

Item 4c

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Wednesday,
25 January 2006

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor J.E. Higgin (Chairman) and

Councillors Mrs. J. Croft, M.A. Dalton, Mrs. L. Hovvels, G.M.R. Howe,
R.A. Patchett, T. Ward and J. Wayman J.P.

Tenant Representatives

A. McGreggor and Mrs. M. Thomson

Invited to attend: Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, R.S. Fleming, J. Robinson J.P and W. Waters

In

Attendance: Councillors A. Gray, B. Hall, D.M. Hancock, J.G. Huntington, M. Iveson,
J.M. Khan, J.P. Moran, G. Morgan and A. Smith

Apologies: Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, J. Burton, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. E.M. Paylor,
Ms. M. Predki and G.W. Scott

OSC(2).30/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members had no interest to declare.

OSC(2).31/05 BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2006/2007

Consideration was given to Cabinets' budget proposals in respect of Culture and Recreation, Housing and Supporting People. Members gave detailed consideration to the report detailing the basis of the proposals and in particular the proposed changes in service provision for each portfolio. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Cabinet Members with responsibility for portfolios under consideration had been invited to attend the meeting in order to respond to questions from the Committee.

Cabinet had agreed its initial budget on 12th January 2006 (Min. CAB.115/05 refers) and as part of the budget setting procedure Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been asked to consider the proposals with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet before it made its final budget proposals to Council at its meeting on 24th February 2006.

The Committee noted that detailed budgets had been prepared based on information and price increases as outlined in the report.

Culture and Recreation

The Director of Resources explained that in accordance with the Medium Term Financial Plan in the main Leisure Services had been provided with an inflationary increase for 2006/2007. It was, however, pointed out that partnership working within Culture and Recreation allowed growth within the budget.

Specific reference was made to a number of changes in service, which included, Leisure Centres, Leisure Centre bars, Green Lane canteen, Shildon pool, play equipment and within the Leisure Services department.

Detailed discussion was held regarding the amount of money invested in, together with the financial benefits of, Locomotion. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation outlined a number of awards and areas where Locomotion had been successful, bringing benefits to the facility, Sedgfield Borough Council and the local and surrounding areas.

Specific reference was also made to the Value of Tourism Review Group and the progress that had been made to develop tourism. The Director of Leisure Services explained that as a result of the recommendations of the Review Group a financial contribution had been included in order to develop and maximise the Tourism agenda.

Housing

It was reported that the proposed budget for Housing General Fund services was £547,360.

Members' attention was drawn to the specific changes in service provision within Neighbourhood Services, Homelessness and Domestic Violence Units and Newton Aycliffe Neighbourhood Management Office.

Members also noted that the Housing Revenue Account had been prepared under the assumption that there would be no requirement to the Housing Revenue Account balances in 2006/2007.

Specific changes to the service provision as detailed in the report were also outlined.

The Cabinet Member for Housing together with the Director of Housing Services explained that there were a number of developments, which would address a number of issues that had been raised in the past by Members. It was explained that a number of reports would be submitted in the future regarding the development of the Service Improvement Plan, lettings policy and the provision of housing accommodation.

Concern was also expressed regarding the number of outstanding non-urgent repairs. It was explained that the Housing Revenue Budget would assist in addressing the issue.

Supporting People

Members noted the overall position in relation to the budget proposals for the Supporting People portfolio.

The submitted report clarified the position in relation to a number of specific budget changes relating to benefits administration, benefits payment and concessionary fares.

With regard to concessionary travel the Leader of the Council explained that Durham County Council administered the scheme on behalf of the seven districts. It was attempting to identify a consensus from all surrounding districts as to what level of the scheme could be provided from the finances available, however the requirement to provide a statutory minimum concession of free fare within Sedgefield Borough would be achieved by 1st April 2006.

RECOMMENDED: That the budget proposals in relation to Culture and Recreation, Housing and Supporting People portfolios for 2006/2007 be supported.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss. S. Billingham, Spennymoor 816166, Ext 4240, sbillingham@sedgefield.gov.uk

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