. The Borough is fully parished and among these are some of the largest Town/Parish Councils in the Country.

The Borough's population has declined from around 93,000 in the early 1980s and is generally ageing but at a slower rate than other parts of County Durham. In the last ten years, the Borough's population has fallen by almost 4%, whilst the percentage of those in the population aged over 50 has increased by 7.3%. For the first time the Borough now has more residents over 60 years of age than children aged under 14. This increase in the elderly population shows that people are living longer, which is good news, but this will place significant demands on services for the elderly and presents a key challenge to the Council and its partners.

In terms of ethnicity, 99.4% of residents are "White British", the eighth highest ranking of all authorities and

98.5% of the population was born within the United Kingdom. Moreover, the Borough has relatively high levels of ill health with 24.8% of the population having a long-term limiting illness compared with 18% nationally. The Council recognises the importance of fairness in service provision and is committed to developing its approach to service equality and diversity.

the local community

Within each community there is a strong sense of local identity and spirit with people remaining proud of and loyal to their local areas. This is evident not only in the former coalmining communities but also in centres such as Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Ferryhill and Shildon. This sense of pride is reinforced by the general environmental quality of the Borough's communities with well maintained and cared for public spaces and housing areas.

local housing

There are 39,900 dwellings in the Borough with approximately 25% owned by the Borough Council. These are maintained to a high standard as evidenced by the fact that 52% of the stock currently meets the Government's 'decency' standard and the Council will deliver the decency standard for all its housing by 2010. However, tenants' aspirations exceed this minimum standard and therefore additional investment is required. This is being sought via a proposed Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT).

The Borough has twice the national average of terraced housing. This terraced housing is predominantly pre1919 and concentrated in the former South Durham Coalfield communities. The council has had some success in regenerating the areas of older private sector housing in Shildon but the former coalfield communities of Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and Chilton are experiencing market failure. These areas have been prioritised for future regeneration by the Council, focused on providing a more balanced mix of housing set within sustainable neighbourhoods. The Council is working in partnership with other councils, registered social landlords, English Partnerships and GONE to develop schemes to regenerate these areas.

the borough's economy

Sedgefield Borough has a strong and proud history of manufacturing; particularly within engineering and is home to one of the largest employment locations in the region at Aycliffe Industrial Park. However, these strong links to manufacturing have left the Borough's economy vulnerable to the rapid and ongoing changes in the global economy, which in turn has led to a continuing local loss of manufacturing from the mid 1980s onwards. Approximately 40% of local employment is within this sector, compared with regional and national averages of 15.9% and 13.4% respectively. It is expected the Borough's economy will continue to be influenced by the further reduction of its manufacturing base, which has already resulted in the loss of over

4,000 jobs since 1999; 13% of the current employment base.

Many aspects of the Sedgefield economy are still extremely healthy with a number of advantages. The Borough's location, in the central A1(M) corridor presents a major economic opportunity and (as stated above) Aycliffe Industrial Park accommodates one of the region's largest centres of employment. There is a strong tradition of developing business sites to encourage business expansion and inward investment, often with support through European and Regional Programmes. There is an established business support infrastructure in place, which works in partnership to promote the economic and employment regeneration of the Borough. Leading edge developments, such as NetPark provide opportunities to diversify the local economic base and deliver wider benefits across the Borough.

A sustainable and healthy economy is key to the overall wellbeing of Sedgefield Borough.

tackling poverty and health inequality

Although much has been done to address social inclusion in recent years, there are still some significant issues to address, particularly in respect of geographical variations in unemployment, educational achievement and health. People's life circumstances and lifestyle are central to their health and wellbeing and the Council recognises how factors such as poverty, housing, unemployment

and the local environment can have a profound effect on mental and physical health.

The newly revised Index of Deprivation 2004 indicates that two of the Borough's wards contain areas recognised as being amongst the 10% most deprived in England and that further hot spots exist in terms of employment, income and health deprivation. These levels of deprivation are as follows ...

18 of the Borough's 19 wards containing areas amongst the worst 10% in the country for health-related issues

Almost 4% of the workforce is unemployed

Means-tested benefits provide a major source of income to around 21% of the Borough's population

Only 44% of young people achieving 5 A*-C GCSE passes compared with 45% in County Durham and 53% nationally

Only 12% of residents have been educated to degree level or above

Over 28% of the Borough's adult population has poor literacy skills and almost 31% has poor numeracy skills

The Council recognises that it must sustain its efforts to improve the quality of life for all, but particularly for those who reside in disadvantaged communities.

leisure opportunities

An active lifestyle is a key to improved health.

On average Borough residents suffer higher levels of ill health and long-term illness and a lower than average life expectancy. This health deprivation can be addressed in part by providing access to a broad range of leisure opportunities. From the four Borough-owned leisure centres to local golf courses and community centres, there is a range of excellent facilities in the area.

The Council recognises the importance of increased physical activity in promoting good health, and in an effort to secure long-term impacts on local health is amongst the highest spending local authorities in this discretionary area. In recent years, investment has been pegged and private sector partners have taken on some of this burden.

Significant success in recent years in attracting external grants and in entering into partnership arrangements has seen the construction of an athletics track at Shildon and a significant extension to Ferryhill Lesiure Centre – which now boasts the European Centre of Excellence for Taekwondo and an international standard indoor bowls facility.

Further improvements have been achieved through a partnership agreement for the provision of state of the art fitness suites in all four Borough-owned leisure centres. This partnership was recently extended to 2018 and will see £2.7M further

investment in these facilities over several years.

A number of interventions with targeted groups such as those suffering from obesity and significant investment in encouraging youth participation should secure improved health for Borough residents both now and in the future.

community safety

Crime and the fear of crime are important indicators of the overall wellbeing of a community. And although the Borough is one of the safest places to live in the United Kingdom, these issues are consistently high in public views on the quality of life in Sedgefield.

Anti-social behaviour impacts on the lives of residents of the Borough and is a priority for the Council. The Council, with its partners, is starting to address this issue through using a multi-agency approach to tackling this issue.

a sustainable environment

As essential development takes place across the Borough to diversify the local economy and meet the needs of an ageing, declining and (in parts) deprived population, it is important that the Council makes every effort to regenerate and maintain the local area and environment in a sustainable way. The local environment is consistently identified as a key issue for residents of the Borough.

the wider agenda

It is imperative that this Corporate Plan articulates the links between ...

The Government's policy agendas, such as developing sustainable communities, social inclusion, decent housing, community safety, equalities and e-government

The Community Strategy, produced by the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership

how do these factors inform this corporate plan?

This first Corporate Plan has been designed to clearly demonstrate how the Council's activities are tackling the issues that the Borough faces as set out above. It not only sets an overall direction for the Council but also includes specific priorities and related targets that when met, will have a real and lasting impact in improving the quality of life for the people of Sedgefield Borough.

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Local Government Act 2000 requires all local authorities to produce a Community Strategy that will set out a long-term vision for the area based on the aspirations, needs and priorities of local communities.

The Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy (2004–2014) was approved in July 2004 and developed following an extensive community appraisal and consultation process via the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP is a single, non-statutory, non-executive organisation that brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector operational in the Borough as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sector interests and local people so that a series of agreed priorities can be determined and service plans implemented to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the Borough.

The Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy (2004–2014) was approved in July 2004 and developed following an extensive community appraisal and consultation process via the Borough's LSP. The Strategy identifies four key priority aims for Sedgefield Borough and is structured around these, setting out a number of supporting priorities and targets to be addressed under which specific service improvements will be developed. These aims are ...

A Healthy Borough
A Prosperous Borough
An Attractive Borough
Strong Communities

The Community Strategy will, with its accompanying medium-term Action Plan, fulfil a key role in the Council's strategic policy framework by clearly articulating a joint community and stakeholder vision for the Borough and linking with this Corporate Plan, Local Development Framework, CPA Action Plan and the roll out of the E-Government Agenda.

The Action Plan is the key document in terms of delivering the Strategy, and will be developed with reference to the LSP's Performance Management Framework, providing details of the key activities to be undertaken, responsible lead agencies and the resources to be committed. In developing activity to achieve this vision, the Strategy identifies four core principles to be addressed, along with three cross cutting themes: -

Principles:

Sustainability
Equality & Diversity
Working in Partnership
Promoting citizenship

Crosscutting Themes:

ICT
Young People
Access

The delivery of the Strategy will also be set out in more detail in a series of Area Framework Documents to be developed in the medium term. These Frameworks will align with the Council's Area Forums and will outline individual areas' contributions to the overall aims and any localised problems/concentrations of deprivation

that may exist. The Area Frameworks will also be developed with regard to the emerging Local Development Frameworks required under the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Bill 2004.

a healthy borough

a borough where people can lead healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities

Improving health and reducing inequalities are two significant issues for Sedgefield Borough. The challenge in achieving this is highlighted by the Indices of Deprivation 2004, which identified 24 areas within the Borough that fell within the worst 10% nationally for health-related issues.

Surveys have shown high levels of smoking, poor diet and low levels of physical activity in the Borough which all contribute to high levels of ill health, high rates of long term illness and a lower than average life expectancy for Sedgefield residents.

Even against this general picture of poor health, there is an obvious link between the various measures of deprivation such as education, employment, housing and health related issues, demonstrated by more acute health difficulties in the areas of highest deprivation.

Local communities have identified that access to high quality health services is also a major concern, particularly in the more rural and outlying parts of the Borough.

Enabling local people to play a key role in improving where they live and in

making decisions about how services are delivered is crucial to improving the Borough and the life opportunities of its residents. It is also a central part of the Government's drive to modernise public services.

Local leadership, greater accountability and closer engagement with communities are at the heart of creating stronger, more vibrant, innovative and responsive governance and service arrangements that meet community needs

Factors affecting quality of life do not occur in isolation but are interrelated and acting on one issue often has an impact on another. Consequently the Council and its partners are working together and sharing resources to maximise their potential impact in this area.

Healthy – key priorities ...

Ensure that local people are proud to be a resident or business of Sedgefield Borough

Work in partnership with our communities in the planning and delivery of local services

Improving Health and Social Care Services

Improving the Health and Well-being of Local Communities

Access to services

a prosperous borough

a borough where high quality businesses can prosper and where local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer

Due to the economic circumstances of the Borough it is essential that access to jobs and to learning/training opportunities be improved.

Sedgefield has a strong and proud history of manufacturing, particularly within engineering. However, these links have left the Borough's economy vulnerable to the rapid and ongoing changes in the global economy that have led to a continuing local loss of manufacturing jobs. With over 40% of local employment within this sector, it is expected the Borough's economy will continue to be adversely affected by the further reduction of its manufacturing base, which has already resulted in the loss of over 10,000 jobs in the Borough since the 1980s.

In NetPark (The North East Technology Park), the Borough will have a business site of regional, and indeed, national importance. It will be capable of attracting and growing major global innovators and research organisations involved in new and emerging technologies. The potential positive impact from this in terms of employment, local businesses and the local communities is encouraging but will require careful management to maximise the benefits to residents. This may include ...

Ensuring an available pool of well trained and motivated labour

Encouraging the provision of suitable infrastructure to support the creation of new jobs, such as transport links, choice of housing and access to good quality services

Creating a development setting of the highest environmental quality

One in four people in the Borough have literacy needs and nearly one in three have numeracy needs and there is a real requirement to tackle these low levels of basic skills. The Council and its partners must build on the good work that is already being undertaken by schools, colleges and other training providers to raise attainment levels, support community learning and to widen participation to learning. It is essential that the Council works with our local colleges, universities and businesses to encourage the practice of lifelong learning, supported by a network of community learning access points.

Prosperous – key priorities ...

A Strong and Sustainable Business Base

Development of the Borough's unique cultural and tourism attractions

A Community and Workforce with the Skills required by Business

Aiming High in School

an attractive borough

a borough where the natural and built environments are valued, conserved and enhanced

Sedgefield Borough is an attractive place to live and work. Primarily rural, with a mix of small industrial towns and attractive villages, it is set within plenty of open and accessible countryside. The Borough has a strong reputation for delivering on sustainability and environmental projects, and has committed a lot of resources to enhancing the built environment.

However, some areas do require attention. Parts of some settlements and housing areas are poor, whilst some town and village centres have struggled to maintain their roles in the light of changing shopping patterns.

Litter, dog fouling and fly tipping are consistently at the top of residents' concerns. Furthermore, the Borough faces some major challenges in improving its use of resources and its recycling rates as well as responding to issues of fuel poverty and conservation of its natural habitats.

The Council and its partners must continue to respond to the challenges facing the Borough's built and natural environments, and manage them through partnerships and planning in a way which respects their special qualities and distinctiveness, and recognises their importance to everyone.

Attractive – key priorities ...

Improving the design and environmental quality of our towns and villages

Ensure the efficient use of our resources

Value, conserve and enhance the biological diversity and natural habitats of the Borough

Enhancing Transport provision across the Borough

Develop and maximise the Leisure and Cultural facilities in the Borough

Enhance the quality of strategic routes and corridors

a borough with strong communities

a borough where people can access the housing and services they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods

Despite the difficulties resulting from the loss of the local industry communities have managed to retain a strength, pride and resilience that offers a solid foundation around which a sustainable future for the Borough can be built.

A considerable amount of work has already been undertaken, often with assistance through external regeneration funding programmes, to help rebuild communities and neighbourhoods across the Borough - but there is still a long way to go. Eighteen of the Borough's nineteen wards contain some areas recognised as being amongst the 30% most disadvantaged nationally. Included within these are three areas that are within the 10% most disadvantaged. Whilst health and employment issues

are prevalent right across the Borough, a key issue must be to reduce the inequalities between those areas suffering from poverty and the rest of the Borough.

The approach to tackling these issues is being developed around the principles of sustainable communities – providing decent homes in clean, safe and attractive environments.

To be successful this needs to be driven from within the communities themselves with the support of statutory agencies that will continue to develop their relationship with the community and the voluntary sector. The Council must work with these agencies to support local people in the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their communities. The capacity of local communities will have to be improved to enable them to engage with service providers and help them shape the future of their neighbourhoods.

Levels of crime are falling across the Borough. Joint initiatives between partners to address particular concerns have delivered results. However, efforts need to be maintained to provide reassurance to residents to prevent a disproportionate fear of crime.

Anti-social behaviour is a key concern for the residents of the Borough. The Council is already working through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to tackle many of the issues of crime and anti-social behaviour across the Borough.

The Council has recently reviewed its Community Force and launched a new Neighbourhood Wardens service. This new service will have a significant role in community reassurance and improving the quality of life in our most deprived neighbourhoods. The Council recognises that there is still significant work to do in this area and will continue to provide strong leadership and direction.

Strong Communities – key priorities ...

Tackling Disadvantage, reducing the current gaps between the Borough's better off and less well off neighbourhoods

Good Choice of Quality Housing

Changing Housing Demands and Needs

Safe Neighbourhoods

Partnership working

Tackling key issues for local people demands concerted and coordinated effort across all sectors and the progress of the LSP to date demonstrates the impact that partnership working can have in improving services across the Borough by ensuring that: -

Sustainable economic, social and physical regeneration happens in disadvantaged communities

Public services work better and are delivered in ways that meet the needs of local people

Ensuring that local people can influence decision-making and participate in improvements

Business and the community and voluntary sectors can play a full and equal part

The development of LSPs in one aspect of the duty of community leadership, which along with the local government modernisation agenda are the two principal drivers that place partnership working at the centre of modern local government. In recent years, the Council has increasingly become engaged in activities across a wide range of service areas that are commonly said to be 'partnerships' or to involve 'partnership working'. These words are often used loosely to describe a number of different types of groupings from informal coalitions of groups committed to working on a particular local issue to top down, statutory and highly-structured bodies with a board and signed agreements on how partners will work together.

It is important that the Council balances effectively the benefits and risks of its partnership working and articulates clearly how it will work in partnership (as well as unilaterally) to achieve the ambitions for Sedgefield Borough set out in the Community Strategy. This is a primary function of the Corporate Plan.

CORPORATE PLANNING

what is the corporate plan?

This document is *the* main plan for the Council, setting out its ambitions and priorities for the future. It helps to determine where and how the Council can best use its limited resources to provide quality services and value for money. It is a “medium-term” plan, which means that it covers a three-year period and it also covers the whole Council. Furthermore, in addition to setting out the way forward, it has been designed in a way that will enable the Council to check the rate of progress it is making towards the achievement of its goals.

Importantly, this plan replaces the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and in doing so represents a significant shift from Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) compliance to customer-focused and needs-based quality service provision.

why is corporate planning important?

The Corporate Plan is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of everything that the Council hopes to achieve over the medium-term. Its purpose is to help elected members, managers and employees focus on corporate ambitions whilst ensuring the delivery of continuously improving frontline services. In short it has been developed to provide clarity about what we are trying to achieve. Specifically,

the plan is important to the Council for two principal reasons ...

It establishes the way forward for service provision and investment over a three-year period and for the first time, pulls together a strategic vision for the full range of Council activities.

It helps to bridge a gap in the Council’s policy and planning framework that was identified by Inspectors following the CPA process.

In striving to become “Excellent”, the Council must be clear about what it wants to achieve. It must have clearly defined priorities and it must recognise that it can never realistically have sufficient resources to deliver increased investment and top quartile performance in all areas.

The recent authority-wide restructure, priority-setting process and the CPA Inspection report have provided the Council with a solid base on which to move forward and deliver service improvement in its key priority areas over the next three years.

how does the corporate plan fit with other plans?

Whilst the Corporate Plan is at the heart of the service improvement agenda, it does not contain every detail of Council plans for service delivery. It is supported by a Medium-Term Financial Plan and a Workforce Plan

as well as a series of related Service Improvement Plans (SIPs), a number of key Strategies and thirteen service-based Service Business Plans. These supporting documents, which are owned and monitored at the portfolio/departmental level, are by definition more detailed than the Corporate Plan, focusing on a specific service and/or aspect of service delivery.

Appendix 1 Corporate Planning Framework

how has the corporate plan been developed?

The Council has listened to what residents and partners have said about current and future services and this has led to a set of new and challenging corporate ambitions, community outcomes and corporate values. However, being clear about service user requirements is only one aspect of Corporate Planning. The Council is committed to achieving its goals and making noticeable improvements to the quality of life for the people of Sedgefield Borough. As such it is essential that the plan's content is relevant, realistic and measurable.

With this in mind, the plan has been developed following a comprehensive exercise to establish (baseline) the contribution of every service to the Council's corporate ambitions, community outcomes and corporate values. This process was particularly informative, revealing some areas where services could not effectively measure their contribution to Council goals

The process of gathering detailed data on current activity has itself provided a basis on which to move forward, both in terms of developing the Corporate Plan that is relevant to those who must deliver its objectives developing awareness and appreciation of the Council's broader strategic objectives.

The Corporate Plan has been developed in an inclusive manner in order to ensure that elected members, managers and employees fully understand how they contribute to the work of the Council. By ensuring that the plan reflects Council goals in a meaningful and measurable way, all contributors will be able to focus on delivering service improvement in the right areas prioritised by the Council.

In February 2004, CPA Inspectors commented that Performance Management had not been fully embedded within the Council. The above process has made significant inroads into fully embedding Performance Management and strategic planning awareness within the Council.

The Council's real commitment to achieving the corporate ambitions set out in the Corporate Plan is demonstrated through the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The MTFP underpins the delivery of corporate ambitions by ensuring that services and the financial resources required to deliver them are aligned over the medium-term. The MTFP sets out how existing and projected resources will be spent and where necessary redistributed to priority service areas. Both plans focus attention and effort on strategic

objectives and demonstrate how the Council's services and actions contribute to the wider Community Strategy.

The Council is also committed to producing a Workforce Plan in 2005, which will assess and set out actions required to address the organisational structure and skills base changes deemed necessary to meet the challenges of the Corporate Plan.

how will the corporate plan be updated?

The Corporate Plan and both supporting annexes will be refreshed and republished in June each year. This will be following an evaluation of progress by Overview & Scrutiny, consideration by Cabinet and final approval by Full Council.

Importantly, the plan is also a key aspect of post CPA improvement planning and will be examined by the Audit Commission as part of the CPA Quality (Self) Assessment scheduled for autumn 2004. The Corporate Plan and Performance Indicators Annexe will be submitted to the Audit Commission for external validation.

CORPORATE VALUES

The Council has also established a series of Corporate Values that underpin Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes. These values embody the spirit in which all Council services are delivered.

being open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive

There is an increasing emphasis on issues surrounding governance and the Council is committed to ensuring that it operates with integrity and in the public's interest. This involves open decision-making processes that extend awareness and understanding of all Council activities. This plan is a key element of this open style, setting out details of what the Council does, how it does it and how well it does it.

Access to services means meeting and responding to customers' needs at times and in ways that are convenient to them – a move that requires a significant culture change for most local authorities. The largely rural nature of much of Sedgefield Borough and relatively low levels of car ownership can result in problems of physical access to services. This type of isolation requires the Council to examine how it engages with customers, whether that be through mobile service provision, outreach sessions or by utilising new technology and delivering the e-government agenda.

The Boroughs population faces significant disadvantage due to issues

of poor literacy and numeracy. Addressing the underlying causes of local academic achievement is a key priority but we must provide services that are easy to access for people facing these issues now. These diversity issues need to be addressed in the development and implementation of all services.

The Council is committed to providing easy access to Council services via its area-based offices and through a recently introduced Customer Services Centre that deals with customers at the first point of contact. It is determined to provide equality of opportunity – both as an employer and as a service provider, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, location or any other categorisation. It is important that every resident and business in Sedgefield Borough has the same access to opportunities, regardless of their individual circumstances. The Council is committed to improving its services for all minority and potentially disadvantaged groups and to providing related training and awareness raising to its employees and partners.

achievements to date

Established a customer services centre, development plan and complaints procedure in order to deal with complaints at the first point of contact and reduce the level of complaints received

Achieved Lexcel award for Legal Services

Implemented the Benefits calculator on the Council website allowing members of the public to check their current entitlement or whether they are entitled to benefits

Introduced a touch tone payments system (24/7)

Carried out improvements to the Sedgefield Borough Council website

Extended the Cyber cafes

Created an online planning portal allowing the online submission and viewing of development control application

Implemented a Customer Relationship Management system in partnership with County Durham e-government partnership

Received approval for its Implementing E-Government (IEG) 3 Strategy and prepared its IEG 4 Strategy

Achieved compliance with the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Rented Housing

consulting with customers and partners

A key principle underpinning the work of the Council is the need to develop services with customers in mind and in order to do this the Council needs to provide information, consult on existing and proposed services and engage in an active dialogue with local people.

The Council has a range of mechanisms for doing this including a Citizens' Panel and a range of area-based consultative forums. Following a recent review of Services for Children and Young People the Council is now consulting on the most appropriate methods to secure sustainable youth participation.

achievements to date

Developed the knowledge and skills base of the Citizens' Panel and as a result increased its effectiveness in providing views on Council services and priorities

Reviewed corporate consultation processes and guidance

Assumed Responsible Body status for the Sedgefield Borough Community Empowerment Network

Worked with tenants and residents through meetings, tenants' groups and residents' associations and actively sought the views of those who do not wish to attend meetings through a Tenant Readers' Panel.

Provided training and capacity building assistance to those tenants actively involved in the development of their service

Undertaken externally facilitated two-way Council Tax consultation exercises (annually for the past two years) with small interactive focus groups

investing in our employees

One of the main points of contact for the public is through employees of the Council. As such it is essential that employees are equipped with the most up-to-date and appropriate skills and are committed to providing and maintaining quality services. The Council has a range of policies and procedures in place to ensure that it recruits appropriate employees, supports their development through training and learning and protects their health and wellbeing.

The Council achieved the national Investors in People (IiP) award in 2002 – a national benchmark demonstrating best practice in employee management, communication and development.

achievements to date

Retained Investors in People

Adopted a framework setting out a corporate approach to Trade Union and employee consultation and involvement

Made substantial progress in agreeing harmonised terms and conditions of employment specifically in the areas of craft workers, refuse collectors and horticulture

working in partnership with others

Strategic Community Planning (via the Local Strategic Partnership) and working in partnership clearly show that the needs of individuals and

communities must be addressed collectively, not separately. Improving public services and making them more complementary and customer focused is increasingly being undertaken through working in partnership.

Effective partnership working recognises that issues, problems and opportunities do not arise in isolation but are often inter-related and that we will be more effective in tackling local issues if different service providers work with the local community and tackle them together.

By sharing resources, building on the achievements with its partners, the Council will develop innovative joint approaches to service delivery and it should be possible to improve both efficiency and effectiveness whilst ensuring that our communities receive the services they require.

achievements to date

Completed an annual review of the Local Strategic Partnership in association with government office

Affiliate – NEPO (Procurement)- Fitness check IDeA commended SBC for procurement

Completed stage 2 e-government partnership Best Value Review

being responsible with and accountable for public finances

The Council has a duty to residents and businesses in the Borough to ensure that it secures value for money

in all of its operations. Moreover, the recently published Gershon report on public spending has challenged local authorities to secure year-on-year efficiency savings whilst delivering and improving services.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan sets out the Council's medium-term plans for financial management aligned to corporate ambitions, community outcomes and stated priorities for investment – building on a strong track record and reputation for effective financial management.

achievements to date

Increased number of direct debit payments received, leading to an improvement in in-year collections

Achieved a good rating from GONE for our Asset Management Plan

Achieved a satisfaction rating of 98% from right to buy customers, 60% of which rated the service as excellent and 38% rated the service as good

Completed annual statement of accounts early and received recognition from the Audit Commission for financial management

achieving continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery

In local government today it is essential that Councils embrace and fully integrate the principle of continuous improvement. The Council has developed modern performance

management processes and systems that focus on measurable community outcomes, monitor performance against targets and hold to account those responsible for service delivery.

Moreover, the modernisation of services is at the heart of the Council's emerging approach to service delivery. It is important that services are developed and redesigned from a customer perspective – leading to new and innovative ways of delivering traditional Council services. Internet technology provides an opportunity to deliver online services in ever more accessible and convenient ways.

achievements to date

Developed an approach to improvement planning that is based on the Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry

Implemented and innovatively procured Agresso system. Nominated for an LGA award and commended for our approach to procurement

Exceeded targets set as part of the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA)

Implemented a staff re-structure

Introduced a new HR system

tackling disadvantage and promoting social inclusion

A caring community is focused on addressing the needs and aspirations of its more vulnerable members – in

other words those who are disadvantaged and/or socially excluded. The Council is committed to recognising and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people in Sedgefield Borough across all of its services and in ways that respect individuality and a need to be fully included within society.

achievements to date

Established Western area Newton Aycliffe Neighbourhood Management Pilot scheme

Introduced a tenants contents insurance scheme

Implemented Benefits DIP and workflow systems to reduce turnaround times for processing benefits

Completed Capital Works Programme to comply with DDA (Leisure)

Continued the Social Pricing Policy for Leisure Services

taking account of sustainability, risk management and s17 (Crime and Disorder Act) responsibilities

The work of the Council must improve people's lives, both now and in the future. This means ensuring that short-term gains are not placed ahead of medium to long-term impacts. This will be achieved by working towards the principles of sustainable development, which recognises that the quality of people's lives and the

state of communities are affected by a combination of economic, social and environmental factors.

Risk management is a central part of the Council's strategic approach to service delivery. It is the process through which the risks associated with Council service provision are methodically assessed alongside development and improvement activities. The Council will ensure that risk management is fully integrated with its performance management systems and processes to support the achievement of objectives across all services.

The Council in responding to the duty placed on it under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, has ensured that the corporate planning process has crime and disorder reduction embedded in all our work. Consequently the reduction of crime and disorder has been placed at the centre of the Council's values and every department/service must proactively assess its contribution in this important area.

achievements to date

Approved the development of Community Safety Strategy

Approved the development of a Domestic Violence Strategy.

Insert bulleted list here! [Dennis Scarr & Harold Moses]

priority services!

During the development of this plan, the Council has considered recent service performance and progress and assessed the need for additional investment in areas contributing to its Corporate Values. The following medium term priorities for investment/growth over and above standard inflation have been identified and earmarked for accelerated improvement over the next three years ...

customer care all portfolios

Effective customer care requires cultural change, which leads to the development of customer focused services delivered in ways and at times that suit the Council's residents, tenants and visitors.

equality & diversity supporting people portfolio

This is a key priority for the Council and for the Government. However, progress has been relatively slow to date because of a lack of real resources (human and financial) to facilitate the changes/arrangements that all areas of the Council need to make. This work is being co-ordinated

by the corporate Equality & Diversity Group attended by the Supporting People and Welfare & Communications Portfolio Holders.

e-government priority service outcomes performance management portfolio

This is a key priority for both the Council and the Government. The Government has specified a range of Priority Service Outcomes (measurable improvements) that all authorities must achieve during 2005/2006 and work is underway to co-ordinate activities

Please refer to the following documents, which support this Corporate Plan for details of the specific actions and measures that the Council will use to deliver and monitor progress against its Corporate Values ...

Key Issues Annexe Performance Indicators Annexe

CORPORATE AMBITIONS AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Sedgefield Borough Council recognises that it needs to be outward looking and customer focused. Importantly, the Council needs to ensure that the way in which it operates is in line with the ways that people live their lives today. Customer expectations have risen dramatically and people increasingly want services to be delivered at times and in ways and places that suit them.

This means being clear about customer needs, aspirations and about

what the Council is trying to achieve as well as making sure that all parts of the Council are pulling in the same direction.

The Council's is committed to the provision of **Quality Services for Local People** by working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities. This vision is set out in a series of Corporate Ambitions and supporting Community Outcomes as summarised in the table below ...

Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes	
<p>A Healthy Borough</p> <p>Safeguarding public health Promoting independent living Creating leisure opportunities Promoting cultural activities</p>	<p>A Prosperous Borough</p> <p>Promoting business and employment opportunities Maximising learning opportunities</p>
<p>An Attractive Borough</p> <p>Ensuring a cleaner, greener environment Improving towns, villages and the countryside Reducing waste and managing natural resources</p>	<p>A Borough with Strong Communities</p> <p>Securing quality affordable housing Promoting safer neighbourhoods Engaging local communities and promoting local democracy</p>

In preparing this first Corporate Plan and in setting priorities and targets for the medium-term, the Council has considered its achievements to date

against the targets it set itself in its 2004/2005 interim Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP).

This section summarises the Council's recent achievements and ongoing developments against its Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes and shows those areas that have been identified as priorities for investment and accelerated progression.

Continued and expanded the Charter Mark accredited Fit For Life programme including the GP referral scheme, Back Pain rehabilitation and Cardio workshops
Developed and adopted an affordable warmth strategy to eradicate fuel poverty

a healthy borough

creating leisure opportunities

safeguarding public health

Prepared and implemented a Food Safety Plan and maintained 100% of high risk food premises inspected

Implemented a Walking the Way to Health Scheme

Re-zoned domestic refuse collection to provide a more efficient service

Achieved improvements in educational performance in Ferryhill and Shildon through the Sure Start programmes

Signed investment proposals with Competition Line to further develop four Leisure Centre Fitness Suites until 2020

Opened 'Locomotion' the National Railway Museum in Shildon providing an important Lifelong Learning facility which promotes the economic and social history associated with the area's railway heritage

promoting cultural activities

Delivered a strategic programme of Arts across the Borough via the Arts Hub

promoting independent living

Implemented the first integrated team for vulnerable adults in Trimdon

Adopted a policy on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse

Continued to work with the Pioneering Care Partnership to promote independent living

Extended the Carelink service, which will secure the future of this service

Achieved a Quality Mark for the Home Improvement Agency

Developed a Durham County and Regional Tourism Strategy in partnership

a prosperous borough

promoting business and employment opportunities

Supported the establishment of a Civic Pride Team (Neighbourhood Services)- Number of people employed on Intermediate Labour Market (ILM)

Completed a new partnership agreement with Sedgfield and Shildon Development Agency (SASDA) to provide a business support service to the companies of Sedgfield Borough.

Introduced business brokerage arrangements to provide competitive business advice to local companies

Secured major investment for the Town centre at Spennymoor

Implemented a town centre management initiative to engage local businesses and promote the town centres of Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor

Continued to provide development sites and been successful in attracting economic investment into the Heighington Lane development

Increased the opportunities for young people to stay on at school and gain qualifications through the provision of vocational GCSEs

an attractive borough

ensuring a cleaner, greener environment

Achieved ISO 9000 accreditation for Horticultural Services, recognised by an above target performance in the number of grounds maintenance complaints received per 1,000 population

Introduced area based multi-disciplinary Street Scene teams

Maintained the cleanliness of highways, leading to an increase of 4% of people satisfied with highways cleanliness standards

priority service!

industrial land units regeneration portfolio

The Council is particularly keen to explore the potential benefits (in terms of local business and employment opportunities) of investing in the regeneration of land and units at Aycliffe and Green Lane industrial estates.

maximising learning opportunities

Established a Learning Borough Partnership to bring together learning providers

priority services!

street cleansing environment portfolio

This area has improved during the past year as a result of recent year-on-year increases in investment. However, it continues to be a high priority amongst local residents. Council spending in this area is comparatively low and satisfaction is still only in the third quartile nationally.

horticulture environment portfolio

Horticulture services have become more efficient and cost-effective during

2003/2004 with services now being provided on a needs rather than contractual basis. Revised methods of working, including Neighbourhood Teams, are now in operation. This has led to significant improvements in some parts of the Borough. This level of improvement now needs to be replicated across the whole of the area.

improving towns, villages and the countryside

Implemented the new Planning Act and developed a Local Development Framework that promotes sustainable tomorrows and will help improve performance against application processing times indicators

Prepared and implemented Development Control Service Improvement Plan

Carried out major improvements to Spennymoor Town Centre as part of a town centre development programme

Created five new wildlife areas and Local Nature Reserves

priority service!

regeneration through housing regeneration & housing portfolios

The Council has committed significant resources from the sale of land to support housing based regeneration of its priority communities of Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and Chilton. These resources, coupled with other funding,

means the Council now has a real opportunity to work with the communities in these areas to deliver area based regeneration. There is already significant co-ordination in this area of work and current plans would have to be revisited to reflect potential increased levels of funding.

reducing waste and managing natural resources

Maintained provision of recycling facilities to 100% of households and extended green waste recycling scheme

Established a waste transfer station at Chilton Depot, thereby increasing the tonnage of waste recycled and not sent to landfill

Increased the average Standard Assessment Procedure energy efficiency rating of properties owned by SBC to top quartile nationally

Incorporated environmental features into Locomotion, the National Railway Museum at Shildon, including a photovoltaic roof, gabion walls, a wind turbine and rainwater harvesting system

Completed Phase 1 of the Green Travel Plan, including auditing the current travel policy and holding a series of focus groups and surveys

Developed an Energy Management partnership to reduce energy consumption

priority service!

**waste recycling
environment portfolio**

The Government has set a demanding target of 18% of all waste collected to be recycled or composted by 2005/2006. The Council has made considerable progress towards this and has a better infrastructure now in place and current performance is over 12% compared to a level of 7.4% in 2002/2003. Further progress needs to be made in this area if the Government's target is to be met. Specifically, actions needed to increase participation in the Kerbit scheme and extend green waste recycling.

**a borough with strong
communities**

securing quality affordable housing

Completed one housing clearance area in Ferryhill Station

Achieved top quartile performance for the proportion of unfit private dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of local authority action (BVPI 62)

Participated in the production of a Sustainable Residential design guide

Complied with the CRE Code of Practice in rented housing (BVPI 164)

Delivered the Housing Service Improvement Plan (Following Best Value Review)

Using modern procurement methods to drive service improvement – reviewed procurement capacity within the repairs service and agreed a partnering contract for void repairs, disabled persons adaptations and emergency call-out services, reflecting Egan principles in the procurement of maintenance services

Completed a housing option appraisal and agreed a strategic partner to deliver Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, including making a successful application to the governments Large Scale Voluntary Transfer programme for 2004/05

Secured funding from the Region's Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) for some initial renewal works in 'Coalfields areas'.

priority service!

**housing maintenance
housing portfolio**

There has been significant investment and subsequent improvement in this area following two (post Best Value Review) Audit Commission inspections. The Council believes that further improvements will materialise when the new organisation structures settles and then still further following Large Scale Voluntary Transfer.

promoting safer neighbourhoods

Carried out a review of Community Safety service

Transformed Community Force into a Neighbourhood Wardens scheme, in line with national best practice

Implemented a Community Safety Strategy and Domestic Violence Policy

Published (in December 2004) a statement of policies and procedures in relation to anti-social behaviour, in response to the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Introduced the Positive Futures programme, including working with 100 young people who are at risk of offending

CCTV cameras – either static and/or mobile.

domestic violence community safety portfolio

The Council recognises the importance of this service in reducing/tackling the problems of those suffering from the often hidden dangers of domestic violence. The Head of Neighbourhood Services is currently drafting a strategy that includes a broad range of partnership-based measures and the Council will examine the potential impact of increasing financial resources (capital and revenue) in this area.

priority services!

carelink community safety portfolio

The Council is keen to see this service extended as it enables elderly members of the community to remain in their own homes. It is also eager to market this service beyond Council house tenants and further expand into the private sector.

neighbourhood wardens/cctv community safety portfolio

The Council recognises that these two interrelated aspects of Community Safety can provide real and tangible returns on Council investment. Significantly, the Council wants to increase the overall number of Neighbourhood Wardens and target them in key areas of the Borough alongside an increase in the number of

engaging local communities and promoting local democracy

Prepared a statement of community involvement for the Local Development Framework in partnership with Durham Districts

Provided excellent customer focused structures for involvement in decision making with has led to achievement of the Charter Mark award for Tenant Participation

Increased member engagement and understanding through a Member Development Programme

Increasing accessibility of Councillors through the Connecting Councillors programme, including providing e-mail access and web pages

Increased community involvement through the implementation of the Consultation strategy

Raised civic awareness and charity funds through the Mayors attendance at events

Implemented the committee minutes system, making Council agendas and minutes available from the Council website

Introduced a postal voting scheme, to be used for the Regional Government referendum in order to increase voter turnout

Maintained Town Twinning initiative

Carried out a scrutiny committee review and reported to Cabinet

Developed a Young peoples website for information and consultation including Young People's data base for communication, consultation and market research

Please refer to the following documents, which support this Corporate Plan for details of the specific actions and measures that the Council will use to deliver and monitor progress against its Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes ...

Key Issues Annexe
Performance Indicators Annexe

crosscutting priority service!

youth development supporting people portfolio

The Council has recently undertaken a Best Value Review (BVR) of its Children and Young People's Services, which has now been inspected by the Audit Commission. This review followed a poor CPA score in this area and rated the current crosscutting service as fair with promising prospects for improvement. Through these processes a detailed action plan has been developed and several key actions need to be progressed in the short to medium-term.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance Management is at the heart of Corporate Planning and is crucial in the drive towards continuous improvement.

Sedgefield Borough Council is a progressive local authority committed to delivering on its Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes. The Council has changed significantly in recent years and now has in place the Performance Management systems to ensure the delivery of our Corporate Plan.

a corporate framework

strategic corporate planning

The aim of the Government's modernising agenda is to introduce more open and accountable Local Government. By establishing a framework through which local Councils are required to publish performance data on an annual basis and set targets for future improvements, the Government hopes to increase the accountability of Councils towards local people and businesses.

Sitting at the top of the Council's Performance Management Framework, the Corporate Plan sets out what the Council wants to achieve in order to meet community needs and aspirations. Performance Management is the how or the structured way in which the Council's in-house employees work to achieve the standards, targets and pledges set out in the Corporate Plan.

service business planning

To maintain and improve performance, it is essential that all Council services have a clear understanding of where they fit into the overall framework, and of how their performance impacts on the Council as a whole. Service Business Plans are developed and monitored by Heads of Service and are the practical tools by which the overall aims and objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan are implemented.

employee development planning

Without effective employees the Council would be unable to achieve its goals. Employees who are well trained, motivated and have a sense of belonging to the organisation are more effective in the execution of their tasks with the consequence that their performance and the services we provide will improve.

Appendix 2 The Performance Management Framework

In order to modernise its approach to service delivery and complement its Performance Management arrangements the Council has introduced a number of changes in recent years ...

a modern political management structure

The Council consists of a full complement of 50 Councillors who are democratically elected by and accountable to residents of their ward. The role of all elected members is to develop strong ward links and maintain regular contact with the people and communities they serve and represent.

full council

As well as being responsible for determining the composition, membership and terms of reference of the Cabinet, committees and other bodies, Full Council determines schemes of delegation and has responsibility for approving the overall policy framework and for setting Council Tax and related Council budgets. The Ceremonial Mayor chairs meetings of Full Council.

cabinet

Cabinet is responsible for ensuring that the Council achieves its policies within budgets and is comprised of the Leader of the Council, who chairs the meetings, the Deputy Leader of the Council and seven other Cabinet Members. Each member of the Cabinet is responsible for a specific portfolio of services/functions that they lead at the political level.

overview & scrutiny committees

Those Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet sit on one of three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, with the exception of the Mayor who must remain impartial to

chair Council meetings. These committees support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole and monitor the decisions of Cabinet.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees can 'call-in' a key decision that has been made by the Cabinet before it is implemented. This enables them to consider whether the decision is appropriate and they can recommend that the Cabinet reconsider the decision if they think it inappropriate. They can also establish review groups to examine issues in detail in order to improve services or to tackle a problem being experienced by communities within Sedgefield Borough.

Appendix 3 Political Management Structure

strategic working groups

Corporate strategic working arrangements are anchored around the Council's corporate policy arrangements and performance management framework and are designed to assist in the delivery of stated priorities. They ...

Are aligned to the Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes

Have a clear sense of purpose with each Group having a defined function and terms of reference

Operate at a strategic policy level (not operational level)

Secure political engagement and support

Provide clear policy advice and guidance and output/outcome performance management information

Are supported by a limited number of Task Groups with a more operational focus

There are five groups that are reflective of the Council's service functions. Importantly, they provide a real focus for discussion around strategic and key service issues as well as an opportunity to review policy and service improvement options.

They secure the input of relevant Cabinet Members and senior officers and help to ensure that service proposals and issues presented to Cabinet have been carefully considered from a number of (often crosscutting) perspectives. These relatively formal groups complement less formal groups, discussions and briefings that take place between individual Cabinet Members and respective Directors and Heads of Service.

Appendix 4 Strategic Working Group Profiles

a reorganised senior management and departmental structure

The Council has recently reorganised its senior management and departmental structures in line with the challenges facing a modern local authority. It is now divided into five departments – Chief Executive's, Resources, Neighbourhood Services,

Housing and Leisure Services. A Director (or the Chief Executive Officer) leads each department, which is supported by a number of Heads of Service.

The new structure was designed to deliver customer-focused joined-up service delivery. However, accountability is also an important feature of this new structure with each department being responsible for a specified range of services/functions.

Appendix 5 Departmental Management Structures

monitoring progress

It is essential that the Corporate Plan is an integral part of the effective delivery of local services and that progress against it is monitored and updated on a regular basis. The key actions detailed in the supporting Key Actions Annexe will be monitored at the departmental and section level on a monthly basis. The indicators and targets contained in the supporting Performance Indicators Annexe will be monitored quarterly via Strategic Working Groups.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
BVPP	Best Value Performance Plan
BVR	Best Value Review
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1995
DIP	Document Image Processing
GONE	Government Office for the North East
HR	Human Resources
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
IEG	Implementing E-Government
iiP	Investors in People
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
LGA	Local Government Association
LPSA	Local Public Service Agreement
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
LSVT	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
NEPO	North Eastern Procurement Opportunities
NWGS	Northern Way Growth Strategy
SASDA	Sedgefield and Shildon Development Agency
SBC	Sedgefield Borough Council
SHIP	Strategic Housing Investment Programme
SIP	Service Improvement Plan
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-Related
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget

CONTACTS

Cabinet Members



Councillor Agnes Armstrong
Supporting People Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5279
e-mail: aarmstrong@sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor Alan Hodgson
Environment Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5265
e-mail: ahodgson@sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor Bob Fleming
Resources Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5228
e-mail: bfleming@sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor Barbara Graham
Welfare and Communications Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5243
e-mail : bgraham@sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor Malcolm Iveson
Community Safety Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5294
e-mail: miveson@Sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor David Newell
Performance Management Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5259
e-mail: dnewell@sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor Kester Noble
Regeneration Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5251
e-mail: knoble@sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor John Robinson
Culture and Recreation Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5297
e-mail: jrobinson@sedgefield.gov.uk



Councillor Bill Waters
Housing Portfolio
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 5284
e-mail: waters@sedgefield.gov.uk

Chief Executive & Directors



Norman Vaulks
Chief Executive
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 4305
e-mail: nvaulks@sedgefield.gov.uk



Colin Steel
Director of Housing
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 4203
e-mail: csteel@sedgefield.gov.uk



Phil Ball
Director of Leisure Services
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 4386
e-mail: pball@sedgefield.gov.uk

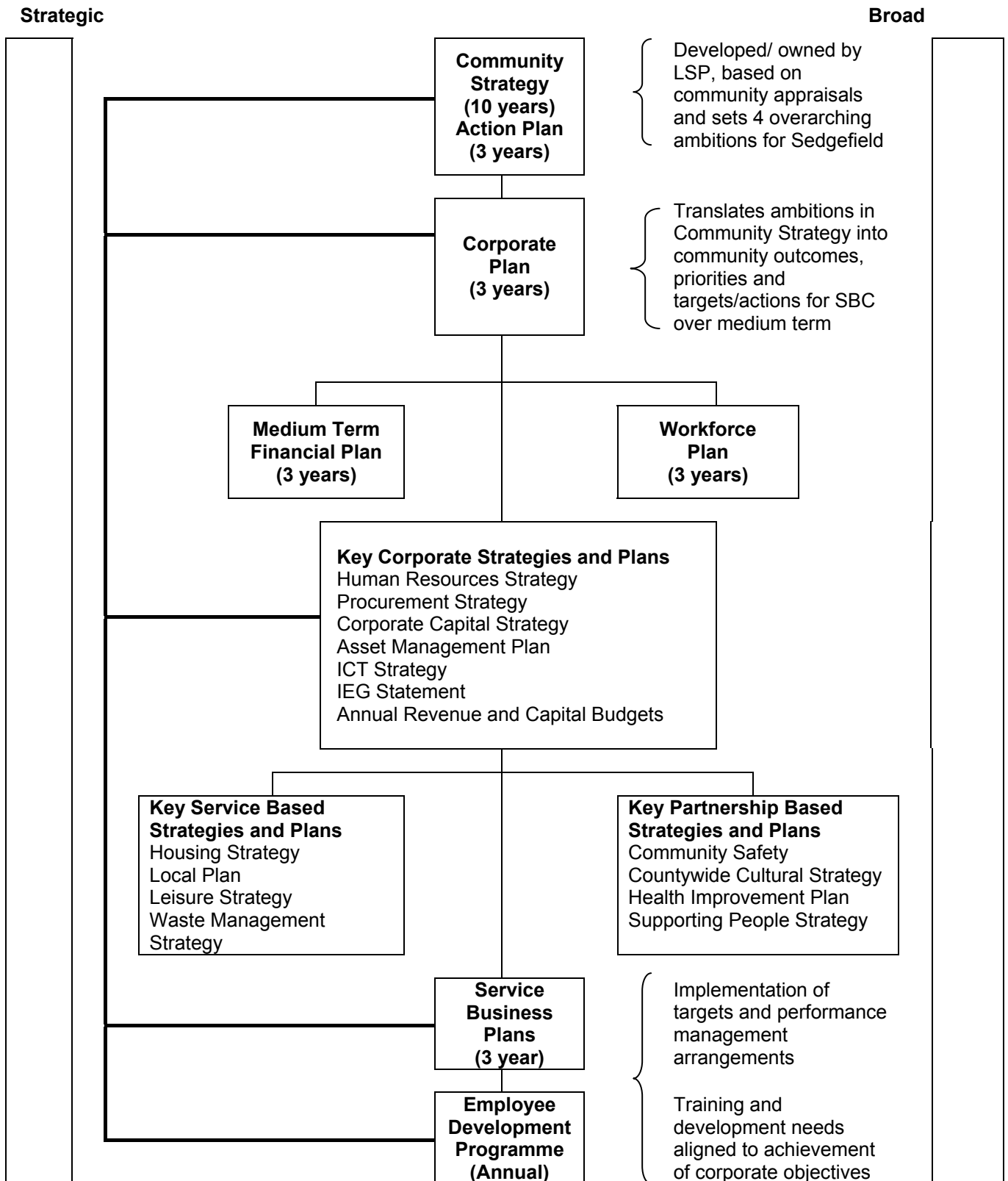


Glyn Hall
Director of Neighbourhood Services
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 4308
e-mail: ghall@sedgefield.gov.uk



Brian Allen
Director of Resources
Tel. 01388 816166 ext. 4003
e-mail: ballen@sedgefield.gov.uk

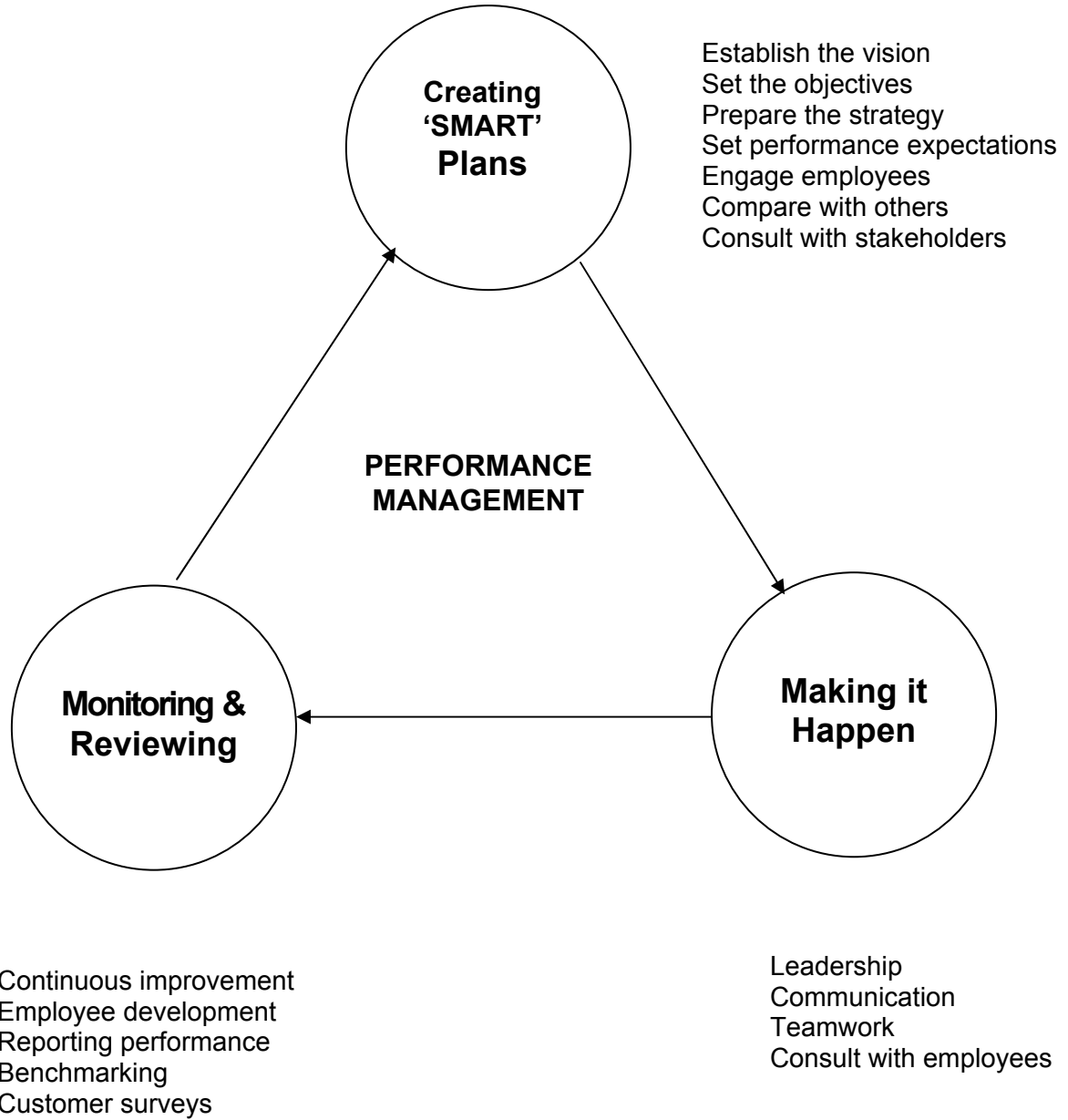
Appendix 1 – Corporate Planning Framework



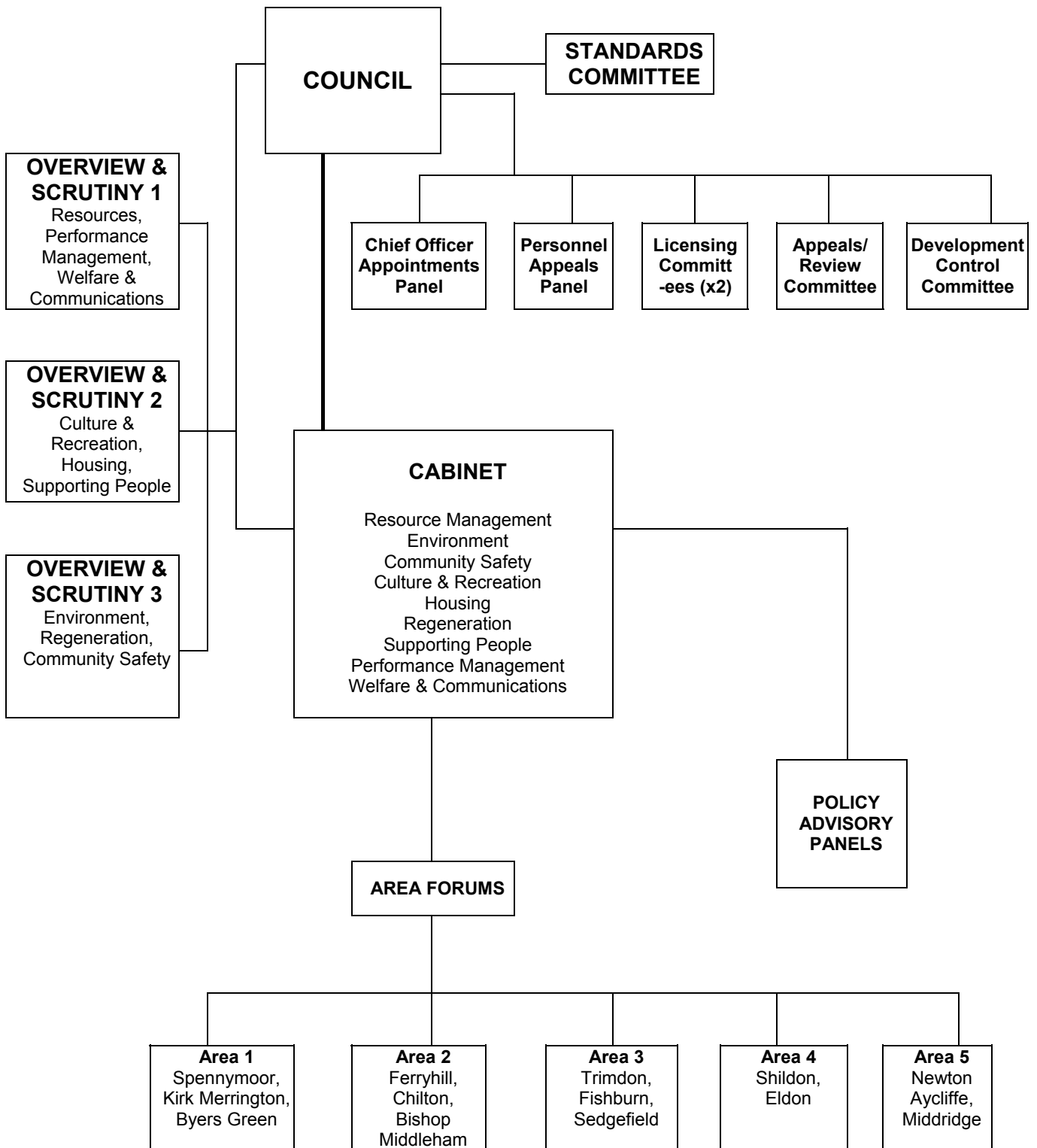
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Appendix 2 – The Performance Planning Framework



Appendix 3 – Political Management Structure



Appendix 4 – Strategic Working Group Profiles

Corporate Strategy Group	
Aims	<p>To maintain a focus on corporate priorities within a strong governance framework</p> <p>To provide strategic direction and guidance to the running of the Council's affairs</p>
Areas of Responsibility	<p>Community Strategy Spatial Strategy Corporate Plan Resource Management Strategic Corporate Initiatives Strategic Partnership Working Corporate Governance</p>
Lead Portfolio Member(s)	<p>Resources Regeneration</p>
Management Team Lead	<p>Chief Executive Officer Director of Resources</p>
Standing Members	<p>Head of Strategy & Regeneration Solicitor to the Council Head of Financial Services Head of Service Improvement</p>
Standing Officer Sub Groups	<p>Risk Management Constitution & Standards Human Resources</p>
Informal Officer Groups	<p>Land & Property Management</p>

Performance Improvement Group	
Aims	<p>To promote continuous performance improvement in Council Services</p> <p>To promote effective internal and external communication of the Council's services and priorities.</p> <p>To oversee Member and Officer development and welfare.</p>
Areas of Responsibility	<p>Consultation & community engagement</p> <p>Customer Relations & Communications</p> <p>Staff/Member welfare, training & development</p> <p>Performance Management</p> <p>Audit Commission Review Progress</p> <p>E-Government and use of Information</p> <p>Communication Technologies</p> <p>Corporate Procurement.</p>
Lead Portfolio Member(s)	<p>Welfare & Communications</p> <p>Performance Management</p>
Management Team Lead	<p>Director of Resources</p> <p>Head of Democratic Services</p>
Standing Members	<p>Head of Service Improvement</p> <p>Head of ICT</p> <p>Head of Strategy and Regeneration</p>
Informal Officer Groups	<p>Best Value and Consultation</p> <p>Information Communication Technology</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Human Resources</p>

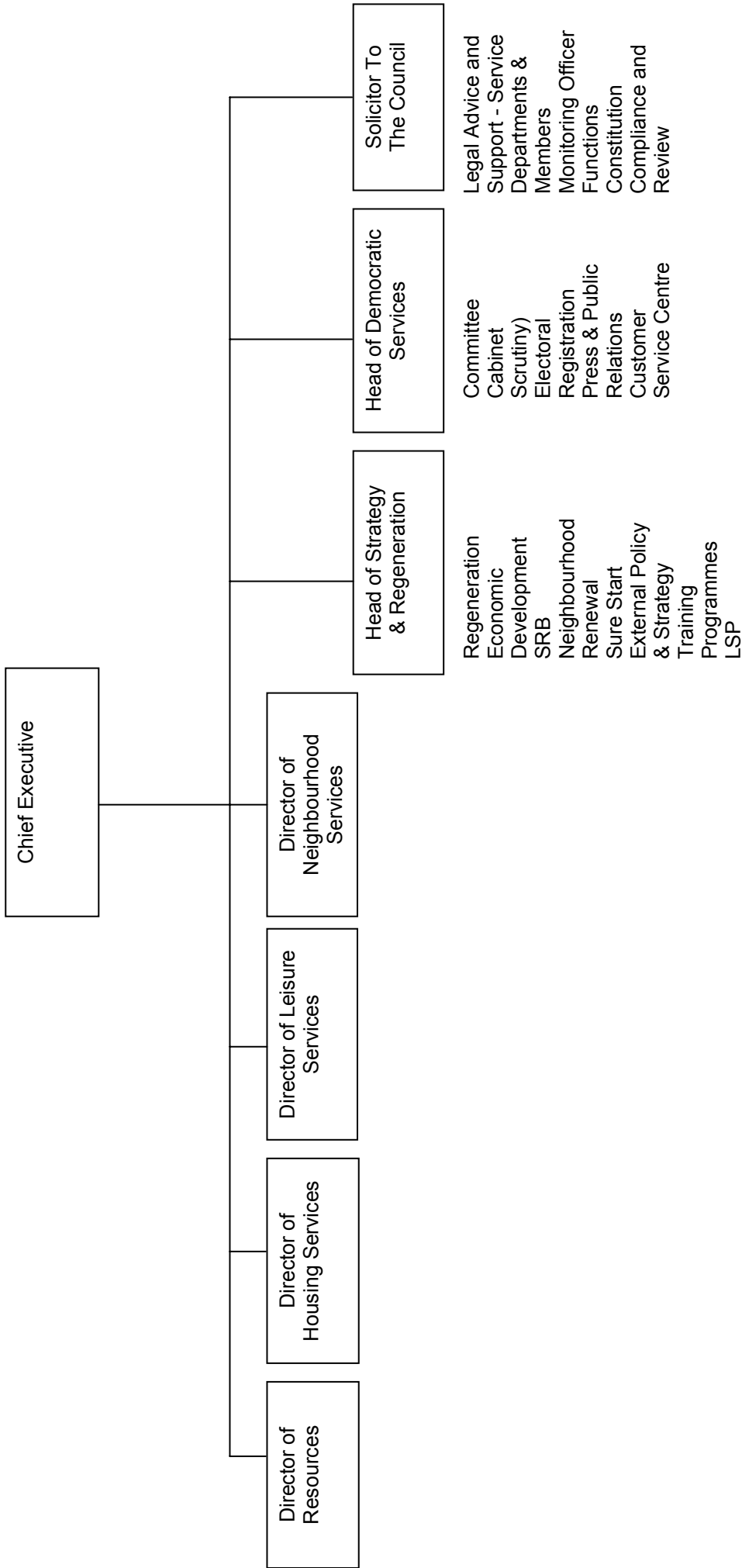
Community Services Group	
Aims	<p>To secure a more sustainable environment</p> <p>To protect and improve the health and safety of people who live, work or visit the Borough</p> <p>To oversee the delivery of community safety</p> <p>To provide a range of leisure and cultural opportunities</p>
Areas of Responsibility	<p>Environmental Management & Sustainability</p> <p>Environmental Health Services</p> <p>Community Safety</p> <p>Tourism</p> <p>Sports, Culture & Arts</p>
Lead Portfolio Member(s)	<p>Environment</p> <p>Community Safety</p> <p>Culture & Recreation</p>
Management Team Lead	<p>Director of Neighbourhood Services</p> <p>Director of Leisure Services</p>
Standing Members	<p>Head of Neighbourhood Services</p> <p>Head of Environmental Services</p> <p>Head of Planning Services</p> <p>Head of (Leisure) Policy and Development</p>

Social Inclusion Group	
Aims	<p>To enhance the economic, environmental, physical and social well being of the Borough</p> <p>To address economic and social disadvantage</p> <p>To provide promote sustainable communities</p> <p>To promote the welfare and health of people living in the Borough</p>
Areas of Responsibility	<p>Economic Development & Business Support</p> <p>Neighbourhood Renewal & Sustainable Communities</p> <p>Housing Strategy & Support Services including Commissioning Specialist Housing Services for Vulnerable People</p> <p>Community Alarms</p> <p>Conservation of the Natural and Built Environment</p> <p>Education & Lifelong Learning.</p> <p>Health Inequalities</p> <p>Children & Young People Services</p> <p>Community & Voluntary Sector Support</p>
Lead Portfolio Member(s)	<p>Regeneration</p> <p>Housing (Non Landlord Functions)</p> <p>Supporting People</p>
Management Team Lead	<p>Director of Neighbourhood Services</p> <p>Head of Strategy & Regeneration</p>
Standing Members	<p>Director of Leisure Services</p> <p>Head of Neighbourhood Services</p> <p>Head of Planning Services</p>
Informal Officer Groups	<p>Cobblers Hall</p>

Council Housing Services Group	
Aims	To provide an effective social housing service
Areas of Responsibility	Council Housing Management & Maintenance Tenancy Enforcement Providing Specialist Housing Services for Vulnerable People
Lead Portfolio Member(s)	Housing (Landlord Function)
Management Team Lead	Director of Housing
Standing Members	Head of Housing Business Development Head of Property Services Head of Housing Management Head of Neighbourhood Services
Standing Officer Sub Groups	Housing Capital & Revenue Programme

Chief Executive's Department

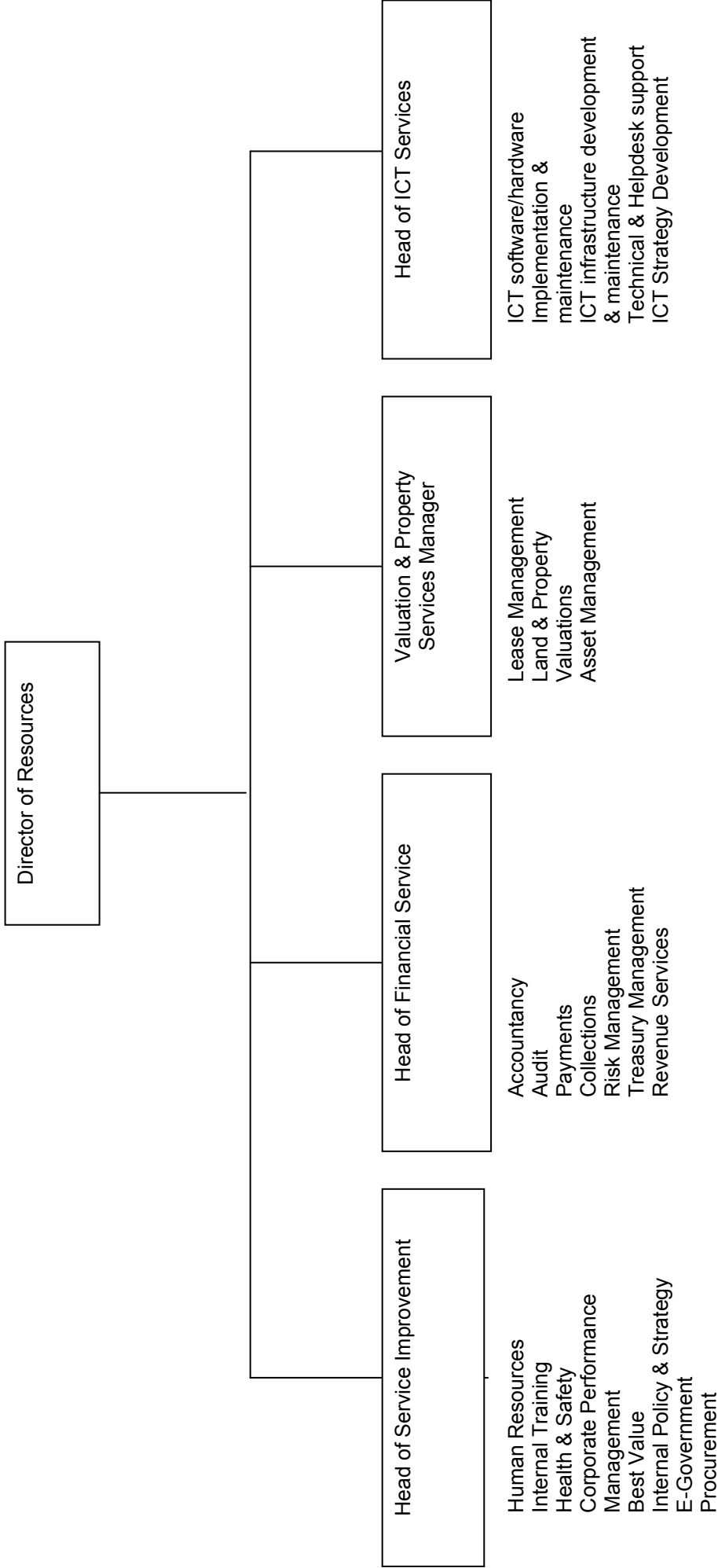
Appendix 5 – Departmental Management Structures



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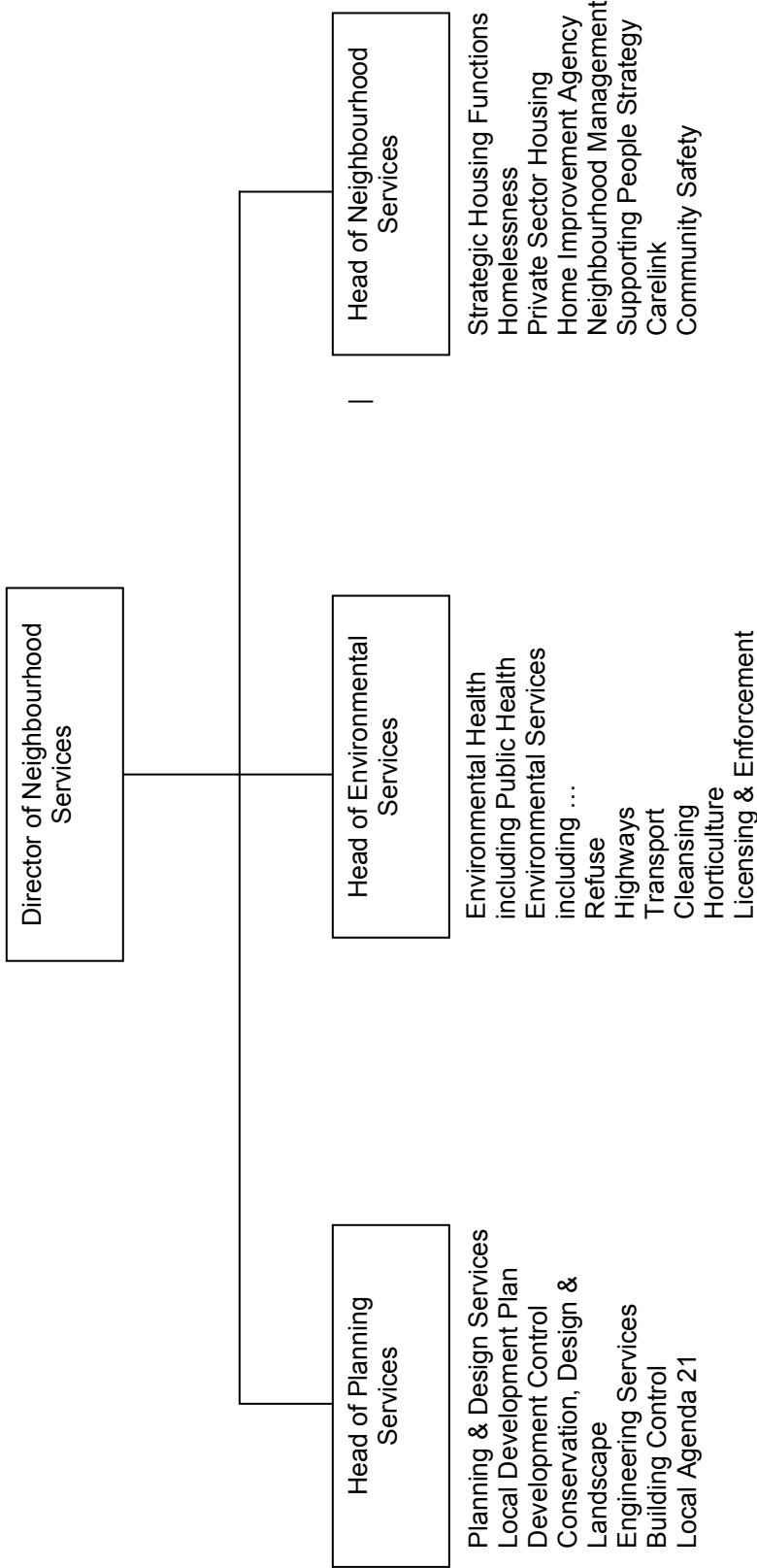
Resources Department



Quality Services For Local People

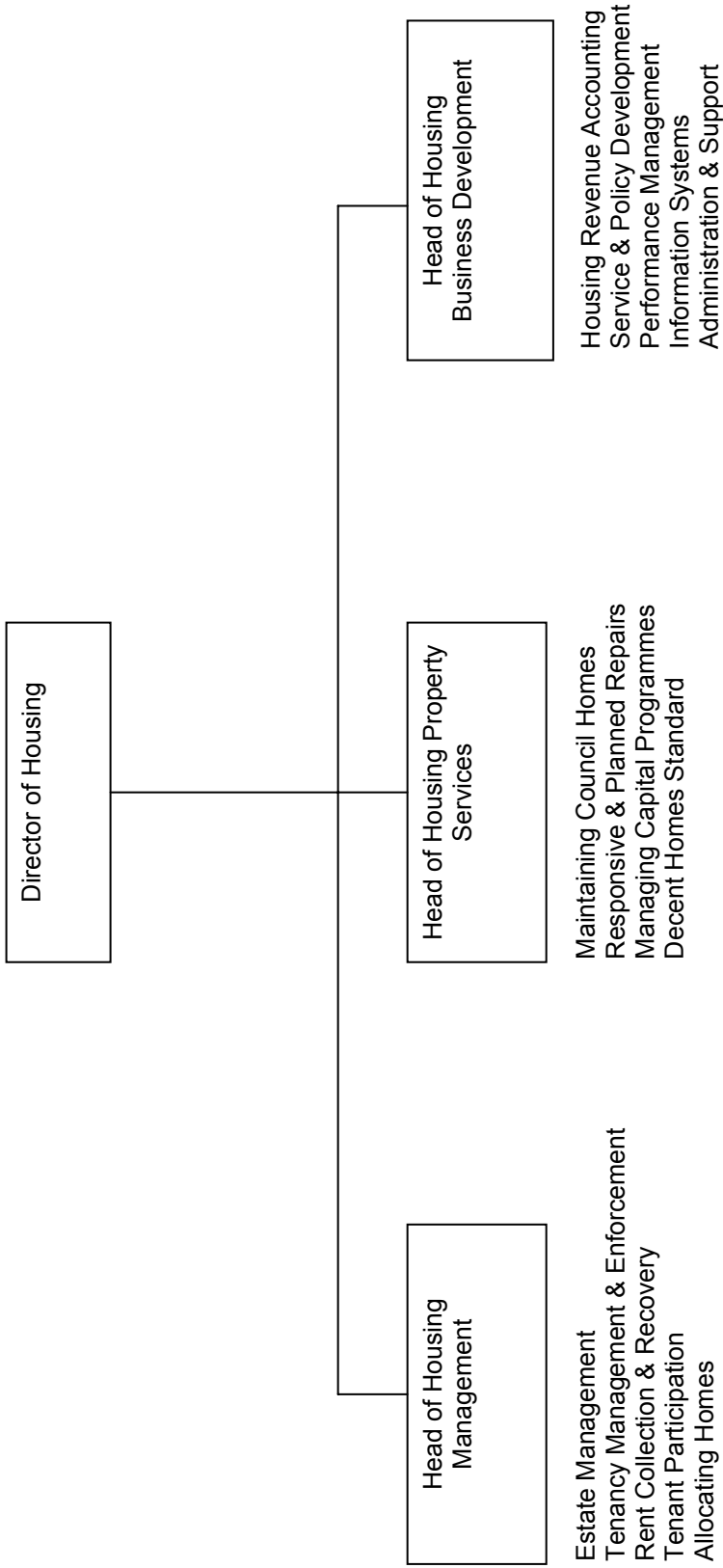
"Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

Neighbourhood Services Department



Quality Services For Local People
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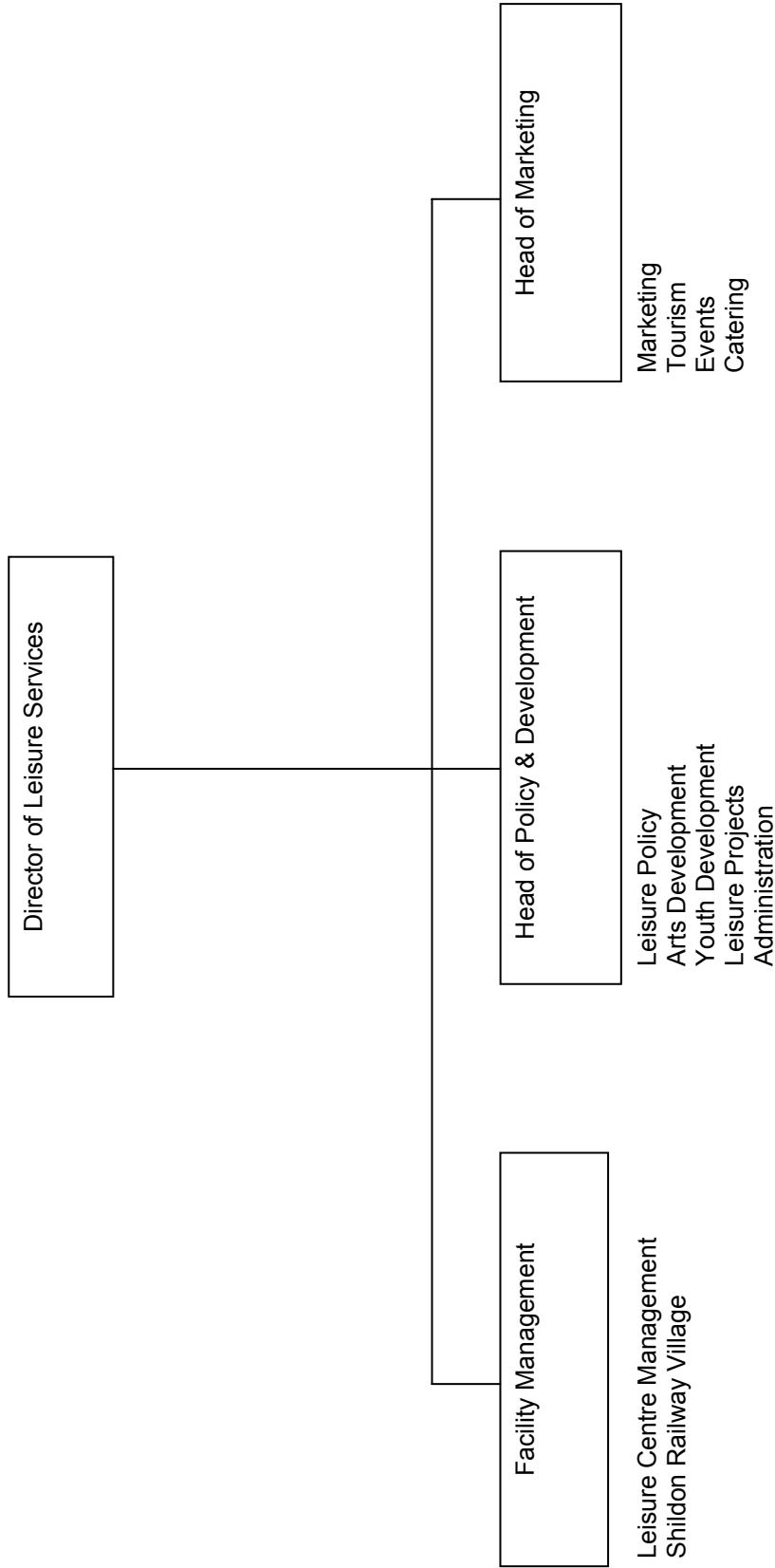
Housing Department



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Leisure Services Department



Quality Services For Local People

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SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



2004/2007

October 2004

Quality Services For Local People
“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

This document supports the Council's Corporate Plan.

It contains tables of national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) and associated targets that the Council uses to measure its progress against Corporate Ambitions, Community Outcomes and Corporate Values.

Tables also include statutory BVPIs that the Council is required to monitor and report.

Progress against these indicators is monitored on a quarterly basis by Strategic Working Groups. It is also reported annually to Full Council for information and to the Audit Commission for external validation.

A Healthy Borough

A place where people can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 084	400kg	404kg	✓	Not Available	Kilograms of household waste collected per head	412Kg	420kg	428kg
BVPI 086	£30.89	£30.89	✓	Not Available	Cost of waste collection per household	£35.58	£37.36	£39.23
BVPI 090[a]	95%	92%	✗	Not Available	Percentage of people expressing satisfaction with household waste collection	Statutory survey every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	95%
BVPI 119[a]	70%	58.3%	✗	Not Available	Percentage of people satisfied with sport and leisure facilities	Statutory survey every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	70%
BVPI 119[c]	70%	27%	✗	Not Available	Percentage of all people satisfied with museum/galleries	Statutory survey every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	70%
BVPI 119[e]	70%	69%	✗	Not Available	Percentage of all people satisfied with parks and open spaces	Statutory survey every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	70%
BVPI 166	70%	70%	✓	Not Available	Score against a checklist of enforcement best practice for Environmental Health trading standards	70%	70%	80%

Quality Services For Local People
 "Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 170[a]	241	162	✘	Not Available	Number of visits / usages to museums per 1,000 population	287	600	600
BVPI 170[b]	127	119	✘	Not Available	Number of visits in person per 1,000 population – museum	287	600	600
BVPI 170[c]	1,500	1,722	✓	Not Available	Number of pupils visiting museums in organised school groups	3,750	4,000	4,500
BVPI 176	0.25	0.033	✘	Not Available	Number of domestic violence refuge places per 10,000 population provided / supported by the authority	0.025	0.025	0.025
LPI H1	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of GP Referral graduates making a significant lifestyle change	80%	80%	80%
LPI H2	100%	100%	✓	N/A	Percentage of playgrounds covered by NPFPA standards	100%	100%	100%
LPI H3	Not Measured (New PI)	Not Measured (New PI)	N/A	N/A	Percentage of population participating in 30 minutes of moderate exercise 5 time per week	28%	29%	30%
LPI H4	100%	100%	✓	N/A	Percentage of high risk food premises inspections that should and were carried out	100%	100%	100%
LPI H5	80%	86%	✓	N/A	Pest Control- Percentage of pest control complaints responded to within 3 days	86%	88%	90%

SBC Corporate Plan 2004/2007 - Performance Indicators

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
LPI H6	90%	87%	✘	N/A	General PH - Percentage of general public health complaints responded to within 3 days	90%	91%	92%
LPI H7	100%	100%	✔	N/A	Air Pollution- the number of authorised premises inspected within the year	100%	100%	100%
LPI H8	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of clients satisfied with HIA service	TBE	TBE	TBE
LPI H9	27	26	✘	N/A	Number of summer holiday play schemes	27	27	27
LPI H10	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of Children and young People attending summer holiday play schemes	24,000	26,000	28,000
LPI H11	934,600	908,715	✘	N/A	Number of visits to SBC facilities	1,081,000	1,100,000	1,120,000
LPI H12	330	332	✔	N/A	Number of sports people using leisure centres achieving County/National/International Honours	340	360	380
LPI H13	Not Measured (New PI)	Not Measured (New PI)	N/A	N/A	Value of tourism industry within Sedgefield Borough	TBE	TBE	TBE

A Prosperous Borough
A place where high quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that are on offer

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 109[a]	60%	64.7%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of major Commercial and Industrial applications decided within 13 weeks	60%	65%	70%
BVPI 109[b]	70%	51%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of minor Commercial and Industrial applications decided within 8 weeks	70%	70%	70%
LPI P1	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of residents receiving new start training and counselling	320	TBE	TBE
LPI P2	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of new businesses created	60	TBE	TBE
LPI P3	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Customer satisfaction rating	90%	TBE	TBE
LPI P4	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of companies advised on business development	500	500	500

Quality Services For Local People
 "Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
LPI P5	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of companies receiving financial assistance	30	35	40
LPI P6	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of jobs created or safeguarded	177	200	220
LPI P7	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of inward investment enquiries handled	44	50	55
LPI P8	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Customer Satisfaction rate	90%	90%	90%
LPI P9	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of Borough Council owned factories occupied	77%	77%	77%
LPI P10	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Area of industrial land remediated	5ha	7ha	9ha
LPI P11	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of new SureStart services created	2	3	4
LPI P12	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of Employment Fairs delivered in SureStart Areas	1	2	2
LPI P13	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of Drop In sessions arranged with Employment Services in SureStart Areas	70	70	70

SBC Corporate Plan 2004/2007 - Performance Indicators

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
LPI P14	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Number of parents benefiting from progression plans developed (SureStart Areas)	N/A	20	50
LPI P15	3,725	3,611	✘	N/A	Number of people obtaining qualifications via SRB 1 and 2	TBE	TBE	TBE
LPI P16	8,905	9,456	✓	N/A	Number of training weeks delivered through SRB Programmes	TBE	TBE	TBE
LPI P17	50%	50%	✓	N/A	Percentage of unemployed adults undertaking training and gaining employment	50%	55%	60%
LPI P18	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Official Adult Learning Inspectorate Rating	TBE	TBE	TBE
LPI P19	55%	62%	✓	N/A	Percentage of school leavers undertaking training with the Council and achieving a positive outcome	55%	60%	65%
LPI P20	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of learners achieving full framework	50%	55%	60%

An Attractive Borough

“A place where the natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced”

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 082	10.7%	12.00%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings that have been recycled and / or composted	14%	18%	18%
BVPI 082[a]	10%	11.06%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings that have been recycled	12%	15%	15%
BVPI 082[b]	0.7%	0.94%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings that have been composted	2%	3%	3%
BVPI 089	63%	65%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of people satisfied with highways cleanliness standards	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken	67%
BVPI 090[b]	60%	73%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of people expressing satisfaction with recycling facilities	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken	75%
BVPI 091	100%	100%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of population served by kerbside collection of recyclables	100%	100%	100%
BVPI 106	29%	56.9%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land	31%	33%	33%

Quality Services For Local People
 “Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 107	£8.77	£7.50	✓	Not Available	Gross costs per head of population – planning	£8.62	£9.06	£9.50
BVPI 109[c]	80%	66%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of all other planning applications decided within 8 weeks	80%	85%	85%
BVPI 111	90%	80%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of applicants / commentators satisfied with the service received	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		90%
BVPI 179	85%	96%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of searches carried out in ten working days	95%	95%	95%
BVPI 188	85%	84%	✘	Not Available	The percentage of decisions delegated to officers as a proportion of all decisions	90%	90%	90%
BVPI 199	Baseline to be established	Not Measured	-	N/A	Percentage of relevant land and highways assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus across 4 categories of cleanliness	TBE	To be developed once baseline established	
BVPI 200[a]	No	No	-	N/A	Does the Council have a development plan that has been adopted in the last 5 years and that has not expired?	Yes	Yes	Yes
BVPI 200[b]	Yes	No	-	N/A	If 'no', are there proposals on deposit for an alteration or replacement, with a published timetable for adopting those alterations or the replacement plan within 3 years?	N/A	N/A	N/A

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
LPI A1	9%	10%	✘	N/A	% of pavements inspected containing dog fouling 10% 2003/04	8%	<8%	<Yr2
LPI A2	1.5	1.4	✔	N/A	Number of complaints received per 100,000 head of population	<2	<2	<2
LPI A3	Not Measured (New PI)	Not Measured (New PI)	N/A	N/A	Percentage of Primary schools taking part in preventative activities around street cleansing and waste recycling	50%	100%	-

A Borough with Strong Communities

A place where people can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 062	6.0%	8.25%	✓	Not Available	Proportion of unfit private dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of LA action	7.0%	7.0%	7.5%
BVPI 063	59	65	✓	Not Available	Energy efficiency: The average Standard Assessment Procedure rating of LA owned dwellings	65	66	67
BVPI 064	22	25	✓	Not Available	Proportion of private sector stock empty properties brought back into use as a percentage of all private stock	22	22	22
BVPI 074[a]	84%	83%	✘	Not Available	Tenant satisfaction with the overall Housing Service	84%	85%	86%
BVPI 074[b]	84%	N/A	-	Not Available	Tenant satisfaction with the overall Housing Service [black and minority ethnic tenants]	84%	85%	86%
BVPI 074[c]	84%	83%	✘	Not Available	Tenant satisfaction with the overall Housing Service [non-black and minority ethnic tenants]	84%	85%	86%

Quality Services For Local People
 "Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 075[a]	68%	64%	✘	Not Available	Tenant satisfaction with arrangements for participation in landlord housing services	68%	69%	70%
BVPI 075[b]	68%	N/A	-	Not Available	Tenant satisfaction with arrangements for participation in landlord housing services [black and minority ethnic tenants]	68%	69%	70%
BVPI 075[c]	68%	64%	✘	Not Available	Tenant satisfaction with arrangements for participation in landlord housing services [non-black and minority ethnic tenants]	68%	69%	70%
BVPI 076[a]	22	635	✓	Not Available	Number of claimants visited per 1,000 caseload	500	500	500
BVPI 076[b]	0.37	0.27	✘	Not Available	Number of fraud investigators per 1,000 caseload	0.27	0.27	0.27
BVPI 076[c]	47	45.94	✘	Not Available	Number of fraud investigations per 1,000 caseload	50	50	50
BVPI 076[d]	0.75	1.83	✓	Not Available	Number of prosecutions and sanctions per 1,000 caseload	2.0	2.0	2.0
BVPI 078[a]	39 days	41 days	✘	Not Available	Speed of processing [average time for all new claims]	36 days	34 days	32 days
BVPI 078[b]	9 days	6 days	✓	Not Available	Speed of processing [average time for a change]	6 days	6 days	6 days

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 078[c]	65%	59%	✘	Not Available	Speed of processing [percentage of renewals on time]	Deleted – Audit Commission		
BVPI 079[a]	99%	99%	✔	Not Available	Accuracy of processing [percentage of cases calculating correct benefit due]	99%	99%	99%
BVPI 079[b]	48%	38.9%	✘	Not Available	Accuracy of processing [percentage of recoverable overpayments [excluding Council Tax] recovered in year]	40%	42%	45%
BVPI 080[a]	80%	78%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of all claimants satisfied with the facilities to get in touch with the Benefits Office	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		
BVPI 080[b]	90%	86%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of all claimants satisfied with the service in the actual Benefits Office	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		
BVPI 080[c]	75%	70%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of all claimants satisfied with the telephone service	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		
BVPI 080[d]	85%	80%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of all claimants satisfied with the staff in the actual Benefits Office	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		
BVPI 080[e]	70%	67%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of all claimants satisfied with the clarity of application forms, benefits letters etc.	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		
BVPI 080[f]	60%	65%	✔	Not Available	Percentage of all claimants satisfied with the amount of time taken to determine their claim.	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 080[g]	75%	77%	✓	Not Available	Overall satisfaction with the Benefits service	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years		75%
BVPI 126[a]	10.5	9.4	✘	Not Available	Number of domestic burglaries per 1,000 households	10.0	10.0	9.5
BVPI 126[b]	14%	26%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of domestic burglaries per 1,000 households detected	15%	15%	15%
BVPI 127[a]	N/A	N/A	-	Not Available	Violent offences committed by a stranger per 1,000 population	Durham constabulary not able to provide this figure		
BVPI 127[b]	N/A	N/A	-	Not Available	Violent offences committed in a public place per 1,000 population	Durham constabulary not able to provide this figure		
BVPI 127[c]	N/A	N/A	-	Not Available	Violent offences committed in connection with licensed premises per 1,000 population	Durham constabulary not able to provide this figure		
BVPI 127[d]	N/A	N/A	-	Not Available	Violent offences committed under the influence per 1,000 population	Durham constabulary not able to provide this figure		
BVPI 128[a]	12	20.2	✘	Not Available	Number of vehicle crimes per 1,000 population	18	18	16
BVPI 128[b]	8%	12.5%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of vehicle crimes per 1,000 population detected	10%	10%	10%

Quality Services For Local People
 "Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 156	77%	26%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of buildings accessible and suitable for disabled people	100%	100%	100%
BVPI 164	Yes	Yes	✔	Not Available	Does the Authority follow the Racial Equality Code of Practice in Rented Housing?	Yes	Yes	Yes
BVPI 174	24	48.7	✘	Not Available	Number of racial incidents per 100,000 Population	30	30	30
BVPI 175	100%	100%	✔	Not Available	Percentage of racial incidents recorded by the council subject to subsequent action	100%	100%	100%
BVPI 183[a]	3 weeks	0 weeks	✔	Not Available	Average length of stay [weeks] in bed and breakfast accommodation of households including dependent children or a pregnant woman that are unintentionally homeless or in priority need	0 weeks	0 weeks	0 weeks
BVPI 183[b]	7 weeks	0 weeks	✔	Not Available	Average length of stay [weeks] in hostel accommodation of households including dependent children or a pregnant woman that are unintentionally homeless or in priority need	0 weeks	0 weeks	0 weeks
BVPI 184[a]	48%	48.1%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of Council housing which did not comply with the decency standards at 1 st April 2002	32%	25%	20%
BVPI 184[b]	23%	29.7%	✔	Not Available	Percentage change in the proportion of non-decent houses in year	-8.5%	-11%	-3%

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 185	60%	73%	✓	Not Available	Percentage of responsive [but not emergency] repairs for which an appointment was made and kept by the authority	80%	85%	87%
BVPI 202	New PI 04/05	New PI 04/05	-	N/A	Number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority.	Less than 10	To be developed once baseline established	
BVPI 203	New PI 04/05	New PI 04/05	-	N/A	Percentage change in the average number of families, which include dependent children or a pregnant woman, placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year.	TBE	TBE	TBE
LPI S1	Not Measured (New PI)	Not Measured (New PI)	N/A	N/A	Percentage of eligible workforce trained to multi skilled level	100%	-	-
LPI S2	97%	95%	✘	N/A	Percentage of urgent repairs completed within government time limits	98%	98%	98%
LPI S3	Proposed PI 05/06	Proposed PI 05/06	-	N/A	Void property re-let time (Proposed as a new BVPI for 2005/06)	TBE	TBE	TBE
LPI S4	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of incidents of racial harassment responded to on the same day	100%	100%	100%
LPI S5	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of incidents of Extreme Anti-Social Behaviour responded to within 1 working day	100%	100%	100%

SBC Corporate Plan 2004/2007 - Performance Indicators

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
LPI S6	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of incidents of serious anti-social behaviour responded to within 3 working days	95%	100%	100%
LPI S7	Not Measured (New PI)	Not Measured (New PI)	N/A	N/A	Percentage of primary schools taking part in preventative activities around fear of crime in the elderly	-	50%	100%
LPI S8	Not Measured (New PI)	Not Measured (New PI)	N/A	N/A	Percentage of primary schools taking part in domestic violence awareness raising	50%	75%	100%
LPI S9	Not Measured (New PI)	Not Measured (New PI)	N/A	N/A	Percentage of Member's training needs addressed	-	80%	100%

Corporate Values
Values that underpin service provision across the whole Council and which provide direction and guidance to officers and elected members, ensuring a framework of high standards of accountability

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 001[a]	Yes	No	✘	Not Available	Does the Local Authority have a Community Strategy?	Yes	N/A	N/A
BVPI 001[b]	March 2007	N/A	-	Not Available	By when will a full review of the Community Strategy be completed?	March 2007	March 2007	March 2007
BVPI 001[c]	No	No	-	Not Available	Has progress been reported to the wider community?	October 2004	N/A	N/A
BVPI 001[d]	N/A	N/A	-	Not Available	When will Community Strategy be in place?	October 2004	N/A	N/A
BVPI 002[a]	2	1	✘	Not Available	The level [if any] of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the local authority conforms	2	3	4
BVPI 002[b]	35%	26.3%	✘	Not Available	Score against checklist on the duty to promote race equality	35%	40%	50%

Quality Services For Local People
 "Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 003	75%	60%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by the authority	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	75%
BVPI 004	45%	36%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of those making complaints satisfied with the handling of the complaint	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	Statutory survey undertaken every 3 years	45%
BVPI 008	100%	95.7%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of invoices paid in 30 days	100%	100%	100%
BVPI 009	95.1%	94.9%	✘	Not Available	Proportion of Council Tax collected in year	95.1%	95.2%	95.3%
BVPI 010	98.5%	99.1%	✓	Not Available	Proportion of Business Rates collected in year	99.1%	99.1%	99.1%
BVPI 011[a]	15%	10%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of top 5% earners who are women	12%	14%	16%
BVPI 011[b]	2.6%	2%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of top 5% earners who are from black and ethnic minority communities	2.2%	2.4%	2.6%
BVPI 012	11.5 days	13.9 days	✘	Not Available	Number of working days lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent	11.5 days	11.0 days	10.0 days
BVPI 014	0.45%	0.5%	✘	Not Available	Early retirements as a percentage of the total workforce	0.45%	0.20%	0.20%

Quality Services For Local People
 "Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
BVPI 015	0.4%	1.0%	✘	Not Available	Ill health retirements as a percentage of total workforce	0.40%	0.40%	0.40%
BVPI 016[a]	8.5%	4.1%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of staff declaring they meet the Disability Act as a percentage of ratio of total workforce	4.1%	5.0%	6.0%
BVPI 016[b]	N/A	21.71%	-	Not Available	Percentage of economically active disabled people in the authority area	22%	22%	22%
BVPI 017[a]	0.80%	1.8%	✔	Not Available	Percentage of staff from ethnic minorities as a ratio of total workforce	2%	2%	2%
BVPI 017[b]	N/A	0.61%	-	Not Available	Percentage of economically active ethnic minorities in the authority area	0.61%	0.61%	0.61%
BVPI 066[a]	97.5%	94.6%	✘	Not Available	Proportion of rent collected	97.50%	97.75%	98.00%
BVPI 157	93%	50%	✘	Not Available	Percentage of interactions with the public capable of electronic service delivery being delivered electronically	58%	100%	100%
BVPI 177	100%	100%	✔	Not Available	Percentage of expenditure spent on legal and advice services that have the quality mark meeting priority legal need	100%	100%	100%
C1	80%	90%	✔	N/A	Percentage of gas servicing carried out to customers satisfaction	90%	90%	90%

Quality Services For Local People
 "Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

SBC Corporate Plan 2004/2007 - Performance Indicators

PI Ref	03/04 Target	03/04 Outturn	Achieved	03/04 Top Quartile	Performance Indicator	Future Targets		
						04/05	05/06	06/07
C2	100%	100%	✓	N/A	Percentage of employees Covered by IIP Quality Standard	100%	100%	100%
C3	80%	80%*	✓	N/A	Percentage of new tenants satisfied with service / property	90%	90%	90%
C4	77%	67%	-	N/A	Percentage of Industrial Property let	70%	75%	80%
C5	Target not set (New PI)	62%	-	N/A	Percentage of Capital Projects within 5% of budgeted cost	75%	80%	85%
C6	Target not set (New PI)	50%	-	N/A	Percentage of Capital Projects within 5% of predicted timescale	65%	70%	75%
C7	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage of Rent Reviews/Lease Renewals	98%	98%	98%
C8	-	To be calculated	-	N/A	Percentage increase in take up of concessionary pricing scheme	25%	10%	5%

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN

KEY ACTIONS



2004/2007

November 2004

KEY ACTIONS

This document supports the Council's Corporate Plan.

It contains details of key actions that the Council plans to undertake in order to achieve its Corporate Ambitions, Community Outcomes and Corporate Values.

This information is presented in an easy to follow table that clearly shows against each key action the name of the responsible Cabinet Member and Chief Officer, links to local and national performance measures and targets (as set out in a separate Performance Indicators Annexe) and is cross-referenced to supporting Strategies, Service Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Section Business Plans.

Progress against these actions is monitored monthly at a departmental/section level.

HEALTHY BOROUGH

Community Outcome:

Safeguarding public health

Responsibilities:	<p>Cllr Alan Hodgson -Environment Portfolio Cllr John Robinson - Culture & Recreation Portfolio</p> <p>Glyn Hall - Director of Neighbourhood Services Phil Ball - Director of Leisure Services</p>
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
1	Ensure that standards of public health in the Borough are in line with regional and national standards by reviewing resources/allocation of grant monies/partnership working to support related activity and projects across the Borough	Develop shared SMART targets at LSP level during Community Strategy Action Planning process - PIs to measure life expectancy, deaths from CHD, teenage conceptions, substance misuse	TBE	Strategy & Regeneration Service Plan
2	Improve the health of local people suffering from long term illness	Provide the Fit for Life scheme inc. GP referrals, back pain rehabilitation and passport to health to residents across the Borough via activities and education	H1	Leisure Services Service Plan
3	Ensure that the Council's playground equipment is safe to use and properly maintained	Undertake weekly and quarterly inspections and annual inspections from independent organisations	H2	Leisure Services Service Plan
4	To deliver locally the National Physical Activity Target	To develop the Sedgefield Physical Activity Strategy, demonstrating how the Council will ensure that at least 28% of the Borough's population participates in a minimum of 30 minutes moderate exercise 5 time per week	H3	Leisure Services Service Plan

Quality Services For Local People

"Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
5	Provide an efficient and effective Environmental Health Service, ensuring compliance with statutory obligations and protection of public health	<p>Implement a risk based inspection programme – ensuring that 100% of High Risk Food Premises are inspected</p> <p>Improve the rate of response (within local target times) to requests for pest control and general public health service requests by introducing an appointments service for customers</p> <p>Minimise air pollution emissions from specific industrial processes by implementing a risk based inspection programme for all Authorised Processes to ensure compliance with authorised emission limits</p> <p>Implement the new HSC strategy for workplace safety, to minimise harm to those in the workplace or those affected by workplace activities, and contribute to the health and well-being of local communities - by working jointly and in partnership with HSC locally, regionally and nationally, to a common set of goals and standards, committed to focussing resources on agreed health and safety priorities</p> <p>Implement the transfer of licensing responsibility from Magistrates Courts to the Council under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003</p> <p>Review Policy and procedures relating to the Licensing of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles</p>	H4 H5 H6 H7 TBE N/A N/A	Environmental Services Service Plan
6	Maintain an effective, efficient refuse collection service to all domestic households	<p>Weekly wheeled bin kerbside collection system to all households supplemented by a free appointment based collection service for bulky/extra household waste</p> <p>Review the Customer Charter offering service guarantees</p>	BV90a	Environmental Services Service Plan

Community Outcome:		Promoting independent living	
Responsibilities:	Cllr Agnes Armstrong – Supporting People Portfolio Cllr Malcolm Iveson – Community Safety Portfolio	Glyn Hall - Director of Neighbourhood Services	

Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
7	Provide a high quality, efficient and effective Carelink Service, which meets the 247 monitoring needs of the Supporting People Partnership	<p>Undertake a review of the current combined control room service (Community Alarm and CCTV monitoring) and develop / implement action plans arising from this review</p> <p>Undertake a review of the Carelink Warden Service and develop / implement action plans arising from this review</p>	N/A	Head of Neighbourhood Services Service Plan
	Facilitate a range of Private Sector Renewals and Grants to maintain and adapt properties to allow vulnerable adults to remain within their homes	Provide an efficient and customer focussed Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service and explore options to diversify funding for clients	H8	Head of Neighbourhood Services Service Plan

Community Outcome: **Creating leisure opportunities**

Responsibilities:	Cllr. John Robinson – Culture & Recreation Portfolio	Phil Ball - Director Of Leisure Services
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
9	Improve customer and non-customer communication and engagement to enable better marketing of leisure opportunities.	Implement a Smartcard Membership Scheme and online booking system at all four Leisure Centres that will allow customer profiling, improve targeted direct marketing communications and research (to various priority groups such as young people, the at risk segment, the concessionary segment) and use output to inform future service provision.	TBE	Leisure Services Service Plan
10	Engage children and young people in leisure activities	Provide access to the Council's mobile skate park facility - ensuring that the mobile skate park is made available in the identified venues within the four Town and Parish Councils. Plus, market the service to allow hire for special events within the Borough and to other Local Authorities. Work with partners to deliver a programme of summer play in selected venues across the Borough	N/A H9 H10	Leisure Services Service Plan
11	Provide a range of diversionary activities and leisure opportunities in accordance with the Positive Futures Initiative	Deliver physical activities to "At Risk" Young People aged 10 – 19 years, in accordance with Referral Protocols, to provide relevant and appropriate individual activity programmes	H11 H12	Leisure Services Service Plan
12	Create "Pathways" for young people to participate in sport	Work through the Sedgefield Borough "Sporting Hub" to provide pathways for young people from the beginner to the elite sports person, including the delivering holiday sports coaching programmes	H11 H12	Leisure Services Service Plan

Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
13	Promote South West Durham as a visitor destination for railway heritage,	<p>Maximise marketing opportunities with existing visitor attractions in the area, building on the success of Locomotion, the National Railway Museum in Shildon.</p> <p>Provide an important Lifelong Learning facility within County Durham to promote the economic and social history associated with the areas of railway heritage</p>	BV170[a] H13 TBE	Leisure Services Service Plan
14	Provide leisure opportunities / facilities which reflect the changing needs of customers	Maintain and develop the Council's leisure facilities through securing partner investment in the Fitness Suites and the Regional Gymnastics Centre at Spennymoor	TBE	Leisure Services Service Plan
15	Maintain public access to Shildon and Fishburn Community Pools	Implement the National Swimming Development Programme	H11	Leisure Services Service Plan

Community Outcome:	Promoting cultural activities
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Responsibilities:	Cllr. John Robinson – Culture & Recreation Portfolio	Phil Ball - Director Of Leisure Services
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
16	Adopt the Regional and County Tourism Strategies	Undertake a Tourism audit and develop a local tourism strategy and plan	TBE	Leisure Services Service Plan
17	Place Arts at the strategic centre of the Council	Work through the emerging Sedgefield Borough “Arts Hub” in securing opportunities for the Arts in the delivery of the Council’s priority agenda	TBE	Leisure Services Service Plan

PROSPEROUS BOROUGH

Community Outcome: Promoting Business and Employment Opportunities

Responsibilities:	Cllr Kester Noble – Regeneration Portfolio Cllr Agnes Armstrong – Supporting People Portfolio	Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
18 19	Increase the new business formation rate so that it is closer to the County Durham and Regional averages	Obtain base line data for Sedgefield, County Durham and the North East. Enhance investment in awareness raising and to support new business formation / survival.	P1 P2 P3	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
19	Encourage the development of the social and community enterprise within the Borough	Obtain base line data for Sedgefield, County Durham and the North East. Raise awareness and encourage the development of the Social Enterprise sector, including those that deliver services to and on behalf of the public sector.	TBE	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan

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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
20	Promote the diversification of the economy	Delivery of business advice through the Business Support Network for County Durham; support growth sectors and clusters; encourage the development of the knowledge economy; support investment in ICT, training and R&D; attract further inward investment; influencing the Regional Spatial Strategy, Northern Way and Tourism Strategies.	P4 P5 P6 P7 P8	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
21	Maximise the economic potential of NetPark	Work in partnership with County Durham CR to develop business support clusters and bespoke training programmes to increase access to local job opportunities.	TBE	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
22	Ensure the Borough has a sufficient supply of business sites and premises available to meet the needs of modern business	Bring forward the development of the key strategic sites (Heighington Lane West; Aycliffe Industrial Park and Green Lane) Encourage investment in the more localised employment sites.	P7 P9 P10	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
23	Promote a workforce with the skills required by business	Enhance linkages between the education sector and business; increased investment in workforce / employer development and training; enhanced support for small business growth and recruitment	TBE	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan

Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
24	Reduce the inequalities and lack of opportunities between children born in designated SureStart areas and the rest of the Borough	<p>Create new Sure Start services and review existing services</p> <p>Organise and deliver employment fairs</p> <p>Develop links with Job Centre Plus and deliver job drop-in sessions through links with employment services</p> <p>Create links with educational, training and employment agencies and co-ordinate appropriate training courses</p>	<p>P11</p> <p>P12</p> <p>P13</p> <p>P14</p>	<p>Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan</p>

Community Outcome: **Maximising Learning Opportunities**

Responsibilities:	<p>Cllr Agnes Armstrong – Supporting People Portfolio</p> <p>Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer</p>
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
25	Ensure that the educational standards and skills of Borough residents are in line with regional and national standards	<p>Prioritise resources/allocation of grant monies/partnership working to support related activity and projects across the Borough, in line with key Community Strategy objective</p> <p>Extend family programmes to improve basic skills</p> <p>Develop community learning centres via Sedgefield Learning Borough Partnership</p> <p>Extend schooling and other initiatives</p>	P15 P16	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
26	Improve the employability of long-term unemployed residents	Provide a structured training programme that includes vocational training, personal development, basic skills support, job search and work experience	P17 P18	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
27	Improve the opportunity of school leavers to progress into either an apprenticeship programme or employment with training	Provide a structured training programme that includes vocational training, personal development, basic skills support, job search and work experience	P19	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
28	Promote and develop the performance of work-based learning	Establish of Work- Based Learning Association within South West Durham	N/A	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan

Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
29	Promote and deliver a range of vocational and non-vocational training opportunities	<p>Deliver apprenticeship programme for young people in construction, administration and manufacturing</p> <p>Build on established links with training providers and establish links with Sedgefield Learning Borough</p>	P20	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan

ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH

Community Outcome:

Ensuring a cleaner, greener environment

Responsibilities:	Cllr Alan Hodgson –Environment Portfolio	Glyn Hall – Director of Neighbourhood Services
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
30	Develop a partnership approach to the monitoring and improvement of local environmental conditions relevant to Street Cleansing activities (litter, fly tipping, dog fouling, graffiti etc.)	Establish cross-agency teams from the Borough Council, Police and Residents Association. Baseline existing local conditions using BV199 inspection methods. Implement local monitoring via Residents and implement improvements, local education and enforcement initiatives identified.	BV089 BV199	Environmental Services Service Plan
31	Reduce the level of dog fouling on pavements	Increase levels of enforcement and educational activity to raise awareness	A1	Environmental Services Service Plan
32	Ensure the Borough contains high quality green spaces and floral displays	Maintain beds, and open spaces/verges, hedge cutting, arboriculture work and maintenance of enclosed gardens to a high quality standard Implement a range of preventative activities for Children and Young People around Street Cleansing and Waste Recycling through devising a Cultural programme that includes performance workshops, professional artist, exhibitions and performances	A2 A3	Environmental Services Service Plan Leisure Services Service Plan

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Community Outcome: **Improving Towns, Villages and the Countryside**

Responsibilities:	Cllr Kester Noble – Regeneration Portfolio Cllr Alan Hodgson - Environment Portfolio	Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer Glyn Hall – Director of Neighbourhood Services
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
33	Improve the design and environmental quality of towns and villages in the Borough	Deliver Major Centres Programmes in Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe and an Urban Renaissance Programme to other small/medium sized settlements Deliver a Town Centre Management initiative	TBE	Strategy and Regeneration Service Plan
34	Provide a high quality, efficient and customer planning service	Enhance the speed and quality of service delivery through the achievement top quartile performance in the processing of planning applications and maximise Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) by close monitoring of performance and continuous review of development control procedures Implement a the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and closely monitor / respond to customer feedback	BV200 BV109 (a)(b)(c)	Planning Services Service Plan
			BV111	

Community Outcome: Reducing waste and managing natural resources

Responsibilities:	Cllr Alan Hodgson - Environment Portfolio	Glyn Hall – Director Of Neighbourhood Services
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
35	Increase recycling rates in accordance with the Waste Management Strategy to ensure that local and national recycling targets are met	<p>Implement the Waste Management Strategy in order to reduce the waste stream, including the evaluation of the use of smaller bins, community bins, recovery of cardboard and increasing participation rates in the fortnightly 'Kerb-it' recycling service for glass, cans and paper</p> <p>Extend the green waste collection service to additional areas in the Borough</p>	BV082 (a)(b)	Environmental Services Service Plan
36	Prepare a Climate Change Strategy	Raise awareness of sustainability issues both within the Council and external organisations, and carry out formal Strategic Environmental Assessments of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant affects on the environment	N/A	Planning Services Service Plan

STRONG COMMUNITIES

Community Outcome:

Securing quality affordable housing

Responsibilities:	Cllr Bill Waters – Housing Portfolio Cllr Kester Noble – Regeneration Portfolio Cllr Agnes Armstrong – Supporting People Portfolio	Colin Steel - Director Of Housing Glyn Hall – Director Of Neighbourhood Services
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
37	Increase investment in Sedgefield Borough Council housing stock to achieve tenants aspirations for stock improvements and service developments	Achieve a “Yes” vote from tenants in the Ballot for Large Scale Voluntary Transfer. Establish local Registered Social Landlord (Housing Association) within Sedgefield Borough area. Improve existing Council housing stock to the Decent Homes Standard	BV184 (a)(b)	Housing Management Service Plan
38	Review the Council’s Housing Strategy to reflect housing needs and priorities within the Borough	Prepare a revised Housing Strategy and achieve a “Fit for Purpose” rating from the Government Office North East. Carry out an evaluation of the neighbourhood management pilot.	N/A	Neighbourhood Services Service Plan
39	Review the Homelessness Strategy to take account of recent increases in the levels of homeless applications	Prepare a revised Homelessness Strategy in accordance with ODPM recommended best practice/guidance	TBE	Neighbourhood Services Service Plan

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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
40	Review the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to reflect landlord priorities and to reflect overarching aims of the Housing Strategy Statement	Prepare a revised Housing Revenue Account Business Plan achieve a "Fit for Purpose" rating from the Government Office North East	N/A	Housing Management Service Plan
41	Implement revised procurement arrangements to deliver high quality stock improvements to Sedgefield's housing stock	Implement multi-skilling in relation to workforce delivery of repairs and improvement works. Develop mobile working systems with repairs and improvement services to reduce paperwork and speed up administration / performance management processes. Implement partnering aims and objectives within the 3 repairs services of Disabled Persons Adaptations, Emergency Callout and Voids Management.	BV185 S1 S2 S3	Housing Management Service Plan
42	Assist in the delivery of the regeneration of the Councils priority areas for Older Private Sector Housing	The delivery of area based interventions using the existing housing legislation. Rebalance housing markets in Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and Chilton West	BV62 BV64 TBE	Neighbourhood Services Service Plan

Community Outcome: **Promoting Safer Neighbourhoods**

Responsibilities:	<p>Cllr Malcolm Iveson – Community Safety Portfolio Cllr Bill Waters – Housing Portfolio</p>	<p>Glyn Hall – Director Of Neighbourhood Services</p>
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
43	Contribute to Safer Communities through the development of multi-agency partnerships to tackle anti-social behaviour within Council Housing Estates	<p>Develop and publish statement of Policy and Procedures in accordance with the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.</p> <p>Delivery of high quality tenancy enforcement action.</p> <p>Provide diversionary activities for children and young people within housing estates</p>	S4 S5 S6	Neighbourhood Services Service Plan
44	Tackle Domestic Violence with the focus on prevention, support (including housing options) and justice.	<p>Improve the coordination and delivery of services for the victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>Prepare a detailed action plan to support the delivery from Sedgfield Borough Domestic Violence Strategy</p>	BV176	Neighbourhood Services Service Plan
45	Facilitate crime reduction through the provision of preventative measures – CCTV & Community Alarms.	<p>Review the functionality of the current control room service.</p> <p>Provide an effective, responsive CCTV service for Borough, based on a review of current provision and supported by suitable monitoring arrangements</p>	N/A TBE	Neighbourhood Services Service Plan

Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
46	Expand the Neighbourhood Warden service in accordance with identified Council priorities.	Examine options for the extension of partnership working and increase the number of neighbourhood wardens across the borough	TBE	Neighbourhood Services Service Plan
47	Preventative activities for Children and Young People around fear of crime in the Elderly	Devise a Cultural programme, based around preventative activities for Community Safety specifically Fear of Crime to include Radio Plays, devising an installation, exhibitions and digital art	S7	Leisure Services Service Plan
48	Raise awareness and develop an understanding within children and young people of the causes of Domestic Violence	Devise an a Cultural programme, based around preventative activities and raising awareness for Community Safety specifically Domestic Violence to include Video Project, Drama, Creating Publications and Specialist workshops	S8	Leisure Services Service Plan

Community Outcome: **Engaging local communities and promoting local democracy**

Responsibilities:	Cllr Bob Fleming – Resources Portfolio Cllr Barbara Graham – Welfare & Communications Portfolio Cllr David Newell – Performance Management Portfolio	Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer Brian Allen – Director Of Resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
49	Support the successful operation of the Sedgefield Borough Community Empowerment Network	Develop an efficient local Community Empowerment Network and maintain support for CAVOS in line with established Service Level Agreement Support and develop local community regeneration partnerships	TBE	Strategy & Regeneration Service Plan
50	Ensure appropriate and timely public access to Council documentation and diaries	Implement an electronic online democratic services system	BV157	Democratic Services Service Plan
51	Ensure the effective operation of an Overview and Scrutiny function	Update Overview & Scrutiny Guide and establish an Overview and Scrutiny Website	TBE	Democratic Services Service Plan
52	Develop knowledge and skills base of elected members to increase their effectiveness	Provide a comprehensive and effective Elected Member Development Programme based on a skills/needs based assessment, and implement the Members Charter Provide each elected member with the opportunity to have a lap top and associated training and develop members specific websites re e-Surgeries	S9	Service Improvement Service Plan

CORPORATE VALUES

Corporate Value:

Be open, accessible, equitable and responsive

Responsibilities:	Cllr David Newell – Performance Management Portfolio Cllr Barbara Graham – Welfare and Communications Portfolio Cllr Agnes Armstrong – Supporting People Portfolio	Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer Brian Allen – Director of resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
53	Improve access to services	Working in partnership through the Countywide e-Government Partnership on CRM solutions Develop and deliver the Implementing E-Government 4 Strategy and linked ODPM Priority Service Outcomes Develop an interactive website that is user friendly and accessible	BV157	Service Improvement Service Plan All Service Plans ICT Service Plan
54	Deliver seamless, integrated service delivery that meets the needs of all service users	Employ a Customer Services Manager to work closely with the e-Government Co-ordinator and service departments in driving forward a corporate customer service ethos	TBE	Democratic Services Service Plan
55	Promote the Council's key ambitions and enhance its reputation as a provider of high quality services	Implement the External Communications Strategy. Develop corporate identity and consistent application of key messages	N/A	Democratic Services Service Plan

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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
56	Develop and improve the Councils approach to Equality and Diversity	Secure improvements against BV002a: Equality Standard for Local Government and BV002b: Score against the checklist to promote race equality through employing a dedicated officer to drive forward the Implementation of the Service Improvement Plan	BV002a BV002b	Service Improvement Service Plan
57	Provide a straightforward and responsive customer complaints process	Implement the revised customer complaints policy and procedure.	BVPI 04 C1	Democratic Services Service Plan

Corporate Value: Consult with service users, customers and partners

Responsibilities:	Cllr Bob Fleming – Resources Portfolio	Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer Brian Allen – Director Of Resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
58	Ensure that the customer is at the centre of all service delivery and improve corporate consultation and community engagement	<p>Develop a Corporate Consultation Strategy and implement the Service Improvement Plan arising from the Best Value Review.</p> <p>Co-ordinate and undertake regular customer consultations and base improvements around customer feedback, both external and internal customers</p> <p>Develop the Customer Contact Centre and prepare service based Customer Charters – ensuring that future service provision reflects market research / data analysis</p>	TBE BV080 (a)(b)(c)	<p>Strategy & Regeneration Service Plan</p> <p>Democratic Services Service Plan</p>
59	Involve Council Taxpayers in Medium Term Financial Planning and the Annual Budget and Council Tax setting process	Use independent external consultants (Market Research) to source and set up focus groups and consult on corporate planning proposals. Outcome of these consultations to be presented to Cabinet in when consideration given to the Budget Framework report in February each year	TBE	Financial Services Service Plan

Corporate Values: Invest in our employees

Responsibilities:	Cllr Barbara Graham - Welfare & Communications Portfolio	Brian Allen – Director Of Resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
60	Ensure that all employees have the necessary skills and opportunities to develop these in order to effectively perform their jobs	Implement annual Employee Development Programme Interviews , linked to the production and publication of an annual Training Directory. Revise and amend structure of Employee Development Programme interviews to incorporate specific questions relating to performance appraisal.	C2	Service Improvement Service Plan
61	Provide a comprehensive Management Development Programme	Introduce a skills/needs based training programme for senior managers, establishing a formal succession planning scheme and establishing a Women's Development Programme	BV011 [a]	Service Improvement Service Plan
62	Retain Lexcel (Law Society's Accreditation Award-year 4)	Prepare a robust Section Business Plan and implement performance management and customer satisfaction processes in compliance with Law Society	C3	Legal Services Service Plan

Corporate Value: Work in partnership with others

Responsibilities:	Cllr Bob Fleming – Resources Portfolio	Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer Brian Allen – Director Of Resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
63	Focus partnership working around key ambitions, values and priorities	Implement the Service Improvement Plan arising from the Best Value Review. and develop robust control arrangements for existing and new partnerships.	TBE	Strategy & Regeneration Service Plan
64	Ensure that the Council actively participates in and is effectively represented on regional , sub-regional and local partnerships	Attend and participate in appropriate forums and support elected members in their work on such partnerships	N/A	Strategy & Regeneration Service Plan

Corporate Value: **Be responsible with and accountable for public finances**

Responsibilities:	Cllr Bob Fleming – Resources Portfolio	Brian Allen – Director Of Resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
65	Ensure that the Council has robust and effective corporate and financial governance arrangements in place	<p>Prepare the Annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with statutory deadlines and obtaining an unqualified auditor judgement - ensuring closedown procedures and processes are robust and effectively managed</p> <p>Ensure systems of internal control and procedures are robust and minimise the risk of fraud and error by maintaining a risk based Annual Audit Plan and reporting progress against this to Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Ensure effective budget setting and monitoring</p> <p>Maximise investment income and resources available for the benefit of local taxpayers in accordance with the Local Code of Treasury Management</p>	N/A	Financial Services Service Plan
66	Provide effective Asset Management to maximise the useful life and return on investment for the Councils Property Portfolio	Preparing a robust Asset Management Plan and undertaking effective planned maintenance to maintain the Council's assets and maximise revenue income. Effective project management of capital projects.	C4 C5 C6	Valuation & Corporate Property Services Service Plan

Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
67	Ensure that all external funding is aligned to corporate ambitions	<p>Co-ordinate, support and evaluate all applications for external funding in support of key services improvements</p> <p>Manage and administer regeneration programmes and projects across the Borough</p> <p>Maximise performance reward grant payable to Council under LPSA1 in respect of the basket of Cost-Efficiency Indicators</p>	N/A TBE	Financial Services Service Plan
68	Pay Invoices on time	Co-ordinating and managing the payment of Invoices by each department via the Accounts Payable Working Group through the use of statistical data and training and development	BV008	Financial Services Service Plan
69	Reduce the levels (and cost) of sickness absence	<p>Target long term sickness and the two major causes of sickness absence (muscular skeletal and stress) through a package of Occupational Health measures and Health and Safety training and development</p> <p>Implement an Occupational Health Strategy</p>	BV012	Service Improvement Service Plan All Service Plans
70	Identify year on year cost-efficiency savings from the procurement of goods, services and works	<p>Review contract procedure rules</p> <p>Implement I&DeA Market Place (linked to data obtainable from the New Agresso Financial Management System)</p> <p>Develop NEPO Partnership</p>	C7	Service Improvement Service Plan
71	Maximise Income Collection and secure year on year improvements in the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates	<p>Monitor performance and continuously review recovery procedures and processes.</p> <p>Provide a range of convenient payment opportunities.</p>	BV009 BV010 TBE	Financial Services Service Plan

Corporate Value: Achieve continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery

Responsibilities:	Cllr David Newell – Performance Management Portfolio	Brian Allen – Director Of Resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
72	Increase learning from and use of customer feedback from complaints	Implement effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms and increase opportunity to comment on services or service delivery	BVPI 04 C1	Service Improvement Service Plan
73	Align service improvement planning to corporate ambitions and values in line with best practice	Improve performance management arrangements and skills, through revised service business planning arrangements aligned to the Corporate Plan Implement a best value review programme aligned to corporate priorities and based on Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry	N/A	Service Improvement Service Plan
74	Maximising the benefits of new technologies	Investing in ICT and support and provide an up to date, secure and reliable network	TBE	ICT Service Plan

Community Outcome: **Tackle disadvantage and promote social inclusion**

Responsibilities:	Cllr Agnes Armstrong – Supporting People Portfolio Cllr John Robinson – Culture and Recreation Portfolio Cllr Kester Noble – Regeneration Portfolio	Norman Vaulks – Chief Executive Officer Brian Allen – Director of Resources Phil Ball – Director of Leisure Services
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Actions	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
75	Effectively engage children and young people in the work of the Council	Implement the Children & Young People's Services Improvement Plan, Ensure that every child in Sedgefield Borough has access to quality play opportunities by undertaking a feasibility study into fixed play requirements across the Borough Expand school holiday activities to include increased participation by children with special needs	TBE C8	Strategy & Regeneration Service Plan
76	Provide an efficient and effective customer focussed Benefits Service	Achieve Charter Mark Accreditation for the Benefits Service and establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure this standard is maintained Maximise benefits take up through a Marketing strategy and undertake regular targeted take up campaigns in partnership with the DWP and other benefits service providers Achieve top quartile performance in the processing of Benefits Claims whilst still retaining a low cost of collection	N/A BV???	Financial Services Service Plan

Corporate Values: Take account of sustainability, risk management and crime and disorder

Responsibilities:	Cllr Bob Fleming – Resources Portfolio	Brian Allen – Director Of Resources
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Action	Objective	Key Actions	Links	
			PIs	Plans
77	Embed Risk Management within the Council	Mainstream use of and reference to Risk Management Policy/Strategy, develop and implement an Action Plan, provide appropriate training to all elected members and staff and include formal risk assessment as a mandatory part of all Council strategy documents and projects/proposals	TBE	Financial Services Service Plan

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SECTION 1 - Foreword and Introduction

This is Sedgefield Borough Council's first Medium Term Financial Plan. It underpins the Council's Corporate Plan, which is aligned to, and sets out, this Council's contribution to the vision and ambitions established in the Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy and will complement the Workforce Plan.

The Medium Term Financial Plan (the Plan) establishes a framework, which will shape the Council's financial strategy and annual revenue and capital budgets (the Budget Framework) over the period 2005/06 to 2007/08. The Plan will act as an important driver for change over the medium term and sets out how available resources will be allocated between portfolios/services - reflecting Council priorities - and therefore assist in the preparation of the annual Budget Framework.

The Council has embraced the modernisation agenda and is committed to achieving continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery. The Council recognises that additional investment is required in some areas to deliver on its identified priority areas, however, it also recognises that such investment must be sustainable and affordable. The Plan also aims to give a clear indication to local Taxpayers of the likely levels of Council Taxes that the Council will levy over the next three years.

The successful delivery of the strategy set out in this Plan will be dependent not only on the resources available to the Council through Government grant settlements etc. but also on the commitment and determination of the Council to achieve efficiency savings (linked to the findings of the Gershon Review¹), continuously improve and realign resources to the priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan and set out in financial terms in this Plan.

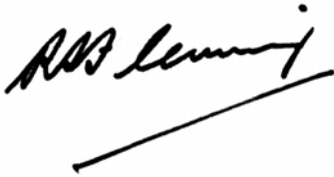
The principles underlying the development of the Plan are as follows: -

- The Plan and the forecasts contained within it will provide a clear framework/focus for the annual Revenue and Capital Budgets;
- All spending plans will continue to be challenged and reviewed to ensure that they are in accordance with identified need, Council priorities and provide Best Value;
- All members and managers are committed to the change process and resources will be realigned within and between portfolios/departments to meet the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and to support improvements in service delivery;
- Any changes to this Plan can only be made in accordance with the relevant provisions as set out in the Council's Constitution;
- External sources of funding e.g. Government grants and new partnership funding arrangements etc. will only be sought where it can be demonstrated that this contributes to Council priorities and only where a robust exit strategy exists. Efforts will be made to maximise the level of external sources of income where this criteria is met.

¹ The Gershon Efficiency Review – *“Releasing Resources to the Front Line: An Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency”*

- The resource allocations for individual portfolios/departments will be based on the indicative figures set out in this plan;
- Departmental Directors and Heads of Service will be responsible for the preparation of annual Revenue and Capital Budgets, in accordance with the requirements and timetable set out in the Revenue and Capital Programme Review Guidance Notes issued by the Accountancy Services Manager on an annual basis;
- The management of risk is a key factor in the Council's financial strategy and the Plan includes a corporate/overall risk assessment. In accordance with the Council's Risk Management Policy/Strategy, future annual revenue and capital budgets will also be supported by formal risk assessments;
- All additional spending requirements will only be included within the Plan if an appropriate funding basis has been identified and agreed;
- Monitoring of the implementation and achievement of the Plan will be undertaken on a six monthly basis by Management team, with any significant variations being reported to Cabinet or Council as appropriate;
- The Plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Councillor R.S. Fleming (Leader of the Council)



Mr N. Vaulks (Chief Executive)



Mr B. Allen (Director of Resources)



SECTION 2 - Context Statement

Community Leadership

The Council embraces its Community Leadership role and recognises that not everything can be a priority. It acknowledges that it needs to be clear about what are its priorities and also recognises that it can never realistically have sufficient resources to deliver increased investment and achieve top quartile performance in all areas.

As explained in the Corporate Plan, the Council is committed to securing quality services for local people and all Council actions are geared towards making the Borough a more healthy, prosperous and attractive place in which to live, work or visit and a place with strong communities.

Following its first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (the authority was rated "Good" by the Audit Commission) the Council has made substantial progress in developing and aligning its corporate, financial and performance management arrangements. The Council was fundamentally restructured in December 2003 and during the summer of 2004 much work was undertaken to gather detailed baseline management information on the contribution of every service (and therefore all Council spending) to the Council's ambitions/related community outcomes and corporate values. Further detailed improvement planning workshops and seminars have resulted in a set of clear Council priorities, actions and success measures.

The Cabinet has established its priorities for investment and improvement and the Council has committed itself to an ambitious and stretching set of targets and actions. The Corporate Plan provides the focus and drive for this improvement planning by focussing effort on the main priorities guiding the Council's allocation of resources.

Key Drivers

The Council believes that it is essential to move beyond single year budget planning. Fortunately, external influences have now moved in a direction, which allows this to be undertaken with a greater degree of accuracy. Although there is no legislative requirement to develop a Medium Term Financial Plan, the following issues are driving the Authority toward developing such a plan:

- Local Government Finance Regime – The Formula Spending Share methodology improves the stability (and predictability) of the Authority's finances with only data changes and national spending totals affecting external grant levels.
- 2004 Spending Review – The Review gives a clear indication of public expenditure control totals over the next three years and, together with the published indicative council tax increases for that period, there is now increased stability, which encourages forward planning.
- Prudential Code – The Local Government Act 2003 introduced sweeping changes to the capital accounting arrangements for all local authorities. A new system, *'The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities'* (The Prudential Code) was

introduced with effect from 1 April 2004. This sets out a framework of self-regulation of capital spending, in effect allowing Councils to invest in capital projects as long as they are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Council adopted and approved a range of prudential indicators in February 2004 and a key aspect of this is the impact of capital investment decisions on the Council Tax. Inevitably, these matters need to be considered over the medium term.

- Corporate / Service Plans – The Corporate plan and supporting departmental service plans set out targets and action plans covering 3 years and therefore it is logical and prudent to plan service financing in a similar manner.
- Current system – The present system has inherent weaknesses, in that it only has a one year focus; is largely commitment driven; there are unclear links between inputs, outputs and performance; the prioritisation of expenditure/ investment is difficult; and the overall approach insufficiently robust.
- CIPFA – The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy has long since advocated the application of three year financial planning and has issued documents setting out recommended practice.
- Audit Commission – CPA focuses on medium term financial planning as a key theme and all authorities are encouraged to take a longer-term view in managing their finances and planning service delivery. Provisional guidance is that the next round of CPA's will place even greater emphasis on this.

Benefits of Medium Term Financial Planning

Medium Term Financial Planning allows changing resource and service levels to be planned in a structured and measured way by forecasting resource availability and balancing this against improvement and investment needs and priorities. Significantly, the Plan sets this within a medium term financial strategy for potential Council Tax increases, which provides clear Community Leadership in terms of local taxpayer's expectations.

The Plan facilitates and identifies any reallocation of resources between services and, together with actions set out in the Corporate Plan, demonstrates how this impacts upon service delivery - to ensure that it is managed carefully.

The Plan acts as an important tool for change, monitoring and review. By reviewing, updating and publishing a rolling 3-year financial plan at each budget cycle, the Council can plan strategically for the medium term. Service development and improvement requires a co-ordinated approach to resource allocation.

It is important that senior officers and members understand the content of the plan and have an appreciation of the links between this and the Corporate Plan (set out in Appendix A). Publishing the Plan helps make all stakeholders aware of the Council's overall financial position, including the financial constraints it faces and how it is prioritising its investment to achieve its required outcomes within the broader corporate planning framework. It can therefore act as an important education tool and help spread learning and financial awareness.

SECTION 3 - Council Priorities

The Council has adopted the four aims of the Community Strategy as its own - recognising the importance of linking its future strategic objectives to those of the broader community. During last year much work was undertaken in developing the Council's corporate and strategic planning frameworks. They moved from portfolio-based arrangements to more crosscutting outcome focused aims, underpinned by a set of key community outcomes and corporate values. This framework/structure is designed to co-ordinate and improve services in the medium to long term.

The Council's overall aim is to secure Quality Services For Local People, by working towards creating a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough, with strong communities.

Sedgefield Borough – The Issues

A Healthy Borough

Our Aim : A Borough where people can lead healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities.

Key Issues

Improving health and reducing inequalities are two key priorities for Sedgefield Borough. The challenge in achieving this is highlighted by the Indices of Deprivation 2004, which identifies 24 areas within the Borough that fall within the worst 10% nationally for health-related issues.

Surveys have shown high levels of smoking, poor diet and low levels of physical activity in the Borough which all contribute to high levels of ill health, high rates of long term illness and a lower than average life expectancy for Sedgefield residents.

Even against this general picture of poor health, there is an obvious link between the various measures of deprivation such as employment and housing and health related issues, demonstrated by more acute health difficulties in the areas of highest deprivation.

Local communities have identified that access to high quality health services is also a major concern, particularly in the more rural and outlying parts of the Borough.

Enabling local people to play a key role in improving where they live and in making decisions about how services are delivered is crucial to improving the Borough and the life opportunities of its residents. It is also a central part of the Government's drive to modernise public services.

Local leadership, greater accountability and closer engagement with communities are at the heart of creating stronger, more vibrant, innovative and responsive governance and service arrangements that meet community needs

Factors affecting quality of life do not occur in isolation but are interrelated and acting on one issue often has an impact on another. Consequently the Council and its partners are working together and sharing resources to maximise their potential impact in this area.

A Prosperous Borough

Our Aim : *To create a Borough where high quality businesses can prosper and where local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer*

Key Issues

Due to the economic circumstances of the Borough it is essential that access to jobs and to learning/training opportunities be improved.

Sedgefield has a strong and proud history of manufacturing, particularly within engineering. However, these links have left the Borough's economy vulnerable to the rapid and ongoing changes in the global economy that have led to a continuing local loss of manufacturing jobs. With over 40% of local employment within this sector, it is expected the Borough's economy will continue to be adversely affected by the further reduction of its manufacturing base, which has already resulted in the loss of over 10,000 jobs in the Borough since the 1980s.

In NetPark (The North East Technology Park), the Borough will have a business site of regional, and indeed, national importance. It will be capable of attracting and growing major global innovators and research organisations involved in new and emerging technologies. The potential positive impact from this in terms of employment, local businesses and the local communities is encouraging but will require careful management to maximise the benefits to residents. This may include ...

- Ensuring an available pool of well trained and motivated labour
- Encouraging the provision of suitable infrastructure to support the creation of new jobs, such as transport links, choice of housing and access to good quality services
- Creating a development setting of the highest environmental quality

One in four people in the Borough have literacy needs and nearly one in three have numeracy needs and there is a real requirement to tackle these low levels of basic skills. The Council and its partners must build on the good work that is already being undertaken by schools, colleges and other training providers to raise attainment levels, support community learning and to widen participation to learning. It is essential that the Council works with our local colleges, universities and businesses to encourage the practice of lifelong learning, supported by a network of community learning access points.

An Attractive Borough

Our Aim : *A Borough where the natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced*

Key Issues

Sedgefield Borough is an attractive place to live and work. Primarily rural, with a mix of small industrial towns and attractive villages, it is set within plenty of open and accessible countryside. The Borough has a strong reputation for delivering on sustainability and environmental projects, and has committed a lot of resources to enhancing the built environment.

However, some areas do require attention. The internal environments of some settlements and housing areas are poor, whilst some town and village centres have struggled to maintain their roles in the light of changing shopping patterns.

Litter, dog fouling and fly tipping are consistently at the top of residents' concerns. Furthermore, the Borough faces some major challenges in improving its use of resources and its recycling rates as well as responding to issues of fuel poverty and loss of biodiversity.

The Council and its partners must continue to respond to the challenges facing the Borough's built and natural environments, and manage them through partnerships and planning in a way which respects their special qualities and distinctiveness, and recognises their importance to everyone.

Strong Communities

Our Aim : A Borough where people can access the housing and services they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods

Key Issues

Despite the difficulties resulting from the loss of the local industry communities have managed to retain a strength, pride and resilience that offers a solid foundation around which a sustainable future for the Borough can be built.

A considerable amount of work has already been undertaken, often with assistance through external regeneration funding programmes, to help rebuild communities and neighbourhoods across the Borough - but there is still a long way to go. Eighteen of the Borough's nineteen wards contain some areas recognised as being amongst the 30% most disadvantaged nationally including three areas that are within the 10% most disadvantaged. Whilst health and employment issues are prevalent right across the Borough, a key issue must be to reduce the inequalities between those areas blighted by poverty and the rest of the Borough.

The approach to tackling these issues is being developed around the principles of sustainable communities – providing decent homes in clean, safe and attractive environments.

To be successful this needs to be driven from within the communities themselves with the support of statutory agencies that will continue to develop their relationship with the community and the voluntary sector. The Council must work with these agencies to support local people in the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their communities. This will entail addressing issues such as apathy and low aspirations

Levels of crime are falling across the Borough. Joint initiatives between partners to address particular concerns have delivered results. However, efforts need to be maintained to provide reassurance to residents to prevent a disproportionate fear of crime.

Significantly, the operation of the Council's Community Force programme has been reviewed and has led the service being refocused and re-launched as a Neighbourhood Warden service in line with national best practice.

Council Actions to Address these Issues

The CPA inspectors commented that strategic and financial planning needed to be better linked/coordinated and that performance management had not been fully embedded within the Council. This was primarily due to a lack of a Corporate and Medium Term Financial Plan, but also because of a lack of clearly defined links between services and corporate (Council) objectives. This made service planning difficult to comprehend leading to a lack of focus on strategic management and a concentration on day-to-day operational management (in other words “the day job”).

During the summer of 2004 the Council re-examined its corporate objectives and priorities and an extensive baselining exercise, involving all senior managers and Cabinet, was undertaken. This process allowed the Council to develop its corporate planning framework and build capacity in terms of developing awareness and appreciation the Council’s broader strategic objectives.

The Corporate Plan has been developed following this extensive consultation and contains a detailed schedule of key actions and priorities for the Council’s services over the next three years. The priorities set out in the Corporate Plan provides the focus for this Plan in terms of the allocation of the Council’s available resources.

The Corporate Plan sets out in great detail these actions, the Councils overarching aims, supported by a set of community outcomes / corporate values, are set out in the table below:-

Corporate Aims, Community Outcomes and Values	
<p>A Healthy Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding public health <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting independent living <input type="checkbox"/> Creating leisure opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting cultural activities 	<p>A Prosperous Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting business and employment opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Maximising learning opportunities
<p>An Attractive Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring a cleaner, greener environment <input type="checkbox"/> Improving towns, villages and the countryside <input type="checkbox"/> Reducing waste and managing natural resources 	<p>A Borough with Strong Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Securing quality affordable housing <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting safer neighbourhoods <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging local communities and promoting local democracy
<p>And in doing so we will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with service users, customers and partners <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in our people [employees] <input type="checkbox"/> Work in partnership with others <input type="checkbox"/> Be responsible with and accountable for public finances <input type="checkbox"/> Achieve continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Tackle disadvantage and promote social inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Take account of sustainability, risk management and crime and disorder 	

Identified Service Based Priorities for Additional Investment

Cabinet, in consultation with Management Team, held a priority setting workshop in the summer of 2004. This workshop considered in detail service performance and progress over the last two years and the key actions and service priorities required over the next three years for all service areas. In determining the priorities for the next three years, Cabinet took account of: -

- How all services impact on existing priority areas and they were currently performing
- The level and rate of improvement that has been secured as a result of additional investment in key areas
- How that performance compares with others (national quartiles where appropriate)
- Whether these remain issues of high public concern (or had enough been done?)
- Experience, knowledge and understanding of where the Council is considered to be failing (reality and/or perception)
- Available socio-economic data and other community consultations

This led to the preparation of the key actions and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan (summarised at Appendix I) and also to the establishing of a discrete set of medium term priorities for further investment/growth (over and above inflation) over the next three years.

The following issues / services have been identified as areas for further investment over the next three years: -

Customer Care

The Council recognises that whilst it currently provides good quality customer-focussed services, it needs to continue to put the customer at the heart of its service delivery. This important area is a key issue for all Council services and functions. The Council is keen that literal application of its policies and procedures should not get in the way of good customer services.

Street Cleansing

Whilst performance in this area had improved during the last two years (on the back of additional investments in 2003/04 and 2004/05), it continues to be a high priority amongst local residents. Council spending in this area is comparatively low and satisfaction is not in the top quartile nationally. Cabinet has determined this as a priority service area warranting additional investment.

Horticulture (Grounds Maintenance)

Performance data shows that horticulture services have become more efficient and cost-effective during the last two years, with substantial efforts having been made to provide these services on a needs rather than contractual basis. Revised methods of working, including Neighbourhood Teams, are now in operation and this had led to significant improvements in some parts of the Borough. Cabinet has determined that this level of improvement now needs to be replicated across the whole of the area and therefore this as a priority service area warranting additional investment.

Waste Recycling

The Government has set a demanding target of 18% of all waste collected to be recycled or composted by 2005/2006. The Council has made considerable progress towards this and has a better infrastructure now in place - current performance is estimated to be over 12% compared to a level of 7.4% in 2002/2003. Further progress needs to be made in this area if the Government's target is to be met. Specifically, actions needed to increase participation in the Kerbit scheme and extend green waste recycling and therefore this is a priority service area warranting additional investment.

Carelink

The Councils Cabinet is keen to see this service extended as it enables elderly members of the community to remain in their own homes. Cabinet is particularly keen to market this service beyond Council house tenants and further expand into the private sector and have identified this as a priority service area that may require additional investment (which could be offset by income generation). Marketing of the services and making links to other agencies will be particularly important to achieve greater take up.

Community Safety (Neighbourhood Wardens/CCTV)

Cabinet believe that these two interrelated aspects of Community Safety can provide real and tangible returns on Council investment. Significantly, Cabinet wants to increase the overall number of Neighbourhood Wardens and target them in key areas of the Borough and also increase the number of CCTV cameras in operation – static and/or mobile. This has been identified as a key priority service area warranting additional investment, linked to the Community Safety Strategy. The need to establish more appropriate PIs/outcome measures to gauge effectiveness of this investment has been addressed via the Corporate Plan.

Regeneration Through Housing

Cabinet believes that this aspect of regeneration can be effectively resourced through the opportunities that have arisen following the recent land sales and future disposals. Real and meaningful private and social sector renewal and intervention is now entirely possible. There is already significant co-ordination in this area of work through the Corporate Capital Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal strategy; however, plans are being revisited to reflect the potential increased levels of funding.

Domestic Violence

Cabinet stress the importance of this service in reducing/tackling the problems of those suffering from the often hidden dangers of domestic violence. The Head of Neighbourhood Services is currently drafting a strategy that includes a broad range of partnership-based measures. Cabinet want this review to be broadened to examine the potential impact of increasing financial resources (capital and revenue) in this area and the outcome of this review will inform a future Cabinet decision in terms of further investment.

Regeneration – Industrial Land/Units

Cabinet is particularly keen to explore the potential benefits (in terms of local business and employment opportunities) of investing in the regeneration of land and units at Aycliffe and

Green Lane industrial estates. This is has been identified as an area for further investigation and review and which may warrant additional investment.

Equality & Diversity

This is a key priority for the Council and for the Government. However, progress has been relatively slow to date because of a lack of real resources (human and financial) to facilitate the changes/arrangements that all areas of the Council need to make. This work is currently being co-ordinated by the corporate Equality & Diversity Group attended by the Supporting People and Welfare & Communications Portfolio Holders and supported (on a limited part time basis) by the Service Improvement Team. Cabinet has determined this as a key priority service area warranting additional investment.

E-Government Priority Service Outcomes

This is a key priority area for both the Council and the Government. The Government has specified a range of Priority Service Outcomes (measurable improvements) that all authorities must achieve during 2005/2006 and work is already underway to co-ordinate activities. Cabinet has agreed that substantial capital investment is required to implement the systems and technologies to deliver the priority service outcomes and have identified this as a key priority service area warranting additional capital investment.

Youth Development

The Council has recently undertaken a Best Value Review (BVR) of its Children and Young People's Services, which has now been inspected by the Audit Commission. This review followed a relatively low CPA score in this area. Through these processes a detailed action plan has been developed and several key actions need to be progressed in the short to medium-term, therefore this has been identified as a priority service area warranting additional investment.

Non-Priority and Disinvestment Areas

Service areas not identified for additional growth/investment are important to both the Council and more importantly the local community. The exercise of prioritising investment reflects Community Leadership and provides focus for the Councils Medium Term Financial Plans. The Corporate Plan includes a wide range of key actions and improvements across all service areas – providing focus for the next three years and allowing a more sustainable and SMART approach to target and improvement planning.

In terms of disinvestments and reduced resources, Cabinet has, in light of the resources available to it, agreed that no Council services would be earmarked for any significant budget reduction during 2005/06. However, the need to drive through efficiency savings, particularly in response to the Gershon Review is fully recognised. Whilst the Council recognises that it is a high spending authority in some discretionary service areas, it also recognises the value these can add to achieving outcomes. The Council has successfully “pegged” revenue spending in leisure services in recent years by allowing the private sector to share some of the burden and risk and it wishes to continue this theme where appropriate.

In addition, a review of the Concessionary Travel Scheme, which contains some discretionary elements, has recently commenced.

SECTION 4 - Revenue Plans / Forecasts 2005/06 to 2007/08

Key Features

The Plan is a financial forecast, aligned to the strategic objectives and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan and set within overall resource availability i.e. demonstrating policy led budgeting, not finance led policy making. The Plan by its nature needs to be flexible, simple and affordable. It is updated on an annual basis to show a rolling 3-year budget position. It needs to be fair, equitable and transparent and incorporate the impact of known commitments such as inflation, debt charges, pension contributions etc., together with desired priorities for additional investment in key service areas.

Significantly, the Plan needs also to reflect the potential impact of major issues affecting the medium term future of the Council, which at Sedgefield are Local Government Review; Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the housing stock; Capital Investment (due to the significant capital receipt resources expected) and the impact of Job Evaluation. Moreover, the Plan identifies where efficiency savings will need to be achieved to deliver the required outcomes within the resources available to the Council, whilst achieving an acceptable level of Council Tax increase.

The Plan also sets out a clear policy on the use of reserves and balances, setting out the implications of decisions upon reserves and balances over the medium term.

Available Resources – Impact of the 2004 Spending Review

Since the July 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), spending limits for Government departments have been set every two years in Spending Reviews. This Plan is prepared in the context of the latest Review (the 2004 Spending Review - Stability, Security and Opportunities for All – Investing in Britain's Long Term Future), published by the Treasury in July 2004, and which sets out the Government's priorities and revised plans for 2005/06 (as detailed in the April 2004 Budget), together with spending plans for 2006/07 and 2007/08. The following table demonstrates the years covered by each spending review since July 1998: -

1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Comprehensive Spending Review – July 1998								
	Spending Review July 2000							
		Spending Review July 2002						
			Spending Review July 2004					

Following a review by Government, the formula for distributing Revenue Support Grant to local authorities was significantly amended for 2003/04 onwards. The grant distribution methodology is designed to calculate what each authority should spend to provide an equal level of service through out the Country. The terminology used for calculating this equal level of service is the Formula Spending Share (FSS), which replaced the Standard Spending

Assessment. The FSS totals published in the 2004 Spending review are set out in the following table: -

2004-05 £M	FSS Block	2005-06		2006-07		2007-08	
		Increase £M	%	Increase £M	%	Increase £M	%
26,402	Education	1,561	5.9	1,900	6.8	1,800	6.0
3,737	Children's Services	279	7.5	300	7.5	200	4.6
8,690	Adult Services	863	9.9	380	4.0	440	4.4
4,355	Police	198	4.5	215	4.7	225	4.7
1,848	Fire	50	2.7	63	3.3	74	3.8
2,004	Highways Maintenance	50	2.5	0	0	0	0
11,152	EPCS	65	5.8	389	3.5	434	3.7
2,802	Capital Financing (Incl PFI)	467	16.7	330	10.1	325	9.0
60,990	TOTAL	3,532	5.8	3,577	5.5	3,498	5.1

In calculating the amount of grant a Council is to receive, the Government take into account an assumed level of Council Tax (the Assumed National Council Tax – ANCT) that each authority will raise. This element is also calculated by the Government and does not reflect actual Council Tax raised by the Council. Set out below is a comparison of how the Government assumes Sedgefield will fund its services and how that compares with the budget framework for 2004/05: -

	Government Assumption 2004/05 £'000	Approved Budget Framework 2004/05 £'000	Difference £'000
Formula Spending Share	12,065	12,065	-
Council Tax Income	4,711	4,646*	-65
External Grant (RSG/NDR)	7,354	7,354	-
Spending Power	12,065	12,000	-65

* Gross of Collection Fund Surplus

The above table demonstrates that within the grant distribution mechanism for 2004/05 the Government assumed that this Council would raise £65,000 more than it actually did in Council Tax. If this extra funding had been raised, Band D Council Tax would have had to be £2.51 higher in 2004/05. Had this been included in the Budget Framework for 2004/05, giving a year on year increase in Council Tax of £11.55 – a 7.15% increase, compared to the actual position of £9.04 and 5.6%.

Whilst the 2004 Spending Review includes a commitment to an average real term increase (over and above inflation) of 5.5% over the three years in local government spending, this primarily follows the Government's main priorities – Education, Social Services and Health. So far as District Councils are concerned, increases will average 2.6% over this period, however, this also contains a high proportion of specific grants such as Planning Delivery Grant, Local Government Online funds etc. The Government has anticipated that council tax rises will average 5.8% in the three years to 2007/08.

The extent to which nationally assumed increases in FSS and ANCT actually translate into local increases in Government Grant depends on various national and local factors, including population change data – which makes accurate forecasting extremely difficult. Falling population figures and improved deprivation scores as a result of the steps that the Council is taking to tackle deprivation in the Borough, mean that the level of Government grant is likely to fall in the medium to longer term. However, within the context of the FSS and ANCT grant distribution process, the Government has a system of floors and ceilings that apply to individual authorities, to iron out significant shifts from year to year and ensure that all authorities receive some increase in government grant – even if this is the national minimum. The Council is expected to receive the floor increase in grant over the next three years. The following table sets out a forecast of how the Governments spending proposals might impact on this Council over the next three years in terms of likely grant income: -

2004/05 Actual £'000		2005/06 Forecast £'000	2006/07 Forecast £'000	2007/08 Forecast £'000
7,354	External Grant (RSG/NDR)	7,546	7,772	7,943
	Percentage Floor Increase	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%
	Year on Year Increase	192	196	201

Impact of the Gershon Efficiency Review

The Gershon Efficiency Review (*Releasing Resources to the Front Line : An Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency*) was also published in July 2004, coinciding with the 2004 Spending Review. The findings of the Gershon review have been factored into the FSS totals published by the Government for the next three years.

This review had been commissioned by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in August 2003 – following the 2003 Budget and was an independent review led by Sir Peter Gershon – with the scope to examine all public expenditure by Government Departments (excl benefits, national debt payments and expenditure by devolved bodies)

The report / findings have been subject to much publicity and debate. The report sets out the scope and value for efficiencies that Gershon identified within the public sector's back office, procurement, transaction services and policy-making functions. The report also identifies opportunities for increasing the productive time of professionals working in schools, hospitals and other frontline public services, and makes a series of crosscutting recommendations to further embed efficiency across the public sector. The report concludes by summarising the specific efficiency proposals that were developed with individual departments during the concluding phase of the review.

The main headline efficiency savings of the Gershon Review are as follows:-

- Efficiency targets have been set for all Government Departments – totalling £21.480 billion annually by 2007/08 (i.e. within the 2004 Spending Review Timetable)
- Areas of greatest efficiency savings agreed with Departments were Health (£6.47 bn); **Local Government (£6.45 bn)**; Education and Skills (£4.35 bn); Defence (£2.83 bn); Home Office (£1.97 bn)
- As part of the efficiency programme departments are to implement reductions in Civil Service and military posts administrative and support roles of 84,000 by April 2008 – of which 13,500 will be reallocated to front-line activities.
- A further 20,000 posts are to be relocated outside London and the South East by 2010.
- To ensure that the efficiencies are achieved, Ministers and officials will be accountable and report annually on progress towards these targets – supported by an external efficiency team reporting direct to the Prime Minister and Chancellor

The Government is expecting (and has factored this into their proposals in terms of FSS/ANCT and likely grant settlements) that Local Government will secure 2.5% of efficiency savings (worth £6.45bn) of their overall budget over the three years.

Building on this, the ODPM has announced that this figure should include the following savings:-

- £79m for "transitional services", which cover money collected from or administered to the local electorate
- £825m from the purchasing goods and services budget
- £150m from money spent on corporate services.
- £90m from changes in the way staff are deployed to deliver services
- £130m to be saved on social housing budgets and £105m on fire service funds

These specific targets make up around a quarter of the overall savings Councils will need to recover to transfer across for frontline service delivery if they are to achieve the 2.5% saving target over the next three years. The efficiency savings anticipated/expected by Government are extremely ambitious and will have a far-reaching impact on local government if council tax is not to soar and/or services cut.

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the Housing Stock

The Council has completed its stock options appraisal in accordance with ODPM criteria and guidance and determined that, whilst it could achieve the Governments Decent Homes standards by 2010, it cannot meet the aspirational wishes of its tenants in respect of modernisation programmes to the housing stock. The Council has therefore decided, subject to a positive tenant ballot (to be held in Spring 2005) that it will transfer its stock to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). Following a detailed selection process the Sunderland

Housing Group has been approved as the preferred landlord. The Council has established a team of officers to work with colleagues from the Sunderland Housing Group (SHG) on the detail of what will transfer and valuations etc. and if the tenants vote in favour of the transfer then this would take place during the latter half of 2005/06. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) would be closed no later than March 2007. Work on the transfer, including explaining the implications to tenants will start in earnest from November 2004 onwards.

In preparation for this, and as part of the Corporate restructure in December 2003, the Council amalgamated all landlord functions under a stand-alone single Housing Department. Previously, responsibility for these housing services had been spread across three departments. All employees in the new Housing department would transfer to the new RSL, under Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations.

There will be a number of full time support staff (payroll, ICT, accountancy, audit, legal, democratic services, human resources etc.) that work outside of the housing department supporting the HRA "landlord" activities and for which a proportion of their time (and cost) is currently recharged to the HRA. The costs would fall back onto the General Fund if the equivalent number of support staff did not transfer also.

In addition, there are a range of other service costs (e.g. democratic representation, added years pension costs, cash office collection arrangements, contribution to the Advice and Information Service, Inform etc.) that are currently recharged to the HRA and which will fall back on the General Fund. The agency agreement with Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL), for the billing and collection of water rates from all Council tenants, is another area that will be subject to detailed negotiations with the SHG.

On the other hand, the General Fund will benefit from any accrued reserves or balances on the HRA at the date of transfer, when it is formally closed a year later. Reserves to the value of approximately £3 million, which currently generate £147,000 investment income for the HRA, will be available to mitigate any residual costs to the General Fund following transfer.

As a consequence of transferring the housing stock all associated HRA loan debt will be repaid from the proceeds of the transfer. Based on the current Tenanted Market Value of the Councils housing stock, the Council can expect to receive, after meeting any set up costs and the transfer levy, approximately £20million. 75% of this will need to be set aside for the repayment of debt. In simple terms, the Council would be able to repay (including any premiums) loans to the value of approximately £15million from the LSVT capital receipts. The estimated value of HRA loan debt is £8.4million and if redeemed early, this would attract a premium of approximately 21% of the principal sum outstanding, based on interest rates in October 2004.

This Plan assumes that all HRA loans are repaid (including premiums) from the set aside receipts arising out of the stock transfer, however, no further premature redemptions have been assumed at this stage. In terms of external interest payments, any reduction from further debt rescheduling will be considered against the loss of investment income. The timing of any premature repayments and rescheduling of the Council debt portfolio will need to be carefully managed, in consultation with external consultants advice, to take advantage when the interest rates are at their optimum level.

The full impact on the General Fund revenue account cannot be determined at the current time and negotiations with the SHG are ongoing in terms of what will and will not transfer following a successful ballot.

The residual costs of funding any non-transferring support staff and other costs that would potentially fall back to the General Fund post transfer have been assumed to be funded from a combination of the HRA reserves transferred and from policy decisions/ efficiency savings in terms of future commitments.

Treasury Management Activities – Investment Income Forecast

The Council is set to receive major capital receipts totalling around £15M in respect of housing land sales in 2004/05, representing a very substantial increase on previous site values, reflecting the recent upsurge in the housing market generally. There is also the prospect of further significant receipts from land sales in the next two to three years (See Appendix C). In addition, very buoyant Right to Buy sales and the prospect of significant receipts following a successful LSVT will mean that very substantial capital receipts could be available in the medium term. The use of these resources in the medium term and the impact on Capital Programmes is set out in Section 5 of this Plan (pages 26 to 30).

The increase in capital receipts over the last two years has meant that the Councils level of external investments have grown substantially, with the prospect of still further substantial increases over the next three years. This presents the Council with a significant opportunity to make positive interventions in terms of its priority areas, through proactive community regeneration schemes etc. These resources will result in significant increases in the Councils investment portfolio and the interest earned on this will allow the Council to invest in its revenue services, to deliver on its priority services for increased investment within the life of this Plan. The portfolio based plans for the application of these additional resources are set out in Section 6 (pages 31 to 46).

Council adopted a Local Code of Practice for Treasury Management Activities (the Local Code) in December 2002. This takes into account recommendations made by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in the Code of Practice 'Treasury Management in Public Services', which encouraged local authorities to put into place formal policies and practices, strategies and reporting arrangements for the effective management and control of Treasury Management activities. Included within this is the requirement to produce an annual Treasury Management Strategy in advance of the commencement of the year and report on performance against this in an Annual Report to Cabinet by 30 September the following financial year.

All Treasury Management activities are undertaken within the procedures set out in the Local Code and the Council employs external Treasury Management Consultants, to advise on its Treasury Strategy and provide economic data and interest rate forecasts to assist in planning and reducing the impact of unforeseen adverse interest rate movements.

The Local Government Act 2003 introduced sweeping changes to the capital accounting arrangements for all local authorities. A new system, '*The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities*' (The Prudential Code) was introduced with effect from 1 April 2004. The Prudential Code sets out a framework of self-regulation of capital spending, in effect allowing Councils to invest in capital projects as long as they are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Council complies with the Prudential Code and Council adopted and approved a number

of prudential indicators in February 2004 - as part of the 2004/05 Treasury Management Strategy. The Council does not plan to undertake any Prudential borrowing at this stage and this Plan is prepared on the basis that capital expenditure is financed from capital receipts, therefore no additional external interest payments have been factored in. The position in terms of future prudential borrowing will be reviewed during 2005/06 and factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09 as appropriate.

As a result of the changes introduced as part of the Prudential Framework and in light of the need to revisit the Treasury Management Strategy taking into account the significant capital receipts expected over the next three years, the Council is currently in the process of reviewing its approved Strategy. The review is addressing the issues of maximum investment periods and authorised limits with individual counter parties, the range and potential use of instruments available, and the performance of all three existing Money Brokers. A report on the outcome of this review, together with an amended Local Code and Treasury Management Strategy, will be presented to Cabinet and Council in January 2005.

Forecasting movements in interest rates and cash flow is not easy and therefore preparing detailed / accurate budgets over a three year period is extremely difficult. In terms of developing this Plan, account has been taken of expected interest rate movements at the date of preparing the draft Plan (October 2004) and expected capital receipts from land sales. These receipts are based on projected receipts at current market rates. Any significant changes in market rates, which are linked to base rate changes and market confidence – both nationally and internationally, or a fall/slump in land values may significantly affect these projections. These assumptions will need to be carefully and regularly reviewed before being factored into the annual Budget Framework.

The following table sets out likely investment income, linked to the capital programme allocations / receipt income set out in Section 5 and anticipates that LSVT takes place: -

2004-05 Actual £'000		2005-06 Forecast £'000	2006-07 Forecast £'000	2007-08 Forecast £'000
13,887	Actual/ Estimated Investments at 1 April	26,529	47,599	54,039
17,532	Capital Receipt Income	39,224	15,580	2,357
-4,890	Used to Finance Capital Expenditure	-7,990	-9,140	-9,140
0	Used to Repay Debt	-10,164	0	0
26,529	Estimated Investments at 31 March	47,599	54,039	47,256
N/a	Assumed Average Rate of Interest	4.9%	4.7%	4.5%
900	Estimated Investment Income*	1,396	2,171	2,247
170	Recharged to HRA (Item 8 Credit)	180	N/a	N/a
730	General Fund Investment Income	1,216	2,171	2,247
400	Investment Income in 2005/04 Base Budget (Based on £10M @ 4%)	400	400	400
330	Additional General Fund Income over 2004/05 Base Position	816	1,771	1,847

* For the purposes of medium term forecasts it has been assumed that capital receipts are not received until the last quarter, whilst capital expenditure is assumed to be uniform throughout the year. This approach to forecasting the average levels of investments is considered to be the most prudent. Average interest rate forecasts are subject to

fluctuations in base rates and market confidence, however, the annual review of this Plan will ensure that forecasts are on the basis of market expectations at that time.

Council Tax Levels

The proceeds from LSVT, and the other significant capital receipts over the next few years, offer the Council an unprecedented opportunity to achieve step change and improvement in the quality of life for people within the Borough through a range of regeneration led positive interventions. Additionally and significantly, the impact that this has on revenue budgets in the medium term (in terms of investment income) means that the Council can be much more certain and clear as to what taxpayers in the Borough can expect in terms of Council Tax increases over the medium term.

Traditionally, the Council has (like most other authorities) not been able to plan effectively for the medium term, due to annual changes in external grant, together with unavoidable and disproportionate impacts (in recent years) of pension fund increases, insurance premiums etc. However, given the resources that can now be expected/forecast the opportunity exists for additional resources to be invested in the Councils identified priorities.

The Councils Cabinet is keen to provide strong community leadership and give local people a clear indication of the Borough Council's Council Tax over the next three years, identify where any additional investment will be made and what this will achieve.

Cabinet is keen to implement Council Tax increases of no more than 3% year on year over the period 2005/06 to 2007/08 – broadly in line with wage inflation. In determining the impact of applying these increases in terms of additional revenue this would generate, variations in the Council Tax base and collection rates need to be considered. The forecast is that the Council Tax base will increase by approximately 1% year on year over this period, which, when applied to a 3% Council tax increase, yields a 4.03% increase in revenue, as set out in the table below: -

2004-05 Actual £		2005-06 Forecast £	2006-07 Forecast £	2007-08 Forecast £
25,888	Council Tax Base	26,147	26,408	26,672
170.44	SBC Band D Council Tax	175.55	180.82	186.24
4,412,479	Estimated Council Tax Income	4,590,106	4,775,095	4,967,393
N/a	Year on Year Increase in resources	177,627	184,989	192,298
N/a	Year on Year % Increase in resources	4.03%	4.03%	4.03%

In summary, a 1% increase on the Band D Council Tax equates to approximately £60,000 additional income in the year.

Collection Fund Surpluses

The Council's tax base has been rising by approximately 1% per annum over the last few years; this is expected to continue and has been factored into future Council tax income projections (as above). However, this tax base is the "adjusted" figure and represents 98% of the actual base that applies in that year. The adjustment is made to reflect in year non-

payment. Through this prudent approach to tax base assumptions, together with prudent application of bad debt provisions, the Council's Collection Fund is anticipated to maintain year on year surpluses. These surpluses are used to offset year on year Council Tax increases and this Plan assumes that £250K will be available in 2005/06 and £200K per annum in the following two years.

Grant Funded Initiatives

The 2004/05 Budget Framework includes a number of initiatives / posts funded from external grant e.g. SRB, NRF, SureStart, I.E.G. These funds are time limited, however, clear exit strategies have been established to mainstream activities where appropriate. The known impact of mainstreaming activities has been factored into future projections, however, issues such as the future continuation of SureStart has still to be finalised and therefore the annual review / update of the Plan will need to give careful consideration of exit strategy commitments.

Local Public Service Agreement

The Governments' national target is for all local authorities to achieve continuous improvement in the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local services through annual improvements of at least 2%. Local Public Service Agreements are an agreement between a County / Unitary Council (plus its partners) and the Government that focuses on achieving stretched improvement in key service areas over a three-year period. The key service areas in the first generation LPSA's had to reflect national priorities and were primarily linked to education issues and therefore the County Council's services, although the Durham Districts were involved in two of the targets – recycling and cost/efficiency.

Given the national target, the Government would expect performance improvements over the period of the LPSA such that the 2004/2005 performances measured 106% of the performance in 2001/2002. The stretched targets in LPSA 1 are to achieve a minimum performance improvement measuring of 106.8% over the base year. If this improvement is secured, the Council will qualify for a performance reward grant payment. The grant is payable on a sliding scale up to 108%, performance at 108% or above will mean the Council will qualify for its full share of the grant.

Through the first generation LPSA, the "Kerbit" green box recycling scheme was implemented throughout the Borough in 2004/05 and the Councils own recycling performance (which has increased from 6.07% in 2001/02 to 12.00% in 2003/04) is contributing towards a Countywide stretched target of 17% this year. Latest indications are that this target will be achieved and performance reward grant will be secured, however, the majority of this will go to the Country Council, who invested heavily in the waste-handling infrastructure to achieve this. For the purposes of the LPSA, the cost efficiency indicators are tracked across a broad and representative range of performance indicators over a period of three years (2002/2003 to 2004/2005). Performance in 2001/2002 was the baseline measure (scoring 100) and improvements in performance are measured against this.

Appendix F shows the Councils LPSA cost efficiency basket of indicators together with current performance and the improvement index over the 2001/2002 base year. An index improvement score of 1.08 or above shows that the current performance is in line to maximise the potential performance reward grant. As can be seen, many of the indicators have seen significant improvements over the last two years and have already far outstripped the

2004/2005 stretched targets. There are however, a small number of indicators where performance has deteriorated quite significantly over the last two years.

Using the LPSA computer model for measuring performance and based on performance in 2003/04, the overall performance index improvement is 1.114 to date. If performance in 2004/2005 across these indicators improves and/or does not deteriorate below 1.08, then the Council will qualify for its full share of the performance reward grant.

Performance reward grant amounting to £268,075 will be available if the stretched cost-efficiency improvement targets in the LPSA are met. 50% will be payable in 2005/2006 and 50% in 2006/2007 and this must be used 50/50 for revenue and capital purposes in both those years. There are no restrictions on what this grant can be used for, although there is an expectation that this would be used for further performance improvement purposes. In terms of this Plan, the performance Reward Grant from LPSA 1 has not been factored into future resources as these payments are one off and will be used for specific performance improvement initiative within that year. Further details on the use of these resources will be included in the annual Budget Framework for 2005/06 and 2006/07.

Year on Year Inflation

The Council faces unavoidable inflationary pressures, which are in excess of and do not directly relate to retail price index headline figures. This can and does cause significant problems when explaining / accounting for Council Tax increases on an annual basis. Being essentially a service provider, approximately 80% of the Council's gross expenditure is employee related. The recent pay award (covering the period 2004/05 to 2006/07) provides a solid foundation on which to forecast expected gross pay expenditure over the medium term.

The Council's contribution to the Durham County pension fund has increased significantly in recent years – the employer's contribution rate for 2004/05 is 295% of the employee's rate of 6% (therefore approximately 18% of an employee's gross pay). This means that for every £1 contribution made by each member of the scheme, the Council (and therefore the local taxpayer) contributes £2.95 currently. The existing rates were established following the last actuarial revaluation of the fund (in 2001), which revealed that the Durham County Pension Fund was only 83% funded.

The Pension Fund is reviewed every three years and whilst the current revaluation has yet to be completed/reported, initial feedback from the actuary is that the funding level has fallen further and that it is currently only approximately 65% funded. Whilst this will inevitably lead to further increases in the employer's contribution rate, actuaries are being encouraged to take a longer-term view to bringing the Funds back to solvency. A period of 20-25 years has been anticipated and on the basis of this, together with the application of localised mortality rate assumptions, indications are that the Council can expect its current 18% contribution rate increased by 1.5% per annum over the next three years.

Inflationary increases are only built into budgets where that price increase cannot be avoided i.e. for employee related expenditure, insurances and utilities. Stationery and materials, books and publications etc. do not receive any inflationary increases year on year.

Forecasting (on an incremental budgeting basis) shows that inflation, including the impact of pay awards, pension fund increases, insurances and utilities, will require the Council to find

additional resources of approximately £2.1 million over the life of this Plan just to meet a stand still position.

Unavoidable Spending Commitments

As explained earlier in this Plan (Section 3, pages 6 to 12), the Council has clearly established (through the Corporate Plan) its priorities over the next three years. A summary of the Key actions, anchored by corporate ambitions, community outcomes and corporate values is appended to this Plan. Furthermore, additional investment / growth (over and above normal inflation) has been targeted over that period, in line with resources available to the Council and further details of how and where this additional investment will be made, together the outcome measures / improvements that this will generate are set out in Section 6 of this Plan (pages 31 to 46).

Following the transfer of rent rebates from the HRA to the General Fund in 2004/05, the cost of unsubsidised rent rebates is no longer a charge to the HRA, but instead is to be met from the General Fund. As this had an adverse impact on the General Fund, additional grant was awarded in 2004/05 and transitional arrangements, covering a two-year period, were introduced to allow Council's to phase in the full impact on the General Fund. Consequently, support from the HRA towards the net cost of rent rebates will fall by £265,000 in 2005/06 and a further £104,000 in 2006/07 as this is fully phased out.

Job Evaluation

The Council has made significant progress in the last year in agreeing and implementing single status agreements with its former "blue collar" workforce. The costs of these agreements have been factored into base budget assumptions. In addition, the Council is also working towards implementing Job Evaluation across the Council. Initially employing a series of job analysts on fixed contracts, turnover has meant that progress has not been as quick as first anticipated. However, renewed focus provided by the restructure and the appointment of an external consultant in August 2004 has led to significant progress being achieved in recent months. A separate job evaluation process covering all Chief Officers and Heads of Service has been completed and implemented with effect from 1 August 2004.

The process of undertaking Job Evaluations for all other employees is being co-ordinated via a Steering Group of senior officers and Trade Union representatives. It is anticipated that all job evaluation interviews will be completed by 31 December 2004 and the process of developing the pay-line has already commenced. During the period January to March appeals will be heard and negotiations on the pay line will be concluded with the Trade Union representatives. It is anticipated that the process will be completed by 31 March 2005.

Initially it was anticipated that the costs of job evaluation would be broadly cost neutral, however, experience elsewhere has shown that job evaluation (generally) leads to increased costs i.e. generally more salaries go up than go down and protection arrangements need to phase in any salary reductions. It is not known what the implementation of job evaluation will cost the Council at this moment in time, however, a clearer picture will be known when this Plan is reviewed in advance of its publication in June 2005. The full impact of job evaluation will need to be built into future budget frameworks, however, the implementation costs in terms of protection and regradings will need to be phased in and there may need to be some contribution from reserves in the short-term.

Medium Term - General Fund Resource Forecast

The medium term forecast in terms of General fund resources places the Council in an enviable and strong financial position, albeit that there are a number of uncertainties at this moment in time. The forecasts have factored in the known impacts of the withdrawal of HRA support to rent rebates, which is expected to cost £369K over the next two years. In addition, the significant impact of pension fund increases on the Council can be absorbed from within these resources without having a significant detrimental impact on the taxpayer, either through high council tax increases and/or cuts in service provision.

The Council's Cabinet has identified priorities for additional investment and improvement and the Council Tax increases it wants to levy over the next three years. Taking into account all known factors and based on the assumptions set out above it would appear that additional revenue resources to the sum of £788,000 will be available over the next three years. This will help meet these priorities and the costs of Job Evaluation, however, efficiency savings will also need to be generated over and above those required to offset the use of the Budget Support Fund.

The following table sets out the revenue resources forecasts for the General Fund over the period 2005/06 to 2007/08: -

2004-05 Actual £M		2005-06 Forecast £M	2006-07 Forecast £M	2007-08 Forecast £M
12.300	Base Budget Requirement	12.300	13.707	14.707
N/a	Year on Year Inflation	0.650	0.700	0.750
N/a	Unavoidable Spending Commitments	0.265	0.104	Nil
N/a	Efficiency Savings Target	Nil	-0.100	-0.200
12.300	Forecast Budget Requirement	13.215	14.411	15.257
7.354	Government Grant (RSG/NDR)	7.546	7.772	7.943
4.412	Council Tax Income	4.590	4.775	4.967
234	Collection Surplus	0.250	0.200	0.200
300	Use of Balances (Budget Support Fund)	0.505	0.189	0.300
N/a	Additional Investment Income	0.816	1.771	1.847
12.300	Total Resources	13.707	14.707	15.257
N/a	Surplus Resources (Investment in Priorities & Offset Job Evaluation)	0.492	0.296	Nil
		Additional Resources over Lifespan of MTFP = £788K		

Balances and Reserves

The Council's General Fund is in a relatively healthy position and at the 1 April 2004 overall balances amounted to £6.561m, of this, £4.221m has been earmarked for specific purposes, e.g. self-insurance, asset management etc., leaving a non-earmarked balance of £2.340m. An earmarked budget support fund has been used to support additional investment in General Fund services. Efficiency savings over the life of this Plan will need to offset this requirement and targets of £100K and £200K in 2006/07 and 2007/08 respectively have been established. In addition, efficiency savings totalling £300K will need to be achieved as the budget support

fund falls out in 2008/09 if expenditure levels and low Council Tax increases are to be maintained.

The Councils medium term strategy is to maintain a General Fund (non-earmarked) reserve of at least £2m.

As explained above, any reserves or balances on the HRA at the date of transfer will revert to the General Fund after the HRA is formally closed. Reserves to the value of approximately £3m are anticipated on the HRA at transfer, which will be utilised to meet residual pressures on the General Fund following LSVT. For the purposes of this 3-year Plan, the reserve is expected to be fully utilised in this manner.

A detailed forecast of reserves and balances is included at Appendix D, and this demonstrates that the Council is expected to have overall balances of £4m at 31 March 2008, consisting of earmarked funds of £1.660m and a general reserve of £2.340m.

SECTION 5 - Capital Plans / Forecasts 2005/06 to 2007/08

Resources to support the Council's various capital programmes come from a variety of sources. Government grants (principally and currently the Major Repairs Allowance to fund housing improvements) and supported borrowing approvals (principally for private sector renewals), alongside contributions from other parties (lottery, Single Regeneration Budgets etc.) represent resources received from external sources. The balance of capital spending falls to be financed from the Council's own resources, which arise principally from the sale of Council assets.

As explained in Section 4 of this Plan, the Council is set to receive major capital receipts totalling around £15M in respect of housing land sales in 2004/05, representing a very substantial increase on previous site values, reflecting the upsurge in the housing market generally. There is also the prospect of further significant receipts from land sales in the next two to three years (See Appendix C). In addition, very buoyant Right to Buy sales and the prospect of significant receipts following a successful LSVT will mean that very substantial capital receipts could be available in the medium term.

Capital Receipts

The rules governing the use of capital receipts were changed significantly from 1 April 2004. Prior to that date a proportion of the various types of receipt could be used locally and the remainder had to be used to reduce loan debt: -

Type of Receipt	Use Locally	Reduce Loan Debt
<i>General Fund</i>	100%	-
<i>Housing Land</i>	50%	50%
<i>Right to Buy</i>	25%	75%

From 1 April 2004, whilst the percentage splits remain the same, instead of the above proportions being set aside to reduce loan debt, these elements were to be paid over to the Government, with one exception:-

Receipts derived from the Tenanted Market Value (TMV) under Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) will, after meeting transfer and levy costs, continue to be split 25% to be used locally and 75% to be set aside to reduce loan debt.

The new rule of making payments direct to the Government applies rigidly to Right to Buy (RTB) receipts but, in the case of housing land, the Council had the opportunity to retain the full amount if it resolved to spend these receipts either on the provision of 'affordable housing':

—
"the provision of dwellings to meet the housing needs, as identified by the local authority, of persons on low incomes, whether provided by the local authority or a registered local landlord ..."

or 'regeneration': —

"any project for the carrying out of works or activities on any land where —

- *the land, or a building on the land, is vacant, unused, under-used, ineffectively used, contaminated or derelict; and*
- *the works or activities are carried out in order to secure that the land or the building will be brought into effective use.”*

The Government therefore is allowing local authorities the opportunity to retain and use all capital receipts locally, other than RTB and LSVT receipts, providing they are spent on priority outcomes. In response to this the Council has decided to take advantage of these new rules and has resolved to use all receipts from the disposal of housing land to be applied to affordable housing and regeneration

In taking this forward, an Affordable Housing and Regeneration expenditure statement has been developed and approved by Cabinet, identifying a range of interventions that will enhance the Council's ability to promote the well being of the Borough and its communities, and delivery of its agreed priority aims and required outcomes. A summary of the potential interventions planned over the next three years is set out in Section 6.

Appendix C shows that the Council could have £36.618m of unapplied capital receipts at 31 March 2008 to finance programmes beyond 2007/08.

Supported Capital Expenditure

Credit Approvals ceased to exist from April 2004 when the Local Government Act 2003 introduced a new Prudential Framework for Capital Finance. Government support for capital expenditure is now described as Supported Capital Expenditure (SCE).

Previously, credit approvals from Central Government set a limit to the amount of local authority borrowing that could be used to finance capital investment. Under the new system, a local authority is free to determine its own level of borrowing, as long as it is affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Council has adopted and monitors a range of prudential indicators that measure this, in accordance with the requirements of the Code. However, Central Government still continues to provide some support for the costs of borrowing through revenue support grant, but only for a specified amount of expenditure.

The Council has been awarded supported borrowing of £655K and £600K in 2004/05 and 2005/06 respectively. Most of this support relates to investment in the Council's housing stock and achievement of the decent homes standard. Around £180K in each year relates to spending on disabled facilities grants. Following the LSVT, only the residual allocation for spending on disabled facilities grants will be received and this has been factored into the medium term forecasts.

In recent years, the Council has been able to generate enough of its own resources, which come mainly from capital receipts, to sustain its capital investments and this is forecast to continue as a result of the major capital receipts expected over the next three years. It is not anticipated therefore that the Council will need to consider any borrowing under the Prudential Code during the period of this plan.

Capital Grants / Contributions

The Council has been very successful in securing grants from external sources (lottery, Europe, SRB, NRF, Single Pot etc.) to help fund its capital investments in recent years. The Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) is the most significant recurring grant that the Council receives and this is used to support investment in the Council's housing stock to achieve the decent homes standard.

Following the LSVT, the Council will no longer receive the MRA, consequently in 2006/07 and beyond this element falls out of the medium term forecast. Whilst the assumption has been made that the MRA will continue to be used to support capital expenditure in 2005/06, the opportunity exists to use this for debt redemption/rescheduling next year. If this is applied to debt rescheduling then this amount would need to be found from balances in order to sustain the 2005/06 HRA capital programme. Careful consideration will need to be given to the opportunities for debt rescheduling as the transfer draws closer, in accordance with advice and guidance that will be received from the Councils external treasury management consultants.

In support of the Government's targets to achieve improvements in access/electronic service delivery, a further grant of £150K (Implementing e-Government Grant – IEG) is expected in 2005/06, however, no additional funding beyond this has been assumed. An ongoing grant of £180K has been assumed in the medium term to represent the Government's contribution towards spending on disabled facilities grants.

No other grants or contributions have been assumed at this stage, although it is recognised that external grants will no doubt be secured e.g. lottery funds, SRB, Single Pot etc. to supplement the Councils investments. The total level of capital spending will no doubt be significantly enhanced when external grants are confirmed and a more robust estimate will be provided once the CP1/ capital appraisal process, which includes 3 year estimates this year, is concluded.

V.A.T. – Impact of Capital Expenditure on Partial Exemption

Under Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994, the Council can recover 100% of its input tax, including expenditure incurred on exempt activities, providing the value of the exempt related input tax does not exceed more than 5% of the total value of input tax recovered. This threshold is called the partial exemption limit and if exceeded, the full value of exempt input tax has to be repaid to HM Customs and Excise. The 5% de minimis limit is approximately £110K.

The Council manages its VAT position very carefully, and utilises tools such as opting to tax new projects to ensure that it does not exceed its partial exemption limit. With the transfer of the Housing Stock and the consequent significant investment in regeneration schemes, extra care will need to be taken to ensure that capital expenditure is appropriately VAT managed during the life of this Plan. The Council is expected to keep within its de minimis limit over the next three years and therefore no provision has been made to repay any exempt input tax that may be recovered during the next three years to HM Customs and Excise.

Capital Appraisal / CP1 Process

The CPA Inspectors commended the Council's approach to capital evaluation; however, the process and assessment criteria (including Capital Programme Form and Evaluation Scheme) were substantially revised and improved during the early part of 2004/05. The process reflects the Council's maturing approach to corporate and medium term financial planning, through a more cohesive strategic planning framework, ensuring that capital investment decisions are made in light of the schemes contributions to community outcomes and corporate values. The measurable impacts that a potential scheme would have are clearly set out in advance of the Council committing resources to that project.

The Council's Corporate Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan (which dictates how significant elements of the Council's capital resources must be spent) set the framework for developing and evaluating capital projects over a **three year period** (reviewed and agreed on an annual basis) - through the preparation of detailed bids (CP1's) and the Working Group / Management Team / Cabinet process. This process complements the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the resources identified in this Plan.

In determining the allocation of resources, Management Team / Cabinet adhere to the following key principles:

- Resources will be directed towards achieving the Council's vision and priorities and asset management plan requirements.
- All potential sources of external grant funding will be explored in resourcing those priorities.
- Impact on revenue budgets.
- Prospects for efficiency savings.
- Alternative approaches to procurement such as partnering will be considered.

Indicative Capital Programmes 2005/06 to 2007/08

The Capital appraisal / CP1 process outlined above ensures that capital programmes/ individual schemes are developed in line with key priorities and for a rolling three years. It also ensures that core "asset management" requirements are factored in, through "top slicing" allocations between portfolio areas. The following table, based on priorities and resources availability set out in this Plan, identifies the projected capital programmes over the next three years: -

2004/05 Estimated Outturn £'000		2005/06 Forecast £'000	2006/07 Forecast £'000	2007/08 Forecast £'000
7,700	Housing Revenue Account	6,500	-	-
	General Fund :			
890	Private Sector Housing	850	850	850
950	ICT	1,000	900	800
180	Office Accomodation	200	200	200
620	Culture and Recreation	500	500	600
40	Environment	50	50	50
2,150	Regeneration	5,500	6,500	6,500
33	Community Safety	50	50	50
20	Supporting People	50	50	50
167	Contingency	300	400	400
12,750		15,000	9,500	9,500
Financed By: -				
655	Supported Capital Expenditure	600	180	180
5,455	Capital Grants / Contributions	5,132	180	180
4,890	Capital Receipts	7,787	9,140	9,140
1,750	Revenue Contributions (HRA)	1,278	-	-
-	Balances (Private Sector Hsg)	203	-	-
12,750		15,000	9,500	9,500

NB: The control totals above are net of any external grants that may be secured e.g. lottery funds, SRB, Single Pot etc. The total level of capital spending will no doubt be significantly enhanced when external grants are confirmed.

SECTION 6 – Additional Investment Plans 2005/06 to 2007/08

This Plan is a working draft and reflects the developmental stage the Council finds itself in at 31 October 2004. The forecast of resources shows that approximately £788K will be available in the General Fund over the next three years to fund additional investment in priority service areas and offset the costs of Job Evaluation.

Following the Cabinet / Management Team priority setting workshop, Departmental Directors and Heads of Service were tasked with developing proposals to address Cabinet concerns and desire to see additional investment / improvement in the services they identified.

This section of the Plan contains the provisional proposals put forward by the relevant departments. It does not indicate actual additional investment in those service areas and must be treated as draft proposals at this stage. The proposals contained in this section will be subject to further consultation, both with Cabinet and through the Council Tax Consultation process (See Section 7, pages 47 to 48), before any final decisions can be reached. Significantly, the availability of resources to fund these proposals will be a key factor if inflation proof Council Tax increases and other current spending levels are to be maintained.

Customer Care

In line with Cabinet desires to ensure that literal application of Council policies does not get in the way of delivering quality services and the need to maintain customer focus throughout the Council, Directors and Heads of Service have prioritised better customer care within their departments/services.

Communication and learning arrangements will be enhanced through the implementation of the robust Internal and External Communication strategies, which were approved in October 2004. In addition, Training and Development opportunities (based on both corporate and individual needs) will be addressed via the Employee Development Interview Process and bespoke courses will be facilitated through the Training Directory.

A further development will be the six monthly reporting of stage 2 complaints analysis and the implementation of the corporate complaints database to record and monitor stage 1 complaints within departments. Complaints statistics by type and frequency, together with complaints handling data will be considered within departments through the stronger performance management arrangements that now exist. All new service plans will include specific references to a measures of customer satisfaction / customer care.

There are no specific resource implications arising from these proposals.

Street Cleansing

The Council's current performance against BV089 (the % of people satisfied with highways cleanliness - a 3 year statutory survey) is 65%. A new indicator BV199 has been introduced and the Council will establish its baseline performance during the course of 2004/05. The new PI measures the percentage of relevant land and highways assessed as having combined

deposits of litter and detritus across 4 categories of cleanliness and replaces a previous performance assessment of the percentage of highways inspected reaching acceptable or high standards of cleanliness. The inclusion of detritus and weed growth into the measure of cleanliness is expected to result in a reduction in performance when compared to the previous indicator.

The Council's street cleansing resources are being further stretched by the need to target resources to areas where littering, flytipping, graffiti and anti social behaviour is increasing. Currently, the Council employs 2 road sweepers to cover 950Km of highway. The provision of an additional machine will reduce the cleaning cycle to 8 weeks and would assist in minimising weed growth by reducing the build up of detritus.

The Council recognises that good quality local environments reduce anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime and have a positive impact on our health, well-being, confidence and civic pride. The following resource requirements have therefore been identified in order to improve performance in this area: -

Revenue Requirements	£
Establish a rapid response/area based initiatives team Employee Costs - £55k Vehicle Lease Cost - £5k	60,000
Road Sweeper : Lease Cost (all inclusive) - £29k Employee Costs – £20k	49,000
Additional Traffic management Costs following loss of Highways Agency	5,000
Additional Chemicals for Graffiti Removal	7,000
Total Revenue	121,000

Horticultural Services (Grounds Maintenance)

The Council recognises the contribution that the natural environment makes to physical and mental well-being and has confirmed its intention to provide a network of high quality, well maintained open spaces in documents such as the Community Strategy, the Environmental Services Service improvement Plan and the CPA Public Spaces Diagnostic self assessment.

Recent changes introduced to open space management have delivered improvements, however, this needs to be built upon. Specifically, the maintenance of woodland is restricted through current capacity issues. The Council owns approximately 85 hectares of woodland on 55 different sites. Current capacity only allows for maintenance of trees on streets, council house gardens and emergency situations. The lack of routine maintenance has resulted in accumulations of litter and waste, deterioration of fences, steps, stiles and gates, trees/branches in dangerous condition and encroachment onto private property.

A recent woodland survey report has outlined the maintenance needs on an immediate, annual and staged basis (1-5 years and 5-20 years). Increasing capacity to undertake routine maintenance will also minimise the likelihood of claims being made against the Council for personal injury claims from persons entering woodland.

The following resource requirements for this service area have been identified: -

Revenue Requirements	£
Ransomes 213 grasscutter - Lease Cost	9,000
Establish a Tree Management Team - Employee costs	58,000
Additional Weed Spray Treatment (assist with BV199)	14,000
Total Revenue	93,000

Capital Requirements	£
Vehicle and Equipment for Tree Management Team	16,000
Seasonal Leaf/Litter collection unit – trailer mounted	4,000
Total Capital	20,000

Waste Recycling

The Council's performance for recycling and/or composting household waste arisings currently stands at 14% and is expected to remain at this level until the end of the financial year, therefore meeting the BV082 performance indicator target for 2004/05.

BV082 requires the Council to meet a target of an 18% recycling rate by 2005/06. The Government in due course will set further increases in national targets up to the year 2010.

The Council, in partnership with DCC and other neighbouring authorities, introduced the Kerb-It recycling scheme in the summer of 2003 and this has contributed significantly to raising the level of recycling of glass, cans and paper within the area to its present level. However, to increase the rate towards achieving the 18% target requires further investment in the service.

Long term investment needs are difficult to identify because of uncertainty as to the future target levels to be set and also the County Council's future waste disposal strategy arrangements i.e. the availability or otherwise of aerobic digestors.

In the short term it is proposed that extending the green waste collection service and undertaking marketing and promotion activities to increase participation in the Kerb-It scheme and minimise the amount of refuse being collected are likely to be the best way forward. Policy changes such as issuing only smaller 180 litre bins instead of the current 240 litre capacity and providing a second recycling box will be needed. The following resource requirements for this service area have therefore been identified: -

Revenue Requirements	£
Extend the green waste collection service to a further 4000 properties – Collection Costs	16,000
Promotion of Kerb-It recycling scheme and waste minimisation – employment of officer or market research consultants (3 years @ £20k per annum)	20,000
Total Revenue	36,000

Capital Requirements	£
Purchase 4000 green waste bins (Net of £16K Assumed DEFRA Grant)	53,000
Additional recycling boxes	1,500
Total Capital	54,500

Carelink

The Council's aims include a Healthy Borough and a Borough with Strong and Safe Neighbourhoods. In contributing to these aims, the Carelink Services provide support to vulnerable people in their homes and can as part of a package of measures prevent admission to hospital or residential care or facilitate early discharge from hospital back into the community. The service is made up of Community Alarms and Warden Services. For the most part these services are funded via Supporting People Grant.

The Supporting People Partnership for County Durham commissions the Sedgefield Borough Community Alarm Service. In addition to income from SP for clients within the Borough, the service has been expanded to take on SP services for another local authority area as well as securing business from the private sector. Prior to the introduction of the Supporting People regime the Council invested in the Community Alarm infrastructure to upgrade computer hardware and move to a substantially dispersed system of alarm devices. This investment has provided the service with a sound base from which to develop and expand service provision.

The Supporting People Partnership faces further significant cuts in SP Grant in 2005/06. The Partnership has commissioned a review of community alarm provision in the County. The review is currently underway, however, initial findings suggest radical changes in the way community alarm services are commissioned and provided.

In order to meet these challenges, the Carelink Community Alarm Service continues to seek to increase capacity, which reduces costs, improve service standards, by achieving compliance for example with ASAP Part 1 accreditation and develop opportunities within new markets, both private sector and other public sectors such as social care and health. There is now a need for a further significant step change for the community alarms service in order to provide the improved flexibility, competitiveness, service diversity and increased capacity.

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Capital investment will be needed both in terms of accommodation requirements of the community alarm service and the technology itself.

In terms of revenue, our target for both community alarms and the warden service would be to operate within a combination of SP Grant and income from other private sector users, public sector partners and development of new markets.

Capital Requirements	£
Accommodation	30,000
Control Room equipment & set up costs	20,000
Total Capital	50,000

Community Safety – Wardens / CCTV / Domestic Violence

The Neighbourhood Warden and CCTV services make a significant contribution to this aim within the context of both the Boroughwide Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategic Partnership and the Council's corporate approach to Community Safety with the emerging SBC Community Safety Strategy having a particular focus on issues such as fear of crime and anti social behaviour.

Additionally, as part of a broad range of partnership based responses to tackling Domestic Violence within the Borough the Council is taking the lead in the development of a DV Strategy for the Borough which will necessitate further service development.

The Neighbourhood Warden Service was established mid 2004 as part of the Council's drive to improve quality of life and promote neighbourhood renewal. The service has a dual focus on community engagement and public re-assurance. The service is targeted on areas of greatest need within the Borough based on a development matrix of needs. Consultation on the development of the service has demonstrated further demand for services from local communities. In order to increase and extend Neighbourhood Warden coverage it is proposed that an additional 5 Neighbourhood Wardens be appointed. The management structure with Community Safety would need to be strengthened accordingly.

The Council has undertaken to complete a review of its CCTV service by December 2004. Additional cameras continue to be added to the network in response to demand. The Council has invested in digital technology to both improve the service and make data analysis/review more efficient. Additionally, new maintenance contracts for CCTV equipment have been agreed which will produce cost savings. Early indications within the context of a service review suggest that further expansion of the service should be underpinned by: -

- Revised accommodation arrangements for the CCTV service.
- the development of criteria to establish the circumstances under which fixed CCTV cameras are seen as the most appropriate solution.
- Review of monitoring costs.
- the development of a business case in support of the proposal.
- Extension of mobile facilities
- The development of a sustainable strategy which includes private sector market opportunities and future technological opportunities.

At this stage it is suggested that additional resources should be limited to: -

- ensuring accommodation arrangements are adequate for the current and developing service. This will be facilitated by looking to provide separate Control Room accommodation for CCTV and the Carelink community alarm service.
- extending the mobile CCTV capacity by the purchase of an additional Mobile CCTV Unit together with the employment of a further 2 Neighbourhood Wardens to support the operation of the mobile facility.

In terms of Domestic Violence, a Borough strategy is currently being developed. A range of agencies supports initiatives to address DV including the Police, Sedgefield PCT and the Sedgefield Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (via funding to agencies such as Victim Support). Accommodation is a key issue in supporting victims of DV. This can relate to additional facilities and services to their existing home, it can relate to the need to provide secure short term alternative accommodation, it can require secure short term accommodation with support, it may require support only, there may be a need for permanent alternative accommodation or out of area accommodation may be needed. In the majority of cases there are a range of support arrangements which need to be in place from personal finances to provision of furniture etc.

It is therefore proposed to appoint a Domestic Violence Accommodation and Support Officer to co-ordinate accommodation related arrangements in DV cases. There may be additional capital and revenue costs associated with developing short term accommodation within the Council housing stock.

Revenue Requirements	£
X7 Additional Neighbourhood Wardens	175,000
X1 Neighbourhood Warden Co-ordinator	30,000
X1 Domestic Violence Accommodation & Support Officer	25,000
Total Revenue	230,000

Capital Requirements	£
CCTV Accomodation	10,000
Additional Mobile CCTV Unit	100,000
Set Up – Short-Term Domestic Violence Accommodation	5,000
Total Capital	115,000

Equality and Diversity

The Council is currently at Level 1 of the Equalities Standard and has established a stretching target of achieving Level 2 by March 2005, Level 3 by March 2006 and Level 4 by March 2007.

To achieve the first year target (Level 2) a Corporate Action Plan has been prepared by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and the following priority actions have been identified:

- Publish a Corporate Equality Plan
- Demonstrate corporate engagement in an equality impact and needs/requirement assessment process
- Develop service level equality objectives and targets
- Develop corporate equality information and monitoring systems
- Consult with staff, community and stakeholders on all aspects of the equality policy, including service specific impact needs requirement assessments and service delivery
- Incorporate equalities policies and objectives into partnership and contract arrangements engaged in by the Council

In order to achieve Level 2 ALL departments must be able to demonstrate compliance with the above actions. The Council recognises that in order to make these improvements it needs to appoint a Corporate Equality and Diversity Officer, who's role will be to work with officers and members to drive this agenda. The following resource requirements have been identified: -

Revenue Requirements	£
Corporate Equality and Diversity Officer	35,000
External Training (Impacts Needs Assessment etc.)	3,000
Community Consultation (Equality Policy)	2,000
Service Engagement with Minority Groups	10,000
Total Revenue	50,000

Capital Requirements	£
E-Sat System (Recording/Monitoring Compliance/Progress against Equalities Standard)	15,000
Total Capital	15,000

E-Government Priority Service Outcomes

E-Government is integral to the modernisation of the Council's Customer Services function, playing an instrumental role in enabling us to deliver service improvements across the Council and providing a basis for engagement with intermediaries such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The local priorities outlined in the Council's Community Strategy can be closely mapped to the ODPM'S national priorities. These national priorities are based on seven-shared priorities agreed between Central and Local Government. These shared priorities are:

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- Raising standards across our schools;
- Improving the quality of life of children, young people, families at risk and older people;
- Promoting healthier communities by targeting key local services, such as health and housing;
- Creating safer and stronger communities;
- Transforming our local environment;
- Meeting local transport needs more effectively;
- Promoting the economic vitality of localities.

The Council's e-Government programme is outlined in our 'Customer Services Modernisation Programme & e-Government Strategy - October 2004-April 2006'. The strategy specifically addresses the delivery of the ODPM'S Priority Service Outcomes (PSOs). Associated with these are a set of 'required', 'good' and 'excellent' e-Government outcomes to be achieved by 2005, 2006 and 2008.

A summary of Sedgefield's position as of March 04 is outlined in the following table:

Priority Services Outcome Status as of 31/03/04	'Required' Priority Service Outcome	'Good' Priority Service Outcome	TOTAL
RED	7	11	18 (33%)
AMBER	14	11	25 (46%)
GREEN	5	1	6 (11%)
BLACK	3	2	5 (9%)
TOTAL	29	25	54 (100%)

(Status is indicated by a traffic lights system whereby **Red** indicates that the Council is at the preparation & planning stage. This includes projects that are being planned or being piloted **Amber** indicates that the Council is at an implementation stage with the rollout of approved projects and **Green** indicates that the Council has fully implemented a project or solution to deliver the priority service outcome.)

The Council has established a Modernisation Taskforce, consisting of cross-departmental senior officers and supported by the ODPM's Implementation Support Unit, to:

- Develop a Corporate Customer Services rollout programme.
- Co-ordinate compliance with BVPI 157 requirements for each service
- Implement the ODPM'S Priority Services Outcomes
- Work in partnership
- Co-ordinate and utilise National Projects products to avoid duplication of effort and avoid re-inventing the wheel
- Jointly develop corporate customer services protocols.

Through its work with the Implementation Support Unit, the Council is now considered as pioneering regards its approach to delivering the PSO's. The development of the Councils IEG4 strategy will secure a further £150,000 from ODPM In 2005/06.

The total capital and revenue expenditure required to implement the 'required' and 'good' Priority Service Outcomes totals approximately £800,000 (£650K capital and £150K revenue). However, this figures does not account for the G12 outcome, which focuses on the delivery of smart cards to the public for Leisure services. This cost alone could exceed £1m if the Council delivered the scheme independently. The Council is currently working with NERSC (North East Smartcard Consortium) to address a regional approach to meeting this outcome that would reduce costs to individual Councils.

Costs within the strategy are indicative and will be validated through the Council's Modernisation Taskforce in the preparation of detailed bids in accordance with the capital appraisal process.

Youth Development

All Council services are required to engage with local children and young people on policy and service development and delivery. As part of its CPA improvement planning, the Council has recently concluded an Audit Commission Inspection of its Services for Children and Young People, which rated overall service provision fair, with promising prospects for improvement.

This project supports corporate commitments to social inclusion, consultation and continuous improvement. Its emerging action plan sets out measures to: -

- Roll out a corporate Child Protection Policy
- Support proposals to improve young people's access to services
- Develop a clear strategic framework for youth engagement with the Council to effectively identify the needs and aspirations of young people and ensure that they are acted upon
- Improve performance management and co-ordination of the Council's youth focused services to ensure continuous improvement and value for money
- Reconvene the Council's Youth Development Fund to help support youth focused activity and initiatives
- Achieve the County Durham and Darlington Investing in Children Quality Award for appropriate services

Improvements to the Council's approach in this area must be aligned with ongoing developments across the Borough and at a County level to improve the five priority outcomes for children identified in 'Every Child Matters' (*Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution and Economic Wellbeing*) via the integration of core services in the form of Children's Trusts, as set out in the recent Children Bill.

The Bill places a reciprocal duty on other organisations (including shire district councils) to enter into partnerships with the top tier and other local partners to improve outcomes for children and young people. The establishment of the Sedgfield Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) through the LSP – of which the Council is a key partner – to address this new agenda for children provides an opportunity to join up consultation mechanisms and to

develop Council services to support, complement and enhance the work of core youth-focused services across the Borough.

In recognition of its co-ordinating role, the CYPP will allocate Children's Fund monies for Sedgefield for the period 2004-2006 amounting to £155,908, £20,000 of which has been allocated to the Council's Youth Development Fund. In addition £30,000 has been allocated to the Council to develop a consultation framework for children in the targeted age range - £18,000 of this will cover officer time contributed by the Strategy and Regeneration to this project.

The activity prescribed in the action plan will be refined and rationalised in the coming months in conjunction with partners in the CYPP and with young people themselves. However, the following definite resource requirements have been identified to date: -

One Off Requirements	£
Youth Development Fund – kick start money	100,000 (from balances?)
Child Protection training for staff and members	12,000
Design/Marketing in relation to CoSIP Partnership website and Council SMS Server (approved via CP1 process)	10,000
Total Revenue	122,000

Revenue Requirements	£
Youth Engagement (e.g. surveys, liC research, forums)	15,000
Youth Development Fund (years 2 and 3 of MTFP only)	15,000
Total Revenue	30,000

Summary – Investment Proposals

The above proposals are very much a draft-estimated position and have been developed for the purposes of this draft of the plan. Further, much more detailed work through the 2005/06 Budget process (currently under way), is required to develop these proposals and Cabinet will need to consider these in line with its desires for service development and improvement. In addition, Cabinet will need to prioritise which investments are made in 2005/06 and which will fall into 2006/07.

Whilst additional resources to the sum of £788K could be available over the next three years, this relies on £300K worth of efficiency savings being generated over that period. Available resources will be needed to meet what are likely to be significant costs of Job Evaluations in addition to the potential service investment plans detailed above and summarised on the following page. The investment proposals outlined above will need careful consideration, balanced against Job Evaluation costs as they become clearer, if the Council is to maintain Council Tax increases at 3% over the period of this Plan. Furthermore, the potential allocation of £100,000 from the General Reserve into a re-launched Youth Development Fund has not been factored into the forecasts contained within this Plan.

Summary - Additional Draft Revenue Investment Plans

	£	Notes
Customer Care	Nil	
Street Cleansing	121,000	
Horticultural Services (Grounds Maintenance)	93,000	
Waste Recycling	36,000	
Carelink	Nil	
Community Safety – Wardens / CCTV	205,000	
Domestic Violence	25,000	
Equality and Diversity	50,000	
E-Government – Priority Service Outcomes	150,000	
Youth Development	52,000	£22K Non recurring one off expenditure, £30K pa in Yr 2 and 3
Total	732,000	

Summary - Additional Capital Investment Plans

	£	Notes
Customer Care	Nil	
Street Cleansing	Nil	
Horticultural Services (Grounds Maintenance)	20,000	
Waste Recycling	54,500	
Carelink	50,000	
Community Safety – Wardens / CCTV	110,000	
Domestic Violence	5,000	
Equality and Diversity	15,000	
E-Government – Priority Service Outcomes	650,000	Included within ICT Capital Programme Allocations in Section 5
Youth Development	Nil	
Total	904,500	

Positive Interventions – Targeted Regeneration Schemes

The resources projected to be available to the Council over the medium term provide the opportunity to make a significant impact on the well-being of local communities, through targeted interventions to deliver the Council's key aims and planned outcomes more quickly than would otherwise be possible. Whilst the Council's agreed priorities for the medium term are set out clearly in the Corporate Plan, a programme of targeted interventions through capital investment has been identified, taking into account the following material factors:

- *Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods Requiring Regeneration*
The need to focus on those neighbourhoods and communities in the Borough that are suffering the greatest concentrations of economic, social or environmental disadvantage and requiring physical renewal to help create more sustainable communities. The Borough's Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy identifies these 'targeted' communities as Western area of Newton Aycliffe, Shildon, West Cornforth and the Trimdons along with Ferryhill and Chilton in terms of area based housing renewal actions. However, it is recognised that a large proportion of the Borough's communities have a requirement and wish to see some form of regeneration related investment.
- *The Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan*
- *External Strategies and Resources*
In terms of demonstrating the Council's community leadership role and ability to operate within a wider regional strategic policy framework, the additional resources provide the opportunity to help secure additional external capital investments to support the Borough's regeneration. This would demonstrate the Council's ability to contribute to the delivery of sub regional and regional priorities covering economic development housing and spatial development. They will also alongside other funding opportunities help to create an enhanced 'pot of resources' able to achieve an even greater benefit for the Borough.
- *Achievement of Wider Regeneration Benefits.*
In developing the spending priorities attention has also been given to the potential to link capital investment with other wider regeneration activities so that the overall benefits are maximised. This might include skills training and the use of intermediate labour market schemes to reduce unemployment; schemes linked to the health agenda to encourage people to participate in more healthy lifestyles; or community reassurance actions to address incidents of anti social behaviour and the fear of crime.

By taking these factors into account the targeted interventions proposed have been developed in a 'joined up' way to help achieve agreed strategic and medium term key aims and have a more sustainable and beneficial impact in terms of improving the well being of the Borough and its communities. Cabinet has approved the following programme themes: -

Theme 1

Support for **Major Area Based/ Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes** that are currently being developed linked to the Borough's Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and other programmes such as the English Partnerships Durham Coalfields Housing Renewal Programme for Ferryhill (Dean Bank and Ferryhill Station areas) and Chilton. It is expected that progress of these major schemes will be considerably enhanced through the additional

resources over the medium term, but they will also be dependant on partner and external funding as well.

Theme 2

Strategic Investments related to major programmes to assist in the delivery of Community Strategy outcomes and to contribute to other national, regional and sub regional programmes that will have significant benefits for the Borough's communities.

Theme 3

Enhancement of current capital programmes the Council's Portfolios are planning to implement, where the proposed capital expenditure would be eligible in terms of the affordable housing and regeneration definitions.

Theme 4

Improvement of Community Assets to enhance the usability and access to buildings and land in local communities so as to support improved access to services and other activities leading to an improvement in the quality of life for local communities. This will build on a review of both the Council's Asset Management Plan and a survey of current community buildings and other assets held by partner organisations, community and voluntary sector organisations and local town and parish councils to ascertain those works that are within the scope of the regeneration definition and would be beneficial to local communities.

Theme 5

A Local Area Programme operated in consultation with the Local Area Forums. This itself would include schemes that are linked to the delivery of the Council's wider regeneration aims and on which the Area Forum would be consulted in order to help determine relative priorities and specific programmes/schemes and a specific **Area Forums Local Initiatives Fund** through which local Forums could themselves decide a programme of works against set criteria.

The development of individual schemes to be supported under the above Strategy will be considered within the overall capital appraisal framework outlined in Section 5, which takes account of the proposals 'fit' to Council priorities and other strategic factors; revenue funding implications; expected timescales for the commitment of expenditure; and community and stakeholder consultations outcomes on the proposed scheme. It is also recognised that there might be a need to undertake feasibility work and to commission studies and option appraisals to support later detailed design stages and alternative procurement routes. This appraisal and development process should not however, prevent early action on some activities being commenced, where the expenditure is already planned or can be brought forward under the programme.

In taking the programme forward the Council has identified the following criteria: -

- Identifying 'early win' schemes, drawn from current programmes with minor requirements in terms of preparation in design, procurement and on-site delivery.

- Commissioning studies, appraisals and feasibility studies. This will require the preparation of a number of Briefs in order to determine the Council's expectations in terms of deliverables and to provide a basis against which proposals can be evaluated.
- Undertake consultations and communication with local communities on the positive impacts of the programme and how they can participate in its determination and delivery. There will also be a need to communicate the Council's plans and proposed approach towards implementation with key partner stakeholders and the Local Strategic Partnership.
- Review of the operation and organisation of the present Area Forums and their support arrangements to provide them with the information, training and capacity to fully and effectively participate in the delivery of the Capital Receipts Strategy.

A schedule of indicative schemes that might potentially be supported is set out below: -

Indicative Schemes	Indicative Proposals
Strand 1 Area Renewal Schemes	
Ferryhill Station Area Renewal. Dean Bank Neighbourhood Renewal Programme Chilton Renewal Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Renewal Actions - Housing Acquisition and Demolitions, Creation of housing development sites and Housing Group Repair Schemes. • Vacant sites revitalisation via landscaping enhancements • Acquisition and demolition of vacant buildings constraining potential development sites • Routeway Schemes
Western Area Newton Aycliffe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Improvements • Release of Hawkshead Place Development Site • Creation of a new Community Hub Building to replace Silverdale House
Strand 2 - Strategic Investments	
NETPark – Phase 2 Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land acquisition former Community Hospital site. • Servicing of land at NETPark • Environmental/Landscape Infrastructure
Aycliffe Industrial Park and Green Lane Industrial Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land and Property Improvement Programme including property acquisition and redevelopment • Buildings Improvement Grant Scheme • Infrastructure works to release land for economic development • Landscape Improvements • Great Crested Newt Management Plan to release site for economic development
Town Centre Renewal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spennymoor • Newton Aycliffe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre environmental improvement works • Shop Improvement Grants scheme • Car park Improvements • Leisure Centre Improvements, (Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe)
Villages Improvement Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Improvement Programme. • Housing Renewal Actions - Housing Acquisition and

Indicative Schemes	Indicative Proposals
	Demolitions, Creation of housing development sites and Housing Group Repair Schemes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition and demolition of vacant buildings constraining potential development sites or environmental improvements.
Strand 3 - Enhanced Portfolio Capital Programmes (including Asset Management Plan Works)	
Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merrington Lane Area Redevelopment Western Area Newton Aycliffe/ Cobblers Hall Open Space Strategy Development and promotion of the Shildon Rail trails, (Brusselton Routeway) including historical interpretation. Development of a Training Centre cluster at the Coulson Street site Countryside management – improvement of SBC owned local sites such as Ferryhill Carrs and Castle Eden Walkway. Improvements to the current stock of industrial premises to improve their marketability.
Culture and Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRM additional works Improvement to the setting of Shildon Leisure Centre to integrate with Athletics Refurbishment of Swimming Pools at Fishburn and Shildon to reduce longer-term maintenance costs. Asset management investments improve entrance to Leisure Centres e.g. provision of Café style bar areas and art display areas.
Supporting People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation of Integrated Health Teams in local communities. Respite Housing accommodation for support of an initiative to address domestic violence issues. Sure Start Shildon and Newton Aycliffe Capital Programme – support for the creation of two new Family Centres and to provide for extended community use.
Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCTV investments CCTV Hackworth Park (Shildon TC request) Many of the other schemes included under other strands of the programme will have community safety benefits.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many environmental schemes are included under other strands of the programme.
Strand 4 - Improvement of Community Assets	
Improvements to Community Buildings and other land to support local access to services, lifelong learning, cultural opportunities and leisure activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of existing Community Centres and Community Houses Support for new Community Centres
Promotion of the 'liveability' agenda in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Spaces Improvement and Revitalisation Programme Play Areas Improvement Programme

Indicative Schemes	Indicative Proposals
local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of Urban Parks – a Town Council partnership programme with Spennymoor, Ferryhill and Great Aycliffe Town Councils
Strand 5 - Local Area Programme	
Local SBC Area Forums Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegated Budget for environmental and community assets improvements within set criteria.

Resources allocated to delivering the positive interventions outlined above are significant. The Council's contribution to the Regeneration Capital Programme is set to increase from £700K in 2004/05 to £5.5M in 2005/06 and £6.5M in 2006/07 and 2007/08 and indicative totals, broken down by the above themed areas is set out at Appendix F.

The delivery of this significant level of capital expenditure will require the Council to procure capital schemes in a different way. It is envisaged that to provide the Council with the required capacity and programme management support, a strategic partner (or partners) will be appointed. To facilitate this however, there is also a need to appoint additional in-house staff to form a Capital Programmes Team to oversee the commissioning role and to manage the relationship with the strategic partner(s).

Additional staffing capacity will be needed to assist the Area Forums in providing an input to the Programme and in determining the schemes to be prioritised for inclusion in the planned Area Forums Local Initiatives Fund. There would also be a need for additional administrative support capacity to support the above posts.

The envisaged Capital Programmes Team would form part of the Strategy and Regeneration Division of the Chief Executives Department. Additional posts will also be required provide accountancy and technical support respectively to the Capital Programmes Team. Specifically, additional capacity to support for use of housing regeneration tools, such as compulsory purchase, group repair schemes etc. will be required in the Neighbourhood Services Department. The costs of this addition to the current staffing establishment and the fee payments to the Strategic partner(s) will be met from the Capital Programme and will equate to around 17.5% of the overall planned expenditure.

A separate report on the implications on these proposed changes to the Council's staffing establishment will be submitted to Cabinet.

SECTION 7 - Monitoring and Review Mechanisms

This is the first draft of the Plan and significant further development is required between November 2004 and March 2005 to refine the content. The final version will not be available until March 2004 and will be published in June 2005 (and annually thereafter), together with the Corporate Plan and Workforce Plan. Significantly, the version that will be published in June 2005 will include portfolio-based targets/control totals over the three years; together with a baseline position of current Council spend against its Corporate Ambitions, each community outcome and the level of support expenditure on Corporate Values.

The content of this Plan and the integration of the corporate planning, financial planning (budget setting processes) and performance management arrangements that have been implemented will ensure that this informs the 2005/06 Budget Framework and beyond.

The integration of the Medium Term Financial and annual Revenue and Capital Budget setting processes is set out in the timetable at Appendix H.

Future Plans, produced from June 2006, will include a specific chapter reviewing the actual position, in terms of resource forecasts and spending, against the provisions set out in the approved Plan. Any variations will be fully explained/ accounted for and revised forecasts / projections prepared.

Council Tax, Budget and Medium Term Financial Planning Consultation

All local authorities are encouraged to consult Council Taxpayers before reaching decisions on the level of their budgets and subsequent Council Tax charges.

The Council has a mature approach to Council Tax consultation, having undertaken exercises in each of the last two years, using independent external facilitators. The feedback as a result of this consultation is intended to inform the decision-making process, not replace it, however, the Council has demonstrated that it reacts positively to the feedback received as a result of this engagement. Previous consultation has been carried out, in the main, by means of small focus groups undertaking a series of meetings at local venues across the Borough.

The feedback from previous consultations shows that 'it was generally believed that the budget consultation exercise had worked very well and that the respondents had seriously and maturely considered the issues facing the Council in arriving at recommendations which addressed these issues'.

Whilst identifying a number of major strengths, a detailed review of feedback has also identified a perceived weakness in the process, centred on the fact that local focus groups have been used extensively in the last two years and, because of the geographical nature of the groups/venues, the discussions and questions raised tended to be more local/parochial issues - at the expense (sometimes) of corporate cross cutting/borough wide issues.

Given the significant progress the Council has made over the last year (post CPA) in developing its corporate and medium term financial planning frameworks. It is important that the consultation process in future addresses not only the following years Budget/Council Tax

setting process but also obtains input/feedback on the draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08 – including priority investment areas and key actions over that period.

Future consultations will involve representatives from the major General Funded spending departments (Neighbourhood Services, Leisure Services and Regeneration) responsible for the provision of services, who will set out their proposals / priority actions over the medium term. This will allow these service heads to be questioned on their future spending or service improvement plans and for the groups to discuss their own priorities for action and these priorities to be reported on as part of the consultation process.

The outcome of this process will be reported to members in advance of any decisions on Council Tax levels and will inform not only the annual Budget Framework, but also the priorities and actions (and therefore resources aligned to these in the Medium Term Financial Plan) in advance of the publishing of the Corporate Plan and support Medium Term Financial Plan.

In recognition of the importance that these consultees are as 'representative' of the population of the Borough as is possible - with small samples of people - the opportunity to be involved is offered to as wide a cross-section of people as possible. Participants should be 'representative' in respect of the geography and demography of the Borough. A policy whereby 50% of the previous years consultees will be invited to attend again supplemented by 50% of "first timers" allows some continuity to the proceedings and also allows informal support to be provided within the groups by those with experience of the process to the inexperienced. Random invitations are issued to previous attendees to try to achieve this balance.

SECTION 8 – Summary Comments

The Government's agenda for local government provides a clear focus on service improvement, in terms of both delivery and outcomes, and encourages Councils to further develop their community leadership roles. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment only served to increase this focus and the Council has reacted positively to this challenge and is now much better placed to respond to these challenges.

The CPA inspectors commented that strategic and financial planning needed to be better linked/coordinated and that performance management had not been fully embedded within the Council. This was primarily due to a lack of a Corporate and Medium Term Financial Plan, but also because of a lack of clearly defined links between services and corporate (Council) objectives. This made service planning (linking to the BVPP) difficult to comprehend leading to a lack of focus on strategic management and a concentration on day-to-day operational management (in other words "the day job").

During the summer of 2004 the Council re-examined its corporate objectives and priorities and an extensive baselining exercise, involving all senior managers and Cabinet, was undertaken. This process allowed the Council to develop its corporate planning framework and build capacity in terms of developing awareness and appreciation the Council's broader strategic objectives.

The Council's first Corporate Plan has now been completed and this sets out the targets and service improvement plans for a wide range of Council services over the next three years. Significantly, this has been developed following extensive consultation and the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan provides the focus for this Plan.

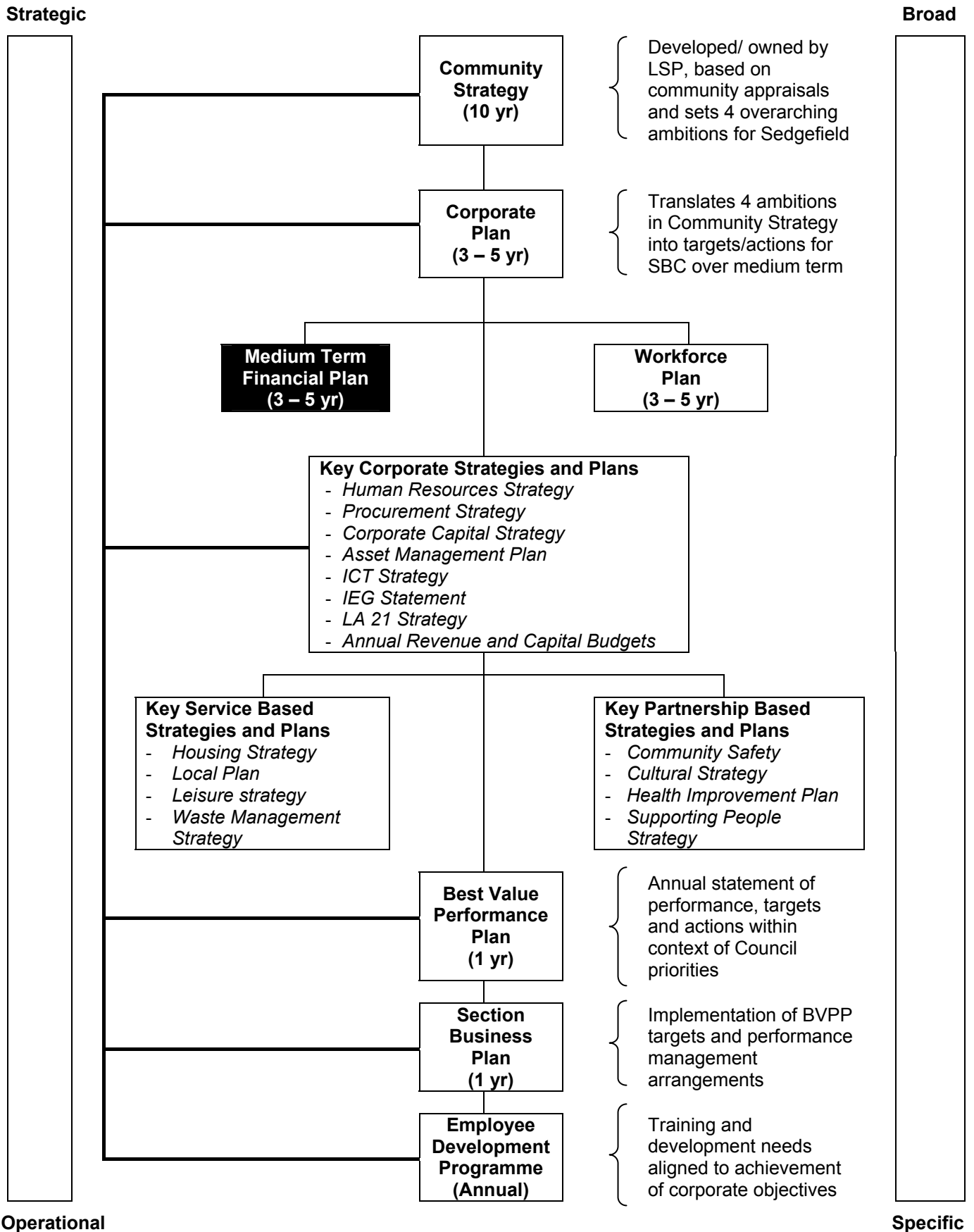
This Medium Term Financial Plan aims to link the Corporate Plan to the Council's annual Revenue and Capital budget setting processes by providing a strategic overview and framework for future budgets. It focuses upon identifying resources available and the targeted investments and efficiencies required to in terms of the allocation of the Council's available resources to support the delivery of the Council's priorities.

In developing a plan of this nature, there are a number of uncertainties and significant areas of risk. As part of the process, a risk assessment has been undertaken - summarised at Appendix E – which identifies the major risks involved in the assumptions made that underpin this Plan. The assessment also identifies ways in which the Council can take positive action to minimise / manage those risks, however, it must be recognised that these risks cannot be fully eliminated, and indeed many of them are outside the immediate control of the Council.

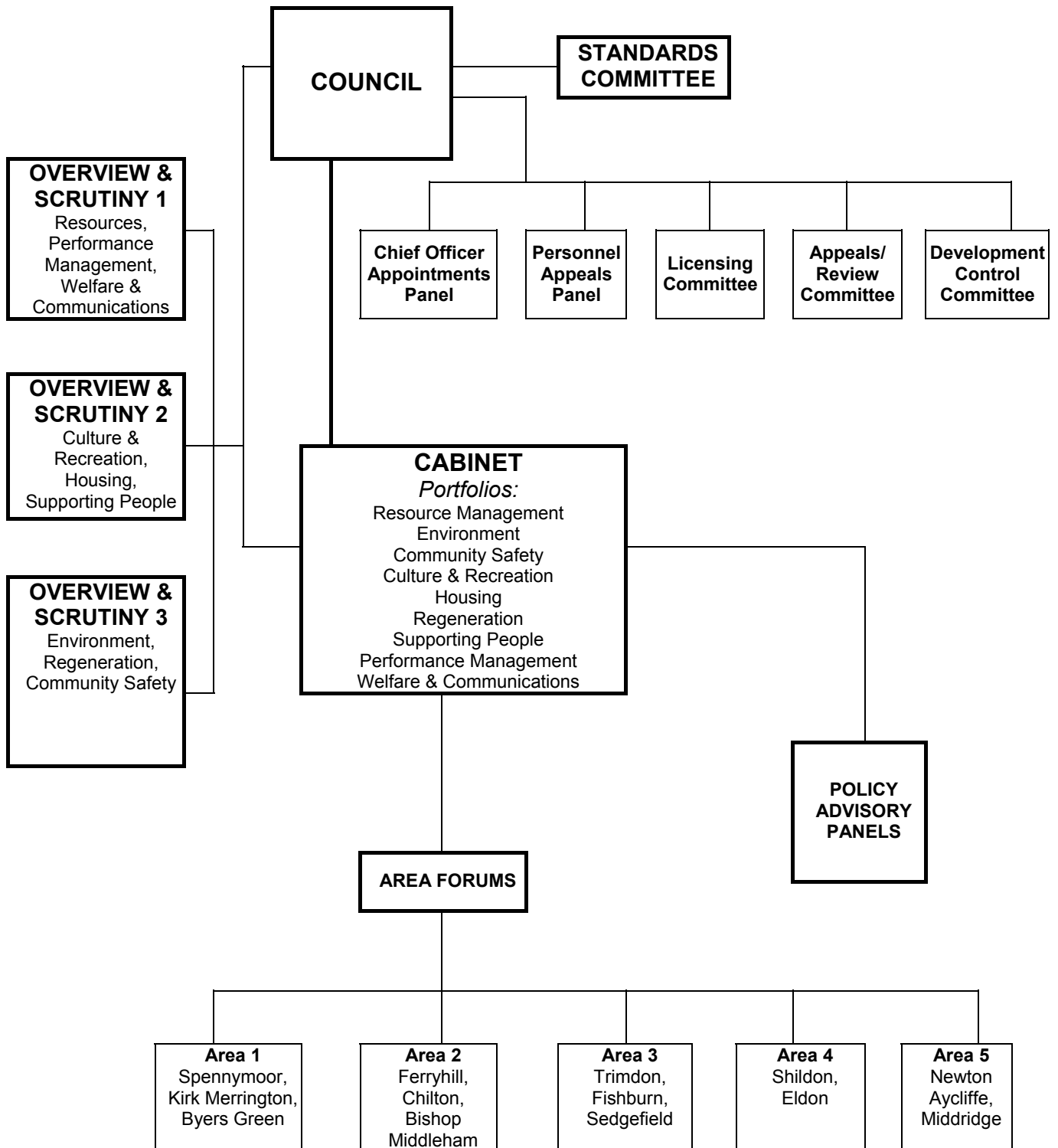
In accordance with the established monitoring and review mechanisms, this Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, producing a rolling three-year forecast.

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Corporate Planning Framework



Corporate Decision Making Process



APPENDIX C**Usable Capital Receipt Forecast – Including Stock Transfer**

2004/05 Estimated Outturn £	Capital Receipt	2005/06 Forecast £	2006/07 Forecast £	2007/08 Forecast £
Housing Land / Property Sales				
2,655,000	Sale of Council Houses	1,319,000		
12,200,000	Cobblers Hall – Site J			
2,517,000	Burn Lane, Newton Aycliffe			
160,000	Highland Gardens, Shildon			
	LSVT Receipts (After Debt Rescheduling)	9,836,000		
	Sunderland Housing Group	7,500,000		
	Cobblers Hall – Site O	10,000,000		
17,532,000		28,655,000	Nil	Nil
General Fund Land / Property Sales				
	Gaiety Theatre, Ferryhill	150,000		
	Sedgefield Net Park	150,000	150,000	150,000
	Long Tens Way, Heigh. Lane	105,000	105,000	
	Heighington Lane East		325,000	
	Cobblers Hall – Site N		5,000,000	
	Agnew 5, Newton Aycliffe		10,000,000	
	Hawkshead Place, N. Aycliffe			1,500,000
	Oak/Ash Terrace			37,500
	Congreve Terrace, Aycliffe Vill.			37,500
	Swainby Road, Trimdon Village			100,000
	South View, Spennymoor			122,500
	Jubilee Crescent, Shildon			152,500
	Eldon bank Top, Shildon			177,500
	Barratt Way, West Cornforth			100,000
Nil		29,060,000	15,580,000	2,357,000
17,532,000		29,060,000	15,580,000	2,357,000
APPLICATION OF USABLE CAPITAL RECEIPTS				
3,046,000	Usable Receipts Brought Forward	15,688,000	36,961,000	43,401,000
17,532,000	Receipts in Year	29,060,000	15,580,000	2,357,000
-4,890,000	Receipts Applied in Year	-7,787,000	-9,140,000	-9,140,000
15,688,000	Usable Receipts Carried Forward	36,961,000	43,401,000	36,618,000

APPENDIX D**Forecast of Earmarked and Non-Earmarked General Fund Balances 2004/05 to 2007/08**

Year	Earmarked Balances										Non – Earmarked		Total
	Budget Fund	Insurance	Economic Development	Training & Employment Services	Asset Management	Private Sector Housing	Pensions	Other Funds	Sub - Total	General Reserve	£'000	£'000	
2004/05	Opening Bal	1,294	1,282	268	290	502	203	296	86	4,221	2,340	2,340	6,561
	Transfer to	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Transfer From	-300	-125	-48	-	-	-	-296	-	-769	-	-	-769
2005/06	Closing Bal	994	1,157	220	290	502	203	-	86	3,452	2,340	2,340	5,792
	Transfer to	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,000	3,000	3,000
	Transfer From	-505	-125	-220	-	-	-203	-	-	-1,053	-1,000	-1,000	-2,053
2006/07	Closing Bal	489	1,032	-	290	502	-	-	86	2,399	4,340	4,340	6,739
	Transfer to	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Transfer From	-189	-125	-	-	-	-	-	-	-314	-1,000	-1,000	-1,314
2007/08	Closing Bal	300	907	-	290	502	-	-	86	2,085	3,340	3,340	5,425
	Transfer to	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Transfer From	-300	-125	-	-	-	-	-	-	-425	-1,000	-1,000	-1,425
	Closing Bal	-	782	-	290	502	-	-	86	1,660	2,340	2,340	4,000

APPENDIX E**Risk Assessment**

Identified Risk	Impact	Probability	Action/Strategy
Government funding/ additional resource assumptions not achieved	H	M	Ensure that investment is held back until resources are confirmed. Review and update MTFP on an annual basis
LSVT vote is “no” and capital resources allocated to General Fund programmes needed to meet Decent Homes	H	M	Established a dedicated LSVT Team, utilising consultants and implementing a robust communication strategy to secure a “yes” vote. Ensure that investment is held back until resources are confirmed. Review and update MTFP on an annual basis. Review position in terms of prudential borrowing
Legislative changes occur that were not anticipated	L	L	Ensure that Cabinet etc. made aware of Government policy and develop clear action plans
Pay awards and inflation vary from that assumed	M	M	Rate of inflation very low at moment, with a stable economy. Wage increases fixed for two years and high degree of certainty in year 3. Initial findings of actuarial valuation of Pension Fund factored into forecasts. Annual update of MTFP
Income targets are not achieved	M	M	Monthly monitoring of budgets and marketing of services. Annual update of MTFP
Forecasts of future spending requirements to meet priorities are under estimated	M	M	Annual update of MTFP. Clear links between corporate and service planning / performance
Forecast off demographic changes vary significantly from those assumed	L	L	Annual review of impact of demographic changes
Investment in priority areas does not lead to desired Community Outcome measures being achieved	H	M	Robust performance management of services through Heads of service. Service improvement team to oversee development of Performance Mgmt Framework
Established budgets are not sufficiently monitored and controlled (leading to significant overspends)	L	L	Quarterly reporting of financial performance via Strategic Working groups. Monthly budgetary control

Identified Risk	Impact	Probability	Action/Strategy
Efficiency savings not achieved	H	M	Annual update of MTFP in light of reviews. Linkages to Best Value Review Processes. Consideration of invest to save capital schemes – linked to e-Govt Priority Services Outcomes
Standards of service fall in non-priority areas	H	M	Robust performance management of services. Communication of performance standards and priorities/ non-priorities. Better linkages and co-ordination through Corporate Plan – more realistic target setting.
Revenue implications of capital schemes are not fully taken into account	L	L	Corporate Capital Strategy process for capital schemes (CP1 process etc.). Clear exit strategies for all externally funded schemes.
VAT Partial Exemption Limit exceeded and Council has to repay in excess of £110K input tax recovered to HM Customs and Excise	H	L	Include VAT implications of capital investments in evaluation criteria for individual capital programmes. Use of opting to tax rules and external VAT advice.
Exit strategies for mainstreaming grant funded activities at the end of the grant assistance not taken into account	H	L	External grant assistance only sought where this contributes to Corporate Ambitions. Priority led budgeting not resource led priorities. Annual review and update of MTFP to include consideration of exit strategies.
Training and Employment Services lose Learning and Skills Council contract	M	M	Effective budget monitoring of T&ES Performance – maintenance of sufficient T&ES Balances
Housing Market crashes and land sale receipts do not materialise	H	M	Annual update of MTFP in light of market conditions. Spend not committed until resources secured.
Cabinet desire to hold Council Tax Increases at 3% over the next three years cannot be sustained	M	M	Effective and meaningful consultation arrangements. Annual review and update of MTFP. Impact linked to national and local average increases – which are expected to be far greater than 3% over next three years. Use of balances to deliver required increases.
Council Taxbase / Collection Fund Surplus Assumptions do not materialise	H	M	Annual update of MTFP. Year on Year improvements in “in-year” Council Tax Recovery rates

Identified Risk	Impact	Probability	Action/Strategy
Costs of Job Evaluation exceed expectations	H	H	Implement robust and effective protection arrangements. Cushion impact on General Fund through use of general reserve / securing efficiency savings
Local Government Review results in the creation of an Elected Regional Assembly and Sedgefield Borough Council is replaced by some form of unitary local government with effect from 2007/08 (shadow authorities in place 2006/07)	H	H	Annual review of MTFP to achieve Council priorities and required improvement in services within the Borough of Sedgefield whilst Council in existence. Investment of resources raised from taxpayers back into the Borough.

APPENDIX F**LPSA 1 – Basket of Cost-Efficiency Indicators**

Ref.	Description	Improvement Indicated By:		2003/2004 Cost Efficiency Improvement over Base	
		Baseline Performance 2001/02	Stretched Target 2004/05 (108% of Base)		Outturn Perf'ce
BV008	Percentage of invoices paid in 30 days	81%	87.5%	Increase in Percentage 95.7%	1.181
BV012	Ave number of days lost to sickness per FTE	11.6 days	10.7days	Decrease in Number of Days 13.9 days	0.802
BV062	Unfit dwellings – fit/demolished	5.70%	6.2%	Increase in Percentage 8.25%	1.447
BV066a	Proportion of rent collected	91.4%	98.7%	Increase in Percentage 94.6%	1.035
BV068*	Average relet times for local authority dwellings	50 days	46 days	Decrease in Number of Days 46 days	1.080
BV072*	Percentage urgent repairs in Govt. Time Limits	86%	92.9%	Increase in Percentage 95.0%	1.105
BV078a	Processing benefit claims – days	105 days	97 days	Decrease in Number of Days 41 days	1.610
BV079a	Benefit processing accuracy	94%	100%	Increase in Percentage 99%	1.053
BV079b	Recovered overpayments	40.8%	44.1%	Increase in Percentage 38.9%	0.953
BV082a+b	Recycled/composted waste	6.07%	6.56%	Increase in Percentage 12.00%	1.977
BV109*	Percentage of all planning applications within 8 weeks	77%	83.2%	Increase in Percentage 62.0%	0.805
BV126a	Domestic burglaries 1K household	10.61	9.8	Decrease in Number 9.4	1.114
BV157	Percentage of transactions electronic	46.5%	50.2%	Increase in Percentage 50.0%	1.075
BV184a	Percentage non-decent houses @ 1/4	39%	36.1%	Decrease in Percentage 48.1%	0.767

* No longer national BVPI's – Still calculated in accordance with definitions as per Baseline Indicator

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APPENDIX G**Positive Interventions – Regeneration Initiatives Strategy 2004/05 to 2008/09**

Strand	Theme	2004/05 (Note1)	2004/05 (Note2)	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total 2004/05 to 2008/09 (Note 3)
1	Major Area Based/ Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes	217,000	200,000	2,000,000	2,200,000	2,200,000	2,000,000	8,600,000
2	Strategic Investments	545,000	200,000	1,000,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,000,000	5,200,000
3	Enhanced Portfolio Capital Programmes	288,000	200,000	250,000	350,000	350,000	250,000	1,400,000
4	Improvement of Community Assets	0	75,000	250,000	350,000	350,000	250,000	1,275,000
5	Local Area Programme	100,000	150,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,150,000
	Programme Costs Sub Total	1,150,000	825,000	4,500,000	5,400,000	5,400,000	4,500,000	20,625,000
	Salary Costs		50,000	280,000	290,000	300,000	312,000	1,232,000
	Fees		125,000	720,000	810,000	800,000	688,000	3,143,000
	Fees Sub Total (Note 4)		175,000	1,000,000	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,000,000	4,375,000
	Total Planned Expenditure		1,000,000	5,500,000	6,500,000	6,500,000	5,500,000	25,000,000
	Budget Forecast		1,000,000	5,500,000	6,500,000	6,500,000	5,500,000	25,000,000

Notes

- 1 2004/05 Regeneration Services Capital Programme Total Expenditure as approved July 2004
- 2 Additional Capital Allocations 2004/05
- 3 Total excludes 2004/05 approved Regeneration Services Capital Programme as at July 2004
Fees based on 17.5% over Programme period, rather than annual
4 expenditure

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Annual budget-setting timetable/process – Commencing January 2005

Month	Key Stages
Jan - May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with Members on Council Tax strategy as set out in the draft Corporate Plan and Medium Terms Financial Plan • Preparation of updated financial resources information • Review of strategic intentions by Members and Chief Officers • Review of previous year's service performance and identification of changes required for following year • Indicative budget allocations set for each portfolio/service • Review of service priorities
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Workforce Plan (Rolling 3-Year Forecasts) containing budget strategy (revenue and capital) in light of strategic priorities
July - Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further consultation on strategic direction and priorities with stakeholders • Revenue and Capital budget setting guidance issued • Preparation of detailed 3 year service plans begins in consultation with Members, service users and staff
Oct - Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further consultation with elected Members • Draft service plans submitted for Working Groups • ODPM announce Local Government Finance Settlement • Budget Strategy reviewed in light of Government announcements • Strategic plan reviewed in light of Government announcements • Indicative budget allocations revised
Jan - Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft budgets issued to all Members • Four week consultation process commences involving: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All Scrutiny Committees – Stakeholders and Key Partners – Council Tax Focus Groups – Tenants Focus Groups and Residents Associations • Strategic plan refined • Service plans refined and matched with budget • Budgets finalised and matched to service plans • Finalisation of General Fund budget • Set Council Tax
Feb - Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital and Revenue Budgets finalised based on confirmed carry forward position • Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plans updated • Service plans finalised, approved and published • Performance review information gathered
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish revised/updated Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Workforce Plan (Rolling 3-Year Forecasts) containing budget strategy (revenue and capital) in light of strategic priorities

APPENDIX I

Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08 Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : A Healthy Borough			
Safeguarding public health	Promoting independent living	Creating leisure opportunities	Promoting cultural activities
Ensure that levels of public health in the Borough are in line with regional and national standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review resources/allocation of grant monies/partnership working ➤ Develop shared SMART targets at LSP level ➤ Provide weekly refuse collection service to all domestic households ➤ Provide appointment based collection service for bulky household waste ➤ Review Customer Charter offering service guarantees 	Provide a high quality, efficient and effective Carelink Service, which meets the 24/7 monitoring needs of the Supporting People Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review and improve effectiveness of the combined control room service ➤ Review and improve the Carelink warden service 	Improve customer and non-customer communication and engagement to enable better marketing of leisure opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement a Smartcard Membership Scheme and online booking system ➤ Assess related management information to inform future service provision 	Develop the Borough as a tourist area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adopt Regional and County Tourism Strategies ➤ Undertake Tourism audit and develop a local tourism strategy/plan
Improve the health of local people suffering from long term illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extend Fit For Life scheme to all residents across the Borough ➤ Deliver the National Physical Activity Target 	Maintain and adapt properties to allow vulnerable adults to remain within their homes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Allocate Private Sector Renewals and Grants ➤ Provide a customer focussed Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Service ➤ Explore options to diversify funding for clients 	Proactively engage children and young people in leisure activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make the mobile skate park available in Town/Parish Council venues ➤ Market the mobile skate park for hire at special events ➤ Work with partners to deliver a programme of summer play arrangements ➤ Provide diversionary activities in line with the Positive Futures Initiative ➤ Promote/provide facilities for those aiming to excel in their chosen sport ➤ Deliver physical activities to "At Risk" Young People aged 10–19 years ➤ Provide sporting pathways through the "Sporting Hub" ➤ Implement the National Swimming Development Programme 	Mainstream Arts into the strategic development of the Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop the emerging "Arts Hub" in line with Council priorities
Ensure that the Council's playground equipment is safe to use and properly maintained <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake weekly/quarterly internal inspections ➤ Commission annual external independent inspections 			Promote South West Durham as a visitor destination for railway heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maximise marketing opportunities for existing visitor attractions in the area ➤ Provide a Lifelong Learning facility to promote railway heritage history

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**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : A Healthy Borough**

Safeguarding public health	Promoting independent living	Creating leisure opportunities	Promoting cultural activities
<p>Provide an efficient and effective Environmental Health Service, ensuring compliance with statutory obligations and protection of public health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake risk based inspection programme for High Risk Food Premises ➤ Introduce appointments for pest control/general public health requests ➤ Implementing risk based inspection programme for air pollution processes ➤ Implement HSC strategy for workplace safety ➤ Work with HSC to focus resources on agreed health and safety priorities ➤ Implement transfer of licensing from Magistrates Courts to the Council ➤ Review policy/procedures for licensing hackney carriages/private vehicles 		<p>Provide modern leisure opportunities and facilities that reflect the changing needs of customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Securing partnership-based investment for Fitness Suites ➤ Securing partnership-based investment for Regional Gymnastics Centre 	

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**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : An Attractive Borough**

Ensuring a cleaner, greener environment	Improving towns, villages and the countryside	Reducing waste and managing natural resources
<p>Develop a partnership approach to the monitoring and improvement of local environmental conditions relevant to street cleansing activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish cross-agency teams with Police and Residents Associations ➤ Baseline existing local conditions using BV199 inspection methods ➤ Examine new approaches to tackling litter, fly tipping, dog fouling, graffiti ➤ Increase levels of enforcement and educational activity to raise awareness 	<p>Improve the design and environmental quality of towns and villages in the Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deliver Major Centres Programmes in Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe Deliver Urban Renaissance Programme to small/medium settlements ➤ Deliver Town Centre Management initiative 	<p>Increase recycling rates in accordance with the Waste Management Strategy to ensure that local and national recycling targets are met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement the Waste Management Strategy ➤ Extend the green waste collection service to all areas in the Borough ➤ Devise/implement cultural programme of performance workshops, exhibitions and performances promoting waste recycling
<p>Ensure the Borough contains high quality green spaces and floral displays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain beds, open spaces/verges, hedges and trees ➤ Devise/implement cultural programme of performance workshops, exhibitions and performances promoting street cleansing 	<p>Provide a high quality, efficient and customer-focused planning service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase the speed and quality of processing of planning applications ➤ Maximise Planning Delivery Grant by close monitoring of performance ➤ Implement a the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 	<p>Raise awareness of sustainability issues within the Council and external organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare a Climate Change Strategy ➤ Assess all plans and programmes likely to affect the environment

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**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : A Prosperous Borough**

Promoting business and employment opportunities		Maximising learning opportunities	
<p>Proactively encourage and support the development of new businesses/social enterprises across the Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Determine local/regional business formation/social enterprise baselines ➤ Raise awareness of SBC types and levels of support 	<p>Ensure that the educational standards and skills of Borough residents are in line with regional and national standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prioritise resources/allocation of grant monies/partnership working ➤ Extend family programmes to improve basic skills ➤ Develop community learning centres via SLB Partnership ➤ Extend existing school-based initiatives 		
<p>Promote economic diversification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide business advice via County Durham Business Support Network ➤ Encourage development of the knowledge economy ➤ Attract further inward investment to create/safeguard jobs ➤ Influence Regional Spatial, Northern Way and Tourism Strategies Maximise the economic potential of NetPark ➤ Develop business support clusters and bespoke training programmes ➤ Develop and promote key strategic business sites and premises ➤ Encourage investment in the more localised employment sites 	<p>Improve the employability of long-term unemployed residents and create opportunities for school leavers to progress into apprenticeship/employment training programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deliver vocational training in personal development, basic skills support, job search and work experience ➤ Establish a work-based learning association within South West Durham ➤ Promote/deliver a range of vocational/non-vocational training opportunities 		
<p>Support the development of the local workforce's skills base – matching those required by business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enhance linkages between the education sector and business ➤ Increase investment in workforce/employer development and training ➤ Enhance support for small business growth and recruitment 			
<p>Reduce the inequalities and lack of opportunities between children born in designated SureStart areas and the rest of the Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create new Sure Start services and review existing services ➤ Organise and deliver employment fairs ➤ Develop links with Job Centre Plus and deliver job drop-in sessions ➤ Create links with educational, training and employment agencies 			

Quality Services for Local People
"Working towards creating a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough, with strong communities"

**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : A Borough with Strong Communities**

Securing quality affordable housing		Promoting safer neighbourhoods	Engaging local communities and promoting local democracy
<p>Increase investment in Sedgefield Borough Council housing stock to achieve tenants aspirations for stock improvements and service developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Secure "Yes" vote from tenants in Large Scale Voluntary Transfer ballot ➤ Establish local RSL (Housing Association) within Sedgefield Borough ➤ Improve existing Council housing stock to the Decent Homes Standard 	<p>Design/develop Safer Communities through multi-agency partnerships to tackle anti-social behaviour within Council Housing Estates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop/publish Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 aligned policy/procedures ➤ Establish measures for quality tenancy enforcement action ➤ Provide diversionary activities for children/young people in housing estates 	<p>Support the successful operation of the Sedgefield Borough Community Empowerment Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop a Local Community Empowerment Network ➤ Maintain support for CAVOS against established Service Level Agreement ➤ Support/develop local community regeneration partnerships 	
<p>Manage housing needs and priorities within the Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare revised Housing Strategy and achieve a "Fit for Purpose" rating ➤ Evaluate and extend the neighbourhood management pilot ➤ Review Homelessness Strategy reflecting increases in homelessness 	<p>Tackle domestic violence with the focus on prevention, support (including housing options) and justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve (and measure) coordination/delivery of services for DV victims ➤ Prepare detailed action plan to support the domestic violence Strategy ➤ Devise/Implement cultural programme of performance workshops, exhibitions and performances tackling fear of crime/domestic violence 	<p>Ensure appropriate and timely public access to Council documentation and diaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement an electronic online democratic services system 	
<p>Review the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to reflect landlord priorities and to reflect overarching aims of the Housing Strategy Statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare revised HRA Business Plan and achieve a "Fit for Purpose" rating 	<p>Actively contribute to crime reduction through the provision of preventative measures – CCTV and Community Alarms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review the functionality of the current control room service. ➤ Review effectiveness/responsiveness of CCTV service 	<p>Ensure the effective operation of the Overview and Scrutiny function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Update Overview & Scrutiny Guide ➤ Establish an Overview and Scrutiny Website 	

Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08 Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : A Borough with Strong Communities	
Securing quality affordable housing	<p>Implement revised procurement arrangements to deliver high quality improvements to Sedgefield's housing stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop multi-skilled workforce for repairs and improvement works ➤ Develop mobile working systems with repairs and improvement services ➤ Implement partnering aims and objectives within all repairs services <p>Assist in the delivery of the regeneration of the Council's priority areas for Older Private Sector Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deliver area based interventions using existing housing legislation ➤ Rebalance housing markets in Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and Chilton
Promoting safer neighbourhoods	<p>Expand the Neighbourhood Warden service in accordance with identified Council priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop/implement options for extension of current partnership working ➤ Increase number of neighbourhood wardens across the Borough
Engaging local communities and promoting local democracy	<p>Develop knowledge and skills base of elected members to increase their effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain/deliver Elected Member Development Programme ➤ Implement the IDeA Members Charter ➤ Provide elected members with a lap top and associated training

Quality Services for Local People
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**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : Corporate Values**

Being open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive	Consult with service users, customers and partners	Invest in our people [employees]	Work in partnership with others
<p>Improve access to services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement Countywide CRM solution ➤ Develop/deliver IEG4 Strategy and linked Priority Service Outcomes ➤ Develop an interactive website that is user friendly and accessible <p>Ensure seamless, integrated service delivery that meets the needs/aspirations of all service users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Employ a Customer Services Manager ➤ Devise measures to mainstream a corporate customer service ethos <p>Promote the Council's Corporate Ambitions and create/enhance a reputation as a provider of quality local services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement the External Communications Strategy ➤ Develop a new corporate identity and a supporting suite of key messages <p>Develop the Council's approach to ensuring Equality and Diversity In all services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Employ a dedicated officer to drive forward the E&D agenda ➤ Achieve level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government ➤ Increase baseline score against the checklist to promote race equality 	<p>Ensure that the customer is at the centre of all service delivery and improve corporate consultation and community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop a Corporate Consultation Strategy ➤ Implement SIP arising from the Best Value Review ➤ Provide opportunities for meaningful tenant participation in housing ➤ Coordinate/undertake regular customer consultations ➤ Develop the Customer Contact Centre (CCC) ➤ Prepare service-based CCC Customer Charters ➤ Involve Council Taxpayers in MTFP/Budget and Council Tax processes 	<p>Ensure that all employees have the necessary skills and opportunities to develop these to effectively perform their jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitor Employee Development Programme (EDP) Interviews ➤ Revise structure of EDPs to incorporate performance appraisal element ➤ Produce/publish an annual Training Directory ➤ Develop/implement Senior Management Development Programme ➤ Establish a Women's Development Programme ➤ Retain Lexcel (Law Society's Accreditation Award) 	<p>Focus partnership working around key ambitions, values and priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement SIP arising from the Best Value Review ➤ Develop robust control arrangements for existing and new partnerships <p>Ensure that the Council actively participates in and is effectively represented on regional, sub-regional and local partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote the Council's work/ambitions at appropriate forums ➤ Support elected members in meeting partnership-based work/roles

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**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : Corporate Values**

Being open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive	Consult with service users, customers and partners	Invest in our people [employees]	Work in partnership with others
Provide a straightforward and responsive customer complaints process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement a new customer complaints policy and supporting procedures 			

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Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08 Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : Corporate Values			
Being responsible with and accountable for public finances	Achieve continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery	Tackle disadvantage and promote social inclusion	Take account of sustainability, risk management and crime and disorder
<p>Ensure that the Council has robust and effective corporate and financial governance arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare Annual Statement of Accounts in line with statutory deadlines ➤ Maintain and report on a risk based Annual Audit Plan ➤ Ensure effective budget setting and monitoring 	<p>Increase learning from and use of customer feedback from complaints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement effective complaints monitoring and reporting mechanisms ➤ Research and increase methods for customers to comment on services 	<p>Effectively engage children and young people in the work of the Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement the Children & Young People's Services Improvement Plan ➤ Undertake feasibility study into fixed play requirements across Borough ➤ Expand school holiday activities to increase participation of children with special needs 	<p>Embed Risk Management within the Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mainstream use of and reference to Risk Management Policy/Strategy ➤ Develop and implement an Action Plan and provide appropriate training
<p>Provide effective Asset Management to maximise the useful life and return on investment for the Councils Property Portfolio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare/maintain a robust Asset Management Plan ➤ Maximise income from Council assets ➤ Undertake effective planned maintenance to maintain the Council's assets <p>Provide effective project management of all capital projects</p>	<p>Align service improvement planning to corporate ambitions and values in line with best practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Revise service business planning arrangements aligned to Corporate Plan ➤ Implement a BVR programme aligned to corporate priorities and AC KLOE 	<p>Provide an efficient and effective customer focussed Benefits Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Achieve Charter Mark Accreditation for the Benefits Service ➤ Maximise benefits take up through a marketing strategy ➤ Undertake regular targeted take up campaigns with the DWP ➤ Achieve (low cost) top quartile performance in processing Benefits Claims 	

**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : Corporate Values**

Being responsible with and accountable for public finances	Achieve continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery	Tackle disadvantage and promote social inclusion	Take account of sustainability, risk management and crime and disorder
<p>Ensure that all external funding is aligned to corporate ambitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maximise investment income and resources available to service providers ➤ Co-ordinate, support and evaluate all applications for external funding ➤ Manage and administer regeneration programmes and projects 	<p>Maximising the benefits of new technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide and support an up-to-date, secure and reliable network 	<p>Ensure Council premises and facilities are accessible/available to all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure compliance with Disability Discrimination Act ➤ Implement/promote concessionary pricing schemes 	
<p>Co-ordinating and managing the prompt payment of Invoices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitor and report processing times for the timely payment of Invoices 			
<p>Reduce the levels (and cost) of sickness absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Target long term sickness and identified major causes of sickness ➤ Implement an Occupational Health Strategy 			
<p>Identify year-on-year cost-efficiency savings from the procurement of goods, services and works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review contract procedure rules ➤ Implement I&DeA Market Place and align with Agresso FMS ➤ Develop corporate approach to achievement of efficiency savings ➤ Monitor performance against LPSA1 basket of indicators 			

**Corporate Plan 2005/06 to 2007/08
Summary – Key Actions / Priorities : Corporate Values**

Being responsible with and accountable for public finances	Achieve continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery	Tackle disadvantage and promote social inclusion	Take account of sustainability, risk management and crime and disorder
Maximise Income Collection and secure year-on-year improvements in the collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Rents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitor performance and review recovery procedures and processes ➤ Develop a broader range of convenient payment opportunities 			

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Item 6

REPORT TO CABINET

11 NOVEMBER 2004

JOINT REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

Welfare and Communications Portfolio

EXTERNAL/EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the details of the proposed External and Employee Communications Strategies attached at Appendix 1 and 2 for consideration by Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The proposed strategies at Appendix 1 and 2 are considered and approved by Cabinet.
- 2.2 The Employee Communications Strategy be reported to the recognised Trade Unions via the Joint Consultative Group.
- 2.3 The External Communications Strategy and the Employee Communications Strategy be reported to the Performance Improvement Group and Cabinet.
- 2.4 The current secondment arrangement in respect of AN economic Development Officer be extended until further notice and the Head of Strategy and Regeneration considers any resulting implications for SBBS.
- 2.5 Additional funding of £11,000 be met from contingencies to fund the customer and staff surveys, staff and elected member training and the production of guides and publicity material as identified in the action plans.
- 2.6 The proposed employee recognition schemes be the subject of a separate report to Management Team.

3. DETAIL

Background Information

- 3.1 Recent external assessments of the Council (IDeA Fit for Purpose Assessment, SOLACE Peer Challenge, Investors in People Reassessment, CPA) have all identified communications as an issue in need of improvement. In addition, the internal Best Value Reviews of Consultation and Community Involvement and Human Resources also identified this as an area in need of improvement. The issues raised can be broadly categorised into:

- External Communication with Stakeholders
- Internal Communication with Employees

External Communications Strategy

- 3.2 The proposed strategy at Appendix 1 was prepared by Democratic Services in consultation with key officers and the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications. The strategy is externally focused in order to ensure that effective communication takes place between the Council and all its stakeholders and will underpin the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan. It addresses the findings of the CPA report, which highlighted communication with the community as a weakness.
- 3.3 Effective external communication is essential if the Council is to fully engage with all stakeholders and the overall aim of the strategy is to:
- Manage external communications in a timely manner in order to promote the Council's key ambitions and enhance its reputation as a provider of high quality services.
- 3.4 To achieve the overall aim the strategy identifies the following three key objectives, each supported by an action plan:
- Develop a sense of corporate identity and the consistent application of key messages
 - Raise public awareness of the Council's role as a provider of services
 - Determine the most cost-effective communications channels for providing access and service to each customer group
- 3.5 The Democratic Services section will be responsible for implementing the External Communications Strategy. This will be achieved through the action plan which will be monitored on a six monthly basis by the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications via the Performance Improvement Group and Scrutiny Committee 1. Success of the strategy will be tested via an annual survey issued to a cross section of stakeholders.

Employee Communications Strategy

- 3.6 The proposed strategy at Appendix 2 was prepared by the Human Resources Section in full consultation with the corporate and departmental Investors in People working groups and the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications. It addresses the findings of the various external assessments, the annual staff survey and the requirements of the forthcoming Information and Consultation Directive (April 2005), and will underpin the Corporate Plan, Workforce Plan and Human Resources Strategy.
- 3.7 Effective internal communication is critical to improved performance management and successful change management and the overarching aims of the strategy are to:
- Ensure a commitment to two-way communication with all staff, particularly those at the frontline.
 - Develop and maintain a culture of effective communication

- 3.8 The strategy introduces a two-way corporate communication framework that builds on existing performance management arrangements and other existing positive aspects of internal communication. These should become an integral part of the management arrangements in each department.
- 3.9 Clarification of specific communications duties and responsibilities of managers and other officers are clearly set out in the strategy together with a quick reference guide.
- 3.10 Both the IDeA Fit for Purpose Assessment and the liP reassessment identified that the Council needs to consider ways of ensuring staff at all levels feel valued, and that, in particular the Chief Executive Officer and Directors should consider their involvement in praising achievement. This has been addressed by the proposed 'Going the Extra Mile' Scheme'(GEM) and 'Long Service Awards,' which will be the subject of a separate Management Team report.
- 3.11 The Human Resources section will be responsible for implementing the Employee Communications Strategy. This will be achieved through the action plan, which will be integrated into the HR Strategy Action Plan. In accordance with the approved monitoring arrangements for the HR Strategy, progress will be monitored on a six monthly basis by the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications via the Performance Improvement Group and Scrutiny Committee 1. Success of the strategy will be tested via the annual staff satisfaction survey.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Resource implications are clearly identified in the action plans contained within the proposed strategies at Appendix 1 and 2 of this report. Both action plans identify a significant contribution from current staff based in the Democratic Services and Human Resources sections. Both sections are already committed to existing priorities and do not have sufficient spare capacity to effectively progress these actions.
- 4.2 To address this it is proposed that the existing secondment arrangement in respect of an Economic Development Officer be extended until further notice. This will cost an additional £5361(per annum).
- 4.3 The External Communications Strategy identifies training requirements for both officers and elected members, production of a number of guides and an externally facilitated survey, at a total cost of £8,000, for which there is currently no budgetary provision. The cost associated with the Plain English campaign can be met from existing budgets.

The Employee Communications Strategy identifies a requirement for a reference guide and an externally facilitated staff satisfaction survey at an approximate total cost of £3000 for which there is no current budgetary provision.

5. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Both strategies have been assessed by the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment Team and are in line with the Council's corporate Equalities Policies.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The External Communication Strategy was prepared in consultation with key officers and the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications.
- 6.2 The Employee Communications Strategy was prepared in full consultation with the corporate and departmental Investors in People working groups and the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications. Following discussion at Management Team the proposed strategy will be taken to the Joint Consultative Group for formal approval by the recognised Trade Unions.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Following Cabinet's consideration, this report will be subject to normal Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - External Communication Strategy
Appendix 2 - Employee Communication Strategy

Contact Officer: John Turnbull/Helen Darby
Telephone Number: (01388) 816166 Ext. 4392/4282
Email address: jturnbull@sedgefield.gov.uk
hdarby@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s) Contents are not ward specific.

Key Decision Validation Will involve expenditure which exceeds current budget. Will not directly impact on more than two wards in the Borough.

Background Papers

Corporate Human Resources Strategy
Investors in People Assessment Report – October 2003
Staff Satisfaction Survey 2002
Comprehensive Performance Assessment Final Report March 2004
IDeA Fit for Purpose Assessment

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Council's Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Council's S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH
EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS
STRATEGY**

FOREWORD

By Chief Executive Officer

The 'Modernising Government' agenda has provided the Council with new challenges and opportunities, together with the responsibility for providing the strategic lead to our communities through the promotion of economic, social and environmental well being of the Borough.

It is most important that the Council effectively communicates with stakeholders interested in the well being of the Borough so they are able to understand the changes, developments and initiatives that are shaping the Borough. Our partners all need to know and understand what Sedgefield Borough Council does, the decisions it makes on providing and funding services, the plans for the future and the challenges to be faced.

The Council realises that it must fully engage with its stakeholders for this to happen and to ensure that the decisions it makes are fully informed. This Communications Strategy sets out how we will work to achieve this.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Both the Government and the Audit Commission clearly state that strategic communication should be at the heart of any organisation and that communication, in its broadest sense, is the lifeblood of local government.
- 1.2 The Council believes that communication is necessary to ensure that its community leadership role is properly carried out, to keep stakeholders informed, to allow effective input from and dialogue with key stakeholders and to build confidence in the Council as a decision maker.
- 1.3 Greater awareness and better understanding of the Council, the context in which it operates and the services it provides is essential for the realisation of its key corporate ambitions:

Corporate Ambitions
A Healthy Borough: A place where people can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities
A Prosperous Borough: A place where high quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access jobs that are on offer
An Attractive Borough: A place where the natural and built environment is valued conserved and enhanced
A Borough with Strong Communities : A place where people can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods

- 1.4 At any one time the Council may wish to communicate with a range of audiences. The means of communication with and involvement with each group may be different. A targeted approach is required and this strategy is externally focused in order to ensure that effective communication takes place between the Council and all its stakeholders.
- 1.5 The recently published Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report on the Borough Council in March 2004 highlighted communication with the community as an area for improvement. Consequently, in addition to this strategy for communicating with external stakeholders, the Council is preparing strategies for communicating with elected members and employees and a strategy for external consultation. These strategies will be inter-linked.
- 1.6 It is essential that our stakeholders are fully engaged in and communicated with regarding the strategic changes taking place and this strategy will help co-ordinate communication and consultation exercises through out the Council.

2. CURRENT SITUATION

- 2.1 Existing communication methods range from face to face contact, by telephone, letter and e-mails to presentations, media relations and promotional campaigns. The 'Modernising Local Government' agenda has brought consultation and communication closer together by highlighting effective communication as a two

way process – the dominant theme is dialogue. This means listening to our stakeholders as well as informing them.

- 2.2 Communication with our stakeholders is currently not done in a co-ordinated, consistent and coherent way across the authority. Some departments have undertake their own marketing activities (Leisure Services for example), whilst all press and public relations activities are co-ordinated through Democratic Services.
- 2.3 Effective communication is essential if the Council is to fully engage with its stakeholders. This will take time and commitment and must become integral to the way we work and should not just be an 'add on'.
- 2.4 Attention must be given to minority and hard to reach groups and the Council has recently engaged with Language Line so that communication can take place with groups for whom English is not their first language. It is also essential to increase the capacity for providing information in other formats, such as audiotapes for those who may have a physical impairment or who have literacy or numeracy problems (30% of the population of the Borough have poor literacy and numeracy skills).
- 2.5 The Council has recently become a corporate member of the Plain English Campaign and is in the early stages of ensuring external documents and publications are written clearly and concisely and become accessible to all.
- 2.6 One of the primary means of communicating with stakeholders is through front-line staff and elected Members – including the Customer Service Centre, Housing Staff, Benefits Staff, Receptionists, Bar Attendants, Craftspeople, Refuse Collectors and so on). The Council is aware that improvements can be made in this area in order that front-line staff are communicating the correct facts and messages to stakeholders. The Internal Communication Framework will be key to this. However, it is important that front-line staff and elected members are seen as a primary external communication tool.

3. STAKEHOLDERS

- 3.1 At any one time, the Council may wish to communicate with a variety of stakeholders, which may include:
 - Residents (including families, young people, senior citizens, 'hard to reach' groups such as single parents, disabled people and ethnic minorities)
 - The media
 - Service users
 - Voluntary groups and organisations
 - The business community
 - Opinion formers (including MPs, national government, parish councillors, government agencies and other partners)
 - Parish and Town Councils
 - Partner agencies (service delivery)
- 3.2 How the Council communicates with these groups may be different, but each needs to be addressed in order to make the External Communication Strategy effective.

In order to maximise stakeholder involvement, it will be necessary to find out the preferred methods of communication and engagement from each group.

4. AIM OF THE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The overall aim of this strategy is to manage external communication effectively and in a timely manner in order to promote the Council's key ambitions and enhance its reputation as a provider of high quality services.
- 4.2 In order to achieve this, the strategy will concentrate on the following key objectives:
 - 4.2.1 Develop a sense of corporate identity and the consistent application of key messages
 - 4.2.2 Raise the public's awareness of the Council's role as a provider of services and in fulfilling its community leadership role
 - 4.2.3 Determine the most cost-effective communications channels for providing access and service to each customer group

5. LINKS TO OTHER COUNCIL STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES

- 5.1 The External Communications Strategy will help promote and inform stakeholders of the priorities highlighted by the following:
 - Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy
 - Council's Corporate Plan
 - CPA High Level Action Plan
 - Best Value Reviews/Service Improvement Plans
- 5.2 Additionally, the Strategy overlaps with almost every strategy and initiative within the Council

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

- 6.1 The Chief Executive's Department (Democratic Services) is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this strategy. This will be achieved through the series of action points attached at Appendix A.
- 6.2 Adherence to the strategy will be monitored and its success will be based on the difference it has made to stakeholders perception. This will be tested through an annual survey which will be sent to a cross section of stakeholders.
- 6.3 The effectiveness of the strategy will be monitored by the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications via the Performance Improvement Group and by Scrutiny Committee 1 on a six monthly basis.

7. TRAINING

- 7.1 Training needs of staff will be identified via the Employee Development Programme Interviews and will be incorporated into the Corporate Training Directory.
- 7.2 Training needs of elected members have been identified via the training needs analysis conducted by NEREO and incorporated into the elected Member Development Programme (Media Skills, Internet/E-Mail Skills, Community Engagement Skills).

THE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Action Points

Objective 1: Develop a sense of corporate identity and the consistent application of key messages				
Action	Who	When	Success Measures	Resource Implications
Agree and implement a corporate protocol and standards for dealing with press briefings, news releases and media statements	Democratic Services	Nov 2004	Increased profile of Sedgefield Borough	Staff time
Promote and implement the use of plain English in all council publications and correspondence	Democratic Services	On-going		£43 per 500 words (Minimum charge £150)
Develop and implement a corporate protocol and approach for the delivery of the Communication Strategy which all departments have signed up to	Democratic Services and Directors	Dec 2004	Uniformed approach across the Council when engaging with its stakeholders	None
Deliver a series of training sessions on the External Communication Strategy to Heads of Service and nominated staff through the Performance Management Development Programme.	External Facilitator	Jan 2005	Uniformed approach across the Council when engaging with its stakeholders	Staff time Course costs estimated £1,000.
Ensure that all Council documentation and publications include the Language Line statement regarding translation	Heads of Service	Oct 2004	Evidence on documents	None
Develop Council documentation so that it is accessible to people with disabilities or	Heads of Service	Jan 2005	Increased number of requests for information	Production of materials in other formats Estimated

physical impairments				£1,000.
Use existing satisfaction surveys to inform a customer-focused approach to communications	Customer Relations/ Complaints Team	Dec 2004	Increased levels of satisfaction on customer surveys as awareness is raised	Staff time
Maintain Media training needs for Members and officers	Heads of Service and Section Heads	Nov 2004	Evidence in corporate training plan	Staff time Facilitators fee – Approx. £1,500.

Objective 2: Raise public awareness of the Council's role as a provider of services and in fulfilling its community leadership role				
Action	Who	When	Success Measures	Resource Implications
Publicise achievements and successes of the Council	Democratic Services and Heads of Service	On-going	Press coverage	Staff time
Develop 'Inform' as the Council's flagship communication method	Democratic Services	Dec 2004	Annual satisfaction survey with readers	None
Ensure that the Council's website is kept up to date and introduce on-line forums so that the public can engage in two way communication	ICT Dept	Jan 2005	Number of comments/questions via on-line forums. Number of hits on website	Staff time
Carry out annual communications surveys to ascertain stakeholders perceptions and produce a report of the results	Democratic Services	Dec 2004	Increased satisfaction ratings at next survey as communication methods mirror what stakeholders want	Staff time. Costs associated with possible use of NWA - £3,000
Develop and implement methods of communication based upon the above findings, identify news opportunities and produce timely press releases for all media mediums within given deadlines	Democratic Services	Feb 2005	Evidence of articles in media	Staff time
Integrate departmental systems with the	ICT Dept and Heads of	March 2005	Number of hits on website	Staff time

Internet where possible and where security can be assured	Service			
Develop and implement a controlled corporate approach to the flow of information going to stakeholders	Democratic Services and Heads of Service	On-going	Stakeholder satisfaction with the amount and content of information received	Staff time

Objective 3: Determine the most cost effective communications channels for providing access and service to each customer group

Action	Who	When	Success Measures	Resource Implications
Ask our stakeholders how they would like to be communicated/engaged with	Democratic Services	Dec 2004	Better communications methods	Staff time and production of questionnaires. Use of LSPs
Develop and implement a comprehensive, useful and relevant on-line library of Council agendas/minutes and other documents (such as policies etc) – link with FOI Publication Scheme	Principal Democratic Services Officer	March 2005	Number of hits on website	Staff time
Develop interactive transactions for all relevant services	ICT Dept and Heads of Service	April 2005	Usage of interactive transactions monitored over a year	Staff time
Undertake a review of present key opinion formers and analyse their communication needs	Democratic Services	Dec 2004	Increased satisfaction as communication methods mirror what stakeholders want	Staff time
Investigate new guides such as 'Who is your Councillor', 'A-Z of the Borough' and 'Frequently Asked Questions – Our Guide to Services'	Democratic Services	May 2005	Number of requests for information	Production costs - £1,500. Staff time

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SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Draft 1
September 2004

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FOREWORD

If we are to improve the quality of life for the people of Sedgefield Borough we must provide a broad range of relevant and excellent services to all our stakeholders and high standards should become the norm. Communication with and between employees is essential if we are to achieve this aim.

I believe we have a culture at Sedgefield where we are constantly striving to improve and provide better services to the people of the Borough. Strategies, plans, policies and performance indicators are in abundance and all have their role to play. They lay the foundations on which our quality services are built, but they need to be understood by our employees, in ways that are meaningful and with which employees feel comfortable.

As such, communication is an essential part of good management that helps achieve effective delivery of services. This strategy will help us through a planned programme of change over the coming years and will contribute significantly to our aim of service excellence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Norman Vaulks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Norman Vaulks, Chief Executive

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council believes that communicating effectively with employees and involving them through comment and feedback is essential to achieving its ambitions, strengthen performance and secure long-term success. This strategy is internally focused and underpins the aims of the Corporate Plan and therefore, by its nature will need to be regularly reviewed and refined as the Council's corporate planning framework develops.

In addition to this strategy the Council is also developing:

- A strategy for communicating with elected members (prepared by Democratic Services)
- A strategy for consulting with employees (prepared by Human Resources)
- An external marketing/PR strategy (prepared by Democratic Services)
- An external consultation strategy (prepared by Strategy and Regeneration)

The Information and Consultation Directive comes into force in April 2005 and gives employees a right to be:

- informed about the Council's economic situation
- informed and consulted about employment prospects
- informed and consulted about decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or contractual relations, including redundancies and transfers.

Additionally, the Information and Consultation Directive will give employees in the UK new rights to information and consultation. Currently, employee rights are limited to consultation about collective redundancies, transfers of undertakings ("TUPE"), and health and safety related matters. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) will consult widely about implementation in the UK and when the final text is adopted the Council will amend this strategy as required.

This strategy makes moves towards ensuring the 'informing' aspects of the Directive are met. The 'consultation' aspects of the Directive will be covered by a separate strategy for employee consultation (both union and non-union).

2. CURRENT SITUATION

In 2003 the Council underwent four corporate external assessments – the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA) Fit for Purpose Assessment, the SOLACE Peer Challenge, Investors in People (IiP) and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Communication was identified as an area in need of improvement in all assessments (Appendix 1) and actions have been included in the relevant emerging action/improvement plans to address this.

The annual employee satisfaction survey is a further important source of information. The findings of this survey relevant to communication (Appendix 2) have also been reflected in this strategy.

In summary, the positive aspects of internal communication are:

- ❑ communication between employees and line managers is generally considered to be effective
- ❑ section meetings are held on a regular basis and staff are encouraged to contribute views
- ❑ communications within teams are effective
- ❑ staff are generally clear about their role and how this impacts on the business plan
- ❑ departmental newsletters are effective

The main criticisms of staff are that:

- ❑ not everyone receives important information at the same time
- ❑ staff are not kept up to date with changes as they happen
- ❑ successes are not celebrated or praised
- ❑ achievements are not recognised
- ❑ communication with front-line staff requires improvement, particularly with on-site workers
- ❑ more could be done to harness enthusiasm

3. AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

Effective internal communication is critical to improved performance management and successful change management. To ensure the strengths identified by the liP reassessment and the satisfaction survey are built upon, and the areas for improvement recommended by SOLACE, I&DeA and CPA are addressed, the following aims of this strategy are to:

- ❑ Ensure a commitment to two-way communication with all staff, particularly those at the ‘front line’
- ❑ Develop and maintain a culture of effective communication

To achieve this the Council will:

- ❑ Communicate with staff in a planned and consistent manner in accordance with the Communication Guidelines at Appendix 3 and the corporate Communication Framework at Appendices 4 and 5.
- ❑ Produce information that is relevant, easily understood and timely
- ❑ Monitor effectiveness of communication, identify and share best practice and therefore continuously improve communication channels/techniques.

4. CORPORATE COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

To ensure a consistent corporate approach to communication with employees, it is important that all departments of the Council operate to an agreed corporate communication framework. This should be programmed into the activities of each department. The following framework has been developed by building on the positive aspects of internal communication and will ensure an effective and consistent framework for two-way communication is in place:

4.1 DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK (SEE APPENDIX 4)

These are the channels that are used to inform, explain, prompt action, provide a sense of direction and monitor performance. They are particularly important in a time of change. Over 80% of staff consider communication arrangements with their line manager to be effective. The following framework builds on existing good practice with a particular view to improving procedures for communicating with front-line staff.

4.1.1 Departmental Performance Meetings – will be held on a monthly basis between the Director and Heads of Service. The agenda will be determined by the Director. These meetings will be a vehicle for communicating decisions made at a political and management team level and to monitor the performance of the department in relation to Key, Best Value and Local Performance Indicators.

4.1.2 Manager Briefing Sheet – will be prepared for Team Leaders/Section Heads by the Head of Service, following the monthly departmental performance meeting. The briefing sheet will be in a corporate standard format and should contain easy to understand summaries of the issues discussed at the departmental performance meeting. The issues noted on the manager briefing sheet will be explained at Service Performance Meetings but should be written in a format that can be understood without a need for explanation.

4.1.3 Service Performance Meetings – will take place on a monthly basis between the Head of Service and the team leaders/section heads for which he/she is responsible. The Manager briefing sheet will be discussed at this meeting to ensure decisions made at Management Team and at political meetings continue to be communicated downwards. In addition, this meeting will be a regular venue for discussing specific service performance.

4.1.4 Staff Briefing Sheet – will be prepared for employees by the team leaders/section head, following the monthly service performance meeting. The briefing sheet will be in a corporate standard format and should contain easy to understand and relevant summaries of the issues discussed at the Service Performance Meetings. The staff briefing sheet may be explained at team meetings but should be written in a format that can be understood without a need for explanation.

4.1.5 Team Meetings – the communication framework does not specify the frequency or format of team meetings as it is recognised that this is dependent on the nature of the service, size of the team, geographic spread of the team etc. It is the responsibility of team leaders/section heads/supervisors to ensure that the employees for which they are responsible are adequately informed and updated and the way in which they do this must be appropriate to their particular team. Team meetings may be appropriate, however, could be supplemented by other communication methods as set out at Para 4.2.

4.2 DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION – OTHER TOOLS

There are occasions when it may not be practical to delay communicating information until a programmed meeting can take place, or where it is necessary to supplement normal channels with other methods. On these occasions effective downward communication tools need to be carefully selected and will depend on the nature of the service and the specific requirements of the team. Suggestions include:

Internal newsletters (Grapevine magazine, departmental newsletters, 'one-off' newsletters)
Intranet and emails
Electronic forums

The advantages and disadvantages of communication methods are discussed at Appendix 6.

4.3 UPWARD COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK (SEE APPENDIX 5)

As well as ensuring that effective downward communication channels are in place, it is also important to ensure corporate mechanisms exist for listening to employees' views and suggestions (upwards communications). The following framework has been developed:

4.3.1 **Stage 1** – An employee should normally raise a suggestion, idea or issue informally (either verbally or in writing) with his/her team leader. Alternatively, they may also raise the issue via the following channel(s):

- with the departmental Staff Focus Group representative
- with the departmental liP Group representative

These officers may then take appropriate action to deal with the issue. If further debate/discussion is required or if approval at a higher level is needed, the matter will be referred to Stage 2

4.3.2 **Stage 2** - Service Performance Meeting/Staff Focus Group meeting/liP Group meeting or Joint Shop Stewards meeting)

Emerging issues that cannot be resolved by a team leader will normally be referred to the monthly service performance meeting and discussed with the Head of Service.

Alternatively, if a member of staff has raised the issue via one of the alternative channels outlined at Para 4.3.1 above, it will be discussed at the relevant meeting.

The staff focus group is a new group consisting of a 'diagonal slice' of employees from across the Council. One third of the membership of the group will be refreshed annually. The group is informal in nature and meets as and when required. The HR Section will use this group as a sounding board to inform the development of policy. Items can be placed on the agenda by the

HR Section, managers, or employees. The staff focus group will also operate a discussion forum on the intranet.

Issues that cannot be approved at this stage may be referred to Stage 3.

Stage 3 -. Emerging issues will only be referred to Stage 3 if they cannot be resolved or if they require approval by a Director. In this case the Director may speak to the individual directly or will discuss the issue at the monthly departmental performance meeting. Occasionally, where an issue is urgent a special meeting may need to be convened. If the issue has corporate implications the Director may also choose to raise it at Management Team or Political levels.

4.3.4 Employee Development Interviews

Where an employee wishes to raise a suggestion/issue relating to their job they also have an opportunity to do this in confidence via the annual/six monthly employee development interview. The interviewer will then determine the most appropriate route to take deal with the issue.

4.4 UPWARD COMMUNICATION – OTHER TOOLS

The above framework provides a mechanism for employees of the Council to raise issues/suggestions and ideas. There are occasions when it may not be practical to use this framework, or where it is necessary to supplement normal channels with other methods. On these occasions effective upward communication tools could include:

- Ad-hoc team meetings
- Intranet and emails
- Electronic forums
- 'Walking the job'
- Employee Satisfaction Surveys

The most appropriate communication method to use will depend on the information/issue which requires communicating. The advantages and disadvantages of some of the numerous methods of communication are discussed at Appendix 6.

4.5 SIDEWAYS COMMUNICATION

Sideways Communication is a term used to describe communication between members of a team/section and/or communication between teams within a Section/Department. The Council's move towards e-government and the increasing availability of technology (CRM) will facilitate improvements in this form of communication.

Customers should receive a consistent standard of service regardless of which department or officer they are dealing with. Customers do not understand the departmental structure of the Council, nor should they be expected to. Once a customer has explained their problem/situation to a member of staff, good

communication should ensure the matter is passed on speedily and accurately. Effective sideways communication channels should ensure issues can be dealt with in the event of a member of staff being on holiday or absent from work and is the responsibility of employees and managers at all levels. The effectiveness of this form of communication will be measured using customer satisfaction surveys.

5. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Managers should be aware that one method of communication is not always appropriate and should choose the method that best suits the specific requirements of the staff within their team.

Special consideration should be given to the following categories of staff:

Shift workers
Part-Time workers
Trainees and Modern Apprentices (young workers)
On-Site workers
Mobile workers
Employees with special needs
Employees from ethnic origin

The advantages and disadvantages of the various communication methods that could be deployed with these staff are discussed at Appendix 6.

6. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH EMPLOYEES – RESPONSIBILITIES (See Appendix 7 for a Quick Reference Guide to communication duties and responsibilities)

6.1 Key duties and responsibilities of the Chief Executive:

- ❑ Ensure that there is an internal communication strategy for communicating with employees
- ❑ Allocate responsibility for the strategy and provide adequate resources and support for its delivery
- ❑ Determine when matters are of such high importance that they justify personal communication either in written form or via 'open forums'.
- ❑ Ensure other members of Management Team have the information they need to be able to inform the staff in their department
- ❑ 'Walk the job' from time to time, to keep in touch with the level of staff motivation, concerns and related work problems
- ❑ Ensure achievements are identified and develop a formal mechanism for recognising achievements of individuals and teams

6.2 Key duties and responsibilities of Directors

- ❑ Ensure that the agreed corporate communication framework for 2-way communication is operating effectively within the department.

- Ensure that lateral communication channels are in place and are operating effectively.
- Ensure Heads of Service have responsibility for communication and possess the skills required to communicate effectively.
- Determine when matters are of such high importance that they justify personal communication to Heads of Service and/or staff within the department either in written form or via open forums.
- 'Walk the job' from time to time, to keep in touch with the level of staff motivation, concerns and related work problems
- Hold monthly departmental performance meetings to ensure Heads of Service have the information they need to be able to inform their staff
- Operate an 'open door' policy to ensure they keep in touch with the level of staff motivation, concerns and related work problems
- Formally identify and recognise achievement and nominate teams/individuals for achievement awards

6.3 Key duties and responsibilities of Heads of Service:

- Attend monthly departmental performance meetings
- Arrange and chair monthly service performance meetings with team leaders/section heads
- Prepare a manager briefing sheet (Standard corporate format) for circulation to team leaders/section heads
- Listen to emerging staff concerns via upwards communication channels
- Liaise with HR about issues – Heads of Service are likely to be the first person that team leaders will approach for an answer
- Take responsibility for keeping staff informed and updated, find answers and ensure team leaders/section heads have the necessary information to answer enquiries they may receive from their staff.
- Ensure effective and appropriate lateral communications systems are in place between teams and individuals
- Formally recognise and praise achievement

6.4 Key duties and responsibilities of team leaders (generic term used to describe Section Heads, Supervisors etc.)

- Attend monthly service performance meeting
- Call team meetings as and when required
- Prepare a staff briefing sheet (Standard corporate format) for circulation to staff
- Listen and respond to emerging staff concerns
- Talk to staff about key management decisions
- Be clear and consistent about information given to staff.
- Take responsibility for keeping staff informed and updated, and regularly disseminate information
- Find answers for staff and ensure they have the necessary information to answer enquiries they may receive from the public.
- Ensure lateral communications systems are operating effectively between teams and individuals
- Recognise and praise achievement as a matter of course

6.5 Key tasks of HR Section

- Take the lead in setting up communication arrangements and establish corporate mechanisms for communication channels
- Ensure that the potential implications of the EU Information and Consultation Directive are taken into account
- Regularly update staff lists, departures and new appointments
- Produce a corporate reference guide to internal communication with staff
- Include training on communication skills in management training and development programmes
- Monitor the Communication Strategy and report progress to the portfolio holder for Welfare and Communications and to Management Team in accordance with the monitoring arrangements set out at Para 10
- Ensure important matters are incorporated into the Grapevine newsletter
- Arrange ‘lunch with the leader’ sessions for recognising achievement and co-ordinate nominations from Directors

7. **RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT**

7.1 Both the I&DeA Fit for Purpose Assessment and the liP reassessment identified that the Council needs to consider ways of ensuring staff at all levels feel valued, and that, in particular the Chief Executive Officer and Directors should consider their involvement in praising achievement.

7.2 This strategy sets out the responsibilities/key tasks of the Chief Executive and Directors outlined at Para 6.1 and 6.2 in relation to recognising achievement, and, to ensure this responsibility is not overlooked, a formal vehicle for praising achievement is to be introduced.

7.3 The Council will hold a regular event to recognise achievement. Detailed criteria and guidelines for the event will be developed by the corporate liP group. The purpose of the event will be to recognise qualifications attained, projects achieved, major successes, increased performance levels, exemplary attendance levels etc. Nominations for the achievement awards will be accepted from Directors, and staff/teams at all levels will be eligible to apply, providing they comply with the relevant nomination criteria and complete the appropriate documentation. Appropriate arrangements will be made to ‘judge’ the nominations to ensure the decision is fair and equitable. Results will be published in the Grapevine newsletter.

7.4 The Council will hold an annual event to recognise long service and appropriate ‘gifts’ will be presented to employees to commemorate service milestones.

8. **BUILDING COMMUNICATION SKILLS/CAPACITY**

8.1 The Performance Management Development Programme for Heads of Service and nominated Team Leaders will provide a number of Senior Managers with the training they need to operate the corporate communication

framework and to deliver the key tasks set out at Section 6 and the actions set out in the action plan at Section 10 of this strategy.

- 8.2 Regular Senior Manager workshops were held during CPA preparations and were so successful that they will now continue to be used as a further mechanism for sharing best practice amongst managers in relation to several issues, including internal communication techniques and tools.
- 8.3 The Human Resources Section will produce a quick reference guide to internal communications for managers and staff. This will form the basis of any internal training courses and will be issued at corporate induction sessions.
- 8.4 Communication is the responsibility of everyone, therefore it is important that all members of staff are aware of the communication channels available to them, particularly upward communication channels. It will be the responsibility of Heads of Service, via their team leaders/Section Heads to convey this information to all staff.
- 8.5 As the staff and liP focus groups will represent staff and will be responsible for communicating decisions and actions back to staff in their departments, this group will receive specific training appropriate to their identified needs.
- 8.6 Communication training needs for staff will be identified via employee development interviews, in accordance with the Performance Management Framework.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS STRATEGY

- 9.1 The Human Resources Section is responsible for implementing this strategy This will be achieved through the action plan set out at Section 10. This Action Plan will form part of the HR Strategy and will be monitored in accordance with the HR Strategy monitoring arrangements.
- 9.2 Adherence to the strategy and the corporate communication framework will also be monitored by the departmental and corporate liP groups.
- 9.3 The success of the strategy will be judged by the difference it has made to employee perception. This will be tested by the annual employee satisfaction survey.
- 9.4 Politically, the effectiveness of this strategy will be monitored by the Lead Member for Welfare and Communications via the Performance Improvement Group and Scrutiny Committee 1.

10. THE WAY FORWARD

Outlined below is an Action Plan detailing the action required to make improvements within the context of the two strategic aims of this strategy:

Aim 1 - “Ensure a commitment to two-way communication with staff”

Aim 2 - “Develop and Maintain a culture of effective communications”

Action	Why	Who	When	Measure of Success	Cost
Agree and implement corporate framework for communicating with staff	To ensure a consistent and inclusive corporate approach	HR Section	Oct 2004	Levels of application of framework. Audited by liP groups	None
Formally launch Staff Focus Group	To provide a representative mechanism for upward communication.	HR Section	March 2005	Evidence of meetings of staff focus group	None
Introduce GEM scheme and long service awards	To provide a formal mechanism for recognising achievement	HR Section	Oct 2004	Satisfaction with arrangements tested by employee survey	TBD
Identify communication training needs for managers	To identify manager training requirements prior to PMDP	Section Heads and Heads of Service	Mar 2005	Evidence in corporate training plan	None
Produce an internal communication reference guide for managers and employees.	To build communication skills and provide guidance	HR Section	Oct 2004	Levels of awareness of framework. Tested by employee survey	Printing costs. Approx £1000
Set up “staff forum” on intranet	To ensure two-way communication is accessible to all.	HR Section IT Section	Dec 2004	Intranet usage. Levels of satisfaction	TBD
Ensure communications issues are addressed in business plans	To put communications “on the agenda”	All Business Plan Owners	July 2005	Evidence in business plans	None
Ensure the intranet is a useful communication tool and is widely available to all staff	To improve accessibility for all staff, including those with direct public contact.	IT Section	Dec 2004	Intranet usage. Levels of satisfaction	None

Action	Why	Who	When	Measure of Success	Cost
Ensure training in relation to communication skills is addressed in EDP's. (framework, methods, techniques)	To identify corporate staff training requirements	All Managers and Supervisors	Dec 2004	Evidence in departmental and corporate training plans	None
Arrange appropriate training	To improve communication skills	Human Resources Section	Mar 2005	Satisfaction with training. Post evaluation.	TBD
Undertake annual survey to assess effectiveness of communications	To check the effectiveness of communications	PWS Ltd External Facilitator	Mar 2005	Survey Results	Approx £2000

EXTRACTS FROM EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS 2003

I&DeA Fit For Purpose Report – May 2003

- “We suggest you review the approaches to bolster communication with front line staff and ensure they feel more valued. You may also want to do more to celebrate successes.”
- “Managers were very well informed of the developments elsewhere in the authority but, despite the improvements produced through the IIP process, felt that communication with front line staff could improve. This should include messages that show staff are valued at all levels. Some managers felt that front line staff were not sufficiently equipped to enable them to be ‘ambassadors for the authority’ within the community which could be a wasted opportunity for promoting the authority and developing services (“front line staff feel proud of their service but not (always) of the council”).”

SOLACE Peer Challenge – June 2003

- “More could be done to harness the enthusiasm of employees through improved and more consistent communication and engagement. Communications are reported by employees to be “top down” but improving.”

Investors In People – October 2003

- “Staff did feel they received appropriate and constructive feedback on a regular basis. Examples included EDP process, team meetings and one to one feedback. It was at a team level that staff believed their contribution was most recognised and ‘thank you’s’ were the norm between Line Manager and their staff.”
- “Team meetings are scheduled to ensure all staff have the opportunity to attend regardless of their status or shift pattern.”
- “The Council needs to ensure that at the most senior level the Chief Executive and his Directors have planned communications with employees that allow them to advise staff on future aims and objectives and give praise on past achievements.”
- “An example of good practice worth sharing are departmental newsletters which have helped staff to understand the changes that are impacting within their area.”
- “Areas that may be worth following through would be:
Communication Strategy – in particular Chief Executive and Director’s involvement in communicating future aims and objectives and praising achievements.”

Comprehensive Performance Assessment – November 2004

- “Communication within the organisation has limited penetration; office staff are better informed than those in remote locations. As a result front line staff are not fully engaged.”
- “There have been problems with on-site communication.”

APPENDIX 2

RESULTS OF ANNUAL EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY 2002

The most recent survey was undertaken in October 2002. The results of the survey which related to employee communication are as follows:

Passing down information

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Everyone receives important information at the same time.	30.7%	46.1%
I am kept up to date with changes as they happen.	38.3%	33.9%
The future direction of the organisation is clearly communicated	38.1%	29.7%
There is effective communication between my line manager and myself.	81.8%	8.4%
I understand the functions of the Council and how it is managed.	61.8%	9.6%
I could explain to someone who does not work here what the organisation is trying to achieve.	58.6%	11.2%

Forum for staff views

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
I am encouraged to feed back comments I get from customers.	52.4%	14.1%
I am encouraged to make suggestions about improving performance.	59.1%	16.2%
We have regular section meetings and I am encouraged to contribute my views.	71.2%	14.8%

Staff's understanding of how they contribute

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
I am clear about how my job relates to the Council and how well it is managed.	64.7%	11.2%
I have been made aware as to how my role impacts on the Business Plan.	55.6%	15.2%
I have been told how I can help the organisation succeed.	33.2%	24.7%

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF

Listed below are some key issues that should be addressed when communicating information:

ACCESSIBILITY

- ❑ Reduce barriers to accessing information through training and improved understanding
- ❑ Be innovative in developing different ways of communicating, including using new technology where appropriate
- ❑ Consider the audience when selecting the appropriate methods to maximise understanding
- ❑ Arrange meeting at times to maximise participation. This may involve meeting outside normal working hours.
- ❑ Written communication should be in Plain English

APPROPRIATE

- ❑ Where possible produce summaries rather than lengthy documents
- ❑ Avoid using unnecessary jargon
- ❑ Tailor communication method to the situation – sometimes speaking to someone is more effective than writing
- ❑ Be consistent and ensure the same message is transmitted
- ❑ Be sensitive to local issues
- ❑ Ensure communication material is unambiguous

RESPONSIVE

- ❑ Ensure communications are two-way
- ❑ Listen to feedback and interpret it impartially

TIMELY

- ❑ Ensure information is communicated in a timely manner
- ❑ Co-ordinate communication to avoid unnecessary duplication and information overload
- ❑ Give appropriate notice of meetings and avoid times when regular meetings may be scheduled
- ❑ Issue documentation in advance to allow the receiver to digest and understand

FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF

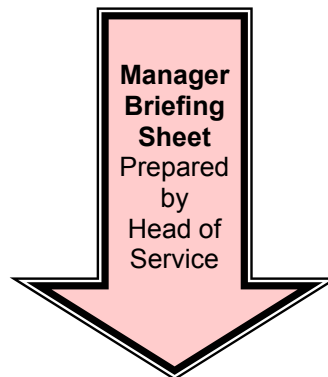
DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION

Management Team/Political Meetings



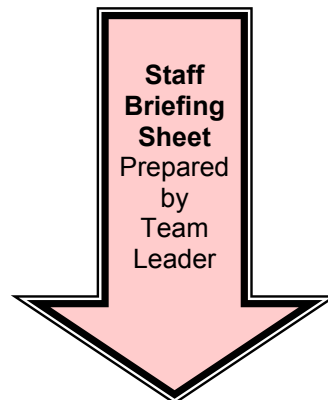
Departmental Performance Meeting
(between Directors and Heads of Service)

Monthly



Service Performance Meeting
(between Heads of Service and Team Leaders)

*Monthly – following
departmental
performance
meeting*



Ad-hoc Team Meetings
And/or other forms of communication

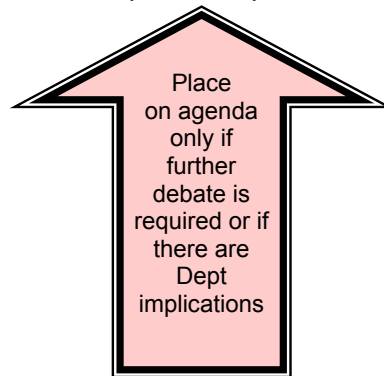
As and When

FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF

UPWARD COMMUNICATION

Departmental Performance Meeting

(Matter debated with Director. Corporate implications referred to Management Team)

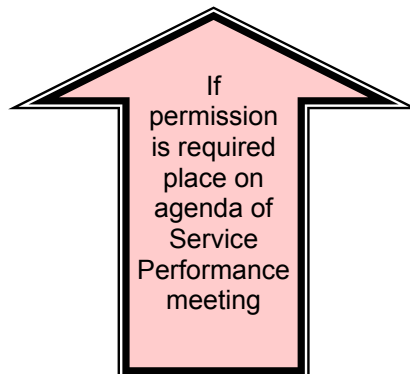


Staff Focus Group

Service Performance Meeting

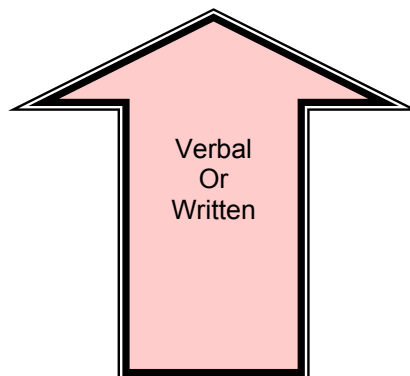
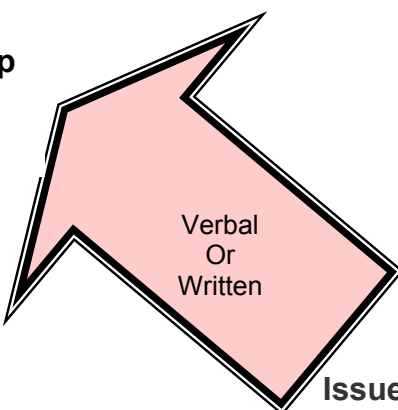
(Matter discussed with Heads of Service)

Joint Consultative

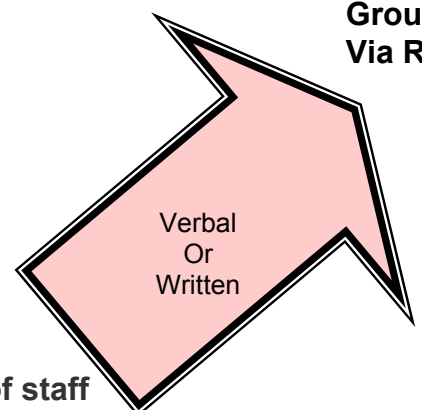


Team Leader – Resolve issue, implement suggestion, give explanation

liP Group Via Rep



Staff Focus Group Via Rep



Issue/suggestion identified by member of staff

COMMUNICATION METHODS – ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Open forums – could be organised to communicate important issues or announce major changes to employees. Open forums will normally be chaired by the Chief Executive Officer, Director or by a Head of Service. The advantages of open meetings are that: employees are given a sense that decision-makers value them sufficiently to take time to talk to them directly and respond to their questions or feedback; and decision-makers gain first-hand access to employees who will probably express not only their own concerns but also issues raised by service users.

The disadvantages of open meetings are that some people are reluctant to ask questions in large-scale open meetings; questions are often specific to a job or group of staff; planning and organisational effort are required, and large numbers of employees are taken 'off-the-job' simultaneously.

Ad-hoc Team Meetings - In periods of rapid change, separate and more frequent team briefings may be necessary. Meetings should allow for the views of staff to be fed back into the process. Care must be taken to ensure part-time workers, shift-workers or employees who operate flexible working are not excluded from team meetings. Care should also be taken to prevent service disruption and offices/services must not close to allow team meetings to take place. Where meetings have to be arranged outside normal working hours (front-line services), appropriate arrangements will be made to reimburse staff (time off in lieu, flexi-time etc.)

Employees generally prefer to receive information face to face from their immediate manager. Advantages of team briefings are that they allow more opportunities for two-way communication than large-scale open meetings; information can be tailored to meet the needs (and concerns of) particular teams; most people will feel more less constrained about asking questions; regular meetings give people confidence that they will hear the full story, and where a structure for team briefing exists, special 'fast messages' can be relayed to all staff.

The disadvantages of team briefings are that their success depends on the manager being able and willing to communicate messages in a brief and interesting way. This requires particular skills, which may need developing. Team briefing can also become talking shops or opportunities for propagating negative views if not managed properly.

Internal newsletters (Grapevine magazine, departmental newsletters, 'one-off' newsletters)

Grapevine is produced on a quarterly basis by the Human Resources Section in partnership with the Press and PR Officer. Grapevine has a defined purpose, style and editorial policy and special issues will be produced for major issues as they are announced. Departmental newsletters have been successful in the past as have 'one-off' newsletters for dealing with specific topics.

The benefits of a newsletter are that larger numbers of employees can be reached more quickly than organising face-to-face meetings; it is easier to reach part-timers and shift workers through newsletters than through meetings, and all employees will receive the same message.

The disadvantages of newsletters is that managers cannot guarantee that messages will be read or understood and individual questions can't be answered as effectively. In addition, care should be taken to ensure the printed document can be accessed by individuals who may have special requirements such as large print, different languages or formats.

Intranet and emails

Intranet messages and/or emails will be produced for major decisions as they are announced. The benefits of the intranet and emails are that larger numbers of employees can be reached more quickly than organising face-to-face meetings; it is easier to reach part-timers and shift workers (particularly if home e-mail addresses are available) and all employees will receive the same message. This communication method is particularly appropriate/appealing to younger workers. E-communication channels also allow for detailed information, such as figures, diagrams, maps etc. to be disseminated more cost effectively.

The disadvantages of the intranet and emails is that managers cannot guarantee that messages will be read or understood, and some staff may not have access to the technology or possess the skills required to gain access. Where an issue requires explanation or discussion this method should not be used as an easy way out of speaking to staff.

An electronic staff discussion forum will be a permanent feature of the Intranet to allow a two-way discussion with staff. This will be maintained by the HR Section. On occasions it may be necessary to set up a specific discussion forum with staff. This can be arranged by speaking to the HR Section.

Information in pay packets

As every member of staff receives a 'pay packet' on a regular basis, this remains to be a valid, efficient and effective method of communicating information to staff. This method is only useful for downward communication and then only where a letter or leaflet can give sufficient explanation.

'Walking the job'

This involves managers leaving their desks and talking to their employees. The advantages of 'walking the job' are that it gives employees the opportunity to speak on a one-to-one basis with managers and put their concerns directly. It can also make employees feel valued and important when top management take the opportunity to meet with them.

The disadvantages of 'walking the job' are that it is time consuming (typically taking 2-3 hours); questions and concerns that staff may raise may not be easily answered and employees may be reluctant to raise their concerns in a face-to-face situation.

Trade union/employee representatives - the improvement of internal communication to achieve effective service delivery depends on a partnership approach to consultation, involving staff and managers – refer to the internal Consultation Strategy.

Formal and informal communication channels with trade unions are an important part of an effective communication strategy. Joint Consultative Groups (JCG's) provide a monthly formal meeting for discussing strategic/policy matters with all Trade Unions. Monthly Shop Steward meetings provide a formal vehicle for discussing operational problems/issues with Trade Unions representing former manual and craft workers.

For major decisions, special meetings with trade unions/employee representatives should be organised as early as possible. This will help to ensure that employees have a chance to put forward their views when changes are being planned and before decisions have to be taken.

The advantages of meeting trade union/employee representatives are that they develop trust between employers and employee representatives.

The disadvantages of meeting trade union/employee representatives are that there is a danger of consulting only the representatives, rather than all staff and the process needs to be well managed to prevent it leading to delays in decision-making.

Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey

The annual survey is administered by the HR Section in partnership with a suitable external independent agency. The survey results have many uses, including assessing the level of understanding of issues amongst staff, satisfaction with HR policies and management practices, and preferred methods of communication. The format of the survey is not fixed and managers may insert additional questions by contacting the HR Section.

COMMUNICATION DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – A QUICK GUIDE

Position within organisation	Major Issues eg. Restructure, Local Gov Review, Outsourcing Decisions	Monthly Updates eg. Management Team decisions, political decisions, specific departmental matters such as performance indicators.	Day to Day Issues eg. Operation of specific policies such as no smoking, flexitime, door entry etc.
Chief Executive Officer	Special forums open to all staff. E-mail or letter to all staff.	Highlight to Management Team those issues that need to be cascaded throughout the organisation	Ad-hoc meetings with Directors and Heads of Service, Office 'walk-about – inc to remote sites.'
Directors	Special meeting with Heads of Service	Monthly departmental performance meeting with Heads of Service. Ensure agenda also includes emerging issues from staff (see upward communication framework)	Ad-hoc e-mails and meetings with Heads of Service, team leaders or staff. Office 'walk-about.'
Heads of Service	Special meeting with Team Leaders and staff, supplemented by written information – memo, e-mail, newsletter	Prepare manager briefing sheet (see standard template) for Team Leaders noting relevant issues arising from Monthly Departmental Performance meeting. Issue and explain at monthly service performance meeting . Prepare agenda taking into consideration any emerging issues from team leaders and staff (see upward communication framework).	Ad-hoc e-mails and meetings with team leaders or staff. Office 'walk-about.'
Team Leaders (inc Section Heads, Supervisors)	Be well informed in order to address any questions raised by staff	Immediately following monthly service performance meeting, disseminate appropriate info to staff using staff briefing sheet (see standard template). This can be circulated electronically or by hand and should be supplemented by team meetings if necessary.	E-mail or speak to appropriate staff. Ensure appropriate arrangements are made for lateral communication ie. within the Section – to ensure consistency of service.
Staff	Attend team meetings as required. Understand the issue and raise questions/issues with Team Leader	Attend team meetings as required. Understand the issue and raise questions/issues with Team Leader	Attend team meetings as required. Understand the issue and raise questions/issues with Team Leader
Human Resources Section	Incorporate into Grapevine newsletter (unless specific issue is urgent and requires a special grapevine, intranet entry or memo/letter.	Incorporate issue into Grapevine where appropriate. Monitor above process to ensure meetings are taking place, and briefing sheets are being prepared.	Address emerging issues in HR policies – refer to staff focus group and JCG where appropriate.

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING POLICY REPORT OF THE POLICY REVIEW GROUP

Members of the Policy Review Group

Councillor J.M. Khan (Chairman)

Councillor M.A. Dalton,

Councillor T.F. Forrest

Councillor G.W. Scott

M. Thomson – Tenant Representative

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING POLICY REVIEW GROUP

REPORT OF POLICY REVIEW GROUP

Introduction

Scrutiny Committee 1 at its meeting on 3rd September 2002 established a sub-committee to undertake an in-depth review of the proposed closure of Hackworth House, Shildon and other residential care homes within the Borough and the impact of the proposals on the care of the community. The Review was not completed before the annual meeting of Council on 16th May 2003 when it was agreed that responsibility for reviewing and scrutinising matters relating to the Supporting People Portfolio would transfer to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 at its meeting on 16th September 2003 was informed that Durham County Council had decided to close a number of homes and develop six new extra care housing schemes, one in every district council area (Minute No : SC(2)10/03 refers). In the light of that information, the Committee agreed to abandon the review regarding the closure of Hackworth House, Shildon and establish a new Policy Review Group to review the accommodation, care and support needs of older people.

Scope and Remit

The Policy Review Group met on 16th October 2003 and proposed the following scope and remit:

‘To examine how Sedgefield Borough Council works in partnership with Durham County Council and the Health Service to provide accommodation, care and support for elderly people and other vulnerable groups within the Borough to support independent living.’

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 adopted the proposed scope and remit of the review on 28th October 2003.

Review Approach

The Group considered the Strategic Housing Framework for Older People, Housing, Care and Support Strategy for Older People in County Durham, Supporting People Strategy and the Council’s housing needs study and assessed the accommodation and services available within Sedgefield Borough to support independent living.

Contributions were also sought from the Council’s Head of Neighbourhood Services, Manager of Sedgefield Locality Carers Centre and Commissioning Services Manager for Durham County Council Social Services.

Main Conclusions

Members of the Policy Review Group met informally on a number of occasions. The Council's Head of Neighbourhood Services attended meetings on 1st December 2003 and 15th March 2004 to give presentations on housing, care and support for older people in the Borough and integrated teams for services for vulnerable adults respectively. The Manager of Sedgfield Locality Carers Centre gave details of the work of the Centre on 12th January 2004 and the Commissioning Manager for Durham County Council Social Services provided information on the provision of intermediate care in the Borough on 24th February 2004. Copies of the presentations are attached.

The Group also visited Southfield Lodge, Crook, an extra care housing scheme, managed by Bradford and Northern and Sycamore Lodge, Middlestone Moor, an extra care housing scheme managed by Hanover Housing Association.

The Policy Review Group arrived at its main conclusions against a background of an aging population within the Borough, where over the next decade there will be a significant increase in the proportion of older people 85 years and above; where levels of disability are higher than both the national and regional average; where there is a growing incidence of older people with mental health needs, particularly dementia and where there is a major shift in service objectives with a particular focus on maintaining independence / maintaining people at home or in a homely environment rather than within an institutional setting.

The role of Intermediate Care services, supporting people in their homes continued to develop increasing the interface between Council Services such as Carelink Warden Service, Carelink Community Alarm Services including assistive technology and tele-medicine / tele-health with Social Care & Health and Primary Health Services. Additionally, the work of the Borough Council Home Improvement Agency was important in maintaining people in their own homes. In terms of service delivery, the emergence of Integrated Teams of Social Care & Health, Primary Health Care and Housing Support would be critical to service provision in the future. The logical next step for Integrated Teams would be to further develop linkages with the Carelink Warden Service.

The future funding of services would continue to fall in the main to Social Care & Health, however, once again the Integration of Staff Teams providing services to vulnerable adults would also see the development of pooled budget arrangements. The Partnership Board would have a key role in terms of commissioning and planning services. Those services which were not defined as Social Care or Health would continue to be met as Housing Support via Supporting People Grant.

In terms of identifying appropriate accommodation / tenure types there was a recognised need for mixed tenure development. Demand did exist for bungalows for sale however generally there was limited interest from developers. Some specialist Housing Associations had emerged such as McCarthy & Stone to begin to meet this market demand offering ownership / shared ownership options. Traditional Sheltered Housing Schemes were less popular than in former years. Options around Intermediate Care were seen as appropriate in taking up some of the capacity released through under-occupation. The Housing Care & Support Strategy also called for the re-modelling of Sheltered Housing to Extra Care provision. Within Sedgfield Borough the first such remodelling was being

undertaken at Derwent Court, Spennymoor, a Sheltered Housing Scheme owned by Home Housing. Housing Corporation capital together with revenue from Social Care & Health and Supporting People would see the scheme being remodelled to provide accommodation and services for older people with mental health needs such as dementia / learning disabilities.

The Extra Care scheme at Sycamore Lodge, Middlestone Moor in the ownership of Hanover Housing which had been developed on the site of the former Moor Grange Part 3 Residential Home had become well established as a model for future provision. A pilot scheme was underway with local GP's regarding tele-care services monitored via Carelink. At the time of writing a decision by Durham County Council on the future of Hackworth Housing Part 3 Residential Care Home was awaited. This 'home' is included in phase 2 of the DCC proposed closure programme which is currently under review by the County Council.

Development of private provision of Residential Care Homes was an issue. The private sector was taking up an increasing proportion of the market, with Durham County Council reducing its market share in Residential provision. New private provision continued to expand. For example, within the period of the review 2 planning permissions were granted for private Residential Homes in Shildon. From a strategic viewpoint it is questionable whether such provision is seen as the most appropriate accommodation, given the emphasis within the Housing Care & Support Strategy to Extra Care Housing.

Finally, the group recognised the significant role played in the provision of services to the most vulnerable in society by the Voluntary Sector.

RECOMMENDATION

That the work already undertaken to establish Integrated Teams of Social Care & Health, Primary Health Care and Housing Support be welcomed and supported.

Members of the Policy Review Group
Councillor J.M. Khan (Chairman)
Councillor M.A. Dalton,
Councillor T.F. Forrest
Councillor G.W. Scott
M. Thomson – Tenant Representative

Item 8

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday, 28
September 2004

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor V. Crosby (Chairman) and
Councillors D.R. Brown, Mrs. B.A. Clare, G.C. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray,
M.T.B. Jones, R.A. Patchett, Mrs. C. Potts, A. Smith and Mrs. C. Sproat

Invited to attend: M. Iveson

In Attendance: Councillors Mrs. J. Croft, A. Gray, B. Hall, D.M. Hancock, J.E. Higgin,
J.G. Huntington, J.M. Khan, B. Meek, G. Morgan, Mrs. E.M. Paylor and
Mrs. I. Jackson Smith

Observer with Chairman's Consent Councillors Mrs. B. Graham

Apologies: Councillors J.P. Moran, B.M. Ord and Mrs. L. Smith

OSC(3).6/04 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th July, 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OSC(3).7/04 DURHAM CONSTABULARY - SOUTH AREA BUSINESS PLAN 2004/2005

It was explained that Chief Superintendent Banks was present at the meeting to address Members on the Durham Constabulary South Area Business Plan 2004/05. He informed Members that his presentation would include how the Plan had come about, the revised structure of the constabulary, the structure for the south area of the constabulary, the area of personnel changes and the overall performance of the force.

He pointed out that the Business Plan was the first ever since re-organisation and restructure. It incorporated National and Police Authority Priorities, Corporate Planning aims and identified what the force hoped to achieve.

In relation to structural changes Chief Superintendent Banks explained that the Communications function now operated from a Central Communications Centre at Bishop Auckland The Intelligence function

and the administrative function had been centralised at Darlington. These measures would enable more Police Constables to spend more time “on the beat”.

Chief Superintendent Banks explained that there were 742 members of staff spread across the area who were divided into Community Policing Teams with two Community Inspectors being introduced.

The Plan reflected six major priorities as follows :-

- Public re-assurance
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Disorder and Anti-social Behaviour
- Disrupt the supply of hard drugs
- Road casualty reduction
- Property crime

The Business Plan complemented the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership’s priorities which had been published.

In terms of the performance for the South Area of the Constabulary, the total recorded crime had decreased by 17.1% compared to the previous year with a 29% detection rate. In relation to drug and alcohol related crime there had been a 14.7% decrease in incidents . There had also been a decrease in violence against persons, recorded drugs offences and burglary from sheds, garages etc. In respect of burglary from dwellings, this had increased by approximately 20%.

In respect of incidents of Anti-social Behaviour, there had been an increase of 11.5% on the previous year’s figures.

In relation to vehicle crime, theft of vehicles and theft from vehicles had both decreased.

The percentage of incidents responded to within target was 76%. Domestic violence was a key issue and the force received around 160 referrals per month. In respect of racism and homophobic incidents, 60 had been recorded so far this year, compared to 46 per year average.

Members were then given the opportunity to comment on the Business Plan.

During discussion of this item members made specific reference to the need for public perception and their fear of crime to be addressed. Many of the incidents were not of a malicious nature and were more about education and integration.

With regard to incidents of racism and homophobia members welcomed the fact that this was a major focus of activity in the Business Plan.

Members of the Committee made reference to the length of time taken

for offenders to be brought to justice. It was explained that currently it could take approximately 71 days to go through the system. Under the Prolific Offenders Scheme a number of top offenders were identified and targeted. They would be sent for rehabilitation and would be fast tracked through the Court system.

Members also mentioned the new Licensing Act which would transfer responsibility for licensed premises to local authorities. This would give an opportunity to look at licensed premises and assess their suitability to be licensed. A Licensing Strategy for the Sedgefield area was being produced.

Clarification was also sought by members of the Committee in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. It was explained that these were being used. However, offenders had to demonstrate a pattern of behaviour and there also needed to be proof that they had been involved in at least six incidents of malicious anti-social behaviour before an Order could be made. The process therefore could be lengthy. Preventional measures had proved to be more effective with a series of letters being sent to families of re-offenders informing them of sanctions etc., which could be taken and involved agreeing an Acceptable Behaviour Contract.

Concerns were also raised by members regarding problems being encountered with the new Communications System and time taken for calls to be answered. It was explained that there were some technical issues with the system and that some training was needed. However, measures had been introduced to alleviate the problems including introduction of a Help Desk and lengthening the hours the switchboard was operational. Members of the public needed to be encouraged prior to making the phone call to assess the importance of the call and whether it was necessary to phone. If it was a serious crime, to dial 999 or for non urgent calls to continue waiting on the line until the call was answered. To redial would mean the call would revert to the back of the queue.

The Chairman then thanked Chief Superintendent Banks for his informative and interesting presentation and welcomed the Council working closely with the Police in future.

CONCLUDED: That the aims etc outlined in the South Durham Area Business Plan be supported and that Members were looking forward to working closely with Durham Constabulary in the future to help achieve those aims.

OSC(3).8/04 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

It was explained that Charlie Walton, Head of Planning Services, was present at the meeting to inform Members of the new Local Development Frameworks which replaced the old style Local Plans under the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The Head of Planning Services explained that the purpose behind the change was for Local Planning Authorities to create sustainable communities.

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act which came into effect that day, powers were introduced to allow for a reformed and faster planning system and an increase in the predictability of planning decisions.

As part of the reformed planning system, Local Development Frameworks were intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a more pro-active positive approach to managing development.

The key aims of the new system were :

- Flexibility – which would allow local planning authorities to respond to local circumstances and prepare spatial plans which would integrate policy for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places.
- Creation of a more effective relationship between local development frameworks and community strategies
- An integrated approach towards future development.
- A joined up approach to community planning.
- Recognition of the Local Development Frameworks as a delivery mechanism,
- Economies of scale.
- Potential to resolve conflicts between community aspirations and national and regional policy.
- The positive contribution to the community strategy process.
- To strengthen community and stakeholder involvement in the development of local communities.
- Front loading – local planning authorities would make key decisions early in the preparation of local development documents. The aim would be to seek consensus on essential issues early to avoid late changes being made.
- Sustainability Appraisal – to ensure that local development documents are contributing to sustainable development.
- Programme Management – the efficient management of the programme in accordance with the Local Development Scheme.

- Soundness – documents must be soundly based in terms of their content and process by which they are produced.

The Committee was informed that the Act required the Council to prepare and maintain various documents including a local Development Framework consisting of Local Development documents such as Development Plan documents, supplementary planning documents, Statement of Community Involvement and Local Development Scheme, Annual Monitoring Reports and Local Development Orders

There were 55 detailed documents to be produced over the next three years.

In respect of the Local Development Scheme this would inform people how the Council would develop the Local Development Framework and would provide a starting point for local communities to find out about Council policies and would set out the programme for the preparation of Local Development documents.

The Statement of Community Involvement was part of the participatory process.

In respect of Development Plan Documents – Local Planning Authorities were required to submit every document to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The examination would be carried out by an Inspector approved by the Secretary of State and his findings would be binding upon the Local Planning Authority.

Supplementary Planning documents set out guidance on a range of topics and involved partnership working with Durham County Council.

The Annual Monitoring Statement would assess the effectiveness of the Local Development documents and would address whether targets had been met,

Dealing with Sustainable Development, it was explained that this was an idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone now and for future generations.

It was explained that Sustainable Appraisal would form an integral part of the Local Development Framework and would appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of the strategies and policies in a local development document.

In response to a query raised by Members it was explained that Local Development Framework would be debated at Development Control Committee and Cabinet. Member training sessions would be held to advise Members of changes.

AGREED : That the information be received.

OSC(3).9/04 SCOPE AND REMIT OF STREETS SAFE INITIATIVE REVIEW GROUP AND REGENERATION OF NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH OLDER PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING REVIEW GROUP

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive Officer (for copy see file of Minutes) seeking approval for scope and remits relating to the Streetsafe Review Group and Regeneration of Neighbourhoods with Older Private Sector Housing Review Group.

It was explained that initial meetings of both Review Groups had been held to discuss the scope and remit of the Reviews and the objectives and methodologies.

AGREED : That the scope and remit of the Streetsafe Initiative and Regeneration of Neighbourhoods with Older Private Sector Housing Review Groups as outlined in the report be approved..

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Liz North, Spennymoor 816166, Ext 4237

Item 9

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 5 FORUM

Town Council Offices
School Aycliffe Lane Newton
Aycliffe

Tuesday, 28
September 2004

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor M.A. Dalton (Chairman) – Sedgefield Borough Council and

Mrs. B.A. Clare	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
Mrs. J. Croft	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
V. Crosby	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
Mrs. A.M. Fleming	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
G.C. Gray	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
Mrs. J. Gray	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
M. Iveson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
Mrs. E.M. Paylor	–	Sedgefield Borough Council	–
A. Robson	-	Burnhill Residents Association	
M. Robson	-	Burnhill Residents Association	
M. Davies	-	ASK	
D. Bowman	-	JNWA Aycliffe Support in the Community	
K. Crosby	-	Dales Residents Association	
R. Fendley	-	Dales Residents Association (Chairperson)	
Sergeant E. Turner	-	Durham Constabulary	
Mrs. S. Mlatovich	-	Great Aycliffe Town Council	
Mrs. S. Iveson	-	Great Aycliffe Town Council	
Mrs. M. Gray	-	Great Aycliffe Town Council	
N. Porter	-	Sedgefield Primary Care Trust	
Mrs. A. Clarke	-	Sedgefield Primary Care Trust	

Apologies: Councillor W.M. Blenkinsopp - Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor R.S. Fleming – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B. Hall – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor K. Henderson – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J.P. Moran – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J.K. Piggott – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Tomlin - Great Aycliffe Town Council
Councillor Mrs. M.A. Dalton - Durham Constabulary

AF(5)8/04 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27th July, 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

AF(5)9/04 POLICE REPORT

Sergeant Turner explained that year-to-date recorded crime for 2004/5 was 799 with 269 crimes having been detected. This equated to a 33.7% detection rate. This compared to the same period in 2003/4 of

1,053 recorded crimes – a reduction of 24.1%. There had been 137 incidents of crime in July compared to 152 in August.

The following was a summary of a breakdown of categories of incidents :

	July 2004	August 2004
Total crime	137	152
Violent crime	21	41
Burglary other	6	11
Burglary	4	2
Damage	49	54
Theft of motor vehicle	3	3
Theft from vehicle	8	5
Theft (shoplifting)	11	14
Drug offences	6	2

AF(5)10/04 SEDGEFIELD PCT - PROGRESS UPDATE

Nigel Porter, Chief Executive of the PCT was present at the meeting to give an update. He circulated copies of the Sedgefield Primary Care Trust's Annual Report for 2003/4 which summarised what the Trust was trying to achieve, detailed objectives and its performance. The report also dealt with the financial aspects of the Trust.

The Forum was informed of the change to out-of-hours surgery arrangements due to take place from 1st December. It was explained that doctors emergency Saturday morning surgeries would cease. The Urgent Care Centre at Bishop Auckland Hospital would consequently expand its service to cover Saturday mornings.

A query was raised in relation to how patients' issues were dealt with. It was explained that a Patient Liaison Advisory Officer was in post to pick up issues and examine the reasons for problems. It was considered that this service needed to be publicised.

It was explained that the Patient and Public Involvement Forum had devised a Health Centre questionnaire to establish patient needs in relation to the provision of facilities at the new Health Centre in Newton Aycliffe. A copy of this was circulated and was to be completed and returned to Councillor Crosby or the Pioneering Care Partnership Centre.

Members were also informed of the PCT Third Listening Event to be held on 18th October in Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre from 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.

AF(5)11/04 THE NHS IMPROVEMENT PLAN PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Consideration was given to a summary of a Government document in

relation to the NHS Improvement Plan.

The document summarised the ambitions of the NHS over the next few years and how those ambitions would be made reality. There had been a significant increase in funding - £33m in 1997 to £67m this year. The amount spent per person had increased from £680 per person to £1,345 per person over the last seven years.

By 2008 the NHS had to provide patients with no more than an 18 week waiting period from seeing GP to being treated in hospital. There was also to be more choice for people in relation to where they were to be treated etc.

There would also be changes in the way services were provided with more people being treated in the independent sector.

Patients would also have a right to access their own care records.

In relation to performance more local targets would be set. Communities would be consulted as part of this process.

AF(5)12/04 NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN SERVICE

Glyn Hall, Director of Neighbourhood Services, attended the meeting to give a presentation regarding the above.

It was explained that Sedgefield Borough Council had invested significantly in the Community Safety Service over the past decade. The Service's achievements included the development of the Community Force, the establishment of Sedgefield Borough Community Safety Partnership and the creation of the Community Care Force Centre, which included a combined CCTV and Community Alarm function.

It was reported that in early 2003, Holden McAllister Partnership had been commissioned by the Borough Council to undertake an independent review of the Council's Community Safety Service. The report confirmed that Community Safety continued to be seen as a priority for residents of the Borough and concluded that whilst the development of the Sedgefield Borough Crime and Disorder Partnership had provided a framework for strategic intervention by partner organisations, the development of a Community Safety Strategy specifically for the Borough Council was a logical next step.

With regard to the operational elements of the service, the report acknowledged that the development of the Community Force during the 1990s had been a bold and innovative step. The Community Force had been one of the first schemes used to inform the national development of Neighbourhood and Street Warden initiatives and latterly, the Police Community Support Officers initiative. The report concluded, however, that although the Community Force as a concept

was pioneering, it now needed to refocus and together with the CCTV function, be set within the Corporate Strategy.

It was explained that the service re-engineering would begin with Community Force Officers being re-designated Neighbourhood Wardens, with an increased emphasis on community engagement/public re-assurance, creating stronger links with Neighbourhood Management by targeting areas of greatest need, having powers to issue fixed penalty notices and operating flexible working patterns in response to need.

It was pointed out that the transition was supported by the recent Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Neighbourhood Renewal Unit national evaluation of the Neighbourhood Wardens Programme the evaluation recognised the unique role Neighbourhood Wardens played in neighbourhood renewal and recorded the overriding message from the evaluation that in successful schemes Neighbourhood Wardens can and were having an impact in areas of increased resident satisfaction, reduced fear of crime particularly for older people, decline in overall rates of crime, perceived improvements in environmental problems and contributing to tackling anti-social behaviour. In fact, the ODPM evaluation did commend Sedgefield Borough Council's existing Neighbourhood Warden Scheme that operated at Dean Bank, Ferryhill and West Ward, Newton Aycliffe in their efforts to reduce youth disorder and anti-social behaviour by engaging young people in a number of innovative initiatives.

The re-engineered Sedgefield Borough Council Neighbourhood Warden Service included features identified by the ODPM evaluation as common in schemes that were working well such as having a tailored and flexible approach, involving a wide variety of stakeholders including resident participation, active and represented steering groups, good management, partnership based, highly visible, targeted deployment based on need and having good quality and well trained staff. Neighbourhood Wardens would be community based although provision would be made for a central mobile response, including the out-of-hours service up to 10 p.m. and targeted joint working between the Wardens as a team and with others such as Police, Environmental Protection Officers, Neighbourhood Management, Housing Management and Tenancy Enforcement. The Wardens would work with Resident Groups and Schools and provide re-assurance to vulnerable groups.

Deployment of the thirteen Neighbourhood Wardens within the local communities had been determined by development of a matrix of needs taking account of population, levels of deprivation, recorded crime and anti-social behaviour, Council housing stock numbers, priority areas amongst older private sector housing, NRF and other partnership funding and other services operating within the area. Based upon the above assessment Neighbourhood Wardens would be deployed within the five management areas across the Borough targeting communities of greatest need. Deployment according to the

needs based assessment matrix would be kept under regular view and any adjustments would be made accordingly.

It was noted that the Council would have access to the Airwaves digital radio communications system used by Durham Constabulary to promote joint working and information flow between Police Headquarters/Officers and the CCTV Control Rooms and Neighbourhood Wardens.

The Forum was also informed that the Council's CCTV service was programmed to be reviewed in the final quarter of 2004, and a Community Safety Strategy for Sedgefield Borough was being developed, which would take account of the changing external environment and link Council services to the strategic directions set by Government Office, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership.

It was pointed out that an article regarding the Neighbourhood Warden Service would be included in the October edition of Inform and arrangements were being made for the new wardens to hand deliver leaflets regarding their services to every household in the Borough.

Specific reference was made to the establishment of the Neighbourhood Warden Steering Group. The Group would include in its membership, representatives from the five Area Forums within the borough. It would meet on a quarterly basis, and monitor and review performance and be involved in service planning.

The Forum agreed that the nomination of a representative for Area 1 Forum to the Group would be considered at its next meeting.

AF(5)13/04 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting to be held on 30th November, 2004.

AF(5)14/04 SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the L. S. P. Board Meeting held on 21st July, 2004. (For copy see file of Minutes).

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Liz North, Spennymoor 816166, Ext 4237

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