

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
11 January 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor R.S. Fleming (Chairman) and

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Hodgson, K. Noble,
R.A. Patchett and W. Waters

In Attendance: Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. B.A. Clare, V. Crosby,
Mrs. A.M. Fleming, A. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Hall, D.M. Hancock,
J.G. Huntington, J.M. Khan, B. Meek, J.P. Moran, G. Morgan,
Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. I. Jackson Smith, T. Ward and J. Wayman J.P

Apologies: Councillors M. Iveson and D.A. Newell

CAB.130/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that Councillors R. Patchett and K. Noble would each be declaring a prejudicial interest in relation to a report regarding attendance at conferences, which was to be considered under Item 11 – Any Other Business.

CAB.131/06 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.132/06 BUDGET FRAMEWORK FOR 2007/2008 (KEY DECISION)

Consideration was given to a report setting out a budget framework for 2007/08 after taking into account the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and the Government's proposed settlements in relation to Revenue Support Grant (RSG), Housing Subsidy and Capital Allocations. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the Council had been provisionally notified that it would receive £9,601,288 of external Government support for 2007/08. The grant settlement, which was broadly in line with expectations, showed a year on year increase of 5.1% or £468,000 including the base adjustments in accordance with the distribution framework.

It was pointed out that no indicative grant figures had been provided for 2008 – 2009. During the coming summer the Government would be announcing the results of its Comprehensive Spending review for the three year period 2008/09 to 2010/11, which was expected to be particularly difficult period for Local Government, with much tougher efficiency targets being imposed.

The budget framework for 2007/08 reflected the Council's key priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and took account of financial issues and pressures, including the significant increase in the pay costs to be incurred by the Council and fuel price inflation. Paragraphs 3.11 to 3.42 of the report outlined the proposed key changes.

It was reported that there would be little scope for further additional growth in spending in later years. Furthermore, all areas of Council spending were expected to continue to contribute to the achievement of efficiency savings. Over the next two years efficiency savings in the order of £750,000 must be achieved to maintain spending levels and keep council tax increase low, as the use of the budget support fund was withdrawn.

Specific reference was made to the target budgets for 2007/08 set out in paragraph 3.45 of the report.

It was explained that careful planning of the budget meant that the commitment made in the Medium Term Financial Plan to restrict council tax increases to 2.9% could be delivered in 2007/08. The substantial additional investment in Council services would add £5.24 per year or 10p per week to the Band D Council Tax. The cost to the Band A taxpayer would be £3.50 per year or 7p per week.

It was reported that the 2007/08 Housing Subsidy settlement had left the Council's Housing Revenue Account significantly worse off. Although the Council's spending allowances for Management and Maintenance had increased in excess of inflation by 3.97% and 4.34% respectively, an increase in Guideline Rent Levels of 7.26% had meant that the net subsidy payable to the Government for redistribution to other local housing authorities had increased by £982,700 to £3.7m.

It was pointed out that the continued implementation of the Government's Rent Restructuring methodology would lead to substantial rent increases for most of the Council's tenants over the next few years to enable full convergence with Housing Association rents to be achieved by 2012. Only 173 tenancies were expected to be at target once the rent changes had been applied in 2007/08. Members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 4.9 to 4.14 of the report, which set out the impact of the changes for 2007/08.

Specific reference was made to the heating charges for tenants in grouped accommodation, which had been increased in April 2006 for the first time in 9 years. It was proposed that the Council would continue to make a staged increase in the charges over the next few years to fully recover the energy costs incurred.

It was pointed out that in the light of the level of resources available to the Council, it would be possible in 2007/08 to launch the biggest Capital Spending Programme ever proposed by the Council since its inception in 1974, amounting to a minimum of £20m, which would increase further as schemes attracted external grant funding. Individual service targets for each portfolio were set out in the table detailed in paragraph 5.3.

It was reported that the Council's three Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be fully consulted on the budget proposals in accordance with the published timetable. In addition, a series of Council Tax Focus Groups consisting of a representative example of interested Council Tax payers would be held during January. Similarly the Tenants Housing Services Group and Residents Federation were being consulted on all aspects relating to the Housing Revenue Account.

RESOLVED : That the Budget Framework for 2007/08 be approved and be consulted upon in accordance with the timetable previously approved by Cabinet on 14th December 2006.

CAB.133/06 IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES TO POWERS TO TACKLE ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Lead Member for Housing presented a report regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that new powers were available to tackle anti-social behaviour under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

The powers focused on both secure and introductory tenants and included:

- The power to demote a secure tenancy
- The power to extend an introductory tenancy by a further six months
- The power to remove the Right to Buy
- The power to apply for an Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction

RESOLVED :

1. *That the Director of Housing be given delegated powers to seek an Order to suspend the Right to Buy in appropriate cases.*
2. *That the Housing Department's Statement of Policies and Procedure on Anti-Social Behaviour be updated to reflect the changes set out in the report.*
3. *That a separate report on the implications and implementation of the Respect Standard for Housing Management be presented to Cabinet in March 2007.*

CAB.134/06 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (LIP) UPDATE ON THE LIP AND CREATION OF A PROJECT DEVELOPMENT DELEGATED APPROVAL MECHANISM

The Lead Member for Social Regeneration and Partnership presented a report regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report highlighted a series of issues regarding the Local Improvement Programme that had become apparent over the first six months of its operation and sought approval for the establishment of a delegated

approval mechanism for first phase technical works associated with LIP projects.

RESOLVED : That the contents of the report be noted and the establishment of a delegated approval mechanism for the first phase of technical works associated with LIP projects be approved.

CAB.135/06 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ROLE OF TWO SENIOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL OFFICER POSTS

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval to change the post specification for two Senior Development Control Officer posts in the Planning and Development Section of Neighbourhood Services Department. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were informed that since the report had been prepared, discussions had taken place with officers in Human Resources Section regarding the job title and it was proposed that the title should be changed to Principal Development Control Officer.

RESOLVED :

- 1. That the changes to the post specification as outlined in Appendix 1 be approved.*
- 2. That both posts be regarded from PO1 to PO2 to reflect the additional levels of responsibility set out in the amended post specification.*
- 3. That the job title be changed to Principal Development Control Officer.*

CAB.136/06 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT - REVIEW OF SICKNESS MANAGEMENT

Consideration was given to a schedule detailing Cabinet's response and action plan to the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Review Group regarding sickness management. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : *That the schedule be agreed.*

CAB.137/06 AREA FORUMS

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following meetings:

Area 5 Forum	-	28 th November 2006
Area 1 Forum	-	11 th December 2006

(For copies see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : *That the reports be received.*

CAB.138/06 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following meetings:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 - 28th November 2006
Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 - 12th December 2006

(For copies see file of Minutes).

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

CAB.139/06 CONFERENCES

NB. In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Members' Code of Practice of Conduct, Councillors K. Noble and R.A. Patchett declared a prejudicial interest in the above item and left the meeting.

Consideration was given to a report (for copy see file of Minutes) regarding the Council's representation at the following:

- Association for Public Service Excellence Employment Issues and Legislation Master Class – Cambridge - 18th January 2007.
- Creating Better and Stronger Local Strategic Partnerships – London – 31st January 2007

RESOLVED :

1. *That the Cabinet Member for Learning and Employment represents the Council at the Employment Issues and Legislation Master Class.*
2. *That the Cabinet Member for Social Regeneration and Partnership represents the Council at the Creating Better and Stronger LSPs conference.*

Published on 12th January 2007

Any key decisions contained in these Minutes will be implemented on Monday 22nd January 2007 five working days after the date of publication unless they are called in by three Members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call in procedure rules.

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 Ext 42440.

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