

Item 5

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

PROSPEROUS AND ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
25 September 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor G.C. Gray (Chairman) and

Councillors Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, P. Gittins J.P., D.M. Hancock,
Mrs. I. Hewitson, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison and A. Smith

In Attendance: Councillors V. Chapman, Mrs. P. Crathorne, A. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray,
Mrs. S. Haigh, J.E. Higgin and Ms. I. Jackson

Apologies: Councillors G.M.R. Howe, J. Robinson J.P, B. Stephens and A. Warburton

P&A.5/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

P&A.6/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th July, 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

P&A.7/07 PROGRESS TOWARD THE ACHIEVEMENT OF BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 204 - THE PERCENTAGE OF APPEALS ALLOWED AGAINST THE AUTHORITY'S DECISION TO REFUSE ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Planning Services (for copy see file of Minutes) updating Members on progress towards Best Value Performance Indicator 204, which measured the number of appeals allowed arising from refusals of planning permission.

It was noted that the Indicator was only concerned with the number of appeals against refusal of planning permission. It did not include decisions on appeals against conditions imposed on planning permission, non-determination of planning applications and enforcement notice appeals.

The Committee was reminded that in December, 2006 a report had been presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 informing that during the period April, 2005 and November, 2006, 47.5% of appeals determined had been upheld in favour of the applicant. This represented a dip in performance as a figure in the region of 35% would normally be expected, which was close to the national average. The Committee at that time, made recommendations to address the declining performance. This report reviewed the progress that had been made to date.

The Committee was informed that during the period December 2006 to August 2007 a total of 8 appeal decision letters had been received. An analysis of the outcomes showed that 5 of the appeals had been dismissed and 3 were upheld. This represented 37.5% of appeals being upheld, which was close to the national average.

It was noted that in the same period 5 decision letters had been received in connection with enforcement notice appeals. Whilst these decisions were excluded for the purpose of calculation performance against BVPI204 it was noted that 100% success rate had been achieved.

There had, therefore, been a marked improvement in performance during that period and the results demonstrated that more robust decisions were being made. It was, however, still intended to continue to monitor and review performance and to report appeal decisions to Development Control Committee together with the critique of the decision and lessons to be learnt.

During discussion of this item reference was made to the 'One Stop Shop' which was held on a weekly basis and particularly the effectiveness of the One Stop Shop and how it was advertised. It was explained that One Stop Shop meetings were held on a weekly basis to consider applications and informal enquiries and to offer advice on applications. This had the effect of reducing the number of refusals by identifying those which would need to be refused at an early stage. In relation to advertising details of the One Stop Shop were displayed on the Council's website and applicants were informed of the facility when making enquiries. It was also proposed to include an article in Inform to publicise the facility.

Reference was also made to the issue of staffing levels with the Section. It was explained that there was a still a vacant post. However, staff resources, following an operational review, were achieving improvements.

AGREED : That the report be received.

P&A.8/07

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RECYCLING SERVICES REVIEW
GROUP- REVIEW OF FUTURE RECYCLING SERVICES OPTIONS**

Consideration was given to Cabinet's Response and Action Plan following its consideration of the recommendations arising from the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Review of future Recycling Services options. (For copy see file of Minutes).

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

It was suggested that an update be given on the Action Plan at the December meeting.

AGREED : 1. That the response of Cabinet and the

recommendations of the Review together with the implementation of the timetable outlined be noted.

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2. *That progress on the Action Plan be reviewed by the Committee in December, 2007.*

P&A.9/07

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP - REDUCING ECONOMIC INACTIVITY (INCREASING EMPLOYABILITY) REVIEW

Consideration was given to Cabinet's Response and Action Plan following consideration of its recommendations arising from the Review of Economic Inactivity (Increasing Employability). (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was suggested that an update be given in December, 2007 on the progress in relation to the Action Plan.

- AGREED :**
1. *That the response of Cabinet and the recommendations of the Review together with the implementation of the timetable outlined be noted.*
 2. *That progress on the Action Plan be reviewed by the Committee in December, 2007.*

P&A.10/07 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Work Programme for Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that a workshop would be arranged for all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to identify future review topics in line with priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan.

AGREED : *That the Work Programme be noted.*

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 email: enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk

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