

Item 5

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
1 February 2005

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor V. Crosby (Chairman) and

Councillors D.R. Brown, Mrs. B.A. Clare, G.C. Gray, M.T.B. Jones,
J.P. Moran, B.M. Ord, R.A. Patchett, Mrs. C. Potts, A. Smith and
Mrs. C. Sproat

In

Attendance: Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. J. Croft, Mrs. B. Graham, B. Meek,
Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. I. Jackson Smith and T. Ward

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. L. Smith

OSC(3)22/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

OSC(3)23/04 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14th December, 2004 and 27th
January, 2005 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the
Chairman.

OSC(3)24/04 VIEW: SHAPING THE NORTH EAST - REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION DRAFT

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Director of
Neighbourhood Services and Head of Strategy and Regeneration (for
copy see file of Minutes) outlining the Regional Spatial Strategy which
set out a long term Strategy for Spatial Development in the North East
to 2021.

Once approved the Regional Spatial Strategy would form part of a
Statutory Development Plan for the Borough. The Council's Local
Development Framework would have to be in general conformity with
the Spatial Strategy.

It was explained that consultation draft Regional Spatial Strategy was
an aspirational document seeking to reduce the economic disparities
between the North East and the rest of England.

The key issues raised by the draft Regional Spatial Strategy
Consultation for Sedgefield Borough were : the introduction of the City
Regions, the development potential of NetPark, the need to provide for
stable population and to ensure that planned housing market
restructuring programmes were recognised and promoted.

A draft formal response to the consultation document and the key issues was appended to the report. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the consultation period would finish on Friday 4th February, 2005. In March, the revised document had to be submitted to the Government Office for the North East.

In response to a query raised by Members in relation to the projected figure for employment at Net Park, it was explained by officers that the County Strategy assumed 5,000 jobs would be created on NetPark.

The Committee also queried in relation to Transport and Tourism whether steps were being taken to improve travel links. Officers explained that the Council was engaged in looking at upgrading to Newton Aycliffe Station, etc.

It was noted by Members that it was an aspirational document and a query was raised as to sustainability. Officers explained that the document was based around certain scenarios and was realistic. It was about turning trends around and what could be regenerated especially in terms of what is achievable and setting a challenge. It was a process of moving forward.

Members also raised a query regarding the potential to create sustainable jobs at NetPark. In response officers explained that the investment at NetPark was mainly in science and technology, training etc., rather than manufacturing industries and that the future emphasis was going to be on ideas and intellectual capacity not physical capacity.

Reference was made by Members to the emphasis in the Regional Spatial Strategy on the Tees Valley and Newcastle areas. In response it was explained that the Strategy was trying to promote the region as a whole and the Borough depended on a strong regional economy. Sedgfield as a Borough, was ideally placed to take advantage of any regional growth.

Reference was also made by Members to the regional retail centres and the need to encourage further new development in town centres.

AGREED: That the draft responses outlined in the Appendix to the report be recommended to Cabinet as the formal response of the Council to the North East Assembly's consultation.

OSC(3)25/04 PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE TO DEVELOP NEW COMMUNITY FIRE STATIONS AND A REGIONAL LIFE SKILLS CENTRE

It was explained that as part of the consultation process George Herbert, Chief Fire Officer and Allan Wood, Area Manager were present at the meeting to give a presentation on the above initiative.(For copy see file of Minutes)

It was explained that in December, 2003 the Government announced funding of £100m to support fire authorities in the underpinning of the modernisation of the Fire and Rescue Service. Bids were invited for Private Finance Initiative funding initiatives to assist in that objective.

The bids had to demonstrate how they would be consistent with the national framework document and how the proposals would allow for greater collaboration between the fire authorities and other emergency services.

The four Fire and Rescue Authorities in the North East Region decided to place a collaborative bid. As part of the proposals two new community fire stations, one at Spennymoor and one at Bishop Auckland were to be built. A Community Life skills Centre was also to be established.

Details of the proposals for Spennymoor were outlined together with the proposed location, facilities to be provided, staffing levels, appliances to be on site, the benefits of the new Station particularly in terms of response times, possible issues which could be involved in the new development and the possible timetable for the development.

The proposals for the new Community Fire Station at Bishop Auckland and the Community Life Skills Centre were also outlined

In response to a query regarding the location of the Life Skills Centre it was explained that it was likely to be based at Spennymoor. However, issues relating to criteria etc., needed to be addressed.

In respect of response times Members queried whether the 999 number was adequate or whether the Fire Service considered that they needed a separate number. In response it was explained that the Fire Service considered that 999 was the most appropriate number and the one which everyone had embedded in their minds.

Regarding a query from Members on the layout of the building, it was explained that the building would take account of the need for Firefighters to undergo extensive training and the need to make provision for Community Safety education.

The Committee also raised a query regarding false alarms and malicious calls and in particular whether the location of mobile phone calls could be traced. In response it was explained that the Service was trying to reduce the number of malicious calls through an number of initial questions being asked by the operator . As part of satellite navigation system, they were able to trace mobile phone call locations.

In respect of training courses it was explained that training courses would still be held at the Community Life Skill Centre.

The Chairmen then thanked the Chief Fire Officer and the Area

Manager for an extremely informative presentation.

AGREED : That the proposals be supported without prejudice to future planning applications.

OSC(3)26/04 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Committee's work programme (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chairman of the Street Safe Initiative Review Group explained that the scoping and review of the Group had been agreed in September, 2004. Chief Inspector Hall had been present at a meeting in November, 2004 to give a presentation on the initiative and a number of questions were raised in relation as to how the Council could fulfil their role and how resources would be targeted. A further meeting would be held on 23rd February when the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Head of Neighbourhood Services would give a presentation.

The Chairman of the Regeneration of Neighbourhoods with older private sector housing explained that the Review was ongoing and a further meeting would be held on 9th March.

The Committee was also informed that one of Scrutiny Support Officers had been seconded to the Human Resources Section until September. In the meantime it was hoped that the absence could be managed so that the Scrutiny function was not adversely affected. Members however expressed their concern that this action could be detrimental the scrutiny function.

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