

CABINET

Thursday, 6 January 2005

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 23rd December 2004. (Pages 1 - 4)

OTHER DECISIONS

COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

4. CCTV CAMERAS - GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN PARK

Report of Director of Neighbourhood Services. (Pages 5 - 8)

5. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT

Report of Director of Neighbourhood Services. (Pages 9 - 12)

MINUTES

6. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2004. (Pages 13 - 16)

7. AREA 1 FORUM

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2004. (Pages 17 - 22)

8. 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
23rd December 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

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
23 December 2004

Time: 10.00 a.m.

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

In Attendance: Councillors V. Crosby, G.C. Gray, J.E. Higgin, M.T.B. Jones, B. Meek,
Mrs. E.M. Paylor, A. Smith, Mrs. I. Jackson Smith and J. Wayman J.P

Apologies: Councillors D.A. Newell

CAB.113/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interest to declare

CAB.114/04 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.115/04 LICENSING ACT 2003 STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY
Further to Minute CAB.87/04 of the meeting held on 28th October 2004, consideration was given to a report together with a draft copy of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were informed that the Policy Statement, which had been considered by Licensing Committee 2 at its meeting on 14th December 2004, needed to be approved by Council and published by 7th January 2005.

RESOLVED : That the draft Statement of Licensing Policy, subject to any further amendments, be forwarded to Council for approval.

CAB.116/04 BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2005/06 TIMETABLE
Consideration was given to a report seeking approval of a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of the 2005/06 Budget and the arrangements for consultation in accordance with Part 4 Section C of the Council's Constitution. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the timetable as shown on the Appendix attached to the report be approved.

CAB.117/04 CONFERENCES

The Leader of the Council presented a report regarding the Council's representation at the National Association of Councillors, Anti-Social Behaviour Conference to be held at York from 14th - 16th January 2005. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the Council be represented at the above Conference by the appropriate Lead Member together with one Member and an officer.

CAB.118/04 REVISED POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

The Lead Member for Welfare and Communications presented a report setting out proposals to amend the Corporate Policy and Procedures for handling of Customer Complaints following a fundamental review of existing arrangements. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report also outlined arrangements for making the Customer Relations database available to those parts of the authority that did not record complaints electronically.

It was pointed out that although the primary objective of the complaints procedure was to provide an effective means for customers to make complaints and have them resolved, another aim was to use complaints in a positive way to improve services. It was therefore proposed that the types and subjects of complaints be recorded and analysed half yearly to identify trends/issues which could be taken into account when policies/services were being established or amended. The reports would be provided to Management Team, Heads of Service, Strategic Working Groups and Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 2, which outlined the complaints received by the Corporate Customer Relations Staff in the Chief Executive's Department for the period 1st April 2003 to 31st March 2004.

RESOLVED :

- 1. That the revised 'Policy for Handling of Customer Complaints' be approved.*
- 2. That complaint statistics by department, including significant/recurring areas of complaint be reported to Management Team twice yearly and that they then be made available to Heads of Service, Strategic Working Groups and Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1.*

CAB.119/04 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following meetings :

- (a) Overview and Scrutiny 3 - 9th November 2004
- (b) Overview and Scrutiny 1 - 23rd November 2004
- (c) Overview and Scrutiny 2 - 30th November 2004

(For copies see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the Committees recommendations be noted and appropriate action be taken.

CAB.120/04 AREA FORUMS

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following meetings:

- (a) Area 4 Forum - 16th November 2004
- (b) Area 5 Forum - 30th November 2004

(For copies see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the reports be received.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 9 and 10 of Schedule 12a of the Act.

CAB.121/04 PROPOSED PURCHASE OF FORMER METHODIST CHAPEL, DEAN BANK, FERRYHILL

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval to acquire the former Methodist Chapel, Beaumont Street, Dean Bank to support the wider regeneration of the area. (For copy see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED : That the recommendation detailed in the report be adopted.

CAB.122/04 NETPARK - APPOINTMENT OF A PREFERRED DEVELOPER

The Lead Member for Regeneration presented a report regarding the appointment of a preferred developer for Phase1 of the NetPark site.
(For copy see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED : That the recommendations detailed in the report be adopted.

Published on 23rd December, 2004

The Minutes contain no key decisions and will be implemented immediately.

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

Item 4

REPORT TO CABINET

6th JANUARY 2005

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

CCTV CAMERAS – GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN PARK

SUMMARY

A request has been received from Great Aycliffe Town Council for funding in relation to the provision of two CCTV cameras in the new Town Park. The Town Council has made a significant investment in the new Town Park facility and has entered into a Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council for the services of 2 additional Neighbourhood Wardens. The provision of CCTV cameras within the Park is seen as a logical step in terms of enhancing the safe and proper use of facilities.

The Town Council has agreed to meet the revenue costs associated with monitoring the cameras. The nature of the proposal is consistent with themes identified within the Council's Housing Land Capital Receipts Programme for Regeneration activities, consequently capital costs may be met from the allocation agreed by Cabinet for the current financial year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the provision of two CCTV cameras in Great Aycliffe Town Park be funded from the Council's Housing Land Capital Receipts Programme for Regeneration activities 2004/05.

CCTC CAMERAS – GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN PARK

CCTV provision is a key element of Sedgefield Borough Council's emerging Community Safety Strategy in terms of enhancing the quality of life of residents of the Borough by reducing crimes and the fear of crime.

A request has been received from Great Aycliffe Town Council for funding in relation to the provision of two CCTV cameras in the new Town Park in Newton Aycliffe. The Town Council has recently opened a new Town Park on the site of the former Avenue School. The Town Park is a significant contribution to the town and offers a range of facilities for users. Town Council capital investment in this venture is in excess of £500,000. Furthermore, the Town Council has entered into a Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council for the services of 2 additional Neighbourhood Wardens to operate as

Park Wardens. The provision of CCTV cameras within the Park is seen as a logical step in terms of enhancing the safe and proper use of facilities.

The Town Council is seeking funding from the Borough Council to meet capital costs associated with the provision of the two cameras.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The capital costs for two cameras have been estimated as £48,400.

The Town Council will meet all revenue costs associated with the provision of the cameras in respect of monitoring, maintenance, BT line rentals and electricity costs. Monitoring Charges will be subject to annual review and will be increased each year in line with annual pay awards. Any annual increases in maintenance costs, BT Line Rentals and electricity costs will be recharged in full to the Town Council.

These arrangements will be the subject of a Service Level Agreement to inform the Borough Council's Medium Term Financial Planning process.

The nature of the proposal is consistent with themes identified within the Council's Housing Land Capital Receipts Programme for Regeneration activities, consequently capital costs can be met from the allocation agreed by Cabinet for the current financial year.

CONSULTATIONS

Extensive consultation was undertaken by Great Aycliffe Town Council regarding the development of the new Town Park.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

CCTV camera provision is a key aspect of the Borough's emerging Community Safety Strategy and is also supported by the Sedgfield Borough Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

None.

Contact Officer
Telephone Number
E-mail address

Dennis Scarr
01388 816166 Ext. 4545
dscarr@sedgefield.gov.uk

Wards:

Shafto & St. Mary's, Newton Aycliffe.

Key Decision Validation:

Background Papers:

1. Correspondence with Great Aycliffe Town Council – Nov. 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"/>

This page is intentionally left blank

Item 5

REPORT TO CABINET

6TH JANUARY 2005

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF
NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT

SUMMARY

Victim Support County Durham manages the victim support project at 31, Upper Beveridge Way, Newton Aycliffe on behalf of the Sedgefield Borough Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. The project team is made up of three members of staff funded via the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Victim Support has raised with the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership issues relating to increased costs they face given the expansion of the service and their VAT registration limit. Consequently the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership has asked that Sedgefield Borough Council to take on management responsibilities for the domestic violence project including employment of staff. There will be no financial implications for the Borough Council arising from taking on these staff.

RECOMMENDED

That the Borough Council take on management of the Domestic Violence Project, including the employment of staff on behalf of the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT – 31 UPPER BEVERIDGE WAY, NEWTON AYCLIFFE

Tackling Domestic Violence is a key objective within the Sedgefield Borough Crime & Disorder Strategy, indeed the issue is considered so significant that the Borough Council is currently in the process of developing its own strategy to address issues of domestic violence via Prevention, Protection, Justice & Support.

Victim Support County Durham manages the victim support outreach project at 31, Upper Beveridge Way, Newton Aycliffe on behalf of the Sedgefield Borough Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. The project team is made up of three members of staff funded via the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. The team comprises a Co-ordinator and two Outreach Workers, one of whom is part time.

Victim Support has raised with the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership issues relating to increased costs they now face given the expansion of the service and their VAT registration limit. Consequently the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership has asked that Sedgefield Borough Council to take on management responsibilities for the domestic violence project including employment of staff.

The three staff in question have contracts of employment up to 31st. March, 2006.

The Borough Council would take on responsibility for these staff as from February, 2005.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Domestic Violence projects within the Borough are funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Single Regeneration Budget, Durham County Council and Sedgefield Borough Council in addition to Building Safer Communities Grant.

Funding for the Domestic Violence Project at 31, Upper Beveridge Way is met in full by the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership using Building Safer Communities Grant. That grant is secure for 2004/5 and 2005/6 which matches the contract of employment period. The Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership will determine whether the project continues beyond March, 2006 by which time Building Safer Communities Grant will have been absorbed within the countywide Safer and Stronger Communities Fund. Arrangements will be made via the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership for budgets relating to this service to include provision which takes account of any possible redundancy costs should the service not be maintained beyond 2005/06.

CONSULTATIONS

Staff within the Project have been consulted on the proposal and have raised no objections.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Domestic Violence is a key issue in Sedgefield Borough. We have the second highest report rate within County Durham, however, reports of repeat cases are falling.

Taking on management of the Project staff within the Community Safety Section of Neighbourhood Services Department will provide an opportunity for the Council to consolidate vital outreach services within its broader strategic approach to domestic violence.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Overview & Scrutiny implications.

Contact Officer **Dennis Scarr**
Telephone Number 01388 816166 Ext. 4545
E-mail address dscarr@sedgefield.gov.uk

Wards: **All**

Key Decision Validation:

Background Papers:

1. Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy
2. Correspondence with Victim Support County Durham

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"/>

This page is intentionally left blank

Item 6

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
14 December 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, J.P. Moran, R.A. Patchett, Mrs. C. Potts and A. Smith

In Attendance: Councillors D.M. Hancock, K. Henderson, J.G. Huntington, J.M. Khan and
T. Ward

OSC(3)15/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

OSC(3)16/04 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th November, 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OSC(3)17/04 COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT - UPDATE

It was explained that Jonathan Elmer, Countryside Officer, was present at the meeting to give an update on Countryside Management Initiatives.

The Countryside Officer explained where the Countryside Management Team fitted into the newly restructured Council. He explained that they were part of the Sustainable Communities Team within Neighbourhood Services Department. This enabled similarity in types of work to be drawn together e.g. energy efficiency etc. He also outlined the staffing structure of the Team.

He explained that his presentation would cover work in which the team had been involved and what initiatives were proposed.

The Committee was informed that the Team had been involved in four "on the ground" projects which included :

- **Bishop Middleham Allotment Community Wildlife Garden Scheme** which had been developed in conjunction with local residents. The area had also been declared a Local Nature Reserve. The project had been 75% funded by the Countryside Agency.

➤ **Brussleton Rail Trail**

This Scheme involved a dis-used railway line in the vicinity of The “Locomotion” the National Railway Museum at Shildon. The Scheme involved making the old rail trail route accessible from the Museum. The Scheme was about to go out to tender.

➤ **Whitworth Historic Landscape Route**

This involved land in the ownership of the Shafto Estate in the valley of the River Wear. An engineering specification had been developed for the scheme. A Licence Agreement was needed from Durham County Council.

➤ **Ferryhill Carrs**

This area had been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest and had also been declared a Nature Reserve. The project involved the installation of a new footpath to the bottom of the valley and improvement to access making it available to wheelchair users etc.

The Countryside Team had also been involved in the “Walking to Health” initiative. Walking Groups had been established in various parts of the Borough and would be extended to include Ferryhill, Sedgefield and Fishburn within the next 8 – 9 months. The walks were targeted at the 50+ age group suffering health problems. Around 3,000 walkers had taken part in the scheme. 53 volunteer walk leaders had been trained at Jubilee Park which had been used as a Training Centre. The Programme was a three year initiative of which this was the final year. The Team was looking to mainstream fund the initiative in future with around £20,000 needed per year.

English Nature’s Wild Spaces Scheme which was also a three year scheme had also been undertaken by the Countryside Team. The Scheme involved the declaration of various sites as Local Nature Reserves which were chosen on the basis of proximity to large developments etc. Areas which had been chosen included Ferryhill Carrs, Brierley Park, Cobblers Hall and Castle Eden Cycleway.

Events programmes were also produced by the Countryside Team including various activities etc., which were included in a leaflet distributed to libraries, schools, etc.

The Countryside Team had also been working with residents and community groups involving them in looking after sites including management and maintenance tasks.

In respect of planning applications, the Countryside Team also commented on proposed developments and considered whether they had an ecological impact.

In response to a query raised by the Member in relation to approaches for suggested schemes, officers explained that in some instances

Parish Councils contacted the Borough Council regarding proposed schemes. The Borough Council then looked at priorities and prioritising sites.

Members of the Committee also raised a query regarding the feasibility of parks, etc., closing at dusk in particular Castle Eden Walkway. In response officers explained that to close the walkway at dusk would restrict access to genuine walkers. It would also be extremely costly in terms of wardens, fencing, signage, etc.

In response to a query raised by a Member in relation to volunteers, it was explained that the only criteria was that they live in the area.

The Committee also raised a query regarding the feasibility of linking various sites e.g. Ferryhill to West Cornforth. Officers explained that the main area of concern would be maintenance of the sites. Sites would need to be staffed and secured. There was, however, support for spending in those areas.

Reference was also made by Members to the need to complete the circular walking tour round Newton Aycliffe by including an area around Woodham Golf Course. Officers explained that negotiations were being held regarding future development of the area.

In relation to the Walk to Health Programme, Members raised a query regarding the role of the PCT in the Programme. Officers explained that the Council was trying to work in partnership with the PCT in relation to the Programme of activities to produce a healthier lifestyle.

Regarding the Shildon Rail Trail extension and accessibility, Members raised a query regarding signage etc. Officers explained that interpretation consultants had been employed to develop interpretation signage for the wider area.

It was suggested that a site visit be held to various schemes to enable Members to become acquainted with some of the schemes.

AGREED : That a site visit be held to various schemes and that all Members of the Council be invited to attend.

OSC(3)18/04 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman of the Committee setting out the Committees work programme for review. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that this was to be a standard item on each Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It set out details of ongoing and future reviews and anticipated items for the next six meetings.

Members were up updated on the progress of the ongoing reviews.

AGREED: That the work programme be approved.

OSC(3)19/04 REGENERATION OF NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH OLDER PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING - REVIEW GROUP - MEMBERSHIP

It was explained that at the last meeting of Council, Councillor Mrs. B. Clare had been appointed to the LSVT Shadow Board and therefore was not eligible to continue to be a member of the above Review Group. It was suggested that Mrs. J. Gray be appointed to that Review Group and that Mrs. B, Clare be appointed to the Street Safe Initiative Review Group.

AGREED : That Councillor Mrs. Gray be appointed to the Regeneration of Neighbourhood Services Review Group to replace Mrs. B.Clare and that Mrs. B. Clare be a Member of the Street Safe Initiative Review Group.

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 Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4237

Item 7

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

AREA 1 FORUM

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Monday,
13 December 2004

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor J.M. Khan (Chairman) – Sedgefield Borough Council and
Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. B. Graham – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor M.T.B. Jones – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B.M. Ord – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Smith – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. C. Sproat – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor K. Thompson – Sedgefield Borough Council
Inspector S. Winship - Durham Constabulary
M. Khan Willis - Durham Police Authority
R. Pattison - Sedgefield Primary Care Trust
I. Geldard - Tudhoe Grange Upper School Council

In

Attendance: P. Bewley, G. Garrigan, , G. Scanlon, T. Rix and S. Carse

Apologies: Councillor A. Gray - Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor G.W. Scott – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillors W. Waters - Sedgefield Borough Council
G. Wills - Sedgefield PCT
Mrs. E. Croft - Neighbourhood Watch
D. Gordon - Local Resident
E. Maddison - Local Resident

AF(1)26/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

AF(1)27/04 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

AF(1)28/04 POLICE REPORT
Inspector S. Winship was present at the meeting to give details of crime figures for the area.

The crime statistics were as follows:

<u>Type of Crime :</u>	<u>October, 2004</u>	<u>November, 2004</u>
Total Crime	95	118
Overall detection rate as a percentage	30.5	34.7
Dwelling burglary	2	4
Burglary (Other)	5	4
Vehicle crime	10	13
Criminal Damage	35	41

Members noted that recorded crime had decreased by 9.3% and anti-social behaviour/public disorder had decreased by 9%.

Reference was made to the new telephone number which had been introduced for non-emergency calls which was : 0845 6060365.

The Forum was also informed that the inaugural meeting of the Tudhoe Grange Upper School Council was being held that night and the inaugural meeting of St. Paul's Residents Association would be held the following night.

Reference was also made to a campaign that was to commence on 16th December 2004 for four weeks, which would involve multi-agency visits to licensed premises/off licences and test purchasing.

AF(1)29/04

SEDGEFIELD PRIMARY CARE TRUST

Ray Pattison, Vice-Chairman Sedgefield PCT, attended the meeting to give an update on local health matters and performance figures.

Specific reference was made to the report "Achieving Patient Access Targets and Baseline Performance Requirements" which had been circulated at the meeting. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that the targets with regard to access to a GP within 2 working days and a Primary Health Care professional within 1 day had continued to be met. It was also noted that no-one had waited more than 17 weeks for an out-patient appointment.

With regard to the North East Ambulance Service the target of response to 75% of calls to life threatening emergencies in 8 minutes had not been achieved. The actual performance was 64.3%.

With regard to the out-of-hours service at Bishop Auckland General Hospital, it was reported that arrangements had been made to employ 3 emergency care practitioners to enhance the service offered.

Reference was made to an assessment of the Mental Health Services that had been undertaken by the Strategic Health Authority. It was noted that 40 out of the 43 required standards had been met.

With regard to the development of Spennymoor Health Centre under the LIFT Programme, it was requested that basic X-ray facilities be provided. It was reported that it was the Trust's intention to make more service available from the Centre.

AF(1)30/04 LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER - UPDATE

Graham Scanlon and Tracey Rix, Sedgefield Borough Council, were present at the meeting to update the Forum on the proposed housing stock transfer.

Tracey Rix gave background information in respect of the Council's decision to transfer its housing stock.

It was explained that the Government required all Local Housing Authorities to achieve the minimum Decent Homes Standard by 2010 for all of their Council housing stock. Sedgefield Borough Council would have sufficient resources to meet the Decent Homes Standard, however, not sufficient to deliver the higher standard required by tenants, known locally as the 'Sedgefield Standard'. The Council had therefore decided to consider the following options to secure the necessary additional investment:

- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)
- Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

Following a study of the options, the Council selected LSVT as the way forward to generate sufficient investment to deliver a high standard of modernisation and estate improvement, better housing services and wider regeneration initiatives throughout the Borough. Large Scale Voluntary Transfer would mean that the Housing Service would be run by a new Local Housing Company, which would be a not for profit organisation and would be regulated by the Housing Corporation.

Stock transfer could however only proceed once tenants had said yes to transfer through a vote at a ballot carried out independently by the Electoral Reform Service.

It was explained that in December 2003 the Council agreed a process and established a 'Choice of Landlord Stakeholder Panel' to make recommendations regarding the most suitable landlord for the proposed transfer of its housing stock. The Panel was made up of councillors, staff and tenants and received independent advice from consultants. Five formal expressions of interest were received and three applicants were short-listed.

Following consideration of the detailed submissions and all other evidence gathered during the process, including site visits and presentations, the Panel concluded that the proposal from Sunderland Housing Group offered the best value to the Council and its tenants. This recommendation was accepted by both Cabinet and Council. It was felt that Sunderland Housing Group would assist the Council in

delivering its strategic aims, supporting the delivery of the stock transfer process and the setting up of Sedgefield Housing Company.

Graham Scanlon then gave a presentation to the Forum on the benefits of transferring the stock to Sedgefield Housing Limited.

It was reported that the new company would develop the 'Sedgefield Standard' that offered a range of improvement works, including fencing, boundary treatment, environmental works and security measures. Sedgefield Housing Company would have £115m available over the next 10 years for investment in the housing stock in the Borough, compared with £62m that the Council would have.

Slides showing new kitchens, bathrooms and new houses constructed by Sunderland Housing Group were shown. It was noted that Sunderland Housing Group had already modernised 10,000 properties.

Specific reference was made to rents and tenants' rights. It was pointed out that under the Government's ten year rent restructuring programme existing rents were to be moved towards target rent levels, thereby removing the differences in rents set by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords. The application of the new formula meant that local discretion in setting rents to generate income for housing stock improvements was reduced. The only variable element in the formula was the individual property valuation, which was a reflection of trends in the wider market. The Government expected Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to have the same target rents by 2012.

It was pointed out that if tenants could buy their homes now with the Council, they would still be able to buy their homes under the preserved Right to Buy scheme. The new Local Housing Company would continue tenants' discount entitlement. All the main rights the tenants had with the Council would be protected and written down in a new legal binding assured tenancy agreement.

The new company would be managed by a Management Board, consisting of five Council Nominees, five tenants and five independent representatives. It would be able to build new houses, however the type and location of houses would depend on local need. The staff and the workforce would transfer to the new company and would continue to provide services to tenants in the same way as they did at present.

Specific reference was also made to the consultations that were to take place prior to the ballot. Various ways would be used to communicate information to tenants such as home visits, public meetings, newsletters, posters, mobile display units and Resident Group meetings. It was also noted that an Independent Tenant Advisor had been appointed to offer independent and impartial advice to tenants.

Members of the Forum were given the opportunity to ask questions.

It was questioned whether the Government was able to intervene to underwrite Sunderland Housing Group should it get into financial difficulties. G. Scanlon reported that he was not aware of any Registered Social Landlord that had been declared bankrupt. Sunderland Housing Group was a very well run organisation and had recently received 4 “green lights” from the Housing Corporation in relation to its services/management.

AF(1)31/04 LOCAL ROAD SAFETY ISSUES

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Road Safety Working Party held on 9th September 2004. (For copy see file of Minutes)

With regard to Minute No: 30/04 – Cycling on Footpaths – the view was expressed that it was unsafe to cycle on the road in the Town Centre as the High Street had been narrowed as a result of the improvement works. Concern was also expressed that the cycle route signs had not been erected.

It was reported that the matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the Spennymoor Road Safety Local Working Party on 13th January 2005.

AF(1)32/04 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 14th February, 2005 at 6.30 p.m. in the Town Hall, Spennymoor.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. G. Garrigan Tel 01388 816166 ext 4240

This page is intentionally left blank