

# Item 6a

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

Conference Room , Council  
Offices, Spennymoor

Tuesday, 27  
September 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,  
B.M. Ord, Mrs. C. Potts and Mrs. C. Sproat

**In**

**Attendance:** Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. J. Croft, A. Gray, B. Hall, D.M. Hancock,  
K. Henderson, J.G. Huntington, J.M. Khan, G. Morgan, Mrs. E.M. Paylor,  
and T. Ward

**Invited to  
Attend** Councillor W Waters

**Apologies:** Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, Mrs. J. Gray, J.P. Moran, A. Smith and  
Mrs. L. Smith

**OSC(3)6/05** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
No declarations of interest were received.

**OSC(3)7/05** **MINUTES**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005 were confirmed as a  
correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to Minute No OSC(3)  
5/05 being amended to include reference to discussions which were held  
in respect of watercourses and the risk of flooding in the Borough being  
included on the Work Programme.. .

**OSC(3)8/05** **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK KEY ISSUES PAPER**  
Chris Myers, Forward Planning Manager was present at the meeting to  
give a presentation in relation to the Key Issues Paper which was being  
prepared for the Local Development Framework.

The Committee was informed that the presentation would cover key  
planning events which had taken place , the Community Profile, the aims  
and objectives of the Local Development Framework and the spatial  
issues that required consideration.

The Forward Planning Manager explained that under the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act the Council was duty bound to prepare a Local Development Framework including a Spatial Strategy. The Committee was informed that as part of an informal consultation process, in relation to the Strategy formal consultations had been held earlier in the year with the Local Strategic Partnership and Town and Parish Councils to identify issues etc. In February 2005 a Sustainability Appraisal Workshop had also been held. Base line information had also been collected to inform the Key Issues paper.

A Community Profile, was also prepared which had identified a number of issues within the Borough, which needed to be addressed, including the increase in the elderly population, availability of affordability of housing, regeneration of town centres, car access and reliability on public transport.

The Committee was informed that within the Strategy five aims with related objectives had been identified which had been developed through consultation and the appraisal process. Those aims and objectives included:-

- **To enhance social inclusion and well being**.by improving access to goods and services, encouraging wider community involvement in the planning process and encouraging healthier life styles.
- **To improve the quality of where people live** by improving areas of deprivation, improving community safety and reducing fear of crime, and maintaining the quality of landscape and design.
- **To reduce the impact of development on climate change** by supporting local transport systems and reducing the need to travel, promoting energy efficiency, minimising the risk of flooding and encouraging habitat creation.
- **To protect and enhance natural resources** by adopting a sequential approach to development and conserving and enhancing bio-diversity.
- **To encourage and support a competitive and diverse economy** by providing an opportunity for development of competitive and diverse economic based high quality employment opportunities and supporting vibrant town centres.

It was explained that a number of issues had been identified in the Strategy which needed to be addressed including:-

- Addressing housing market failure
- Securing high quality design for new development
- Addressing climate change
- New economic needs

The draft Strategy had been out for consultation to relevant stakeholders and interested parties from 25<sup>th</sup> July 2005 to 5<sup>th</sup> September 2005. However Members were still invited to submit written comments to the Forward Planning Manager for consideration in the next stage of the preparation.

During discussion of this item Members queried the following issues:-

A risk of flooding as a result of new housing development and the role of the Environment Agency.

High density housing and the use of brownfield land

Affordable housing – in particular the definition of affordable housing and development by Housing Associations for Social Housing

The condition of town centres and the need for regeneration

The decline of manufacturing industries and the role of Central Government

Tourism and in particular the approach to tourism within the county.

In respect of the risk of flooding and new housing development it was explained that the Environment Agency was a consultee for all planning applications relating to major housing development. The Forward Planning Manager was also in the process of preparing a strategic Flood Risk Assessment addressing the issues

Dealing with high density housing and the use of brownfield land for housing development sites, it was explained that the national target for use of brownfield land was 60%. It was noted that, as a result of the lack of available suitable brownfield sites, the target achieved within the Borough was likely to be only 30% . The Council would be unlikely to be able to meet the national target.

With regard to affordable housing it was explained that a site at Sedgefield village was to be developed with 25% 'affordable housing'. There was however no clear definition of affordable housing. In relation to the development of sites for social housing by Housing Association each site would be dealt with on their own merits with housing needs being taken into account

Dealing with issue of the need to regenerate town centres discussion was held regarding the poor condition of shopping centres in the Borough and the need for regeneration.

The issue of the effects of the decline of manufacturing industries on the region's economy the Committee considered should be dealt with as a national issue and taken up by central government.

In respect of the issue of tourism and the approach within the county it was explained that Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 had set up a Review Group to look at the issues and would be reporting its findings to that Committee in the near future.

A query was also raised regarding the changes which had been included in the Regional Spatial Strategy since the original draft particularly in relation to housing numbers. It was explained that in terms of housing numbers these remained the same. The major change related to further allocation of land to the Net Park site at Sedgefield.

*AGREED: That the queries raised by Members be considered by the Forward Planning Manager for inclusion in the Key Issues Paper.*

### **OSC(3)9/05 CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - MEMBER INVOLVEMENT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer making proposals for arrangements to provide for the engagement of Members in the Council's processes for the review of the Constitution. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that it was necessary to monitor and review the Constitution to ensure that its aims and principles were given full effect. Any amendments to the Constitution were considered by the Chief Executive Officer and approved by the Council.

It was recognised however that there were occasions where Members could have a legitimate expectation to be engaged in reviewing certain areas of the Constitution e.g. rules of procedures at meetings and Overview and Scrutiny procedures.

The report proposed that:-

- That the work schedules of Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually include an item inviting Members to identify and submit proposals for changes to the Constitution.
- That the Chief Executive Officer be formally notified of such proposals.
- That the Chief Executive then convene a meeting of the Chairman of the Cabinet and Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss, consider and then formulate draft proposals for changes and amendments.

- That, if necessary, such proposals form part of a report by the Chief Executive to be submitted to the Council for formal approval.

General discussion took place in relation to the type of issues Members could raise regarding review of the Constitution.

A query was raised regarding the circulation of updated versions of the constitution. In response it was explained that the version on the Councils website was updated and could be accessed by all Members. An updated version would also be made available in each of the Members Rooms.

Members of the Committee raised a query regarding the timing for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider proposals for Constitutional Review. In response it was explained that this would be determined by each Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

*RECOMMENDED : That the proposals be approved.*

**OSC(3)10/05 REGENERATION OF NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH OLDER PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

It was suggested that as the Chairman of the Review Group was unable to attend this meeting consideration of this item be deferred.

*AGREED: That consideration of this item be deferred to a future meeting.*

**OSC(3)11/05 WORK PROGRAMME**

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

It was explained that in respect of the Street Safe Initiative Review it was anticipated that the final report would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

An item was also to be included in the programme regarding the risk of flooding within the Borough. An appropriate Officer was to be invited to a future meeting.

Concern was also expressed regarding recycling skips and the frequency of emptying. It was suggested that an Officer from Neighbourhood Services Department be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

*AGREED: That the following items be included in the work programme:-*

*Risk of flooding within the Borough  
Recycling skips and frequency of emptying*

---

**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 01388 816166 ext 4237