

Item 13a

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
16 January 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, T.F. Forrest, D.M. Hancock, J.P. Moran,
K. Thompson and J. Wayman J.P

In Attendance: Councillors Mrs. B.A. Clare, V. Crosby, A. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray,
J.G. Huntington, J.M. Khan, G. Morgan and Mrs. I. Jackson Smith

Apologies: Councillors J. Burton, G.M.R. Howe, Ms. M. Predki, J. Robinson J.P and
T. Ward

Tenant Representative

Mrs. M. Thomson

OSC(2).27/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

OSC(2).28/06 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

OSC(2).29/06 THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING REVIEW GROUP FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of The Provision of Affordable Housing Review Group presented the report of the Review Group which had been established to identify how the Council could define affordable housing at a local level, identify any potential need for affordable housing in the Borough and examine partnership and policy options to help deliver suitable levels of affordable housing in the Borough. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Housing Management was present at the meeting to answer any queries.

It was explained that the review contributed towards the Council's ambition to create a Borough with strong communities and the community outcome of securing affordable housing.

The Review Group had gathered information and evidence through presentations by officers, analysis of information from a variety of sources, a site visit to a registered social landlord and interviewing an applicant to the authority's first Affordable Housing Scheme.

The Review focused on the following aspects: -

- Defining Affordable Housing
- Intelligence
- Effective Use of Existing Housing Stock
- Delivering New Build Housing

The conclusion and recommendations formulated by the Review Group for consideration by Cabinet were set out in the report.

Members queried whether the Council anticipated resistance from developers required to provide affordable housing. It was explained that in cases where developers felt that a need for affordable housing could not be demonstrated, i.e. in areas where house prices were already affordable or there was a low demand for rented accommodation, resistance could be experienced.

It was pointed out that developers who had purchased land unaware of the requirement to provide affordable housing may also challenge the Council.

In response to a Members question regarding the selection process for applicants to affordable housing schemes it was explained that the Council, through the use of Section 106 agreements, would ensure that applicants to local schemes had strong local connections.

With regard to the timescale for the sale of affordable housing it was explained that in cases where people with a strong local connection did not enter into the affordable housing scheme the opportunity would be rolled out to all residents of the Borough and finally to all residents of County Durham.

Members expressed concern that the introduction of affordable housing schemes could cause a decline in the value of older property types. In response it was explained that developers were only required to designate 20% of their development site as affordable housing.

It was also pointed out that as a result of an assessment criteria affordable housing schemes could not be introduced in all areas of Sedgfield Borough

It was emphasised that housing led regeneration would continue to be made throughout the Borough, especially in the three priority areas of Chilton West, Ferryhill Station and Dean Bank.

RECOMMENDED: That the report and recommendations contained therein be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

OSC(2).30/06 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW - STREET SAFE

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman of the Committee detailing Cabinet's response and Action Plan following its consideration of the recommendations arising from the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Street Safe. (For copy see file of Minutes).

A suggested timetable for the implementation of Cabinet recommendations was also attached to the report.

Reference was made to Recommendation 3 - **that Sedgefield Borough Council develop its own Community Safety Strategy taking into account its Section 17 responsibilities for crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour**. It was explained that the Performance Review, which would contribute to the development of a Section 17 Strategy for Sedgefield Borough, was ongoing. It was pointed out that every department had a responsibility to contribute to the performance review.

With regard to Recommendation 6 - **that local targets be developed by the Street Safe Partnership which are consistent with national targets in order to measure success and effectiveness** – it was explained that national recording standards had been set enabling all partners nationally, County and District levels to use the same standards.

Reference was made to the implementation of the Customer Relations Management System (CRM). It was anticipated that the CRM, which would enable all departments to access the same information, would be implemented by July 2007.

Members queried how Recommendation 7 - **that the Area Forum Review Group be requested to consider how Area Forums could be used as a means to raise awareness of the Street Scene Initiative and help engage with local communities in order to support its aims** - could be implemented as the Area Forum Review Group had already formulated its recommendations.

In response it was explained that the Community Safety Section in partnership with Street Scene Services aimed to carry out four clean up operations in various locations throughout the Borough each year. These clean up operations would be carried out in consultation with Area Forums.

Reference was made to the disciplinary and intervention procedure. It was explained that this procedure involved the issue of warning letters, joint home visits, anti social behaviour contracts and anti social behaviour orders (ASBO's).

It was pointed out that there were currently 16 ASBO's issued throughout the Borough. It was felt that the issue of ASBO's did reduce levels of anti social behaviour.

It was explained that the Council worked in partnership with a variety of agencies, including the Police, Social Care and Health, Probation Officers and Tenancy Enforcement, in order to reduce anti social behaviour throughout the Borough.

Members were of the opinion that the success of the Community Safety section, especially following the introduction of the disciplinary and intervention procedure for juveniles within the Borough, should be publicised.

- RECOMMENDED :*
- 1. That the progress of the Action Plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Street Safe be noted.*
 - 2. That progress on the Action Plan be reviewed in six months.*
 - 3. That a publicity story be published highlighting the success of the Community Safety Section following the introduction of the disciplinary and intervention procedures for juveniles within the Borough.*

OSC(2).31/06 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman of the Committee setting out the Committee's Work Programme for consideration and review. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the draft final report in relation to the Review of Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme had been produced. Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 had considered the final report in relation to the Review of Affordable Housing.

With regard to future topics for review it was explained that as a result of the Borough elections in May 2007 and the timescale involved in completing a review, new reviews would not commence until after the elections.

Members suggested that housing maintenance costs should be considered as a future topic for review. Housing maintenance costs had increased over a number of years despite a reduction in the Council's housing stock.

It was agreed that a report regarding housing maintenance costs be given at a future meeting.

- RECOMMENDED:*
- 1. That the work programme be noted.*
 - 2. That a report regarding housing maintenance costs be given at a future meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2.*

OSC(2).32/06 DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2006 were considered and noted. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the Modernisation of Mental Health Services. It was explained that the temporary closure of the Tony White Unit had now been made permanent.

AGREED: That the information be noted.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. L. Walker, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4240, lwalker@sedgefield.gov.uk