

CABINET

Thursday,
20 December 2007
10.00 a.m.

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

AGENDA and REPORTS



This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format upon request

العربية (Arabic)

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

বাংলা (Bengali)

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

(中文 (繁體字)) (Cantonese)

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

हिन्दी (Hindi)

यदि आपको सूचना किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये तो कृपया हमसे कहे

polski (Polish)

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

Español (Spanish)

Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea recibir información en otro idioma o formato.

اردو (Urdu)

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھیے۔

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To notify the Chairman of any items that appear in the agenda in which you may have an interest.

3. MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 6TH December 2007. (Pages 1 - 6)

KEY DECISION

SOCIAL REGENERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS AND HOUSING PORFOLIOS

4. COALFIELD HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL

Joint report of Director of Neighbourhood Services and Assistant Chief Executive. (Pages 7 - 16)

OTHER DECISIONS

SOCIAL REGENERATION AND PARTNERSHIP AND LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT PORTFOLIOS

5. SPENNYMOOR AREA ACTION PLAN

Report of Assistant Chief Executive. (Pages 17 - 20)

HOUSING PORTFOLIO

6. LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER (LSVT) COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS TO THE SHADOW BOARD

Report of Director of Housing. (Pages 21 - 24)

7. SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH HOUSING ADVICE AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2007 - 2010

Report of Director of Neighbourhood Services. (Pages 25 - 62)

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PORTFOLIO

8. SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL - TRANSITION PLAN

Report of Chief Executive. (Pages 63 - 106)

9. BUDGET FRAMEWORK - 2008/2009 TIMETABLE

Report of Director of Resources. (Pages 107 - 110)

MINUTES

10. HEALTHY BOROUGH WITH STRONG COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held 27th November 2007. (Pages 111 - 116)

11. AREA FORUMS

To consider the Minutes of the following:

(a) Area 4 Forum - 20th November 2007 (Pages 117 - 120)

(b) Area 5 Forum - 27th November 2007 (Pages 121 - 124)

N.B. Whilst the following item does not contain any 'exempt' information, it should be noted that if members wish to raise any questions, it may be necessary to pass the appropriate resolution to exclude the press and public as the queries may involve the disclosure of exempt information.

12. EMPLOYMENT ISSUES PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2007. (Pages 125 - 126)

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Lead Members are requested to inform the Chief Executive or the Cabinet Secretary of any items they might wish to raise under this heading by no later than 12 noon on the day preceding the meeting. This will enable the Officers in consultation with the Chairman to determine whether consideration of the matter by the Cabinet is appropriate.

B. Allen
Chief Executive

Council Offices
SPENNYMOOR
12th December 2007

Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, V. Crosby, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Hodgson, Mrs. L. Hovvells, J.M. Khan, D.A. Newell and W. Waters

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection in relation to this Agenda and associated papers should contact Gillian Garrigan, on Spennymoor 816166 Ext 4240 ggarrigan@sedgefield.gov.uk

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
6 December 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong (Chairman) and

Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, V. Crosby, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Hodgson,
Mrs. L. Hovvels, D.A. Newell and W. Waters

In Attendance: Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. P. Crathorne, P. Gittins J.P., A. Gray,
B. Haigh, Mrs. S. Haigh, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, T. Ward and
J. Wayman J.P

Apologies: Councillors J.M. Khan

CAB.109/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

CAB.110/07 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.111/07 KERBSIDE RECYCLING SERVICE 2008/2010 (KEY DECISION)
The Lead Member for Environment presented a report regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were reminded that the Council currently had an agreement with Durham County Council for the provision of a kerbside recycling service - the "Kerb-it" scheme, which was delivered under contract by Premier Waste Management Limited. The contract would terminate on 31st March 2008 and its terms and conditions did not contain an extension clause to allow the service to be extended.

It was explained that in order to meet the Council's statutory obligations in respect of recycling targets and to satisfy residents expectations, Borough Council officers had been in discussion with service managers from Chester-le-Street, Durham City and Easington Councils regarding the joint procurement of a new kerbside recycling service from 1st April 2008.

It was reported that five companies had submitted tenders and following a full evaluation, the officer group overseeing the procurement process had jointly selected a preferred bid i.e. the variant tender submitted by Greencycle Plc., in the sum of £54.57 per tonne of recyclate collected. The variant tender was based on the additional collection and recycling of mixed plastics and cardboard.

Details of the preferred tender were set out in Section 5 of the report.

It was noted that the anticipated net revenue cost for the provision of the service for 2008/09 was £51,000. In addition to the annual revenue expenditure for the provision of the service, there would be a need for a one off purchase of re-usable plastic bags for the collection of mixed plastics and cardboard at a cost of approximately £50,000.

- RESOLVED :**
1. *That the variant tender submitted by Greencycle Plc in the sum of £54.57 per tonne of recyclate be accepted and approval be given to award a two year contract to Greencycle Plc for the provision of a Kerbside Recycling Service as described in its 'variant' bid.*
 2. *That the Council purchases re-usable plastic bags for the collection of mixed plastics and cardboard, as outlined in the report.*

CAB.112/07 PROPOSED MERGER BETWEEN SBC TRAINING AND BISHOP AUCKLAND COLLEGE (KEY DECISION)

The Lead Member for Learning and Employment presented a report regarding the proposal to merge the Council's Training Service with Bishop Auckland College and to provide a Construction Training Centre of Excellence at Coulson Street, Spennymoor as part of the overall redevelopment of Bishop Auckland College. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report also set out the core business of the merged entity, the proposed activities of the Centre and sought approval for a Memorandum of Understanding to be entered into with Bishop Auckland College for that purpose.

The vision for the project was to facilitate a step change in both the quantity and quality of construction related training and to make a significant contribution to the social and physical regeneration of the borough.

Members noted that Section 24 of Local Government (Public Involvement in Health) Act 2007 placed limitations upon the Council's ability to make financial commitments. Certain consents may be required from the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Durham County Council, in its role as transition authority, the Joint Implementation Team of Officers and the Implementation Executive, once established, and such other persons as the Council may be directed to consult.

With regard to the structure and governance arrangements for the new entity, it was noted that the preferred option was for a joint board to be established to oversee operations. Formal appointments to the joint board would be the subject of a further report to take account of the Council's constitutional requirements.

- RESOLVED :*
- 1. That the progress made since September 2006 in the investigation of the feasibility of working with Bishop Auckland College be noted and the proposed merger as set out in the report, be endorsed.*
 - 2. That agreement be given, in principle, to further development work being undertaken on the proposed Construction Training Centre and a report be submitted to Cabinet in due course, setting out the Council's capital contribution to the project within the confines of the Medium Term Financial Plan.*
 - 3. That approval be given for the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to sign a Memorandum of Understanding as a clear statement of intent to work with Bishop Auckland College to merge the Council's Training Centre with the College and to build a Construction Training Centre at Coulson Street as an integral part of the redevelopment of Bishop Auckland College.*

**CAB.113/07 SEDGFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK -
MAPPING SENSITIVE AREAS FOR BIRDS PROJECT**

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

The report sought approval to approach specialist consultancies to tender for the preparation of reports mapping sensitive areas for birds and plotting likely routes, of particular importance for feeding and breeding bird species to minimise the impact of developments that might arise as a result of the Borough Council's Local Development Framework. The cost of producing the document was estimated at £6,000 and neighbouring authorities had been approached to jointly commission the study to achieve efficiency savings.

- RESOLVED :*
- 1. That the Mapping Sensitive Areas for Birds Project be commissioned.*
 - 2. That in view of the specialised nature of the project, specific consultancies be approached, instead of undertaking an open tender process.*

CAB.114/07 PUBLIC SECTOR EFFICIENCY

Consideration was given to a report regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report updated Members on progress with regard to the Gershon Efficiency agenda and the achievement of the efficiency targets set by the Department of Communities and Local Government. It also gave details of

the Council's overarching strategy that had been developed for achieving efficiency gains and the actual progress made for the period 2005/06 to 2006/07.

Members' attention was drawn to the table set out in Paragraph 3.5, which showed the targets and efficiencies achieved to date. It was noted that a total of £1.243m of efficiency gains had already been delivered against a target of £0.833m to the end of 2006 – 07.

RESOLVED : That the progress made by the Council in relation to the efficiency agenda and the achievement and monitoring of efficiency savings be noted.

CAB.115/07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following:

- Prosperous and Attractive Borough
Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th November 2007
- Strategic Leadership
Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 20th November 2007

(For copies see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED : That the reports be received.

CAB.116/07 AREA FORUMS

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following:

- Area 2 Forum – 6th November 2007
- Area 3 Forum – 14th November 2007

(For copies see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED : That the reports be received.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Act.

CAB.117/07 SALE OF FORMER INDUSTRIAL SITE AT MIDDRIDGE

The Lead Member for Learning and Employment presented a report seeking approval to sell 0.92 hectares of land on the former industrial land at Middridge Industrial Estate. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the recommendation detailed in the report be adopted.

Published on 7th December 2007.

The key decision in respect of item No. 5 (CAB.112/07) will be implemented on Monday 17th December 2007, five working days after the date of publication unless, called in by three Members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call in procedure rules.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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Item 4

KEY DECISION

REPORT TO CABINET

20 DECEMBER 2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES / ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Social Regeneration and Partnerships / Housing Portfolio

COALFIELD HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 On 13 July 2006, Cabinet considered a report detailing the work undertaken to produce the Sedgefield Borough Coalfield Housing Market Renewal Masterplan, a strategic document setting out an approach to addressing long term imbalances in the housing market conditions in the priority Communities of Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and West Chilton.
- 1.2 Following Consideration of the report and associated items relating to creating the internal capacity to deliver the Housing Market Renewal Agenda, further detailed consultations were undertaken with the Residents' Associations, Chilton Town Council and other key Stakeholders. These consultation arrangements have since been formalised to provide a steering group whose purpose is to facilitate communications into the community and to take soundings from residents.
- 1.3 Detailed costings and delivery programmes are currently being worked up to guide the implementation of Phase one of the programme which includes The Rows at Ferryhill Station, Faraday & Stephenson Streets and the area surrounding the Praxis site in Dean Bank and Dale Street, Denewood Terrace and the Norman / Hunter Terrace area of West Chilton.
- 1.4 The Councils approach to delivery has and continues to be one of securing properties to facilitate works through negotiation, although it is recognised that it may be necessary to utilise all powers available to the Council to secure all the land and property required to deliver the renewal schemes.

- 1.5 In recognition of the need to be clear about the current state of the local housing market and the condition of properties within these areas, Cabinet authorised the Commissioning of a Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment (NRA) in December 2006. The resulting report, dealing with the Socio Economic situation of Residents, levels of unfit properties and types of disrepair, has recently been completed and provides a clear steer to refine the programmes works detailed in the original Masterplan. A continuation of the participatory approach to setting the Regeneration Priorities for the priority areas is to be commenced to incorporate this new information.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is Recommended that Cabinet;
- i) Endorse the acquisition of 14 – 19 Newcomen Street Dean Bank and 6 Norman Terrace, Chilton.
 - ii) Endorse the Local lettings policy adopted in Faraday & Stephenson Street, Dean Bank which suspends lettings of Sedgefield Borough Council Housing stock in those streets
 - iii) Grants delegated powers to the Director of Resources to agree the purchase of such properties as required for the purposes of Deed swap for affected residents.
 - iv) Grants delegated powers to the Director of Resources to grant a discretionary relocation payment of up to £25,000 in exceptional circumstances as outlined in paragraph 3.19.
- 2.2 Recommendations (iii) and (iv) to be incorporated into the next revision of the Council's Constitution.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 13 July 2006, Cabinet considered a report detailing the work undertaken to produce the Sedgefield Borough Coalfield Housing Market Renewal Masterplan, a strategic document setting out an approach to addressing long term imbalances in the housing market conditions in the priority Communities of Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and West Chilton.
- 3.2 The report set out a ten year programme of work which was costed and illustrated as being a three phase approach to dealing with the complex and inter-related issues of Housing Market Failure, Abandonment, Imbalance of tenure and a host of associated problems such as anti social behaviour and poor environmental condition.
- 3.3 **Consultation**
Following the report to Cabinet in July 2006 a further programme of targeted consultation was undertaken across the priority neighbourhoods between July and October 2006, with each affected occupier being given the opportunity of a one to one meeting with the

specialist Consultation consultants who have assisted in the development of the Masterplan.

- 3.4 A further series of consultations was undertaken with the Residents' Associations in Dean Bank and West Chilton with approximately 150 and 100 persons present at the respective meetings. Details of the programme and the timetable for implementation were also presented to Chilton Town Council.

3.5 Programme Development

A protocol for securing property by negotiation was agreed at the beginning of the process. This was to ensure that both progress in securing properties required for redevelopment works in phase one of the programme could be made and also that persons in certain situations - such as suffering from the withdrawal of a formal offer on their property following publication of the Masterplan, would not be disadvantaged by progressing the plan. Since the consideration of the Masterplan in July 2006, a total of 67 properties have been secured through this process in Dean Bank, Chilton and Ferryhill Station.

- 3.6 In addition to those properties identified in the original Masterplan report of July 2006, a further 6 properties incorporating numbers 14 to 19 Newcomen Street have been acquired to provide a larger development area and deliver a more comprehensive redevelopment scheme. 6 Norman Terrace, Chilton, a property immediately adjacent to a demolition block is also in the process of being purchased as a result of abandonment and severe disrepair.

- 3.7 The programme of activity for the priority areas was identified from the outset as being broader than simply a physical renewal focus, being underpinned by a comprehensive approach to the regeneration of the areas. This included seeking to tackle a range of problems associated with the poor regulation of private rented properties through a selective licensing scheme (approved by cabinet 21 June 2007.) and the development of a Neighbourhood Management Programme. This seeks to improve the co-ordination and targeting of public services by the Council and its partners across the three priority neighbourhoods, whilst providing significant opportunities for local people and stakeholders to shape the delivery of the services to suit local needs.

3.8 Housing Market Intelligence

The Masterplan considered by Cabinet contained a proposal to address the over supply of properties of a certain type and to introduce new housing types to meet the demands of the areas, where often an immediate development site could not be identified. From the initial proposal which provided an urban design, grounded in housing market demand figures, further detailed research has been undertaken to both ensure that the fullest possible picture of the physical and social

conditions in each of the areas is recognised, but also to ensure that sufficient information is available if properties cannot be secured by negotiation and the Council has to consider the use of the powers available to it.

3.9 To support this process, Neighbourhood Renewal Assessments (NRA) have been commissioned for Ferryhill Station and more recently for Dean Bank / West Chilton, as approved by Cabinet in December 2006. The NRA for Dean Bank and West Chilton has recently been completed and following detailed consideration, it suggests amendments to the areas within Dean Bank and West Chilton that should be utilised for redevelopment whilst also identifying potential problems with properties which, under the duty placed upon Local Authorities by the 2004 Housing Act, should be addressed when they are brought to our attention. A number of these hazards could be addressed by either the extensive proposals for group repair for properties, which will remain in the priority areas or through a targeted programme of intervention taken forward through the Neighbourhood Management Initiative.

3.10 Key features of the Dean Bank and West Chilton areas, identified through the NRA include:

- 31.3% of properties in West Chilton and 22% of properties in Dean Bank have Category 1 hazards, which are of a type that the Local Authority is under a duty to seek to resolve. Many of these hazards are in the Private rented sector, although there are significant issues with some owner occupied properties in West Chilton.
- When compared against the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (which provides the minimum standard of decency) 76.8 % of occupied dwellings in West Chilton and 54.4% of occupied dwellings in Dean Bank are classed as Not Decent.
- The costs associated with remedying unfitness, urgent disrepair and non-urgent disrepair to provide a 30 year life for properties in the priority areas would entail almost £9 million of works in West Chilton and around £17 million in Dean Bank
- 81% of residents in West Chilton and 76.2 % of Residents in Dean Bank were aware of the development proposals contained in the Masterplan, suggesting the Consultation and engagement programme noted in para 3.3 & 3.4 had been effective.

3.11 The NRA also sought to test the concepts outlined in the original Masterplan through option development, a process detailed in the NRA guidance manual published by ODPM in 2004. This was a central aspect of the study aimed at considering whether in the light of market changes and other technical factors, the existing proposals are still the most satisfactory course of action.

3.12 In line with the principles of engagement and participation put in place at the beginning of the Masterplan process, a programme of community based events have been arranged for January 2008, to assess resident and stakeholders views of the findings of the NRA and how this information is used to refresh and reprofile the phased programme of activity across Dean Bank and West Chilton.

3.13 Housing Management Operational Issues

The first phase of work for Dean Bank identifies selective clearance and rebuild in Faraday & Stephenson Streets. As such initial efforts on property acquisitions have been focussed there. Consequently, there has been a general downturn in the demand for all properties in these streets, including stock owned and managed by the Borough Council.

3.14 Properties in this area are facing quite rapid decline and are subject to increased vandalism and anti-social behaviour. As a result, under the terms of the Housing Allocations Policy, the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder have agreed a local letting policy to suspend the lettings of Council owned properties in the streets and to take the necessary measures to secure and soft strip properties to reduce the risk of vandalism and theft. This local policy will be reviewed once the implications of the NRA have been worked through with the affected communities

3.15 Support to Residents

The reports 'Compensation Payments for Residents Affected by Selective Demolition' considered by Cabinet on 15 February 2007 and Development of Financial Assistance Products to support residents affected by relocation, considered by Cabinet on 29 March 2007. set out the wide ranging programmes of assistance provided to assist in the delivery of the Coalfield Housing Market Renewal Programme, including the operation of Equity Loans to assist residents to remain in the priority areas and purchase new properties. This is in line with the views expressed by members through the Scrutiny Review of Neighbourhoods with older private sector housing and the views expressed by those residents involved in the Steering Group, which oversaw the development of the Masterplan.

3.16 In order to assist owner-occupiers in the following exceptional circumstances a discretionary grant of up to £25,000 will be paid in addition to the market value.

- The availability of suitable housing
- The current market value of the existing property
- The current market value of the proposed new property
- The existing mortgage terms and conditions
- The cost of funding any alterations to the new property
- The funding of any shortfall between the new and old property

- The equity in the existing property
 - The mortgage rearrangement costs
 - Any other exceptional circumstances
- 3.17 The grant will not be paid in cash but paid direct to the home owner's solicitor to enable completion on the purchase of a new home. The amount paid will be subject to "claw back" within the first five years.
- 3.18 Operationally, a small and easily convened discretionary panel should be established in order to make timely decisions. It is therefore proposed that the Director of Neighbourhood Services, the Director of Resources and the Valuation and Corporate Property Services Manager meet as required to undertake this task and that the Director of Resources be given delegated powers to grant discretionary payments in accordance with the policy.
- 3.19 A further area of support which has been identified as providing significant assistance to residents, and which can speed up the acquisitions process, is the operation of a deed swap initiative.
- 3.20 This involves negotiating a value of a property for acquisition and a property of approximately equivalent value, which can be occupied or improved to an equivalent standard utilising existing grant programmes. This option has advantages over straightforward purchase as it deals with replacement residential accommodation alongside the acquired property and removes uncertainty, the potential of lack of suitable property coming to market or potential impact of property chains

4. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Human Resource Implications

The Human Resource implications of delivering the Coalfield Housing Market Renewal Programme were the subject of a separate report to Cabinet on 13 July 2006, seeking authorisation to secure the capacity to deliver the programme through the creation of a Neighbourhood Renewal Team within the Neighbourhood Services Directorate. The proposals contained within this report are deliverable within the existing capacity of the team and partner organisations.

4.2 Financial Resource Implications

The acquisition of property has been resourced in line with the various sources of finance identified for the programme, namely Borough Council Capital Programme, SHIP funding and an allocation from the Council's Major Regeneration Initiative programme. Further resources from these sources are identified or have been bid for to operate across 2008/9.

- 4.3 The vacant Sedgefield Borough Council Housing properties in Stephenson and Faraday Streets, Dean Bank have been scheduled for demolition since consideration of the Masterplan report in July 2006 and the financing of the demolition and associated Home Loss payments will need to be considered as part of the budget process.
- 4.4 The ongoing delivery of the Coalfield Housing Market Renewal programme is currently subject to an application to English Partnerships (for assistance across Wear Valley, Sedgefield and Easington) for costs associated with acquisition and demolition of Property, as part of a cohesive programme of Housing Market Renewal.

5. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 The Coalfield Renewal Programme has from its inception, been built around a strong element of Participation and consultation, initially through the project steering group which oversaw the development of the Masterplan, through to a revised steering group structure comprising of key stakeholders to the programme.
- 5.2 The results of the Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment have been fed into the revised Steering Group mechanism and detailed discussions have been undertaken with other stakeholders such as Three Rivers Housing, who have significant property holdings in the identified area of Dean Bank.
- 5.3 A full schedule of detailed community based consultations over the impact of the results of the Neighbourhood Renewal assessment is planned for early 2008.
- 5.4 The diverse activity detailed in this report reflects the corporate approach to the delivery of Coalfield Housing Renewal and in preparing this report consultations have been undertaken with The Head of Housing Management, Area Housing Manager, Housing Strategy Manager, Private Sector Renewals Manager, Valuation and Corporate Property Manager and the Accountancy Services Manager.

6. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Legal Implications

A report to Cabinet 25 September 2007 sought to approve the statement of Reasons and authority to prepare the draft orders to progress with the compulsory purchase of properties at "The Rows" Ferryhill station. On the basis of the information provided in the HMA for Dean Bank and West Chilton, a similar process will be undertaken to ensure that the twin track approach of Negotiated purchase and Compulsory Purchase if required can be progressed

Risk Management

Given the complex nature of this programme of work, the delivery is being progressed utilising the principles of MSP (Managing Successful Programmes). Through this approach, individual elements of work are identified and risk assessment for each project and programme element will be detailed and considered in the Councils adopted STORM methodology.

Sustainability

One of the original motivations for producing a Masterplan for the three priority neighbourhoods was to ensure that they could be seen as sustainable communities in their own right.

Equity and Diversity

As one of the Council's major transformational programmes, the Coalfield Housing Market Renewal works will be subject to a programme specific Impact Needs Requirement Assessment as part of the Borough Council's programme of Equality Assessments

Crime and Disorder

Recorded incidents identify particular problems associated with each of the priority neighbourhoods, particularly relating to Anti-Social behaviour. The proposed approach seeks to minimise crime and disorder issues through a combination of activities including the better regulation of tenancies, enhanced policing through liaison with the Neighbourhood Management programme and wherever possible in the physical redevelopment works, to design out crime in accordance with the Home Office Advice.

7. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The ongoing works within the priority areas are the subject of regular updates to Scrutiny following the action plan contained within the report considered by cabinet on 25 April 2006.

8. **LIST OF APPENDICES**

No appendices

Contact Officer **Graham Wood**
Telephone Number 01388 816166 Ext. 7754
E-mail address gwood@sedgefield.gov.uk

Wards: **Ferryhill, Chilton**

Key Decision Validation: This report is deemed a key decision by virtue of it relating to activity in more than one ward and resulting in expenditure of more than £100,000

Background Papers:

Coalfield Housing Renewal – Masterplan. Cabinet Report 13 July 2006
Private Sector Housing Renewal – Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment –
Cabinet Report 14 December 2006
Compensation Payments to Residents affected by Demolition – Cabinet
Report 15 February 2007

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Item 5

REPORT TO CABINET

20th DECEMBER 2007

REPORT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Social Regeneration & Partnerships Portfolio: Learning & Employment Portfolio

Spennymoor Area Action Plan

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 In a report to Cabinet on 13 September 2007, covering the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive funding, a sum of £300,000 was allocated against feasibility works and technical studies, such as the above Area Action Plan
- 1.2 A further report to Cabinet, Commissioning an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor Town Centre, October 2007 sought approval to appoint consultants to develop an overall land use plan for Spennymoor, in a format which would allow integration with the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.3 A select list was established and the work tendered. However the range of prices returned was broad and included two in excess of the £75,000 allocation noted in the original report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the appointment of DTZ consultants (Company B) to undertake the Spennymoor Area Action Plan at a cost of £99,435 in accordance with Contract Procedure Rule 28.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The previous report to Cabinet set out the justification for a framework for Spennymoor which would help direct investment and new development recognising the potential for change and improvement across the town anticipated on the back of new residential development.
- 3.2 In taking such an approach, the brief for the commission sought to include a process, which would deliver the outputs in a format that could be subject to formal consultation and incorporation within the Local Development Framework.

- 3.3 In doing so, some of the prescribed requirements; such as Sustainability Appraisals for generated options and Appropriate Assessments led to cost increases above the initial budget estimate.
- 3.4 The methodologies and approach to the planning processes varied considerably a was reflected in the overall tender prices for this project which were;
- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| Company A | £44,450 |
| Company B | £99,435 |
| Company C | £56,124 |
| Company D | £127,111.3 |
| Company E | £58,100 |
| Company F | £43,814.5 |
- 3.5 A desktop evaluation of the tender submissions was undertaken, following which all six companies- whose submissions were thought to broadly meet the requirements set out in the brief, were interviewed.
- 3.6 The interviews of Consultants to undertake the Spennymoor Area Action Plan were conducted on 26 & 27 November. The proposals were assessed as detailed in the brief on the basis of Cost, Methodology and Relevant experience, with consideration being given to the approach to the new statutory processes required under an Area Action Plan and the management of risk particularly relating to capacity and experience.
- 3.7 A full scoring exercise was conducted on each of the interviewed consultancies, which considered the approach, resourcing and costing as well as the relevant experience of each practice. From this exercise it became clear that several of the consultancies were unfamiliar with the new requirement for Area Action Plans and had under resourced the commission. Only two submissions – both above the original £75,000 budget, had experience of the new process and had and were felt to have fully met the technical requirements set out in the brief, particularly in respect of producing the required supporting documentation to the main plan. Company B were the lowest of these two tenders.
- 3.8 Under the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules, the appointment of consultants is to be made following an assessment of the most economically advantageous proposal (Procedure Rule 27), with a report to Cabinet required if acceptance of a tender is sought above the approved budget / estimate. (Procedure Rule 28).
- 3.9 Following consideration of the project proposal and subsequent interview, Company B (DTZ) was felt to be most appropriate for the Spennymoor Area Action Plan.

4. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Human Resources
There are no additional Human Resource requirements in connection with this report.

4.2 Financial Resources
The original report seeking approval for the commissioning of consultants identified a project budget of £75,000, to be secured from an allocation of £300,000 identified in the report to Cabinet of 13 September. This overall allocation will also be used to fund a separate study for Ferryhill and Shildon centres which is of a lower value as it will be a shorter commission and as it does not follow full Local Development Framework consultation and adoption procedures.

5. **CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 In preparing this report consultations have been undertaken with the Audit & Resources Manager and the Capital Programme Manager.

5.2 The programme of work identified in the brief includes significant elements of public consultation prior to formalisation and adoption of land use plans.

6. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Legal / Procurement Implications
The procurement of consultants including the acceptance of tenders is being undertaken in line with the Councils Rules of Procedure Part G - Contract Procedure Rules.

6.2 Risk Management
The different approaches to the brief were considered in detail including the risks associated with each proposal, particularly in relation to capacity of the various consultancy teams and the potential for timescale or cost over-runs

7. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The Council's contribution to the vitality of the Borough's main centres is subject to a regular update to scrutiny under the heading of the Future Role of Town Centres

8. **LIST OF APPENDICES**

8.1 No appendices attached to this report

Contact Officer **Graham Wood**
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E-mail address gwood@sedgefield.gov.uk

Wards: **Spennymoor, Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange**

Background Papers:

Cabinet Report 13 September 2007.

Utilising Local Authority Business Growth Incentive funds

Cabinet Report 27 September 2007

Commissioning an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor Town Centre

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item 6

REPORT TO CABINET

20TH DECEMBER 2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Housing Portfolio

LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER (LSVT)

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS TO THE SHADOW BOARD

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council on 26th October 2007 (minute reference C.55/07 and C.56/07 refers) approved Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) to a standalone Registered Social Landlord (Housing Association) as the preferred option for the future ownership and management of the Council's housing stock. On 22nd November 2007 (minute reference CAB103/07). Cabinet approved a report setting out the proposed selection criteria, the timetable, and process for the appointment of Shadow Board. The Board will be made up of 12 members equally drawn from Council nominees, tenants and independents (members of the community with the required and appropriate skills to support the development of the new Housing Association).
- 1.2 This report updates Cabinet on progress on the establishment of the Shadow Board.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the report is approved and the names of the Council and Tenant nominees to the Shadow Board are read into the meeting.

3. APPOINTMENT OF THE SHADOW BOARD

- 3.1 A key requirement of the project plan and governance arrangements for the delivery of the preferred option is to establish a 'Shadow Board' ("the Board"). The Board is formed in advance of the ballot because it has a clear role in developing "the Promises" that are to be made to tenants about the future investment in their homes, estates and service. These Promises must be achievable, fundable and meet the aspirations of tenants expressed through the formal consultation programme. The Board will also be required to lead and represent the interests of the new Housing Association before it is formally constituted.
- 3.2 Applications were sought from all members of the Council. Advice had been sought on the appointment of Cabinet members to the Shadow Board and provided the advice detailed in the report to Cabinet on the 22nd November 2007 in terms of conflict of interest is followed there is no valid reason that they should be excluded from the Shadow Board.

- 3.3 The 4 tenant members of the Shadow Board would, normally have been appointed by all tenants through an election mechanism. At present, there are no election mechanisms in place and an alternative method was needed to appoint tenant members to the Shadow Board. Nearly 600 tenants have expressed interest in becoming involved in the transfer in a range of different ways. Volunteers were sought from these 600 tenants to put themselves forward for the 4 Shadow Board places.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive of Derwentside Homes (A standalone Housing Association) agreed to undertake the interview process with support from Lead Advisor to the Council. Interest from tenants and elected members has been keen and consequently it has not been possible to complete the process as anticipated, giving all applicants the attention required and meet the deadline for distribution of Cabinet papers.
- 3.5 It will be necessary to distribute the names of the recommended Council nominees and note the names of the Tenant Representatives appointed to the Shadow Board after the dispatch of the Cabinet papers and read them into today's meeting.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The costs associated with the appointment and ongoing support to the Shadow Board have been included in the estimate identified and agreed at Cabinet on 8th November 2007.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Early discussions have started with key stakeholders including the Department of Communities and Local Government, Housing Corporation, Audit Commission and Durham County Council regarding the implementation of the Council's preferred option.

6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Links to Corporate Objectives/Values

The contents of this report support the Council's Community Outcome of a Borough with Strong Communities, where residents can access a good choice of high quality housing. The Council's ambitions, which are linked to this Community Outcome, are articulated through the Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. Importantly ambitions include delivering a Borough with Strong Communities with good quality affordable housing in safe neighbourhoods. The preferred option would ensure the Council's housing stock could continue to support these objectives into the future.

6.2 Risk Management

The two key risks associated with the Shadow Board is:-

- (a) The failure to attract sufficient interest from suitable independents to fill the Shadow Board places.

- (b) The failure to develop appropriate skills and ability within the Shadow Board membership to deliver the LSVT project plan within the timescales identified.

A STORM assessment will be undertaken of these two key risks to inform the methodology of reducing them to an acceptable level.

6.3 Health & Safety

No additional issues have been identified.

6.4 Equality & Diversity

Full account will be taken of the Council's obligation to promote equality and diversity in the development.

6.5 Legal & Constitutional

Further detailed advice and support will be required from the Council's Solicitor in delivering the preferred option. The Solicitor advised Members and Officers to note the relevance of the report approved by Standards Committee on 10th February 2005 entitled "Report to Sedgefield Borough Council - Conflicts of Interest and Decision Making Arrangements". This report gives guidance on potential probity issues during the process of decision taking. The Council's Solicitor circulated copies of the report in order to appraise members and officers, albeit that the guidance does not supersede the revised Member Code of Conduct, which is also material to this process.

- 6.6 There are no other material considerations identified.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Overview and Scrutiny Implications of this report.

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Telephone Number	01388 816166 Ext.4207
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Ward(s)	None
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Key Decision Validation:

Not a key decision.

Background Papers:

Report to Council 26th October 2007 – Updating in the Stock Options Appraisal Study.
Report to Council 26th October 2007 – Choice of Landlord.
Report to Cabinet 22nd November 2007 – Resourcing the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer.
Report to Cabinet 22nd November 2007 – Establishment of a Shadow Board.

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item 7

REPORT TO CABINET

20th December 2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Housing Portfolio

Sedgefield Borough Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007 –2010

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Borough Council's first Homelessness Strategy covered the period 2003/4 – 2006/7 and was developed as a result of a new duty introduced in the Homelessness Act 2002. Since the adoption of this last Strategy, the Government has significantly changed its approach to the delivery of homelessness services with a greater focus on prevention and support.
- 1.2 The attached Sedgefield Borough Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007 –2010 has been developed to take account of the national, regional and local policy issues and priorities. The Strategy has established clear links to the Council's Housing Strategy, Corporate Plan and the Local Strategic Partnership's Community Strategy. The Strategy focuses on a range of issues but in particular building on the recent success achieved in delivering the prevention and support agenda, which have reduced the level of homelessness applications made to the Borough Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Sedgefield Borough Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007 –2010 is adopted.

3.0 Sedgefield Borough Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007 –2010

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a duty on all housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and produce a strategy to address the issues identified. The Strategy has been developed to take account of the key National, Regional and Local policy drivers. The strategy has taken account of local need using a range of data including homelessness returns and demand for housing.
- 3.2 The strategy takes a lead from the clear messages for homelessness services articulated through the Government's national approach in "*Sustainable Communities – Settled Homes, Changing Lives*".
- 3.3 To ensure a clear strategic fit with the Regional Housing Strategy's four objectives these have been adopted in developing the strategy with an emphasis on the fourth objective:-

- To **rejuvenate the housing stock** to meet 21st Century aspirations, replacing market failure with high quality housing in the right locations to help create successful, cohesive and sustainable communities.
 - To ensure the **type and mix of new housing provides choice**, supports economic growth and meets housing needs and demand. This will reflect the diversity of urban and rural communities and the needs for affordable, family and prestige housing.
 - To secure the **improvement and maintenance of existing housing** so that it meets required standards, investing in sustainable neighbourhoods.
 - To promote good management and targeted housing investment to address **specific community and social needs**, including an ageing population and the needs of minority communities; this will be integrated with the Supporting People programme and promote greater community involvement.
- 3.4 The Strategy takes account of the Council's ambitions articulated in the Corporate Plan and the vision for the Borough set out in the Local Strategic Partnership's Community Strategy. The Strategy has a clear link to the Housing Strategy for the Borough and the sub regional Housing Strategy, and this link will ensure progress is monitored.
- 3.5 The Strategy has been developed based on the key legal, policy changes and evidence-based assessments of need. This has seen the development of key priorities for action. Each priority is supported by a number of key actions set out in the strategy.
- 3.6 The delivery of the Strategy will be monitored through the Council's performance monitoring framework.

4. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The adoption of the Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007 –2010 has no direct resource implications.

5. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 Consultation has occurred with residents, partners and other stakeholders on the development of the Strategy. This has included specific consultation with the Local Strategic Partnership working group on Homelessness.

6. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 **Links to Corporate Objectives/Values**

The Community Strategy Outcomes include a Borough with Strong Communities where residents can access a good choice of high quality housing. The Council's ambitions, which mirror those in the Community Strategy outcomes and are articulated through the Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. Our ambitions include delivering a Borough with Strong Communities and the Housing Advice and

Homelessness Prevention Strategy has a direct contribution to delivering these ambitions.

6.2 Risk Management

The delivery of the discrete elements of the Strategy will be subject to appropriate risk management controls. Copies of the strategy will be available in other languages, in large print or on audio tape.

6.3 Health and Safety

There are no additional health and safety implications over and above those for existing staff of the Borough Council.

6.4 Equality and Diversity

Full account has been taken of the Borough Council's obligation to promote equity and diversity in the development of the Strategy.

6.5 Legal & Constitutional

No new implications have been identified.

7. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no overview and scrutiny implications.

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Background Papers:

Sustainable Communities Settled homes, changing lives – ODPM
Sedgefield Borough Homelessness Strategy 2003
Sedgefield Borough LSP Community Strategy
Sedgefield Borough Housing Strategy
Regional Housing Strategy
Sub Regional Housing Strategy

Examination by Statutory Officers

Yes

**Not
Applicable**

1. The report has been examined by the Councils
Head of the Paid Service or his representative

2. The content has been examined by the Councils
S.151 Officer or his representative

3. The content has been examined by the Council's
Monitoring Officer or his representative

4. The report has been approved by Management Team



SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING ADVICE AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2007 – 2010



“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive borough with strong communities”

Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

-1-

HOUSING ADVICE AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2007 – 2010

*“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive
borough with strong communities”*

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Foreword

Sedgefield Borough Council's ambitions set out in the Community Strategy **Vision for Sedgefield Borough in 2014** is to ensure that the Borough is a place where...

- People can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities.
- High quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer.
- The natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced.
- People can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods.

In summary, we want Sedgefield to be a Borough that is prosperous, attractive and healthy, with strong safe communities. We have adopted these ambitions for the Council and this Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy will have a significant role in helping deliver our vision for the Borough.

Homelessness is recognised by Sedgefield Borough Council as a serious issue that has a profound impact on lives and communities. Homelessness is a widespread problem and often has a number of complex causes.

Sedgefield Borough Council adopted its first homelessness strategy in July 2003 as a result of the requirement placed upon local authorities set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, and after undertaking a comprehensive review of homelessness within the Borough.

The Authority has undergone a re-structure across all service areas resulting in a separation of the strategic and landlord functions. This has provided the opportunity to reconfigure the Homelessness service to focus on prevention, and to revisit the original strategy in order to update information and produce a further strategy. The document compliments Sedgefield Borough's Housing Strategy 2006/7 to 2008/9 and our Corporate Plan. There are also clear links to the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy.

Sedgefield Borough has sought to address the priorities highlighted by Central Government with regard to preventing homelessness, ensuring accommodation is available to meet the needs of homeless people and ensuring support is available to prevent homelessness re-occurring. The Borough Council has made significant progress in these areas since 2003, by implementing a Service Improvement Plan early in 2004.

Statutory Homelessness presentations have reduced by 35% from 822 in 2004/05 to 531 in 2005/06, and again by 55% to 238 for 2006/07. Progress has been made with regard to joint working with the Housing Department, Registered Social Landlords and private landlords. This is to ensure that accommodation is available to meet the needs of homeless people. Close working links with support agencies have been established to prevent repeat homelessness.

This strategy will identify how the Authority proposes to continue to address these issues over the next three years and how it will aim to:

- Continue to work to prevent homelessness within the Borough.
- Address the personal and social causes of homelessness – examining initiatives that will support tenancy maintenance. We recognise this approach can help to develop sustainable communities and reduce the cost of failed tenancies to the Council.
- Encourage inter-agency working to provide support for vulnerable people – development of effective and robust links between agencies.
- Continue to maintain the low level of rough sleepers.
- Tackle the wider causes of homelessness.
- Provide more settled homes.

Sedgefield Borough realises that services must be co-ordinated, focused on need and informed by service users in order to provide the best outcomes for homeless people. The needs of our clients are changing and our services will continue to change in order to meet their needs, by a process of ongoing, continual review.

By working together with our partners, we can improve the lives of our citizens and ensure we have strong safe communities where people can access housing they require in an attractive environment.



A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background.

Councillor A. Armstrong
Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in black ink.

Councillor W. Waters
Portfolio Holder for Housing



A handwritten signature in black ink.

Brian Allen
Chief Executive

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What This Strategy Will Achieve

During the course of our first Homelessness Strategy significant improvements have been made within the Housing Advice and Homelessness Service, by reconfiguring and refocusing the service towards the prevention of homelessness. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of statutory homelessness applications submitted, from 822 in 2004/05 to 238 in 2006/07.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007 – 2010 aims to build upon this success and during the life of the Strategy the service will:

- Formalise a Domestic Violence Sanctuary Scheme to enable victims of domestic abuse to remain safely in their own homes.
- Establish prevention protocols with Housing Management and Tenancy Enforcement services to reduce the number of evictions through rent arrears and anti social behaviour.
- Develop a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to allow greater access to the private rented sector.
- Produce a comprehensive housing advice and information pack including a directory of services.
- Establish a working protocol with supported accommodation providers to allow increased access to this service.
- Establish a Homelessness Prevention Network within the Borough with all agencies involved with potentially homeless clients.
- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.
- Assess all temporary accommodation against specified minimum standards.
- Establish a Homelessness Forum.
- Produce a homelessness prevention education pack for young people aged 14 – 16.
- Establish a protocol with Registered Social Landlords to increase the number of allocations made to homeless clients, by linking in to the Housing Corporation Homelessness Strategy's key elements.
- Further reduce the number of statutory homelessness applications by 25%.

-
- Reduce the number of failed private tenancies by working with landlords and increasing tenancy support services.

The delivery of these outcomes will require effective joint working across a range of agencies, including statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

The strategy and its outcomes will link into the development of a sub regional homelessness strategy that is proposed for County Durham.

Section

1

How to use this Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a number of changes to the duties placed on a local housing authority in relation to homelessness and housing advice. One of the most significant being the requirement to review homelessness in the Borough and produce a strategy to address the issues identified. We have taken the opportunity to update our Strategy and look forward over the period 2007 – 2010.

What Is A Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

The Government has highlighted the need for the prevention of homelessness wherever possible. This Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy (“the strategy”) will provide an insight into the levels of homelessness across the Borough, the strategic context in which the strategy was produced, an analysis of need, the priorities for the future and how the Authority proposes to address these priorities over the next 3 years.

What Is In The Strategy

This Strategy is made up of six sections:

Section One – provides an overview of what is incorporated within the strategy.

Section Two - tells you about the importance homelessness prevention plays in the operation of the Council, the strategic context in which the strategy was produced, and how we are addressing changes in policy and legislation.

Section Three - tells you how we work with our partners and consult with our residents to deliver our plans.

Section Four – tells you how we developed our priorities for intervention through analysis of need in the Borough.

Section Five – explains the current position and tells you future priorities for action for the Borough and how we are seeking to address key Government policy issues.

Section Six - tells you how we will monitor and report on the progress we make in delivering our Strategy.

Where To Find Out More Information

Please contact S Hewitt, Senior Homeless Persons Officer, at the Council’s offices in Green Lane Spennymoor (01388 816166) or email shewitt@sedgefield.gov.uk for further information or visit our website www.sedgefield.gov.uk

Section 2

Corporate Context and Wider Priorities

Sedgefield Borough is situated in the South of County Durham in the North East of England, between Durham City and Darlington. Covering some 217 sq. km, almost 80% of the 87,206 residents (2001 Census) live within the four towns of Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Shildon and Ferryhill, which provide the main focus for employment, shopping and leisure. Newton Aycliffe is a former 'New Town' and the others have developed around iron, coal and railway industries. In contrast to these urban centres, the Borough also contains small historic villages (some of Saxon origin) and coalfield communities in the more rural eastern part of the Borough. The population within Sedgefield has fallen by 4.3% since the 1991 Census compared to the North East average of 2.8%, due largely to economic migration. The departure of young families and longer lives has resulted in an increasingly ageing population within the Borough, with more than twice the number of people aged over 65 than aged under 5. At the 2001 Census the population was 99.3% white, compared to the regional average of 97.6%.



Strategic framework

Many issues drive the Council's strategy development including this housing strategy e.g. the socio-economic circumstances of local people, community aspirations identified through consultations, the policy directives of national government and regional governance structures and the Council's capacity and resources.

The key socio-economic factors influencing the quality of life of local people across the Borough are set out below...

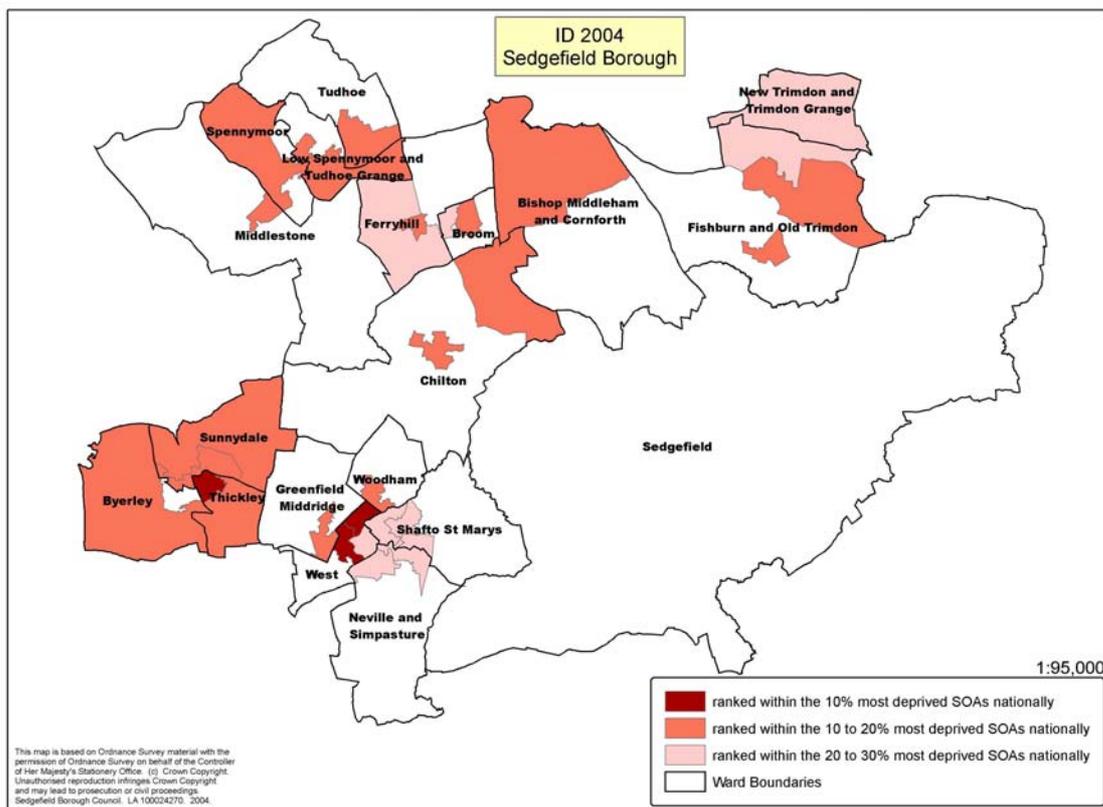
- ❑ **Health deprivation** –high levels of ill health, long-term illness and a lower than average life expectancy, with 18 of the Borough's 19 wards containing areas amongst the worst 10% in the country for health-related issues.
- ❑ **An ageing population** – more residents over 60 years of age than children aged under 14, placing significant demands on services for the elderly.
- ❑ **Low educational and skills attainment** – with less young people achieving 5 A*-C GCSE passes than the national average and a significant proportion of adults lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- ❑ **Employability** –low unemployment masking economic inactivity rates much higher than the national average, with means-tested benefits providing a major source of income for a significant proportion of the population.

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- ❑ **Narrow employment base** –manufacturing sector twice that of North East and National average and therefore more vulnerable to global economic pressures.
- ❑ **Sustainability of the Borough’s towns and villages** – some settlements and main town centres are struggling to maintain their competitiveness in the light of changing shopping patterns.
- ❑ **Access to key services** – is often difficult, particularly for residents in the outlying areas of the Borough.
- ❑ **Community development** – development and support are required to increase the aspirations and participation of residents in their communities
- ❑ **Reassurance** – real successes in addressing issues such as community safety need to be better communicated to local communities.

The types of deprivation outlined above can affect anyone across the Borough but tend to cluster in certain neighbourhoods. The Indices of Deprivation 2004 identifies three of the Borough’s 56 Super Output Areas (areas of around 1,000 residents constructed to allow statistical comparison) as within the 10% most deprived nationally across a range of factors and 18 of the Boroughs 19 wards containing SOAs within the 30% most deprived. The Borough was one of the original 88 areas allocated Government Neighbourhood Renewal Funding on the basis of the extent of multiple deprivation in the area and is scheduled to receive a further allocation of £2m over the 2006-2008 period.



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How we have developed our Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

This strategy has been developed taking account of the Council's legal duties set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part VII and the Homelessness Act 2002. The national and regional policy context has assisted in developing an approach to tackling homelessness that is broad based and focuses on local issues. A thematic group on youth homelessness has been established through the Local Strategic Partnership and through this, the views of our partners and stakeholders have been taken into account in developing this strategy.

The National Context

The national policy context is set out in the Government's, '*Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*' strategy, which was published in 2005.

This document highlighted five key objectives:

1. Preventing Homelessness

Authorities should aim to prevent homelessness wherever possible and ensure accommodation and support is available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The personal and social causes of homelessness need to be addressed, with emphasis placed on initiatives which offer a range of options at an early stage, thus enabling households to stay in their existing accommodation or move to more suitable accommodation on a planned basis. These options could include:

- Family mediation
- Debt counselling
- Housing benefit uptake
- Sanctuary schemes for the victims of domestic violence
- Rent deposit schemes
- Tenancy support schemes
- Housing advice services

2. Support for people when they are vulnerable

The causes of homelessness for some people are more than just a housing problem and can be very complex often including mental health and/or substance misuse. Multi agency services need to be co-ordinated to meet the needs of vulnerable households with complex problems.

The Supporting People programme aims to support housing based options and sustain suitable tenancies by encouraging inter-agency planning. A robust framework is required to provide housing based support services to vulnerable people to reduce the risk of failing tenancies.

3. Tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness

Addressing homelessness is an integral part of neighbourhood regeneration. Uptake of employment, state benefits, health, financial and advice services are found to be lower among homeless households.

Housing organisations will be central to facilitating access to these services by vulnerable households.

4. Sustaining reductions in rough sleeping

Successes are being achieved in reducing the number of 'roofless' people and improving hostel provision remains a key public service priority. The need for suitable follow on accommodation and support is becoming greater as the availability of council owned stock is reducing.

5. Providing more settled homes

For those households accepted under the legislation, the range of housing options are increasingly limited. Accessing suitable accommodation for homeless families can cause problems due to the physical lack of appropriate council properties and lack of affordable housing in the privately rented sector and owner occupation.

Issues of crime and anti social behaviour, poor employment and education opportunities, and lack of local services need to be addressed holistically by ensuring that our Local Strategic Partnership is active in the delivery of our homelessness strategy.

Tackling the anti social behaviour of individual households remains key to improving the quality of neighbourhoods and preventing repeat homelessness.

The Government has published guidance on making nomination arrangements work better, and Sedgefield Borough Council and our partner RSL's have jointly reviewed how effective nomination agreements, exclusion criteria and tenancy sustainment measures currently are at a local level.

The expectation of tackling homelessness issues also extends to the private rented sector, with recognition for the need to work more closely with private landlords to prevent homelessness. Some initiatives may include:

- Rent deposit schemes
- Accredited landlord schemes
- Goodwill payments to private landlords – can be used to minimise the number of homeless presentations by making a 'goodwill' payment to the landlord in exchange

for allowing the tenant to remain in the accommodation until a suitable alternative can be found.

In addition to the objectives identified in '*Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*', the Government has also set a target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, and has set local authorities other challenging performance targets and indicators to continue to drive improvements in the homelessness service these are set out below.

Performance Indicators

- **BV183(a)** – average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households including dependant children or a pregnant woman that are unintentionally homeless or in priority need.
- **BV183(b)** – average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households including dependent children or a pregnant woman that are unintentionally homeless or in priority need.
- **BV202** – number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority.
- **BV203** – percentage change in the average number of families which include dependent children or a pregnant woman placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year.
- **BV213** – number of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service, and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation.
- **BV214** – proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years.
- **BV225** – score against checklist for actions against domestic violence.

The Regional Perspective - The North East

The regional perspective plays a key role in informing local homelessness strategies.

The publication of the North East Regional Housing Strategy (NERHS) in July 2005 is a key document that sets out four main objectives:

- To **rejuvenate the housing stock** to meet 21st Century aspirations, replacing market failure with high quality housing in the right locations to help create successful, cohesive and sustainable communities.

-
- To ensure the **type and mix of new housing provides choice**, supports economic growth and meets housing needs and demand. This will reflect the diversity of urban and rural communities and the needs for affordable, family and prestige housing.
 - To secure the **improvement and maintenance of existing housing** so that it meets required standards, investing in sustainable neighbourhoods.
 - To promote good management and targeted housing investment to address **specific community and social needs**, including an ageing population and the needs of minority communities; this will be integrated with the Supporting People programme and promote greater community involvement.

Our Strategy has been developed in this context and we have aligned our aims to these objectives.

Homelessness has emerged as a key issue in the North East with homelessness acceptances in County Durham rising from 614 in 2000/01 to 1430 in 2003/04 representing a rise of 132.9%. The reduction of social housing in the North East has reduced the availability of accommodation in the social rented sector and put pressure on other housing providers.

In some cases, the needs of those presenting as homeless, are complicated by drug and alcohol problems, mental health issues or a combination of both. Consequently, these people may have particular problems accessing services and obtaining suitable accommodation.

In addition, research has identified that there is a provision gap in accommodation and support for other groups, specifically, women and families experiencing domestic violence, vulnerable young people, ex-offenders and pregnant teenagers.

Because of the relatively low numbers of rough sleepers in the region, the issue is not regarded as a high priority. However, close liaison will be maintained with the voluntary sector to ensure continuing improvements.

The need to minimize homelessness through preventative action, as well as responding to problems as they arise, has to be a priority for all local authorities.

Sub Regional Context – County Durham

Sub-Regional Housing Strategy

This strategy has been developed by the Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group and sets out priorities for the Durham sub-region over the period 2008 to 2011.

The aim of the strategy is to have a strong and supportive housing market that:

- Supports economic growth and provides new opportunities.
- Offers a wide choice of affordable, quality housing.
- Promotes repair and improvement across all tenures.

-
- Supports all sections of the community, especially older people and the vulnerable.

The strategy has identified developments that need to be explored in order to address the needs of vulnerable people who may have physical disabilities, mental health issues, learning disabilities, or who may be teenage parents, ex-offenders, substance misusers and careleavers.

The prevention of homelessness and securing good quality, stable housing for these groups is of paramount importance, and the crucial element identified in the strategy is the need for effective partnership working between all agencies, authorities and integrated teams, joint commissioning of work and the sharing of good practice across the sub-region.

Supporting People

The five-year Supporting People Strategy has been developed by the Durham and Districts Supporting People Partnership in order to establish the key developments and changes which need to take place in relation to housing related support services across County Durham.

The strategy has identified gaps in current service, which include lack of support for sufferers of domestic violence, high-risk offenders, people with complex mental health issues and people with drug and alcohol problems.

It has also set out the priority areas for development which include the increased provision of floating support schemes for specific vulnerable groups, consolidation of homelessness monitoring across all agencies, support for a mediation service for young people and the Countywide Joint Protocol scheme for 16/17 year olds.

In addition, there has emerged a clear issue with the lack of supported move on accommodation across the County including Sedgefield Borough.

Durham Housing Neighbourhood Group

The Durham Housing Neighbourhood Group was established in 2002 to take a strategic lead on the delivery of housing issues within the County (further details are available at www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk). The Group comprises the Directors of Housing/Strategic Housing from the District Councils within the County, and representatives from Adult and Community Services, Probation, Housing Providers and Primary Care Trusts. This group recently refocused its activities into two groups, one dealing with Supporting People Commissioning and the other dealing with Housing issues. This will facilitate a more focused role in the development of a Local Area Agreement, which includes preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness among vulnerable young people.

Local Area Agreement

The homelessness targets are located within the Children and Young People's Block, and the Safer, Stronger Communities Block of the Local Area Agreement.

Children and Young People's Block

Children and young people are protected from homelessness and failing tenancies.

There are three targets identified in order to achieve this outcome:

- A 30% reduction in the number of homelessness presentations amongst 16/17 year olds.
- Reduced number of repeat homelessness cases involving children and young people.
- A reduction of 550 cases of homelessness through housing advice casework by 2009.

Safer, Stronger Communities Block

There are three targets identified in order to achieve this outcome:

- A reduction in the proportion of vulnerable households living in non-decent accommodation in the private sector.
- A reduction in the number of households facing homelessness.
- A reduction in the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

Sedgefield Borough Council is committed to achieving these targets.

Homelessness Action Partnership

County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership has been working alongside the Durham Housing and Neighbourhood Group in the development of the Local Area Agreement bid. In addition, it has developed a Countywide Joint Protocol for 16/17 year olds, and has been successful in obtaining £100,000 for mediation services to homeless young people aged between 16 and 25 years old. NCH* has been commissioned to carry out this service.

The partnership is committed to the development of new initiatives to prevent homelessness across County Durham.

Joint Protocol

A Joint Protocol has been developed between Homelessness Departments, Adult and Community Services and the voluntary sector to ensure the best service possible for 16/17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The agencies will work together to prevent homelessness and to ensure the most appropriate housing solution is obtained for the young person. This protocol is now operating across the County.

* NCH -National Children's Homes

Corporate Context

The Local Strategic Partnership's ambitions for the Borough is set out in the Community Strategy a **Vision for Sedgefield Borough in 2014**.



To ensure that Sedgefield Borough is a place where...

- ❑ People can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities
- ❑ High quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer
- ❑ The natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced
- ❑ People can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods

We have adopted the ambitions of the Community Strategy as our Corporate Ambitions, and have identified the 12 Community Outcomes to which we, as a Council, can have maximum influence. Both the Housing Strategy and this Strategy's aims can influence the delivery of many of the Council's Corporate Ambitions through the cross cutting nature of housing.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY VISION	Sedgefield Borough Council Corporate Ambition	Community Outcome
People can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities	A HEALTHY BOROUGH	Safeguarding public health Promoting independent living Creating leisure opportunities Promoting cultural activities
High quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that	A PROSPEROUS BOROUGH	Promoting business and employment opportunities Maximising learning opportunities

Quality Services For Local People

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COMMUNITY STRATEGY VISION	Sedgefield Borough Council Corporate Ambition	Community Outcome
they offer		Tackling disadvantage and promote social regeneration
The natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced	AN ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH	<p>Ensuring a cleaner, greener environment</p> <p>Improving towns, villages and the countryside</p> <p>Reducing waste and managing natural resources</p>
People can access the housing they want, in attractive and safe neighbourhoods	A BOROUGH WITH STRONG COMMUNITIES	<p>Securing quality sustainable housing</p> <p>Promoting safer neighbourhoods</p>

Previous Sedgefield Borough Homelessness Strategy 2003

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007-2010 builds upon Sedgefield Borough's Homelessness Strategy 2003, in which, four key aims were identified.

- To improve preventative work
- To increase appropriate temporary accommodation
- To increase the range of options for permanent housing
- To increase the support for people after rehousing

Significant progress has been made in achieving these aims over the past 3 years as highlighted in Section 5.

By working with stakeholders and partners, and by taking account of national and regional policy, we have refined the aims of the Homelessness Service and have agreed the following 5 service aims as our priorities for the next 3 years, 2007/10.

-
- **Prevent homelessness within the Borough.**
 - **Encourage inter-agency working to provide support for vulnerable people.**
 - **Seek to address the personal and social causes of homelessness and the wider causes.**
 - **Maintain the low level of rough sleepers.**
 - **Provide more settled homes.**

Through the process of needs analysis these aims have been broken down into a number of objectives, underpinned by actions, for which targets for delivery have been developed.

Resources

Sedgefield Borough employs 5 Housing Support Officers, one based in each of the 5 geographically based Integrated Teams for Vulnerable Adults. A Senior Homeless Persons Officer, is based at Sedgefield Borough's main Council Offices as part of its Housing Advice and Homelessness Service. This new way of working places the Housing Advice and Homelessness function at the heart of teams with direct access to social care and health support providing a more holistic outcome for our clients.

There are 7 homeless temporary accommodation units dispersed across the Borough, and 3 domestic violence temporary accommodation units. These are furnished tenancies and are typically 2 or 3 bedroomed houses.

The Department of Communities and Local Government's Homelessness grant for 2006/7 was £27,000 which has been used to refocus the service towards the prevention of homelessness.

Section**3**

Partnership Working

The Council has a track record of developing effective partnerships across all service areas. We recognise we cannot deliver this Strategy and our ambitions for the Borough without effective partnership working. Set out below are the key Partnerships in which we are currently involved, along with a number of examples of successful projects.

- **County Durham Supporting People Partnership** - we are part of the Partnership and contributed directly to the development of the 5-year Supporting People Strategy for County Durham.
- **County Durham Monitoring Initiative** - the Authority contributes to the funding of a Countywide Monitoring Officer post. Through this initiative levels of homelessness are monitored and needs can be assessed across the County and within specific areas/boroughs.
- **Partnership Board for Services to Vulnerable Adults** - we are represented by the Director of Neighbourhood Services on the Board and have been key to the development of the integrated teams bringing together health, social services and housing staff in order to provide a single point of contact for the needs of vulnerable adults.
We have successfully implemented an innovative approach to joint work with Housing, Health and Social Care staff in area based teams to cover the whole of the Borough.
- **Sedgefield Residents and Tenants Federation** - is a partnership between the resident and tenant organisation across the Borough and the Council, to ensure effective service delivery to address the priorities of our communities.
- **County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership** - the Council is a member of this County wide group with the aim of delivering effective interventions to tackle homelessness.
 - *We have adopted a Joint Protocol for Young Homeless based on a model of good practice developed by Sedgefield Borough.*
 - *Implemented a County wide mediation service for young people and their families to prevent homelessness.*
 - *Worked jointly with the Housing and Neighbourhood Group to define LAA targets on the prevention of homelessness.*
 - *Secured funding to use on preventative measures across the County.*

-
- **Durham Housing and Neighbourhood Group** - whilst not strictly a partnership, the group consist of the Directors of Housing in the County and leads on cross cutting issues.
 - *We have agreed to implement a single Travellers Housing Needs Assessment for County Durham.*
 - **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership** – the authority is part of this partnership which seeks to reduce anti-social behaviour within the Borough and so enable more settled homes to be provided. The Homelessness service is represented as part of a multi agency approach alongside the Police, Probation, Tenancy Enforcement, Education, and Young People’s support services.
 - *We have established a Domestic Violence Action Group as part of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which meets on a quarterly basis to address issues of domestic violence and abuse within the Borough.*
 - **County Durham Youth Homeless Partnership** – the Council is a member of this County wide group which seeks to disseminate good practice in the field of youth homelessness and homelessness prevention.
 - *We have worked together to raise awareness of the complex issue of youth homelessness and co-ordinate efforts across the County.*
 - **Supported Lodgings Scheme** – the Homelessness service works jointly with Social Care and Health via the Supported Lodgings Scheme.
 - *We have enabled young people to be placed within a host family in order to develop their life skills in preparation for independent living.*
 - **Homelessness Prevention Liaison Unit** – although not now in operation, this service was developed from the Homelessness Innovation Fund and sought to advise authorities on prevention methods to reduce homelessness throughout the North East Region. The unit has left a legacy of useful initiatives and has produced a final report.
 - *We will work together with other authorities to establish forums and share good practice.*
 - **Joint Protocol** – the Authority is a key partner in the Joint Protocol process for vulnerable young people, working in partnership with other agencies including Adult and Community Services and the Voluntary Community Sector.
 - *We will work together to reduce and prevent homelessness and provide support for the 16/17 year old group.*
 - **Sedgefield Children and Young People’s Partnership** – the Authority is a partner in the Children and Young People’s Partnership which aims to ensure that children are protected from homelessness and failing tenancies.

Section**4****Needs Analysis**

We have identified our broad priorities for intervention through consultation with stakeholders, taking account of national and regional policy, and on analysis of demographic and homelessness data. Sedgefield Borough is committed to promoting equality and welcomes and values the diversity of communities. We will work with other agencies to address the needs of particular sections of the community who are often disadvantaged. In this section of the strategy we have identified the key evidence that has been used to confirm our priorities as issues that we should seek to address. This evidence has been used to develop the action plan to take forward the Strategy.

Homelessness presentations steadily increased nationally from 1997 to 2003. Since this time they have been reducing. In 2003/04 the main causes of homelessness nationally were:

- 38% evicted by family or friends
- 20% relationship breakdown
- 13% end of assured shorthold tenancy
- 29% other categories

62% of accepted households included dependant children or an expectant mother.

In the North East region, the homelessness figures continued to rise, going against the national trend. In 2000/01 there were 5151 homeless acceptances, these continued to rise to 8284 in 2003/04 across the North East. This trend was consistent within County Durham with 614 acceptances in 2000/01 rising to 1430 in 2003/04, and Sedgefield Borough with 215 acceptances in 2000/01 rising to 342 in 2003/04, and again to 441 in 2004/05.

The rise in homeless presentations within the North East could be due to a combination of factors including:

- The changes made by Central Government in the Homelessness Act 2002 which extended the priority need categories.
- The significant rise in house prices:- people are no longer able to access affordable housing in the private housing market. In addition private landlords have taken advantage off these rising prices to sell their properties and make a profit, which left many private tenants without a home.
- The shrinking social housing sector:- demand outweighed supply, therefore, long waiting times for those attempting to access Council accommodation through the normal housing waiting list, with people presenting as homeless to gain priority on the list.
- An increase in the number of new households.

Within Sedgefield Borough homelessness presentations continued to rise in line with the North East regional trend.

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Decisions	472	373	312	608	822
Acceptances	215	210	217	342	441

The main causes of homelessness for those who were accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty are:

	2003/04	2004/05
Family/friend eviction	115	143
Relationship breakdown	98	127
End of Assured tenancy	13	52
Mortgage arrears	9	24

Analysis of data from P1E statistics and Centrepoint Monitoring information, suggests that there has been an increase in the number of homeless presentations from 16/17 year olds, people with drugs and alcohol problems, women suffering domestic abuse and teenage parents over the past four years within Sedgefield Borough.

This overall increase is compounded by a lack of supported accommodation for vulnerable client groups, including those stated above, and there is limited access into permanent accommodation for those ready to move on to independent living. There is also a need for a more pro-active approach in assisting those homeless people who are considered to be 'non priority need'. In addition, it has been found that there is a gap in the provision of suitable temporary accommodation for young people and ongoing support for those people when they are placed in temporary accommodation.

We have used this information to inform our priorities and actions for 2007 - 2010.

Section**5****Our Priorities**

Our key actions over the life of this strategy are linked to the Council's ambitions and the national and regional policy requirements. We have set out below under each priority heading the current position on each objective, our next key action and a timescale for completing the action. This "action plan" will be used to monitor and review the strategy annually in accordance with the approach set out in Section 5 of the Strategy.

Our Achievements and Priorities

Sedgefield Borough's Housing Advice and Homelessness Service has made significant improvements over the past three years by reviewing the service, refocusing it and implementing a robust and challenging action plan.

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/07
Total decisions	822	531	238
Acceptances	441	271	119

Preventing Homelessness

The Borough Council has experienced rapidly increasing numbers of homeless applications and acceptances over the last 3 years in line with most Councils in the North East. We implemented an action plan in May 2005 to re focus our services on prevention and housing advice. We have seen a 40% reduction in applications and acceptances in 2005/6 compared to 2004/5, and a further 46% reduction in applications and 56% reduction in acceptances in 2006/07. We wish to sustain this improvement and meet the Government targets in relation to the reduction in use of temporary accommodation. We have introduced a Domestic Violence Accommodation service to provide additional housing options to the victims of domestic abuse.

The Homelessness and Housing Advice service has been pro active in using the mediation service which is in place across County Durham for young people experiencing problems within their home, in order to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

Sedgefield Borough is a partner in the Countywide Joint Protocol for 16/17 year olds. This is a protocol between Housing, Social Care and Health, Voluntary Sector Service Providers, Connexions and the Youth Engagement Service. The aim of the protocol is to prevent a young person being passed between different agencies and to prevent them from becoming homeless, by assessing their housing circumstances and needs and providing alternative options.

Through the Homelessness Innovation Fund, a Homeless Prevention Liaison Unit was established to work with Local Authorities throughout the North East of England in order to

share good practice and enhance prevention measures. Sedgefield Borough has worked with this project to further develop prevention of homelessness within the Borough.

A Homelessness Prevention Guide has recently been issued from the Department for Communities and Local Government to Local Authorities which will be adhered to, therefore ensuring Homelessness Prevention is at the forefront of any forthcoming initiatives.

Sedgefield Borough is committed to establishing a prevention network within the area to encompass and bring together all agencies involved in seeking to help clients remain in their own settled accommodation. Partners would include CAB, Floating Support Providers, Housing Services, RSL's, private landlords, Social Care and Health and specialist workers if necessary (substance misuse services etc.).

Key Actions	Target Date
Increase joint working with other agencies and expand the housing advice and options service to prevent homelessness.	ongoing
Identify schools which generate homeless presentations and develop work within these and other education providers to prevent homeless 16/17 year olds.	September 2008
Link into mediation and tenancy support services.	ongoing
Facilitate access to other services for clients including discretionary housing benefit payments.	ongoing
Develop and formalise Domestic Violence Sanctuary Scheme.	July 2008
Continue the Joint Protocol for Young Homeless	Ongoing
Initiate training for Housing Support Officers on specific debt management issues. Link with CAB.	June 2008
Develop protocols with the Housing Management Department and Tenancy Enforcement Team to prevent homelessness due to rent arrears or anti social behaviour.	March 2008
Work together with RSL's and support providers to prevent homelessness and promote tenancy sustainment.	Ongoing
Explore options on rent deposit schemes for the Borough and link into County wide scheme.	March 2008
Establish working relationships with private sector landlords by linking into selective licensing and private sector renewal team.	March 2008
Work together with private sector landlords on tenancy management issues (arrears /ASB) to prevent homelessness.	October 2008
Assist in the development of a Countywide Prevention Network and develop locally based scheme.	June 2008
Develop comprehensive advice and information pack for single homeless and develop initiatives to assist those not in priority need.	January 2009
Develop a directory of services.	June 2008
Implement Prevention Good Practice Guide.	ongoing

Support for people when they are vulnerable

Sedgefield Borough has established 3 domestic violence temporary accommodation units to be used for vulnerable families/people who have suffered domestic violence and have left abusive relationships. The accommodation offers respite for approximately 6-9 months to enable the client to build confidence, self esteem and practical living skills before they move on to more permanent accommodation. The accommodation units are supported by SODA (Survivors of Domestic Abuse) who offer emotional support and by the Borough Council's Domestic Violence Accommodation and Support Officer, who offers practical support and can facilitate access to other services such as health and benefits. The Accommodation and Support Officer also helps the client with moving on to permanent accommodation.

The Housing and Returning Prisoners (HARP) Protocol has been fully incorporated into Sedgefield Borough's working practices in order to prepare and support offenders leaving prison. The HARP has recently undergone a regional review in order to establish a consistent approach across the County.

Comprehensive training has been undertaken by Housing Advice staff regarding people who may have alcohol or substance misuse problems and good working relationships have been developed with voluntary agencies to ensure appropriate support is available for this group.

A County wide care leavers protocol is currently being developed with Children and Young People's Services to enable care leavers to obtain a planned move into independent living and to ensure that an appropriate support package is in place in order to help the young person sustain the tenancy.

Sedgefield Borough has established 5 Integrated Teams for Vulnerable Adults located across the Borough. These teams comprise housing, health and Social Services. This enables staff to work jointly in order to deal with any issues quickly. The housing needs of older people have always been a high priority within the Borough. The needs of this group can be more effectively addressed due to the integrated way of working which enables the care and support to be managed in such a way that many older clients can remain safely in their own homes for as long as possible.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service works closely alongside the Home Improvement Agency to ensure those with physical disabilities have the help they require to live independently.

Sedgefield Borough is developing links across the County with specialist services to help those clients who may have learning disabilities or mental health issues, to sustain their own accommodation by ensuring that the appropriate support is in place.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service is exploring the initiative of establishing a Vulnerable Persons Housing Panel, which would include representatives from Supporting People, floating support providers, Community Mental Health Services, substance misuse professionals, probation, leaving care team, RSL's and the private sector. This would be

linked into the prevention agenda and would aim to provide the correct support services to an individual who may be vulnerable.

Sedgefield Borough has established excellent working links with the Tees Valley Floating Support Scheme for teenage parents and all applicants within this client group are offered the service.

Supporting People are currently developing a holistic floating support service which is envisaged to fill in some of the support gaps across all tenures. This will provide an opportunity for Sedgefield Borough and Supporting People to work together to seek to address the housing support needs of the community.

Key Actions	Target Date
Initiate training for Housing Support staff on issues of specific vulnerabilities and support needs within certain groups.	June 2008
Work together with other agencies to develop support services for specific needs ie. Drug and alcohol misuse.	December 2008
Review the support available for clients placed in temporary accommodation.	June 2008
Link into Stonham floating support scheme for learning disabilities and raise awareness of this scheme.	ongoing
Implement a review of the support schemes available and access specialist floating support.	March 2009
Work together with Supporting People to link into the holistic floating support services available.	June 2008
Work closely with Adult and Community Services to ensure appropriate support packages are in place for clients with mental health problems.	Ongoing
Develop a Vulnerable Persons Housing Panel.	March 2010
Explore initiatives to improve access into fully supported accommodation for young people.	June 2008
Work together with other agencies and the Housing Department to seek to access appropriate move on accommodation from supported.	March 2008
Assist in the development of a care leaver's protocol with Children and Young People's Service.	Ongoing
Work with other partners to contribute to the development of a Countywide Protocol for Vulnerable Groups.	June 2008
Continue to provide support for the victims of domestic abuse.	Ongoing
Work effectively within the integrated teams to enable older people to remain safely in their own homes.	Ongoing
Work with Home Improvement Agency to ensure those with physical disabilities can sustain accommodation.	Ongoing
Implement protocol for PPO's and ex offenders.	Ongoing

Develop links with criminal justice services to enable more information to be shared and more informed decisions to be made regarding priority need of ex-offenders.	June 2008
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Tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness

Research has identified that uptake of employment initiatives, state benefits, health, financial and advice services is lower among homeless households.

It is important for Housing organisations to facilitate access to these services by vulnerable households and to raise awareness through advice.

Households who are forced to go into temporary accommodation become further disadvantaged and for many this has an extremely negative impact on their lives. Housing organisations must strive to reduce the use of temporary accommodation overall and ensure that when it is used it is of a certain quality standard and for the minimum time period possible. The government aims to halve the use of temporary accommodation by 2010.

Key Actions	Target Date
Implement a review of temporary accommodation usage and standards of quality.	July 2008
Increase the level of suitable temporary accommodation.	September 2009
Develop solutions to reduce the overall usage of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.	March 2010
Implement quality standards and mechanisms for support within bed and breakfast accommodation.	September 2009
Implement a Homelessness Forum within the Borough.	June 2008
Expand housing advice to incorporate more comprehensive guidance on available services, produce information packs and publicise accordingly.	June 2008
Ensure continuing completion of Centrepont Monitoring forms and put reports produced from this information to effective use in identifying and addressing the wider homelessness issues.	ongoing
Explore and link into debt counselling and budgeting skills schemes. Establish referral mechanisms.	March 2009

Sustaining reductions in rough sleeping

A regular rough sleeper count is carried out across the Borough in line with Government directives. Sedgfield Borough is committed to sustaining the low level of rough sleepers.

Key Actions	Target Date
Continue regular rough sleeper count.	June 2008
Establish regular cold weather provision for rough sleepers, produce guidance and advertise appropriately.	Ongoing

Providing more settled homes

The range of housing options for those accepted as statutorily homeless are increasingly limited. The reduction in social housing stock and lack of affordable accommodation in the private sector are major contributing factors.

Tackling anti social behaviour is a key element in improving the quality of neighbourhoods and reducing repeat homelessness.

Sedgefield Borough employs an Anti Social Behaviour Reduction Co-ordinator as part of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to reduce the level of anti social behaviour within the Borough. The Homelessness service has close links with this service and with the Borough's Tenancy Enforcement Team.

Relationships are being developed with RSL's and private landlords to try to prevent homelessness and provide a route into settled accommodation. New nomination agreements have been established and signed up to by the RSL's in the Borough.

A private sector renewals team and selective licensing team has recently been developed within Sedgefield Borough. The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service will work closely with these teams to develop links with private sector landlords.

Sedgefield Borough is committed to promoting equality and valuing the diversity of communities. It is important to ensure that the needs of particular sections of the community who are often disadvantaged or discriminated against are addressed. These groups could include people from ethnic minorities, people with an institutionalised background, former asylum seekers, people with debt, age related problems, poor mental or physical health or substance misusers.

Any communication needs of ethnic minority groups will be addressed, materials can be published in different languages and formats and language line is in operation within Sedgefield Borough. In addition, detailed training on the recent immigration guidelines has been undertaken by staff within the Housing Advice and Homelessness Service.

The travelling community forms County Durham's largest ethnic minority. A study of the accommodation and support needs of gypsies and travellers in County Durham has recently been completed. The poor living conditions endured by this group have a negative impact on their health and access to services, living under constant threat of eviction contributes to high levels of stress, mental illness and family disruption. Key findings included a strong indication of the need for appropriate stopping places, appropriate facilities and a desire for the children of the community to be able to receive a good education.

A significant minority believed that their nomadic way of life would not last beyond the next few years due to the social and economic pressures which they face. Housed travellers and their children had experienced harassment from other sectors within the wider general community.

The study has highlighted educational, health and social issues which need to be addressed within the travelling community. New pitches or refurbished sites are required across the County with appropriate facilities.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service will aim to work with this group to provide information on housing options and access to facilities, and will develop links in order to work alongside the County Durham Traveller's Liaison Service.

Key Actions	Target Date
Establish regular forums with private landlords.	September 2008
Increase working relationships with RSL's	Ongoing
Explore options for rent deposit schemes.	March 2008
Work together with selective licensing and private sector renewal team to establish robust links with private landlords.	March 2008
Develop private sector advice and information pack.	December 2008
Develop a working protocol with private sector landlords to enable qualifying offers to be made for homeless households.	December 2008
Provide assistance to the victims of domestic violence in order to move on into settled accommodation.	Ongoing
Formalise Domestic Violence Sanctuary Scheme	July 2008
Implement protocol for PPO's and ex offenders.	Ongoing
Develop protocol for ex service personnel.	January 2009
Explore intervention options for families facing action that may result in eviction for anti social behaviour, and develop options for families who may be intentionally homeless.	December 2008
Develop protocol with Tenancy Enforcement Team to prevent homelessness through anti social behaviour and to seek to address the underlying issues.	March 2008
Work jointly with Supporting People and develop links with Traveller Liaison Service to assess needs of gypsies and travellers and assist with those needs.	June 2009
Develop Housing Options packs and information on local services catered towards the travelling community.	June 2009
Staff training on the use of language line.	July 2008
Review all publicity materials to incorporate equality and diversity guidance.	March 2008

Section**6**

Delivering the Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

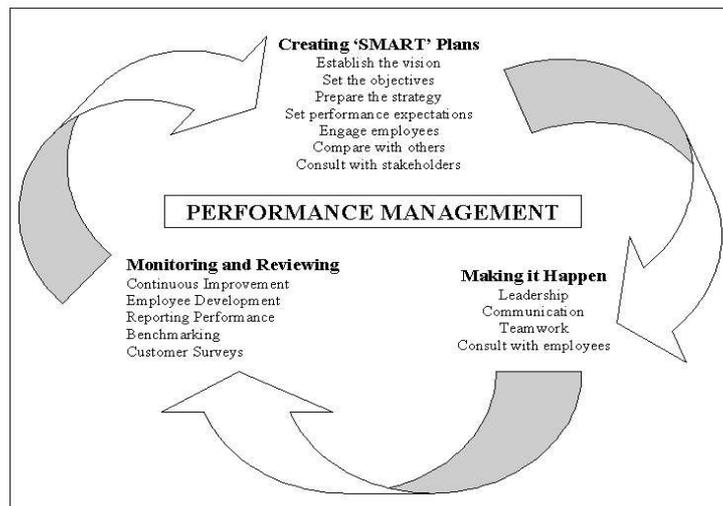
We monitor progress around our targets quarterly and will review our Strategy annually. The Strategy update will be reported through our performance management framework and to our key stakeholders and partners via our Homelessness Forum. Our approach to performance management and review is set out below:-

Monitoring And Review Mechanisms

Performance Management

Performance Management is at the heart of Corporate Planning and is crucial in the drive for continuous improvement.

Sedgefield Borough Council is a progressive local authority committed to delivering on its Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes. The Council has developed its performance management arrangements significantly in recent years and now has in place robust Performance Management systems to ensure the delivery of our Corporate Plan. The Performance Management Framework operated by the Council is displayed within the diagram below:



In order to modernise our approach to service delivery and complement our Performance Management arrangements the Council has introduced a number of changes: -

Quality Services For Local People

"Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

Cabinet level ownership of performance management

Performance Management is “owned” and directed at Cabinet level through a Portfolio Holder for Performance Management.

Strategic Working Groups. Corporate strategic working arrangements are anchored around the Council’s corporate policy arrangements and performance management framework and are designed to assist in the delivery of stated priorities. They are aligned to the Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes and provide clear policy advice and output/outcome performance management information.

Monitoring of performance measures at Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s. Overview and Scrutiny Committees play an important role in performance management in that they receive regular update reports on the achievement of the Council’s ambitions through bi-annual reviews of the performance information submitted and monitored by Strategic Working Groups.

Driving performance management throughout the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Ambitions and Values is a key activity of all services.

Making the Council’s Performance Management framework operate in our Division means the Division’s performance will be monitored throughout the year to assess what targets are being achieved and reviewed in accordance with current performance to decide what changes/actions need to be taken to address identified problems.

Performance monitoring is undertaken through Employee Development Programme interviews; Section Team meetings; Section Head Meetings and the Departmental Senior Managers Meetings.

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Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

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العربية (Arabic)

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

বাংলা (Bengali)

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

(中文 (繁體字)) (Cantonese)

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

हिन्दी (Hindi)

यदि आपको सूचना किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये तो कृपया हमसे कहे

polski (Polish)

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

Español (Spanish)

Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea recibir información en otro idioma o formato.

اردو (Urdu)

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔



Sedgefield

BOROUGH COUNCIL

01388 81 61 66



Quality Services For Local People

"Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"



Quality Services For Local People
"Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

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Item 8

REPORT TO CABINET

20 December 2007

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Portfolio – Strategic Leadership

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL - TRANSITION PLAN

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 On 25 July 2007 the Government announced that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government was minded to implement a single unitary council for County Durham. A decision she confirmed on 5 December 2007. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health bill, required for the implementation of a single unitary council in the County, received Royal Assent on 30 October 2007. The implementation orders are expected in the New Year, with an election to the new Council in May 2008.
- 1.2 Whilst a legal appeal of the decision is still ongoing, councils within the County are working together in readiness for the new council. Leaders of the Districts, together with the Leader and selected Members of the County Council are working to form an Implementation Executive, whilst the Chief Executives of the District Councils are working with the County Council's Corporate Management Team to form an Implementation Team. An independent programme Director has been appointed to oversee the process of transition. A series of work-streams are being established.
- 1.3 It is incumbent upon affected councils to cooperate fully and to ensure that their activities for the remainder of their lifetime are complementary to the formation of a new Council. Government consultation papers and guidance both emphasise the importance of this approach. Moreover the Local Government (Public Involvement in Health) Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act") has now received Royal Assent; Section 24 of that Act places limitations upon the Council's ability to make financial commitments. This report recognises that certain consents may be required from the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Durham County Council in its role as transition authority, the Implementation Team of Officers and the Implementation Executive, once established, and such other persons as the Council may be directed to consult. Further reports will deal with these aspects in detail where appropriate.
- 1.4 This report sets out a Transitional Plan for the Borough Council as a key consultative document within the transition process. The

Transition Plan highlights the major projects that the Council is seeking to undertake, internal arrangements for transition, guiding principles and values as well as the financial plan to deliver it. This report further sets out the key issues that will affect the Council over the transition process and sets out recommendations to address these issues.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Transition Plan be recommended to Council as an amendment to the Corporate Plan.
- 2.2 That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Council's constitution be amended to give the Chief Executive a revised remit to facilitate the Transitional Process as set out in para. 4.4
- 2.3 That Cabinet recommend to Council that delegated authority be given to the Chief Officers Appointment Panel to make changes to the pay and conditions of Chief Officers as may be deemed necessary through the transition process.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In the 2006 Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities invited Councils to submit proposals to create Unitary Authorities by April 2009 or working as Pathfinders to improve services in two tier areas. The County Council's decided to submit a bid for a County Unitary Authority whilst the District Council submitted a bid for a Pathfinder, leading to Unitary Government in the future. In July 2007 the Government indicated they were minded to implement the County Council's proposal for a single unitary council for County Durham.
- 3.2 The 2007 Act received Royal Assent on 30 October 2007. The implementation orders are expected in the New Year, with an election to the new Council in May 2008. The table below sets out the position nationally.

Current area and structure	New structure	First election date:
Cornwall 1 county council 6 district councils	1 unitary council	May 2009
Durham 1 county council 7 district councils	1 unitary council	May 2008
Northumberland 1 county council 6 district councils	1 unitary council	May 2008
Shropshire 1 county council 5 district councils	1 unitary council	May 2009

Wiltshire 1 county council 4 district councils	1 unitary council	May 2009
---	-------------------	----------

3.3 CLG have issued a number of consultation papers regarding the implementation process which will contribute to the Implementation Order, expected in the New Year. These set out the intention to form a joint District and County Member Implementation Executive and a joint Implementation Group made up of senior officers from the County and District Councils.

3.4 Whilst a legal appeal to the decision is still ongoing, councils within the County are working together in readiness for the new council. Leaders of the Districts, together with the Leader and selected Members of the County Council are working to form an Implementation Executive (IE), whilst the Chief Executives of the District Councils are working with the County Council's Corporate Management Team to form an Implementation Team (IT). An independent programme Director has been appointed to oversee the process.

3.5 Vesting Day of the new unitary council will be 1 April 2009.

4. TRANSITION PROCESSES.

4.1 Through the programme director a number of key work-streams are currently being established. These include:

- Leadership
- Vision / Strategy
- People / Organisation
- Process / ICT
- Finance / Property
- Customers
- Democracy and Governance

4.2 County Wide groups are being established (where they do not already exist) to examine the issues and report recommendations through the IT and in the first instance to the Implementation Executive and following the election in May 2008 the Transitional Authority for decisions. These groups will be responsible for detailed and complex work and will no doubt prove resource intensive.

4.3 Within Sedgefield Borough Council a member of the Council's Management Team will lead on each of the work-streams where they relate to the relevant service area. This will include ensuring that the internal working arrangements of the Borough Council mirror those of the emerging Unitary Council. This will inevitably require internal staff support. The staffing requirements are highlighted in the Transition Plan.

- 4.4 It is recognised that the Council's decision processes need to be reviewed and reshaped to assist effective decision making during the transitional period. In addition, the increased workload during the transition period will itself require a revision of the current delegation arrangements to facilitate decision-making and improved outcomes. A Report to Council will follow that will propose that the constitution be amended as follows:

Chief Executive Officers proposed revised remit:

addition of new Article 13.02 (c)

" Functions to facilitate Local Government Reorganisation Transitional Process :

The Chief Executive may make changes to the Constitution, and take decisions on the basis of such changes, subject first to consultation with

(a) the Leader of the Council and the Chair of any committee or committees to which the decision might be relevant or have direct effect (in the latter case as circumstances might reasonably require)

and

(b) the Statutory Officers,

where such changes are required on one or more of the following grounds:-

(a) To assist, promote or facilitate the transition to the creation of a new Unitary Local Authority for Durham.

(b) That such steps are reasonably necessary in order to sustain the delivery of the Council's functions and services.

or

(c) That such steps are required to maintain the Council's Constitution in accordance with current legislation.

subject only to the requirement that any such change shall subsequently be published on the Council's website as soon as practicable and details of such changes being tabled for retrospective approval in a report to the next Council Meeting after such changes have taken effect.

5. KEY PROJECTS

- 5.1 The Transition Plan highlights a number of key projects that the Council will be undertaking in its final year of operation which may require approval through the IE or Transitional Authority. The projects which are major elements of the Borough's regeneration plans are detailed in the Transitional Plan, setting out the key issues that are

being addressed, the historical context and business case for each. Many of these projects will continue into the new Unitary Council and are being progressed to enhance the services of the new council.

5.2 The key projects as listed in the plan include:

- LSVT of the Council's Housing Stock
- Housing Maintenance Partnering Contract with Mears
- Coalfield Housing Regeneration Trust and Company
- Spenny Moor Town Centre Renewal
- Newton Aycliffe Town Centre Renewal
- Merger of the Council's Training Service with Bishop Auckland College and associated Construction Training Centre

5.3 In addition to the major projects the Plan highlights those key areas which will be continued throughout the transition phase, such as the Local Improvement programme and the Neighbourhood Enhancement Fund.

5.4 As with the work-streams, the key projects have a lead officer designated from the Council's Management Team and will require dedicated staff support in order to ensure their success.

6 **CORPORATE POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Transition Plan represents a revision to the Council's Corporate Plan. The plan restates the Council's Values and sets out the principles by which the Council will operate during its remaining lifetime. The plan sets out in broad terms what the Council's investment priorities will be, those areas that will no longer be progressed (as they conflict with the notion of a County Unitary) priority projects and the resource plan.

7. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 **Human Resources**

The transition projects and Local Government Reorganisation work-streams detailed in this report will require additional employee resources.

This requirement can be partially met by releasing resources from non-critical "business as usual" activities. However, scope for releasing resources in this way is limited given that many frontline services will be largely unaffected by LGR and will continue to operate as normal. Corporate support areas such as Legal, HR, ICT and Finance will experience an increase in the demand for their day-to-day (non-transition) services as a direct result of LGR.

Given the importance of these projects and the need to be adequately represented at LGR work streams the Council must and can address workforce capacity requirements through a series of available/existing HR measures including ...

- Temporary additional duties and responsibilities

- Acting-up (stepping-up) arrangements
- Upskilling/Development
- External consultants
- Agency/temporary employees
- Overtime working

In its recent discussion paper *Local Government Restructuring Staffing Issues*, the CLG recognised that authorities involved in LGR may face capacity and retention difficulties and it is considered that the above measures will help to mitigate this risk to the Transition Plan.

Whilst much of this can be dealt through authority already delegated to the Chief Executive and Head of Organisational Development. However, existing arrangements at Chief Officer level are less flexible and require approval by Full Council. In order to provide a more streamlined/responsive process whilst at the same time maintaining the highest standards of accountability and governance, it is proposed that authorisation at this level be delegated to the Chief Officers' Appointments Panel.

7.2 **Financial Resources**

The Transitional Plan will not require financial resources over and above those detailed within the revised Medium Term Financial Plan. The Borough Council has made a number of financial commitments in order to support the major projects detailed within the council's Transitional Plan. Subject to the further approvals that may be required from the IE and IT the Borough Council will honour these commitments. The Council reiterates its commitment to sound financial management, prudent use of resources and reserves and will continue to ensure efficiency savings in line with Gershon targets. In terms of the HR capacity issues outlined above it is estimated that the costs associated with these measures will not exceed £130,000 which can be met through savings secured through the current years staffing budgets as a direct result of increased staff turnover.

8. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Transition Plan is a key consultative document of the Borough Council and will be widely circulated to interested parties for comment prior to approval from full council.

9. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Key other material considerations include:

Constitutional and legal Implications

The Council's Solicitor advises that the Local Government (Public Involvement in Health) Act 2007 has now received Royal Assent; Section 24 of that Act places limitations upon the Council's ability to make financial commitments. This report recognises that certain

consents may be required from the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Durham County Council, in its role as transition authority, the Joint Implementation Team of Officers and the Implementation Executive, once established, and such other persons as the Council may be directed to consult. Further reports will deal with these aspects.

Risk Management

The plan contains a risk analysis. Individual projects will be subject to full risk analysis as we move through the process over the coming months.

Sustainability

The plan ensures the sustainability of key initiatives within Sedgefield Borough.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Local Government Reorganisation and the Council's transition projects will impact directly on the Overview & Scrutiny work programme. This report seeks approval for changes to the previously published Corporate Plan on which this work programme was based and so (subject to Council's approval) it will be necessary to review this and agree a revised programme that reflects the transition plan.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

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E-mail address	anpalmer@ sedgefield.gov.uk

Wards: All

Background Papers:

Sedgefield Borough Council Corporate Plan.

Sedgefield Borough Council revised Medium Term Financial Plan

A new County Durham Council, proposal for future Unitary Structure for County Durham.

The Transition plan contains background papers and historical context for each of the transition projects.

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL TRANSITION PLAN
WORKING TOWARDS A COUNTY DURHAM COUNCIL
JANUARY 2008 - APRIL 2009

Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive borough with strong communities.

Version	Consultation Draft 3.1
Date of Release:	December 2007
	

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1. In the 2006 Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, the Secretary of State for the Department Communities and Local Government (DCLG) invited all councils (except London Boroughs and Metropolitan Districts) to submit proposals to create unitary councils by April 2009. In addition, Councils in shire areas were invited to submit proposals against the same timetable to become pathfinders for enhanced two-tier working. The White Paper envisions a new relationship between central and local government and local government and communities and accordingly set out a number of tests that proposals must meet in order to be approved.
2. In response to the White Paper, Durham County Council submitted a bid for a single unitary authority for County Durham and the Durham District Councils a longer-term 'pathfinder to unitary' bid by the 25 January 2007 deadline. DCLG shortlisted 16 unitary bids for consultation on 27 March, including Durham County Council's bid. The consultation period ended on 22 June and following consideration of responses submitted, DCLG announced on 25 July that several bids, including the County Council's, were to proceed to 2009 implementation.
3. Following the enactment of the Local Government (Public Involvement in Health) Bill on 30 October 2007 this decision was confirmed on 5 December 2007. The implementation orders are expected in the New Year, with an election to the new Council in May 2008.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

4. The decision to implement unitary local government within County Durham necessitates a major change programme involving Durham County Council and all Durham District Councils. An emerging governance structure for the County Durham Council change programme has been provisionally endorsed by all Councils.
5. The forthcoming changes will require radical changes to existing corporate planning arrangements in order to facilitate a successful transition to the new authority.
6. This plan outlines for the benefit of members, employees and partners the Council's arrangements to develop with partners a new unitary authority for County Durham up to April 2009 and to manage effectively the transition period.
7. It sets out the Council's key priorities for service improvement, investment and savings during this period and the key capital projects to be progressed. Issues that require the consideration and approval of the Implementation Executive are highlighted.
8. It is intended that Cabinet, Management Team (the Programme Board) and the Project Officers Group, together with the Implementation Team for the new authority, will use this plan to monitor and manage the Council's progress during transition.

OBJECTIVES

9. The objectives of this Transition Plan, are to: -
 - State the Council's aims, objectives and priorities during the transition period

- Set out revised corporate activity and funding arrangements for transition period
- Clarify corporate transition programme management arrangements
- State the Council's vision for the new authority for County Durham
- Set out the values and principles by which the Council will operate during transition
- Establish terms of engagement with 'County Durham Council' Change Programme

SCOPE

10. This plan is the overarching plan for [Sedgefield Borough Council](#) during the transition period, and such sets out how services and projects will be facilitated, delivered and resourced.
11. It also establishes terms of engagement with the 'County Durham Council Change Programme' and specifies the roles and responsibilities within this programme for relevant members and officers of the Council.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

12. The Transition Plan is a rationalisation of the Council's Corporate Plan (BVPP) 2007-2010, published in June 2007, and associated Medium Term Financial Plan and Organisational Development Plan. As such, it represents the Council's contribution to the Borough's Community Strategy and the Strategic Vision for County Durham and is grounded in robust needs assessments shared with local partners.
13. It represents the Council's contribution to the wider change programme for the new unitary authority and will be integral to the success of this programme.

CONTEXT

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH

14. Sedgefield Borough is situated in the South of County Durham in the North East of England, between Durham City and Darlington, covering some 217 km². Almost 80% of the 87,206 residents (2001 Census) live within the major centres of Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor and Shildon and the settlement of Ferryhill. In contrast to these urban centres, the Borough also contains small historic villages (some of Saxon origin) and coalfield communities in the more rural eastern part of the Borough.
15. The Indices of Deprivation 2007 identifies three of the Borough's 56 Super Output Areas as within the 10% most deprived nationally and 18 of the Boroughs 19 wards containing SOAs within the 30% most deprived. Comprehensive socio-demographic data on the Borough's communities is set out in a number of Area Framework documents, available at www.sedgefieldsp.org.uk.
16. At present, Sedgefield Borough is subject to a 'two-tier' local government, with [Durham County Council](#) responsible for the strategic functions and services such as education, social care and transport and Sedgefield Borough Council providing local services such as regeneration, benefits, street scene, housing and leisure. In addition, some functions are shared between the County and Borough Councils (e.g. waste management) and others are delivered across the region, with multi-agency involvement (e.g. planning, economic development and tourism).
17. The Borough is also fully parished, with 13 Town and Parish Councils. Amongst these Great Aycliffe and Spennymoor Town Councils represent two of the largest in the country.

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Organisation

18. Sedgefield Borough Council is a 'Shire District' Council, commissioning, facilitating or providing over 200 services to the public. It comprises 50 councillors democratically elected by and accountable to residents of their ward. The Council has operated with a Cabinet/Leader model since 2000. Following the recent elections held in May 2007 the Council remains Labour-controlled. For further information on the Council's structure and governance, please see the Council's Constitution at www.sedgefield.gov.uk.
19. The Council is a rated as Good under the Audit Commission's CPA regime, and is on the cusp of Excellent status following a series of strong corporate governance inspections and consistent improvement in service performance.

Corporate Planning process

20. The Council has a well-established corporate planning process, which is fully integrated with the performance management arrangements of the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership, as is similarly structured around the four ambitions for the Borough set out in the Community Strategy – Healthy, Prosperous, Attractive and Strong. Appendix 1 sets out how the Transition Plan relates to existing plans and strategies.

Corporate Values

21. Corporate Values articulate expected standards of behaviour for the benefit of all stakeholders. The Council reviewed and revised its Values during 2007/2008. The new Values, and the chosen acronym *RADICAL*, are a marker for transformation and forthcoming change.

R	Respect	We value and promote diversity, mutual respect and equal opportunities in everything that we do.
A	Accountability	We are accountable to the public and ensure that our decisions and actions are objective, clear and properly scrutinised.
D	Dedication	We work hard to secure excellent, value-for-money, customer focused services for local communities.
I	Integrity	We maintain the highest standards of behaviour at all times to build trust with our customers and partners.
C	Collaboration	We seek to work in partnership wherever practicable, to improve outcomes for local communities.
A	Ambition	We want our communities to reach their full potential. We want to be the best at what we do, and to improve, year-on-year.
L	Leadership	We represent the needs and aspirations of local people, and work with partners to shape strong and prosperous local communities.

22. Values and associated behaviours are promoted through the Council's Organisational Development Plan and communication strategies.

THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW COUNCIL

Employees

23. Employees must be treated fairly and well through the transitions process, therefore the Council welcomes the Government's commitment to apply TUPE-like terms to the transfer to the new Authority which will provide that staff who transfer do so on terms no less favourable than those they enjoyed immediately before the transfer.
24. The Council is committed to playing an intrinsic role in the People and Organisation workstreams with the intention of seeking to establish a common and cohesive protocol towards the management of staff pre and post transfer which will:
- not cause unnecessary redundancy or recruitment to take place
 - seek to maximise the transfer and retention of employees and
 - ensure a process that is fair and transparent, thereby creating a climate of trust and openness
 - ensure equality of treatment and meaningful engagement with staff and unions
 - develop and maintain effective channels of communication to ensure employees receive timely and consistent messages
25. The Council will advocate that the Implementation Executive consults on all aspects of the staff transfer and the human resource implications of the new Authority with the appropriate local staff representatives including consulting with Trade Unions at the earliest possible stage on facilitation arrangements in the new Authority. The Council will also actively promote a staff communications strategy and will employ a range of communications methods to ensure all employees hear the same key messages, at the same time.

26. The Organisational Development section of this plan sets out how the Council will support employee development during the transition process.

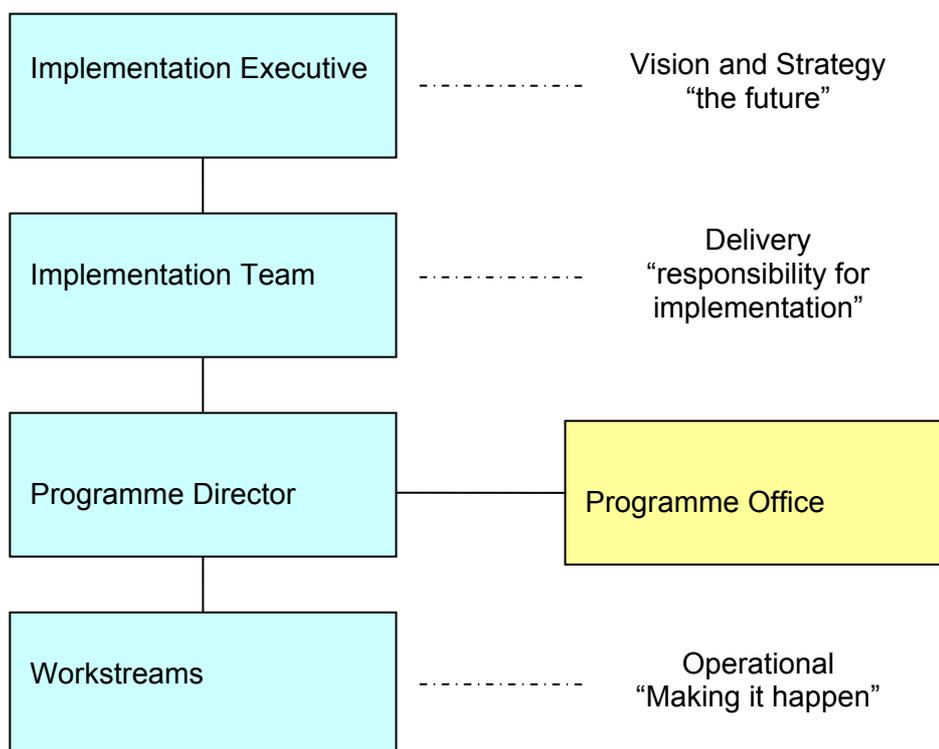
Organisational design

27. The introduction of a single Council for a County represents a move away from traditional forms of local government and introduces a new concept, that of sub-regional government. This is a major change in the way that democratically accountable public services are organised and presents an opportunity for positive change if innovation in organisational design is embraced and service provision devolved in line with the aspirations of the Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act 2007.
28. The Borough Council believes that the two-tier local government system has many positive benefits and has served rural Counties well. Care must be taken to ensure that the very positive aspects of the two tier system, such as the autonomous local decision making and locality based perspective of district councils, are maintained and combined with the economies of scale and strategic resource allocation that can be achieved through larger structures.
29. As a broad principle, the Borough Council favours a decentralised system of local government, which empowers neighbourhoods and supports locality working. In particular, it would wish to see multi-disciplinary teams working within neighbourhoods, empowered community partnerships and trusts capable of commissioning services in areas of need, supported with enhanced access to services.
30. Locality based working would be best supported through multi-functional, sub-county policy, management and decision making structures that reflect the distinct sub-county geographies identifiable through labour markets, retail patterns, housing markets and community identity. This principle has been adopted by the recently reconfigured PCT and County Durham's Police Force. The abolition of District boundaries provides the opportunity to review and align sub-county policy, strategy and delivery areas on a multi-agency basis.
31. At a County level, a centralised back office would create the economies of scale to support this locality based working. The County is viewed as the natural place for Strategic Leadership and large-scale project and service development, where a broader view is necessary.
32. The Council welcomes the opportunity for inclusion in the change management process and will work positively during the transition phase.

THE COUNTY DURHAM COUNCIL PROGRAMME

33. A 'County Durham Council' change programme structure has been developed by the Durham County and District Councils' Senior Officer Group and provisionally endorsed by all authorities to commence once legislative orders have been placed.
34. The vision of the programme is to create "a new unitary Council committed to developing a prosperous, safe and sustainable future for County Durham, listening to, and working with, local people, leading and shaping our communities and working in partnership to ensure quality, cost-effective services".

35. The following governance model for the programme has been agreed.



36. The programme will be managed through an Implementation Executive of Elected Members and an Implementation Team (IT) comprising the Chief Executive and Directors of the County Council, the Chief Executives of the Durham District Councils and the Programme Director.

37. The day-to-day management of the programme will be the responsibility of a Programme Director, who will be supported by a Programme Manager and a small programme office. The Programme Director will be independent of the authorities involved.

38. The projects that will create the new Council will be developed under the workstreams, which will each be managed by a Workstream Lead. The Workstream Leads will be drawn from the County and District Councils, as appropriate. Provisional workstreams are Leadership, Vision/Strategy, Organisation, Service Delivery, Leadership, People, Processes, Customer, Finance, Property and Stakeholder/Communications.

THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO THE CHANGE PROGRAMME

39. The Council will make a number of commitments, set out below, to facilitate the development of the new authority and at the same time to deliver on existing commitments and local priorities during the transition period.

40. The Council will be represented on the Implementation Executive and the Implementation Team and offer the change programme full support and cooperation at all times. It will comply with all protocols to be agreed in respect of the change programme. It will release appropriate resources to support the programme workstreams.

41. Project and service design and investment/disinvestment decisions will be developed alongside and complement the vision and objectives of the County Durham Council change programme and the vision for the new authority. All key decisions of the Council will be submitted to the Implementation Executive, Implementation Team, and where appropriate, the Audit Commission and DCLG, for comment.
42. The Council commits to no growth in its overall revenue budget during the transition period; prudent use of its reserves and capital expenditure grounded in existing policy commitments. Expenditure, contracting and disposals will be in accordance with the provisions of section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
43. The Council will continue to follow as far as practicable the principles laid out in the existing Medium Term Financial Plan or in line with any revisions outlined in the financial plan element of this document. Flexible approaches to some savings will need to be adopted to deal with capacity and capability issues associated with the delivery of this plan.
44. It will be necessary to re-examine existing staffing levels and structures in relevant sections and to consider the appropriateness of existing officer delegations in order to ensure that ...
 - Resources are aligned to the tasks of managing the transition and participating in the development of a new County Durham Council
 - Staffing levels and structures can be amended relatively quickly as circumstances change in the lead-up to April 2009.
45. Appropriate workforce analyses will be undertaken when details of this Council's transition and the development of the new council become clearer and the constitutional implications of existing establishment and staffing decision-making processes need to be examined to determine if they can be made more flexible and less bureaucratic whilst maintaining the highest standards of probity.
46. In order to ensure that all affected employees are supported throughout this change process, employees' development needs are reassessed and incorporated into the Council's transition plan.
47. The Council has developed internal programme management arrangements to deliver this plan that are complementary to those of the County Durham Council change programme. These are set out below.

INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS

48. The Council must ensure that service standards are maintained, that priority commitments (e.g. those outlined in the Corporate Plan and capital programmes) are honoured where practicable, and that employees are fully supported through the change process, so that the legacy of Sedgefield Borough Council is positive.
49. The Council has a number of priority objectives for the Borough's communities, which will continue to be pursued within the constraints imposed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and those locally determined. These are outlined in subsequent sections.

50. The Council must also ensure that it plays a full part in the development of the new authority so that the needs of local communities continue to be met, the Council's good practice and learning is fully utilised, the profile and skills of employees are raised and their interests protected.

Transition Plan

51. This plan sets out activities that will ensure that both of these responsibilities are executed effectively. It will be updated on a monthly basis and be supported by an action plan for the use of the Project Officers Group. It is proposed that the Council delivers the Transition Plan in line with Managing Strategic Programmes (MSP) and PRINCE2 principles, with a programme structure that plays into countywide arrangements.

Programme Management arrangements

52. The Transition Programme will be coordinated by the Assistant Chief Executive, and managed on day-to-day basis by the Corporate Performance Manager and Policy and Regeneration Manager. The Information Management Projects Officer will provide programme and projects support. These officers, together with key Accountancy and HR supports, will comprise the programme management team.
53. Management Team will act as the Programme Board and has agreed leads and project officers to develop internal arrangements linked to the County Durham Council Change Programme workstreams. These are set out below.

Workstream Area	Management Team Lead	Project Manager
Leadership	Brian Allen/Glyn Hall	-
Vision/Strategy	Andy Palmer	Paul Stephens
Democracy/Governance	Dennis Hall	David Anderson
People/ Organisation	Alan Boddy	Helen Darby
Service Delivery/Customer	Colin Steel	Jerry Miller
Processes/ICT	Alan Smith	Anita Maxwell
Finance/Property	Alan Smith	Harold Moses/John Wilkinson
Stakeholder/Communications	Phil Ball	Paul Stephens/Clare Marshall

54. Leads and project officers will develop teams and internal arrangements as appropriate on a time-limited basis, within the framework established by Organisational Development. A Project Officers Group will be established to ensure work is coordinate effectively. This framework is outlined at Appendix 2.
55. Programme updates will be a standing item on Management Team and Cabinet agendas and will be reported to Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Rationalisation of partnerships, policy development and service improvement arrangements

56. It is clear that the implementation of the Transition Plan within the allotted timescale will be challenging. This work will involve some element of rationalisation and 'mopping up',

as some initiatives, programmes and projects will no longer be relevant or deliverable within the transition period.

57. The Council's partnerships will be reviewed in line with corporate arrangements, and revised accordingly.
58. Policy development and mid to long-term service improvement initiatives in particular will be curtailed. For example, the service development and optimisation programme 'Making Change Happen' is one that will not now proceed in its proposed format. It should be noted that 'Making Change Happen' was to incorporate the Council's 'Best Value Review' programme, which will be curtailed. All policy and service development will be nested within the countywide transition process.
59. Existing groups such as Strategic Working Groups, the purpose of which has been largely to develop policy, will be re-engineered, with their focus to be upon bringing forward projects through the transition programme. Other policy-focused middle manager groups should be abolished or realigned to the Transition Plan as appropriate.
60. The Heads of Service Group will continue to meet, but on a quarterly basis. In the interim, key Heads of Service will be involved in or support the transition programme; others will focus on maintaining service standards and dealing with more operational transition issues under the guidance of the Board.
61. Cabinet and Management Team will continue to receive performance and budgetary updates via a quarterly, composite, exception report. Quarterly reports will also be made available to Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
62. This will necessitate a review of the workload of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The proposed quarterly performance updates and progress updates on the Transition Plan will add to Scrutiny workload, but this may be offset by a reduction in Scrutiny Reviews, which will be focused largely upon transition issues. This issue will be discussed with members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and via the countywide change programme.

Business as usual

63. Outside of this transition programme, business as usual will continue. Service standards must be preserved as far as practicable against a background of increased employee turnover, a moratorium on recruitment, a possible drop in morale and the ongoing development of new delivery arrangements. Performance will be closely monitored for early warning signs of deterioration, and exception reports presented to Management Team and Cabinet as outlined above. The Business Continuity Plan will be reviewed to determine whether it is fit-for-purpose from a LGR perspective and revised as appropriate.

KEY PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITY TO APRIL 2009

CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

64. The key priorities for Sedgefield Borough, identified by the Sedgefield Borough Local Strategic Partnership, are: -

- Health – Improved life expectancy and premature mortality from circulatory disease and cancer, healthy lifestyles, improved mental health and reduced teenage pregnancy.
- Employment – Improved employment and economic activity rates and increased average household income.
- Education – Improved attainment levels and numbers of young people in education, employment or training.

In addition, anti-social behaviour and decent homes for vulnerable households in the private sector remain key issues.

65. The Council's own key priorities are reviewed annually as part of the corporate planning process, taking into account national and regional policy, sub-regional and local strategy, quality of life statistics, and service performance information, audit and inspection and community views. The following current priority objectives are set out in the Corporate Plan 2007-2010: -

- Work with partners to reduce health inequalities
- Jointly commission with partners a range of services to promote independent living for vulnerable groups
- Enhance the vitality of town centres
- Improve the employability of local people
- Work with partners to narrow the gap in quality of life experienced by the most disadvantaged groups in the Borough
- Reduce waste and increase recycling rates
- Promote sustainability across the Borough
- Achieve excellence in the delivery of Council Housing Services
- Work with partners to regenerate older private sector housing
- Work with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour
- Support the development of cohesive communities

66. The Council has reviewed the commitments made in the Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and associated documents and has determined, in light of key objectives and resource constraints, which planned activities and projects will be progressed during the transition period. This plan makes clear the links between work to be undertaken during the transition period and priorities and investment decisions previously made by the Council.
67. The major activities/projects in support of the Council's key objectives are set out below, and will be supported by a detailed action plan.

Healthy Borough

68. The Council will continue to work with partners to promote healthy lifestyles, progressing the Borough's Physical Activity Action Plan, publishing Alcohol Harm and Accident Reduction Strategies and raising awareness in local communities and businesses. Employees working in these areas will be trained in public health issues.

69. Capital investment in leisure will continue, with a new fitness suite at Spennymoor Leisure Centre and five new play areas installed across the Borough.
70. The Council will continue to support the development of Every Child Matters in County Durham by implementing the County Durham Family Support Strategy and supporting the development of the Borough's Local Children's Board.
71. There will be continued support for independent living for older and vulnerable people, with the implementation of an Older Persons Accommodation Strategy for Supported Housing and the Adult Partnership Board Assistive Technology Strategy. An options appraisal will be undertaken ahead of Supporting People Strategic Review of Home Improvement Agencies across County Durham.

Attractive Borough

72. The ongoing development of the Local Development Framework will continue, and the Council will approve and adopt an Open Space Needs Assessment, which in turn will inform a Green Space Strategy for the Borough.
73. A sustainable waste management strategy for 2008-2013 will be developed, taking into account public concerns at the progress of recycling in the Borough.
74. To promote sustainable development, the Council will develop a sustainability appraisal toolkit for use in the development and evaluation of strategies, plans and policies. It will also produce an organisational Climate Change strategy and seek to involve partners and local communities in the development of a strategy for the Borough as a whole.

Prosperous Borough

75. An Economic Development Strategy for the Borough will be published this year and the Council will continue to develop the Borough's land and property offer through the Shildon Business Village and investment in other key locations. The development of NETPark will remain a priority. Business engagement will be strengthened through the development of 'Your Business Forum'.
76. The ongoing implementation of the LEGI programme will continue across the County Durham NRF area, and the Council will continue its approach to enterprise facilitation in deprived areas.
77. In recognition of local concern at the competitiveness of town centres, the Council will undertake masterplanning exercises for Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe town centres and identify opportunities to increase economic activity in Ferryhill and Sedgfield.
78. To improve the local tourism offer, a ten-year capital plan for Locomotion – The National Railway Museum at Shildon will be developed and implemented.
79. To boost the numbers of local people with Level 2 qualifications the Council will deliver the Train to Gain programme to local businesses from 2007. The Council will also work with Bishop Auckland College and Higher Education providers to develop a new training service in the Borough, with an integrated 14-19 apprenticeship programme and a new Trades and Construction Training Centre at Spennymoor.

Strong Communities

80. The Council will determine the future model for social housing in the Borough through a Council housing stock options review. In the interim, the Council will continue to improve service to tenants by developing with a partner a new capital and repairs and maintenance service, and appraising the future of sheltered housing schemes. Customer focus will be strengthened through a review of the Allocations Policy and Tenancy Agreement and the development of a Tenants Compact Strategy.
81. An Available Housing Land Assessment will be undertaken and a Supplementary Planning Policy Document on affordable housing developed.
82. The Council will complete with partners Phase 2 of the Durham Housing Market Assessment, and implement a MasterPlan Programme Plan for former coalfield communities. Regeneration of the Rows in Ferryhill Station and the Hawkshead Place and Praxis partnership sites will be progressed. To promote future improvements, options for the development of a housing regeneration vehicle for the Borough will be appraised and progressed.
83. A Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour plan will be developed, and the Council will sign up to the RESPECT standard for social landlords and implement selective licensing of private sector landlords.
84. To promote local democracy and community cohesion, the Council will develop Area Frameworks – development plans for each of the five areas of the Borough – and will work with partners, local partnerships and communities to deliver these.
85. The Council will also continue with its policy of devolving funding to local communities through its existing Local Improvement Programme and Neighbourhood Enhancement Programme. Community disposal of assets is being explored with applications made to the Big Lottery Fund for the Pioneering Care Centre in Newton Aycliffe and the Ladder Centre in Ferryhill.

SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW AUTHORITY

86. The activity outlined in this Plan is consistent with the vision and programme management arrangements for the new authority. Investment in corporate governance and infrastructure in particular will be closely aligned to workstream development
87. Corporate health and governance issues for progression during the transition period include Organisational Development, the achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, the reduction of sickness absence and the review of corporate governance arrangements.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENTS

88. The Council has in place a capital programme aligned with its key objectives. The pages below outline the key capital projects and associated developments to be taken forward in the transition period, and set out relevant issues for the consideration of the Implementation Executive or Transitional Authority.
89. Key priority capital-related commitments are Housing Partnering; potential LSVT of Council Housing Stock; Coalfields Housing Renewal; Town Centre planning; the

Training Service merger with Bishop Auckland College and the development of an Arts Resource Centre in Spennymoor.

90. In line with the process agreed for change programme workstreams, Management Team has agreed leads and project officers for each of these projects. These are set out below, together with an assessment of corporate support required for each.

Project	Portfolio	Management Team Lead	Employee support required					Project Officer
			Accountancy	HR/OD	Legal	ICT	Valuers	
Housing Partnering	HSG	Colin Steel	H	H	H	H	L/M	Bob Scougall
LSVT	HSG	Colin Steel	H	H	H	H	H	Ian Brown
Coalfields Housing Renewal	SR&P/ HSG	Glyn Hall	L	L	H	L	H	Graham Wood
Town Centre Planning	SR&P/ HSG	Glyn Hall	L	L	H	L	M/H	Graham Wood
Training Merger	L&E	Andy Palmer	L/M	M/H	M/H	M	M	Andrew Megginson
Arts Resource	L&C	Phil Ball	L	L	L	L	L/M	External

KEY PROJECTS FOR CONSULTATION WITH TRANSITIONAL AUTHORITY

Housing Partnering

Link to key objectives

- Achieve excellence in the delivery of Council Housing Services

Link to LGR objectives

- Will provide a step change in quality of housing maintenance
- Will improve customer focus and service
- Will make £2.5m savings over the life of the contract
- Contract will transfer to RSL if LSVT successful

Background

91. The Council must ensure that it meets the Government's Decent Homes Standard by December 2010, achieves best value in the delivery of services and achieves savings and improvements in service delivery as identified in the Review of Public Services by Sir Peter Gershon (Gershon Report).
92. On 16 March 2006 Cabinet agreed to pursue partnering as the preferred procurement strategy in recognition of best practice, and having been advised that Partnering would provide the Council with an opportunity to address a number of key issues facing the Capital and Repairs and Maintenance Service, notably the key issues of:-
 - Securing value for money, achieving efficiency gains and efficient service delivery as identified in the Gershon Report and recommended by the Audit Commission.
 - A diminishing workload base for existing craft staff.
 - A need to modernise and invest in ICT capacity.
 - A need to improve the service performance and ensure a two/three star service rating is achieved in the future for all the Housing Service.
93. Partnering promotes improved performance through collaborative business relationships based on best value rather than lowest cost. It requires that the parties' work together in an open and trusting relationship based on mutual objectives, an agreed method of problem resolution and an active search for continuous measurable improvements.
94. After an OJEU procurement exercise, Mears Group PLC was selected as the proffered supplier.
95. The contract will be over 5 years and will include the provision for a 2-year extension; subject to satisfactory performance. The scope of works included within the construction Partnering Project 2007-2012 are as follows: -
 - Council Properties: Day to day repairs and planned cyclical maintenance of approximately 8,500 council homes and some of the Council's public buildings.
 - Refurbishment and improvement of council homes to achieve Decent Homes Standard.
 - Private properties, Group Repairs Schemes to private domestic properties over a three-year period.
 - New Build (Carbon Neutral Homes): 130 homes consisting of 30 affordable homes and 100 homes for sale.

- Development of Spennymoor Leisure Centre (Arts Resource)

Benefits

96. The benefits of successful Strategic Partnering, to the Council, tenants of the Council and employees includes: -
- Increased tenant satisfaction.
 - Better value for the client.
 - Staff training and development with resulting job satisfaction.
 - The creation of an environment that encourages innovation and technical development for the benefit of tenants.
 - Better understanding between partners and driving down of real costs, assisting the Council to address the Gershon efficiency agenda.
 - Increased integration with specialists in the supply chain.
 - The eliminated of duplication within process and management.
 - Better predictability of time and cost.
 - Shorter overall delivery period.
 - Stability, which provides more confidence for better planning and investment in staff and resources.

Indicative Costs

97. The contract will be for £60m over a five year period, potentially rising to £85m should the Coalfields Housing Renewal project and the Arts Resource Centre development progress as anticipated.
98. The partnering arrangement will result in the achievement of £2.5m of savings over the life of the contract.

Timescales

99. The contract and transfer of staff is scheduled to begin on 11 February 2008.

LSVT Of Council Housing Stock

Link to key objectives

- Achieve excellence in the delivery of Council Housing Services

Link to LGR objectives

- Will allow step change in housing investment in South West Durham
- In line with modern government policy
- In line with the wishes of tenants, as identified through recent survey work

Background

100. National and local policy changes since the last ballot in 2005 make it prudent to revisit Stock Options Appraisal.
101. On 7 June 2007 Cabinet considered a report that recommended that it would be wise to revisit the strategic options to consider how the future investment needs of it housing stock can be met, whilst ensuring its effective ongoing management.
102. The establishment of an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and private finance initiative (PFI) are not considered suitable or appropriate options as they fail to deliver the capacity to address the strategic and operational objectives.

103. Stock Transfer remains the only viable option to address the key issues that have emerged as part of the changing policy environment. The Council proposes transfer to a stand-alone RSL – Sedgefield Homes.

Benefits

104. Stock Transfer would offer the following benefits to tenants and to the Council: -
- Safeguarding resources withdrawn by Government from the current housing service (in excess of £3m this year) for investment in the housing stock.
 - Partnership arrangements for wider regeneration
 - Potential for financial benefits
 - Securing the delivery of Decent Homes for tenants against a background of increasing construction costs.
 - Delivering the asset management standard and tenants aspirations for their homes over and above the Decent Homes Standard.
 - Modernising and extending support services for vulnerable households.
 - Promoting the delivery of additional affordable housing across the Borough.
 - Increasing community involvement in the management of local services and assets.

Indicative Costs

105. It is estimated that the costs of managing the stock transfer process to ballot stage will be approximately £411,000. In the event of a yes vote and subsequent transfer, these costs would be recovered from the sale of the stock as a set up cost.

Timescales

106. It is anticipated that a ballot of tenants will be held in July 2008. Approval would see the transfer take place in February 2009.

Coalfields Housing Renewal

Link to key objectives

- Work with partners to regenerate older private sector housing
- Work with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour
- Support the development of cohesive communities
- Work with partners to reduce health inequalities
- Improve the employability of local people
- Work with partners to narrow the gap in quality of life experienced by the most disadvantaged groups in the Borough

Link to LGR objectives

- Flagship project for a modern council with intensive level of community involvement
- Attracting national interest, fully supported by CLG
- Sets up first community trust as outlined in Unitary bid proposal

Background

107. The Council has over the past three years worked with neighbouring authorities along with national and regional bodies such as the Regional Housing Board and English Partnerships, to identify, understand and address housing market fragility in the Borough with a focus in the former coalfield areas of Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and West Chilton areas in particular.

108. The Borough has a number of fragile housing markets characterised by poor quality, private sector properties, type and tenure mismatch, high turnover of tenancies and some degree of abandonment. The economic profile of residents and owners (be they owner occupiers or private sector landlords) in these areas has meant limited investment in properties, low house prices and no sustainable inward migration.
109. The Council recognises the need for structured, supported intervention is critical to achieving the objectives identified for these areas in previously agreed Development Frameworks. Innovation has been a key element of the works to date with resident support packages based around equity loan products and the designation of a selective licensing scheme to assist with the management of tenancies across the areas.
110. Whilst partnership working and a significant degree of community participation has brought plans for these communities so far, real step change in terms of the delivery of physical renewal, based on a specific, financially flexible, regeneration vehicle to work alongside Private Sector investment. The Council is pursuing the development of a Regeneration and Development Trust (RDT) for the Borough to continue and accelerate progress.

Benefits

111. The agreed proposals to deal with Housing Market renewal in the identified settlements presents a programme of activity of more than £56 million with a funding gap of over £25 Million. A Trust would be in a much stronger position than the Council to optimise the use of public assets by maximising land values, and innovate in developing joint ventures and leveraging both public and private finance to support development.
112. The Trust would operate as the local delivery vehicle translating the established vision, objectives and policies into real outcomes for the local community.
113. It would work closely with the new National Homes and Communities Agency and other stakeholders to ensure the particular pressures relating to housing and regeneration faced by local communities are suitably addressed. And it would enable the local community to be at the heart of plans for investment, consultation and regeneration.
114. The proposals for a Housing growth point, centred upon additional residential growth, but incorporating infrastructure and economic development projects would add to the scale and pace of transformation of these communities, if secured.

Indicative Costs

115. To achieve the aspirations of the Trust a capital fund of £6m will be transferred by the Borough Council. This funding is in addition to an initial allocation in excess of £3million already defrayed in commencing the purchase of land and properties and the relocation of residents
116. Additional public sector contributions to the process are sought on a sub regional basis from the Homes and Communities Agency and the Regional Housing Board. Further opportunities for financial support from the Housing Corporation will be considered with development partners given the type and tenure of properties that are proposed for these areas.
117. The expectation has been from the outset that there is a significant role for the private sector (Housebuilders) to play in delivering the vision for these areas. The RDT will

provide a mechanism to engage with and lever in significant investment from the private sector.

Timescales

- July 2006 – Sedgefield Borough Council Cabinet report - Coalfield Housing Market Renewal –(Masterplanning)
- December 2007 – Sedgefield Borough Council Cabinet report on establishment of Regeneration Development Trust
- January 2008 Anticipated response from English Partnerships to application for support across Sedgefield Wear Valley & Easington Councils.
- Spring 2008 Announcement of Successful bids for Growth point status

New Training Service And Centre For The Borough

Link to key objectives

- Improve the employability of local people
- Work with partners to narrow the gap in quality of life experienced by the most disadvantaged groups in the Borough

Link to LGR objectives

- Model example of local leadership
- Will provide step change in training and learning opportunities for local people
- Provides a strategic response to the supply of skilled labour for the major building programmes of the new council i.e. BSF, Coalfield Housing Renewal.
- Provides opportunity to rationalise existing Borough council depot as part of new Council's asset management plans with associated capital receipt.

Background

118. There are a number of training organisations based in the Borough delivering work based learning programmes to both youth and adult learners. In general, these organisations work in a complementary manner, though there are also areas of duplication and competition.
119. However, in light of the new, tougher, national contracting environment for training, the Council will work with Bishop Auckland College and Higher Education providers to develop a new training service for the Borough.
120. The Council has operated a successful training service since 1978 and is now the only Council in the region to run both adult and youth training services. The service focuses on return-to-work training for long-term unemployed people, as well as modern apprenticeships, specialising in business administration, construction and engineering training.
121. Bishop Auckland College also provide construction skills training from their Bishop Auckland College campus base. The college has undergone extension refurbishment through funding from the Learning and Skills Council. The next phase of investment will focus on the Work Based Learning activity and in particular construction skills.
122. Sedgefield Borough Council Training Service and Bishop Auckland College share common goals with regard to quality training provision within South West Durham. In view of the new national contracting environment, a merger between the Council's Training Organisation and Bishop Auckland College to provide a joined up training

solution for Sedgefield Borough and wider South West Durham Communities is considered the optimum solution for both parties.

123. The central theme of the proposal is to initially enhance Work Based Learning and Train to gain opportunities with a principle focus on construction trades. A clear aspiration for the relationship is also to provide a greater variety of Higher Education courses linked to established regional HE providers.
124. Linked to this is a further commitment from both partners to construct a new Training Centre at the Council's existing Coulson Street training site in Spennymoor to provide for work based learning in construction and specialist trades skills.

Benefits

125. The merger and associated new training facility would offer the following benefits to learners and partners: -
 - Greater Higher Education presence in the Sedgefield Borough area and provision of a central venue for South West Durham on a key site in Spennymoor that has been vacant for over 15 years.
 - Increased credibility, capacity and access to contracts for the new Training Service.
 - Greater choice for learners of approved courses and the opportunity to engage in continual development up to degree level.
 - Improvements in the employability of local people linked to local demand, particularly in respect of the wider regeneration agenda – Housing Master Plan, Building Schools for the Future and the Housing Service Partnering Contract.
 - Provides clear opportunity to rationalise provision at the Chilton Depot site as part of reorganisation discussions.

Indicative Costs

126. Based on cost estimates from Bishop Auckland College Phase 1 development the cost of the Training Centre on the Coulson Street site has been estimated at £5m.
127. In addition to this some of the Higher Education components of the Project will be located at the Bishop Auckland College site as part of their Phase 2 development through the Learning Skills Council. Ultimate costings will rely largely on the final curriculum plan, as this will establish the project requirements and set the necessary footprint of the building.
128. At this stage, the Council in support of this project has identified a budget of £2.7m. This includes £200,000 outlined for the feasibility, project development costs and fees. Additional funding towards the proposal will come from a mixture of Bishop Auckland College and external sources. The Learning and Skills Council will be a major funder. The curriculum plan will inform discussions with the LSC. Single programme funding will be sought for the Higher Education elements. £200 - 500,000 will be sought from the RDA following clarification of curriculum plan requirements and layout/fitting out costs.

Timescales

129. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the College will be signed in December 2007.
130. The new Training Centre is expected to be operational by Autumn 2009.

Redevelopment Of Spennymoor Town Centre (Arts Resource Centre)

Link to key objectives

- Enhance the vitality of town centres
- Work with partners to narrow the gap in quality of life experienced by the most disadvantaged groups in the Borough
- Support the development of cohesive communities

Link to LGR objectives

- Provides an early win for joint provision of county council and Borough Council services
- Integral to the place shaping agenda

Background

131. The Borough Council is in the process of commissioning an Area Action Plan for the major centre of Spennymoor in order to direct opportunities for investment. Spennymoor town centre must fundamentally reshape its retail offer for the current market, with a smaller number of larger units and maximise its increasing role as a service centre and place of leisure.
132. Critical to this redevelopment is the promotion of a night time economy to service the needs of residents, particularly given the extent of the new housing to be built including the Thorn's and Whitworth sites.
133. The Council proposes to develop an Arts Resource Centre for the Borough within the existing Spennymoor Leisure Centre site to provide opportunities for community development and cohesion, learning and skills acquisition and access to arts and cultural programmes. Providing arts and sports facilities under one roof would provide an innovative arts development that is a leader in the region, and would support the Olympic vision.
134. The Arts Resource Centre would comprise a multi-functional performance and rehearsal facility seating up to 200, a specialist dance and drama rehearsal space, a small gallery facility, and foyer and café facilities integrated with a digital display capacity and facilities for artists along with small business space for creative industries.
135. Durham County Council is currently considering a proposal to re-site the Spennymoor library within the proposed Arts Resource centre. Bishop Auckland College has signalled its intention to collaborate with the Council on this project and use the facilities provided by the Arts Resource Centre.
136. The Area Action plan will identify these current and proposed development alongside the towns population and retail catchments and establish formal planning policy for land use allocations across the town.
137. The focus and opportunity for significant development could be yet further enhanced if the bid for the designation of a growth point across County Durham is successful.

Timeline

- Spennymoor & Newton Aycliffe Town Centre Study, September 2000, EDAW

- Spennymoor Town Centre Improvement Programme - Report to Cabinet December 2003.
- Regeneration Service Capital Programme 2004/5 Report to Cabinet July 2004
- Report to Cabinet 13 September 2007 – Utilising Local Authority Business Growth incentive Funds
- Report to Cabinet 27 September 2007 – Commissioning an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor town Centre.

Benefits

138. Planned investments would incorporate additional public realm works to improve linkages within the secondary retail area of Cheapside and link it more effectively with the main retailing core and the leisure centre site.
139. The retailing provision in the Cheapside area is currently the subject of significant planned private sector investment, which will refurbish several significant properties, attract new retailers and provide additional commercial business space.
140. The Arts Resource Centre would help to fill a gap of professional provision for arts groups identified by the Sedgefield Borough Arts Audit and Spennymoor Arts Resource studies undertaken by Arts UK in 2004 and 2005.
141. The planned investments across the centre are part of an ongoing programme to improve the diversification of businesses in Spennymoor and provide a range of local services in line with the future local socio-economic and demographic patterns
142. The potential relocation of the library within the new Arts Resource Centre in particular would not only provide a diverse public service outlet which would enhance footfall within the town centre, but could also pave the way for a further round of site assembly to assist in the further redevelopment of the Town Centre.

Indicative Costs

143. It is estimated that the capital build costs including provision for the library and external/environmental improvement is £3.624m, based on an assumed September 2009 opening date.
144. The model for the first five years of operation of the arts resource shows that no additional revenue funding will be required to underwrite the ongoing expenses of the building, its staffing or programme.
145. The model indicates new annual fundraising targets in four areas: -
 - From Arts Council North East, an additional £45,000 per annum core revenue funding to 2011/12 (the next three year funding period).
 - £50,000 per annum project funding from 2011/12 (currently the Sedgefield Arts Team raises more than £50,000 per annum project funding for its activities).
 - £15,000 per annum from 2012/13 to support 75% of the bussing costs of bringing school students to performances at the venue.
146. £5,000 per annum from 2011/12 towards the outdoor events programme that links the venue and the Town Centre. Given the public exposure of such work and the large number of people the programme should attract it is very likely that the programme would attract a commercial sponsor.

147. Committed capital expenditure from the Spennymoor Improvement Programme is currently directed towards delivering streetscape works and property improvement grants.

Timescales

148. The capital building programme could commence in May 2008, which would indicate an opening in May/June 2009 with the first full season commencing in September 2009. However, this will depend on how quickly the partners (particularly Durham County Council) reach consensus on the project and linked funding applications.

Redevelopment Of Newton Aycliffe Town Centre

Link to key objectives

- Enhance the vitality of town centres
- Work with partners to narrow the gap in quality of life experienced by the most disadvantaged groups in the Borough
- Support the development of cohesive communities

Link to LGR objectives

- Integral to the place shaping agenda
- Opportunity to display joint County/District Council working

Background

149. The Borough Council is currently working with Durham County Council, County Durham PCT, Great Aycliffe Town Council and Freshwater, the private owners of much of Newton Aycliffe Town Centre, to bring about a comprehensive regeneration solution for the Town Centre that ensures good access to high Quality Public service outlets and supports a process of ongoing investment in retail and commercial operations as anticipated for a Town of Newton Aycliffe's size and catchment.
150. In order deliver these improvements, the town centre must fundamentally reshape its retail offer for the current market, with a smaller number of larger units, aimed at filling retail gaps following a significant supermarket development and maximise its increasing role as a service centre and place of leisure.
151. Critical to this redevelopment is the timely resolution of key public service outlets – Library and Health centre in an area between the original town centre and a more recent expansion. Service user consultations are underway or planned, but initial feedback has indicated a strong desire to retain both facilities in the town centre.
152. The Council is supporting the owners of the town centre in the development of a Masterplan which will seek to resolve issues relating to the retail offer across the town - like Spennymoor a proliferation of smaller undesirable units and the need for new larger regular formatted units which national retailer groups will be attracted to. In addition, issues of access by foot car and public transport require attention to ensure the most effective and sympathetic integration with surrounding residential areas.
153. Durham County Council is currently considering options to I to re-site the library either as a short term solution to enable the next phase of Town Centre redevelopment to progress or if suitable premises can be identified / created as a long term solution.

154. Such has been the focus of residential growth on sites surrounding Newton Aycliffe in recent years that there is an enhanced catchment population for convenience retailing and access to services. the opportunity for significant development could be yet further enhanced if the bid for the designation of a growth point across County Durham is successful.

Timeline

- Spennymoor & Newton Aycliffe Town Centre Study, September 2000, EDAW
- Report to Council June 2007 – Sedgefield Borough Corporate Plan
- Report to Cabinet 13 September 2007 – Utilising Local Authority Business Growth incentive Funds

Benefits

155. Planned investments would incorporate additional public realm works to improve linkages across the retail area of and consolidate the currently fragmented car parking and transport access points.
156. The Borough Council's leisure centre provides a significant and prominent facility directly in the Town Centre, which itself has recently benefited from private sector investment in its facilities. Additional services such as cash office and access to Citizen's Advice Bureau are currently provided. Opportunities for a new library and ancillary functions in the town centre would greatly improve resident's access to services.
157. The planned investments across the centre are principally private sector led, in line with land ownerships. Planned public sector investment extends beyond the provision of new facilities and includes potential investments under the County Council's Urban & Rural Renaissance Programme – major centres theme and enhancing pedestrian and public realm links.

Indicative Costs

158. Until the later stages of the Masterplan are reached, it is not possible to identify either total cost for redevelopment or specific project costs to facilitate this.
159. There is currently no committed capital budget to assist with the redevelopment of Newton Aycliffe Town Centre, given the extent of Private ownership and State Aid rules. Sedgefield Borough Council has some land ownerships within and adjacent to the Town Centre and seeks to maximise the benefit derived from these assets.
160. A significant level of internal staffing resource is and may continue to be required across Regeneration, Valuation and Property, Development Control and Forward Planning sections to ensure the comprehensive and holistic nature of the Masterplan proposals for the Town Centre.

Timescales

161. The development of a Masterplan for the Town Centre should commence with early stages .of public consultation in 2008. These will be linked to ongoing consultation exercises being undertaken by partner agencies wherever possible.
162. An agreed and costed Masterplan is anticipated by Summer 2008.
163. Ongoing discussions are required to establish the most advantageous disposal of PCT / DCC property assets within the Town Centre

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CAPACITY

164. To ensure that transition projects, LGR implementation milestones and service delivery standards are met the Organisational Development Service will support service departments with effective and timely methods. Appropriate additional resource such as agency workers, interim managers, consultancy and temporary employees will be secured as and when required, and temporary additional duties and responsibilities assigned as necessary.
165. It is also important that 'key worker' knowledge is retained during the transition period, therefore flexible-working policies will be promoted and encouraged.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Top Team Development

166. Providing positive leadership through the transition to a unitary authority is a significant and key challenge that will have a major impact on employee morale and retention. To facilitate this executive support will be provided for Management Team and Cabinet via a range of interventions.

Competency Framework

167. It is likely that common standards (competencies) will be used by the new authority to enable fair and transparent recruitment and selection through skills matching. The Council has therefore adopted the competency framework that was developed regionally for managers and this will be implemented in "at risk" areas.

Career Transition Programme

168. In an effort to support employees to secure future career opportunities, a Career Transition Programme will build confidence and understanding of competency based recruitment processes (interviews and assessment centres).

Professional Development

169. It is important that employees are able to demonstrate compliance with professional standards to ensure they are best positioned for job matching. Relevant employees will be encouraged and supported to identify training required to fill any potential gaps. This will require a re-write of appropriate job descriptions and person specifications to comply with the minimum entry-level requirements of some professions.

Talent Management

170. During the transition period the Council considers it important to address the career aspirations and talents of employees who wish to remain with the new authority but who require further training to enable them to access better opportunities. The current round of post-entry training has started to identify such employees, however, the training required is broader than post-entry and this is not a complete list. On this basis, the Organisational Development Service will work with Directors and Heads of Service to identify such employees, and agree and compile appropriate development plans.

Change Management Training

171. A detailed LGR focused change management programme will be delivered to all managers as implementation progresses.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

172. It has been agreed that an internal communications strategy be developed that identifies the key messages at each stage of the change programme. This will need to be regularly reviewed throughout the process and delivered via the following mechanisms:
- CEO/Director Briefings
 - Borough Matters (Elected member/staff newsletter)
 - liP Group and departmental representatives
 - Interactive Methods e.g. Intranet Blog
 - Trade Union Consultation and Involvement Framework
 - Team Brief
 - Team Meetings
173. To ensure swift communication takes place, it may be necessary at times to deploy the above mechanisms at short notice. Internal/external communications strategies will be aligned and coordinated to ensure employees receive information from the appropriate source at an appropriate time.

FINANCIAL PLAN

174. The authority has been following its Medium Term Financial Plan as approved by Cabinet on 15 June 2006 and as amended in terms of capital spending in March 2007. This document outlined the Councils spending plans and resource base for the period 2006-2009.
175. It is now appropriate to review this in the light of changing priorities, the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 and the reorganisation of local authorities in County Durham.
176. This revised plan will cover the period to the end of March 2009 and focus mainly on the resourcing of the key projects outlined in this Transition Plan, the pressures facing the authority in setting its final year revenue budget and the overall position of financial resources.
177. This authority's finances have been in a relatively healthy state in recent times due largely to robust management arrangements and efficient use. This approach will be maintained over the transitional period. The efficiency targets introduced as part of the Spending Review 2004 have been exceeded and used to support frontline services and corporate priorities. The authority will approach the new efficiency agenda with the same application and outlook.
178. The Medium Term Financial Plan has been a document widely used in developing detailed spending plans for 2006/07 and 2007/08 and its content will largely be applied to the development of plans for 2008/09. The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 has obviously become a key factor in resource availability alongside Housing Subsidy determinations and these directly impact on revenue spending plans for 2008/2009.
179. The review of capital priorities as outlined in this document is being developed within the Medium Term Financial Plan framework and existing trends determined by the development of detailed capital budgets in recent years and the availability of additional capital resources restricted in use to regeneration schemes.
180. All spending plans are now subject to appropriate consultation as outlined in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and forecasts contained herein are assuming that required approvals will be forthcoming.

REVENUE BUDGETS 2007/2008 AND 2008/2009

181. The Council currently has 2 detailed revenue budgets – the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and both accounts will require a budget to be determined for 2008/09.
182. At the time of writing members have received forecast on the position of the 2007/08 budgets to the end of September 2007 projected through to the end of the financial year. These were as follows: -

	Original Forecast Use of Reserves	Revised Forecast Use of Reserves	Forecast Saving
	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund	760	595	165
Housing Revenue Account	160	(109)	269
Total	920	486	434

183. Cabinet received this information on 22 November 2007.

184. Progress on 2008/09 budgets is progressing broadly in line with the timetable. The revenue budgets are being prepared using a number of principles either in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan and the changed environment created by Local Government Reorganisation.

Revenue Budget Principles

- Growth restricted to legislative or demand led changes that will lead to added value
- Use of Reserves in line with Medium Term Financial Plan forecasts i.e. the use of balances and reserves to meet recurring expenditure will be maintained, but with the constraint that it will not exceed more than 5% of the revenue budget.
- A Council Tax increase of 3% is being used in the development of the budget. This will increase a district band D tax by £5.58 to £191.69 (for Band A this would mean an increase of £3.72 pa)
- A balanced Housing Revenue Account without recourse to reserves in accordance with the Medium Term Financial Plan
- Rent increases in accordance with the revised rent restructuring formula.

Achievement of a balanced budget in applying these principles requires savings and efficiencies to be delivered.

CAPITAL BUDGETS 2007/2008 AND 2008/2009

185. The Council agreed to a capital programme for the current financial year set at a minimum of £20m that could increase as external support to existing schemes became available. This was agreed with the intention that it would continue at this level in 2008/09.

186. This programme has been kept under review and has also been amended to reflect the changed environment and schemes have been withdrawn, as they are no longer considered appropriate given their nature and the remaining life of the authority.

187. The latest position presented to the Cabinet on the 22 November 2007 showed a total capital programme budget of £25.5m this includes brought forward commitments from prior years. Current forecasts are showing that some £4.2 will be carried forward to 2008/09 as unspent commitments.

188. The capital budget for 2008/09 will be mainly underpinned by the need to support investment in the Council's Housing Stock as well as the transitional projects outlined in this paper.

189. The HRA programme will be financed from ring-fenced resources i.e. Major Repairs Allowance and Budgeted Contributions from within the Account.

190. The three transitional projects that require funding are already in the programme but will require additional capital support. Funding has also been identified within the Medium Term Financial Plan to complete the schemes.
191. Taking these into account the expected capital programme for 2008/09 is estimated at the same level as the current financial year i.e. £20m.

Scheme Description	Forecast 2008/09
	£m
Housing Revenue Account	7.7
Transitional Projects	
Regeneration Trust – Housing Market Renewal	6.0
New Training Service and Centre	2.5
Redevelopment of Spennymoor Town Centre (Arts Resource Centre)	1.3
Other Corporate Projects	2.5
Total Programme	20.0

Resource Availability

	Forecast 2008/09
	£m
Capital Receipts - Regeneration	
Uncommitted Balance	4.6
Site O – Cobblers Hall	11.1
Capital Receipts – Other	
Right to Buy Sales	0.9
HRA Major Repairs Allowance	5.5
HRA Revenue Support	1.5
SHIP Funding *	1.0
Disabled Facilities Grants *	0.2
Private Sector Housing Fund	0.1
Asset Management Fund	0.3
Total Resource Availability	25.2

* Still to be confirmed

192. It should be noted that there are still some risks to this level of funding as some of the receipts are still in the final stages of completion.
193. In accordance with the Medium Term Financial Plan, there are no plans to take up additional borrowing under the Prudential Framework.

Other Transitional Projects

Housing Partnering

194. This project is well advanced and the financial implications have been assessed as part of the selection process. Prudent forecasts anticipate that savings of approximately £2.5m will accrue over the initial 5year contract period. These relate to the maintenance and improvement of the Housing Stock and will either contribute directly to the balancing of the account or ensure that the authority will receive better value for the investments being made in the stock.
195. An assessment of direct savings will be taken into account in the detailed budget preparation of the Housing Revenue Account.

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer

196. The financial support required to ballot stage has already been identified and earmarked (Cabinet 8th November 2007 – Minute CAB.96/07) at £411, 525. This

funding will be recovered as a set up cost if a positive decision is taken by the tenants and the transfer proceeds.

197. Any post ballot costs would be initially incurred by the authority but would again be recovered from a combination of the Capital Receipt for the sale of the stock and directly from the new RSL.
198. The financial impact of the transfer cannot be fully assessed until the offer document and business plan have been finalised but progress to a new RSL will only be progressed on the basis of positive financial benefits to both organisations.

BALANCES AND RESERVES

199. The Revenue Budgetary Control Report to Cabinet on the 22 November showed forecast balances as at the end of the current financial year as follows:

	£m
General Fund	5,889
HRA	2,647
Total	8,536

200. Large elements of these have previously been earmarked for specific purposes and some application, in accordance with the Medium Term Financial Plan, will be required to support the revenue budget and capital programme for 2008/09. The current level of non-earmarked General Reserve is approximately £2.24m
201. The minimum levels of non-earmarked reserves have been set at £2m for the General Fund and £3m for the HRA. These are medium term projections as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The HRA was set at the level of £3m to reflect risks to the account at the time of agreeing the Medium Term Financial Plan which included covering equal pay risks and supporting the changes in capital programming associated with the provision of Decent Homes. A separate provision has now been created to cover equal pay risks that would allow for the minimum level of HRA reserves to be reset at a lower level of £2m.

SUMMARY

202. The authority continues to face financial pressures and challenges but has been able to operate within the parameters set within the medium term financial plan. This has ensured that resources have been targeted to priority areas achieving optimum use.
203. Stringent management of spending remains in place and the current process of quarterly reporting with forward projections will continue place throughout 2008/09.
204. The completion of the budgets for 2008/09 is progressing and detailed analysis will be complete for reports to be considered in accordance with the Budget timetable and an approval from the Council on 29 February 2008.

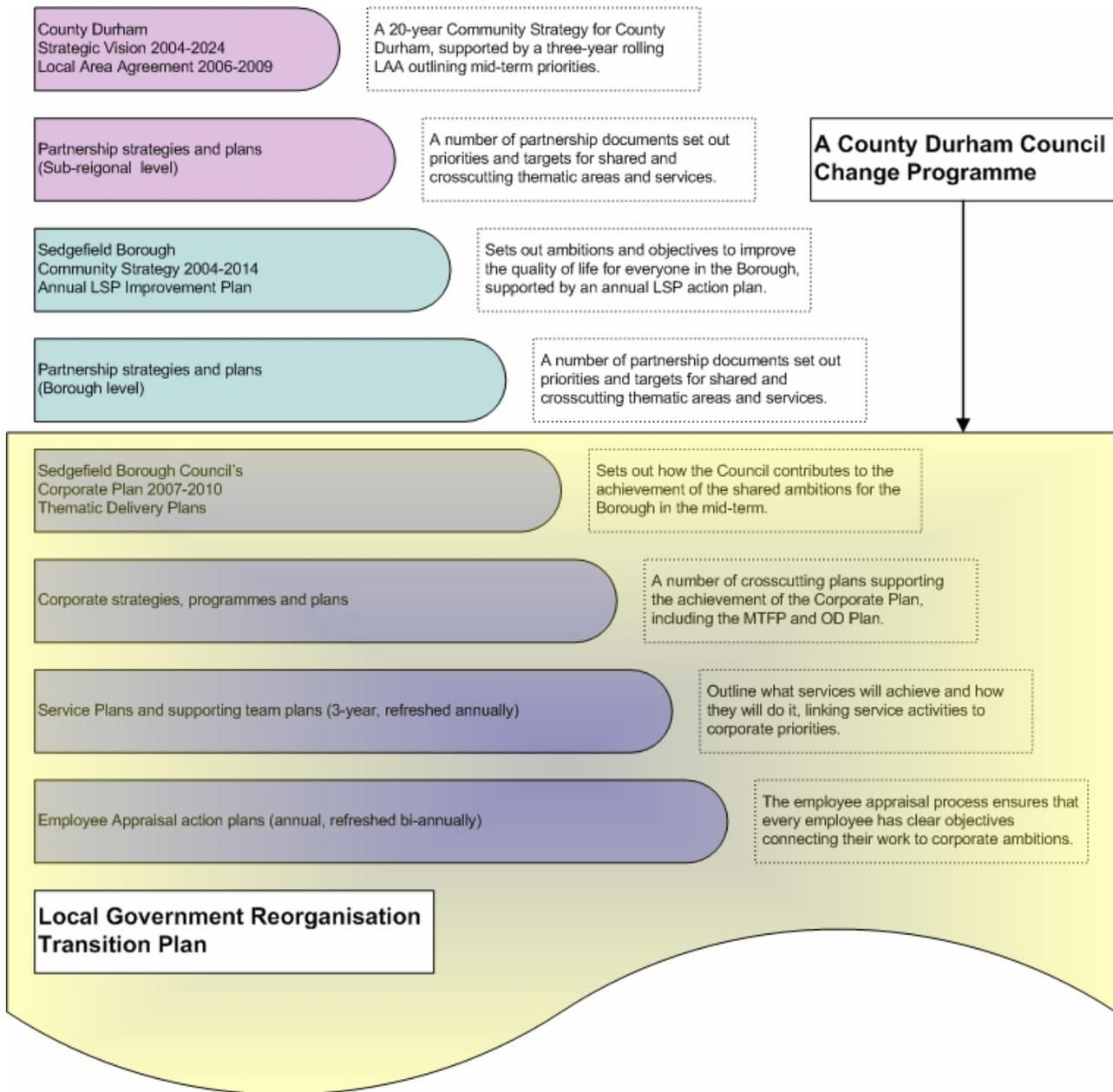
RISK MANAGEMENT

205. Risk management arrangements within the council have been continually developed over the past year with an increased focus on the strategic risks facing the authority.
206. The decision to proceed with the move to a single unitary authority for County Durham has led to a further review of the major risks facing the authority in the remaining period up to April 2009. The revised 12 key strategic risks are now considered to be: -
- The recruitment and retention of staff
 - Failure to reduce levels of sickness
 - Failure of the Council's ICT infrastructure
 - Failure to maintain/improve on the quality of corporate governance
 - Non-compliance with legislation
 - Failure to deliver Private Sector Housing Master Plan
 - Ability to develop performance management across departments
 - Failure to deliver an ongoing training service/facility
 - Partnerships – performance, funding, exit strategies
 - Comprehensive assessment of Resource needs
 - Failure to deliver satisfactory housing/capital maintenance within the partnership agreement
 - Failure to deliver the Decent Homes Standard and a quality housing management Service
207. Many of these are referenced within this document and delivery of the key projects identified will address the fundamental issues outlined.
208. The authority has, through its strategic risk group, nominated lead officers for each of the associated risks and information on each has been gathered using the risk matrix and management action plan approach.
209. Nominated lead officers will be responsible for preparing and maintaining a risk log for each of the projects in accordance with PRINCE principles. The other, more generic risks will continue to remain the responsibility of the nominated lead officers.
210. A headline risk assessment (High/Medium/Low) has been undertaken in relation to the key projects outlined in this document, and is set out below. Work is ongoing to ensure these risks are addressed prior to final approvals.

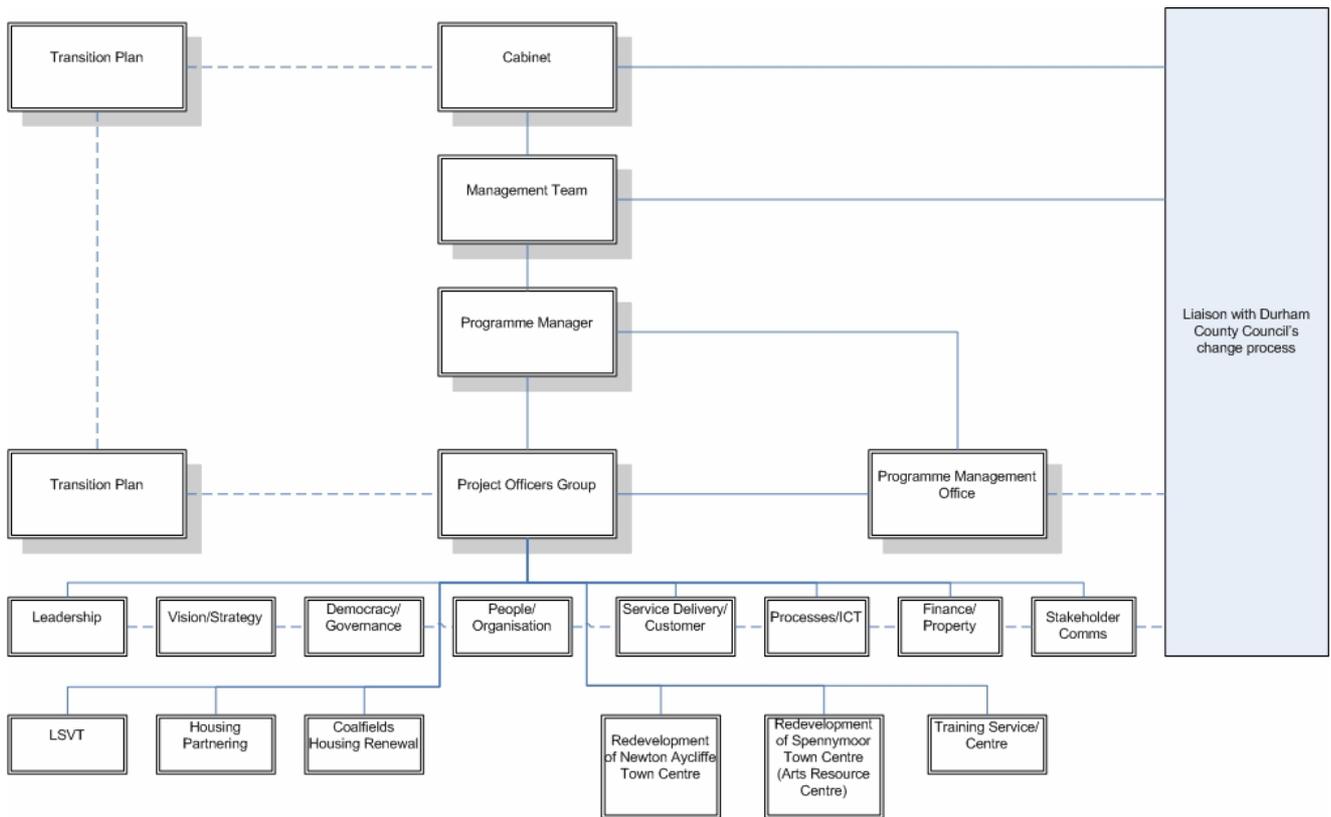
Project	Public demand	LGR proof	Probability of meeting required commitments		
			Financial	People	Time
LSVT	M	H	H	H	H
Housing Partnering	H	H	H	H	H
Coalfields Housing and Town Centre planning	H	M	M	H	M
Arts Resource	H	L	L	H	M
Training Merger	H	M	M	M	H

211. Regular review of progress will be a key feature of the project management approach adopted and this will need to be informed by other risk issues that could affect the overall successful delivery of the expected outcomes.

APPENDIX 1. CORPORATE PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS



APPENDIX 2. CORPORATE TRANSITION PROGRAMME STRUCTURE



Please ask us if you would like this document in other languages, in large print or on audio tape.



العربية (Arabic)

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

polski (Polish)

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innej formie, prosimy dać nam znać.

বাংলা (Bengali)

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

(中文 (繁體字)) (Cantonese)

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

Español (Spanish)

Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea recibir información en otro idioma o formato.

हिन्दी (Hindi)

यदि आपको सूचना किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये तो कृपया हमसे कहे

اردو (Urdu)

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔



Sedgefield
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Item 9

REPORT TO CABINET

20th DECEMBER 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

Portfolio: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

BUDGET FRAMEWORK – 2008/2009 TIMETABLE

1. SUMMARY

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Cabinet is required to publicise a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of the annual Budget and its arrangements for consultation.

The attached Appendix proposes a timetable for the adoption of the 2008/2009 Budget and arrangements for consultation, which will accommodate the requirements of the Constitution.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the timetable be approved, as shown on the attached Appendix.

3. DETAIL

3.1 Part 4 Section C – Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution requires Cabinet to publicise a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of a Budget and its arrangements for consultation. A proposed timetable is shown in the attached Appendix.

3.2 At the Cabinet Meeting to be held on Thursday, 10th January 2008, I intend to present a report which will set the scene for next year's Budget, including a summary of the initial Budget requirements, details of the Revenue Support Grant and Housing Subsidy Settlements and suggested spending targets for each of the Cabinet portfolio areas.

3.3 In terms of the arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny of the budget process this year, I have agreed that each individual Committee will again consider their own portfolio of services and the formal consultation process will begin 3rd January and end on 30th January 2008. Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings have been agreed with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen for 22nd, 23rd and 24th January 2008 for the Strategic Leadership, Healthy Borough with Strong Communities and Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committees respectively.

3.4 Cabinet, at its meeting on Thursday 14th February 2008, will be able to consider the views expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees,

- 3.5 After taking those views into account, Cabinet will then approve the Budget proposals and make recommendations to the Council at its meeting to be held on Friday, 29th February 2008, when the level of Council Tax will be determined, taking into account the precept requirements of the County Council, Police Authority, Fire and Rescue Service and Town and Parish Councils. The Council Meeting on the 29th February 2008 is the earliest date possible for determining the Council Tax as this date is influenced by the date on which precepts of the County Council, Police Authority, Fire and Rescue Service and Town and Parish Councils are received.
- 3.6 The statutory deadline by which the level of Council Tax must be determined is Tuesday, 11th March 2008. Part 4 Section C – Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules (2e to 2h) of the Council’s Constitution provide specific procedures where Council resolves to amend the recommendations of Cabinet (an in-principle decision). The period in between the Council meeting on Friday, 29th February and the statutory deadline for determining the Council Tax on 11th March does provide sufficient time to comply with the arrangements set out in the Constitution.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As the purpose of this report is to identify the timetable for the Budget process, there are no financial implications to be considered.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Council’s three Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be consulted as part of the Budget process. If the decision to create a Single Unitary Council for County Durham with effect from 1st April 2009 proceeds as planned then this will be the final budget prepared by this Council. Preparation of the budget assumes that this will progress and the budget will not deviate significantly from the current year and the Medium Term Financial plan. Therefore it is considered that the recent practice of consulting a representative group of council tax payers regarding the Annual Budget Proposals would no longer serve any useful purpose this year.

6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Links to Corporate Objectives/Values

The timetable has been established to ensure that all appropriate actions are undertaken during the process of determining the 2008/09 budget in that the Council is:

- *Being responsible with and accountable for public finances.*
- *Being open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive to the public.*

6.2 Risk Management

If this timetable is not met, the Council could suffer an adverse cash flow in not being able to collect Council Tax from Council Taxpayers from the beginning of the financial year on the 1st April 2008. This timetable has therefore been devised to ensure that the appropriate statutory deadline to determine the level of Council Tax can be achieved.

6.3 Health and Safety

No additional implications have been identified.

6.4 Equality and Diversity

No Equality and Diversity implications have been identified as the purpose of this report is to identify the timetable for the budget process.

6.5 Legal and Constitutional

The appropriate Legal and Constitutional implications have been taken into account in determining this timetable

No other 'Material Considerations' have been identified.

Contact Officer: Alan Smith
Telephone No.: 01388 816166 ext. 7776
E-mail: alansmith@sedgefield.gov.uk

Background Papers: The Constitution – Part 4 Section C – Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

Examination by Statutory Officers:

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Council's Head of the Paid Service or his representative.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Council's S.151 Officer or his representative.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Management Team has approved the report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET FRAMEWORK – 2008/2009 TIMETABLE**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION, PART 4 – RULES OF PROCEDURE,****C – BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES**

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Report Distributed</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>
CABINET		
• To consider Budget Framework	Wednesday 2/1/2008	Thursday 10/1/2008
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY		
• Consultation Process	Begins Thursday 3/1/2008	Ends Wednesday 30/1/2008
• Strategic Leadership	Monday 14/1/2008	Tuesday 22/1/2008
• Healthy Borough with Strong Communities	Tuesday 15/1/2008	Wednesday 23/1/2008
• Prosperous and Attractive Borough	Wednesday 16/1/2008	Thursday 24/1/2008
CABINET		
• To consider view of Overview & Scrutiny Committees))) Wednesday 6/2/2008	Thursday 14/2/2008
• To approve the Budget proposals and make recommendations to Council))	
COUNCIL		
• To consider recommendations from Cabinet)) Thursday 21/2/2008	Friday 29/2/2008
• To determine the Council Tax level))	

Item 10

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTHY BOROUGH WITH STRONG COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
27 November 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. D. Bowman, Mrs. P. Crathorne,
Mrs. S. Haigh, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson and Mrs. E.M. Paylor

Apologies: Councillors J. Burton, K. Thompson, T. Ward, J. Wayman J.P and
Mrs E. M. Wood

H&S.19/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

H&S.20/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October, 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

H&S.21/07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT - LEISURE CENTRE CONCESSIONARY PRICING SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report detailing progress to date on Cabinet's Response and Action Plan following consideration of its recommendations arising from the Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme Review (for copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that Paul Gray, Marketing Manager, was present at the meeting to outline progress. The portfolio holder for Leisure and Culture, Councillor Mrs B. Graham, was also at the meeting to respond to any queries.

Members were reminded of the background to the Review and recommendations provided by the Review Group, the Action Plan which had been drawn up and suggested timescale.

Details on progress of each action was outlined.

During discussion of this item specific reference was made to therapy facilities within the Borough and in particular the need to extend facilities to more areas of the Borough.

A query was raised regarding partnership working with the PCT in relation to encouraging fitness exercise prescribing. It was explained that initially uptake in fitness exercise prescribing had been slow due to certain criteria having to be met. However, uptake had now increased considerably through partnership working and approximately 900 people had been through the Fit-for-Life Programme.

There was scope for increased capacity and the situation continued to be monitored.

- AGREED :**
1. *That the Committee was satisfied with the progress of the Action Plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Review for Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme.*
 2. *That the Committee reviews the progress of the Action Plan in six months.*

H&S.22/07 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Consideration was given to a report measuring performance against the Corporate Plan of the Healthy Borough and Strong Communities Delivery Plans covering the period from 1st April 2007 to 30th September 2007 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The report provided data on 15 healthy borough and 29 strong Performance Indicators, of which 8 were key to the Council's aims and objectives. The report did not include figures which were calculated on an annual basis.

Members expressed their satisfaction with the following key points of progress :-

Healthy Borough

- Percentage of Pest Control Complaints Responded to within 3 days
- Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home per 1,000 of the population aged 18 – 64 and older people helped to live at home per 1,000 of the population aged 65 and over.
- Representative facility use by people from black and ethnic minorities.

Strong Communities

- 44% Homelessness applications that are repeat applications.
- Number of Homeless Applications and Number of Homeless Applications from 16 – 17 year olds.
- Number of Households who consider themselves as Homeless for whom Housing Advice Casework Intervention resolved their situation.
- Number of Domestic Burglaries per 1,000 Households/Violent Crime per year per 1,000 population Number of Vehicle Crimes per 1,000 population. Number of racial incidents per 1,000,000 of the population.

The Committee then broke into workshop sessions to give detailed consideration of performance information.

Members made specific reference to the following Indicators :

- Proportion of rent collected (BV0066(a)) : the Indicator was performing 1.38% below target. However, performance could only be calculated accurately at the end of the financial year. It was

anticipated that the target would be achieved. It was considered that no remedial action was required at this time. The situation should, however, be monitored.

- Rent Arrears of Current Tenants as a Proportion of the Authority's Rent Roll (LPI17) : Performance of this Indicator was below target. It was anticipated that the target, however, would be met by the end of the financial year. It was considered that no remedial action was required at this time. The situation, however, needed to be monitored.
- Robberies per year per 1,000 of the Population in the Local Authority area (BV127(b)) : This Indicator was performing below target. It was, however, considered that the target would be met by the end of the financial year. It was therefore considered that no remedial action was required at this time. The situation should, however, be monitored.

The following issues were identified for inclusion on the Committee Work Programme for further indepth examination :-

Percentage of High Risk Food Premises Inspections that should and were carried out (CPH04)

The Indicator was performing 15% below target. Staffing levels in the Food Safety Team were down by 33% and a high percentage of the premises in this years Programme requiring an inspection in the first half of the year were the reasons for the target not being met. The appointment of an additional Senior Environmental Health Officer would, it was anticipated, ensure that the overall inspection programme was completed by the end of March, 2008. It was, however, considered that further information and explanation was required to ensure that the target would be met.

Representative Facility Use by Young People under 16 (CPH16)

Concern was expressed that the Indicator was performing 18.91% under target. The figure had been recalculated for Quarter 1. The calculation was now based on actual figures from Torex, the software package, recording the number of people swiping their B: Active cards on entry to the facility. The figure would therefore before become more reliable once turnstiles were fully operational and all Leisure Centre visitors were recorded through the Torex via B: Active Card Swipes. It was considered, however, that more information was needed in relation to usage at the Centres by young people and indicating methods which were being used to attract users from this age group.

This was linked also to the following three Indicators relating to Leisure Centre usage :

Representative Facility Usage by People from the Most Disadvantaged Socio Economic Groups (CPH17)

It was noted that the figure for this would not be available until the end of the year.

Representative Facility Usage by People aged over 60 (CPH18)

This Indicator was also performing below target and information was required on how usage could be increased within this age group.

Proportion of Facility Use by Disabled People Aged under 60 (CPH20)

Although this Indicator was performing on target it was considered that ways of increasing usage by this Group needed to be examined.

Percentage of Population that is Within 20 Minute Travel Time of a Range of Three Different Facility Types of which one has achieved a High Quality Standard Assurance (CPH22)

This Indicator was performing 7.3% below target. Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre had recently submitted its application for QUEST which was an accredited scheme. Assessment was due in February 2008 and it was anticipated that QUEST would be awarded by the end of the financial year and the target would be met. However, it was considered that further information was required.

Average Time Taken to Relet Local Authority Housing (BV212)

Performance was currently 4.1 days below target. Long term voids in sheltered units were being targeted resulting in properties being let. This was leading to an adverse affect on the voids turnaround time. Further information was requested on this Indicator.

This was also linked to the following Indicator :-

Satisfaction with Condition of New Let Properties (CPS08)

This Indicator was performing 12% below target. The voids standards were under review. Standards would be issued to new tenants in order for new tenants to assess satisfaction levels against standards dealing with tenants perception, compared to standards. Further information and clarification was needed in relation to this Indicator.

Total BCS Crime within the Borough (CPS15)

The performance was being monitored monthly by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The Partnerships target was to reduce crime by 15% by 2008. It was noted that Sedgefield Crime and Disorder Partnership was the only one in the County to record a reduction in total crime against baseline in the year. Performance was good but achieving a 15% reduction was a challenging target. Further information was requested in relation to this Indicator.

- AGREED :*
- 1. That the key points of progress be noted.*
 - 2. That areas of concern be incorporated in the Committees Work Programme.*

H&S.23/07 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Work Programme for the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that at the meeting of Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20th November, 2007 consideration had been given to a half yearly Corporate Complaints report and in particular an issue identified in the Ombudsman's report relating to a complaint which had been referred regarding repairs to a central heating boiler. At that meeting it was agreed that consideration of the issue be referred to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members noted that the issue had been identified and corrected. The tenant had been compensated as suggested in the Ombudsman's report and systems had been put in place to ensure that the possibility of a similar issue arising again was minimised. The Committee considered that no further remedial action was needed.

Members had identified Performance Indicators to be addressed in the Work Programme.

- AGREED :*
- 1. That the report be noted.*
 - 2. That the following items be placed on the Committee Work Programme :-*
 - Progress towards the Performance Indicator relating to High Risk Food premises inspections (CPH04).*
 - Progress towards Leisure Centre usage Indicators (CPH16, CPH17, CPH18 and CPH20) relating to usage by young people, older people and other disadvantaged groups.*
 - Progress towards Indicator (CP22) relating to the percentage of the population that was within 20 minutes travel time from a range of different leisure facilities.*
 - Progress towards Indicators (BV212 and CPS08) relating to the average time to let a Council property and the satisfaction with condition of new let properties.*
 - Progress towards crime Performance Indicator (CPS15) relating to the total BCS crime within the Borough.*

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Item 11a

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 4 FORUM

Shildon Sunnydale Leisure
Centre

Tuesday,
20 November 2007

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor B. Stephens (Chairman) – Sedgefield Borough Council and

Councillor V. Chapman	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor D.M. Hancock	–	Sedgefield Borough Council/ Shildon Town Council
Councillor G.M.R. Howe	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J.G. Huntington	–	Sedgefield Borough Council/ Shildon Town Council
Councillor Ms. I. Jackson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
C. Bean	–	County Durham Primary Care Trust
D. Sadler	–	County Durham PPI Forum
Sergeant G. Milne	–	Durham Constabulary
PC B. Booth	–	Durham Constabulary
Councillor Mrs. D. Bowman	–	Durham County Council
C. Thompson	–	New Shildon Residents Association
B. Carr	–	Shildon Community Safety Group
C.A. Fletcher	–	Shildon Community Safety Group
M. Waterson	–	Shildon Town Council

Apologies: H. Robinson - Eldon Parish Council

AF(4)13/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors V. Chapman, D.M. Hancock, G.M.R. Howe, J.G. Huntington and Mrs. I. Jackson indicated that they would be declaring a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No : 6 – Sedgefield Borough Local Improvement Programme – Application – Stage, Sound and Lighting System, Shildon Civic Hall – as they were Members of Shildon Town Council.

AF(4)14/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

AF(4)15/07 POLICE REPORT

Sergeant G. Milne and PC B. Booth were present at the meeting to give details of crime statistics for the area.

The reported crime figures for September and October 2007 were as follows:

	<u>September:</u>	<u>October:</u>
Total Recorded Crime	68	87
Violent Crime	17	16
Robbery	1	1
Burglary (Dwelling)	1	3
Burglary (Other)	4	2
Vehicle Crime	6	7
Theft of Vehicle	2	4
Shoplifting	4	6
Total Theft	23	37
Nuisance/Rowdy Behaviour	77	67

Members of the Forum were requested to be more security conscious especially during the hours of darkness. It was reported that a leaflet had been circulated around the area on security measures.

AF(4)16/07 COUNTY DURHAM PCT

Carol Bean, County Durham PCT, Glen Carroll and Kay McEntee, Intrahealth were present at the meeting to address concerns regarding the telephone systems used by many GP practices, including the Hallgarth Surgery, Shildon.

The representatives of Intrahealth, who operated the Hallgarth Surgery, reported the decision to install the telephone system operated by Network Europe Group (NEG) had been in direct response to feedback from patients. The system provided callers with a menu of choices and placed them in a queue. Previously, the majority of people who had called the surgery had heard an engaged tone or the telephone had not been answered. The system was designed to ensure that 96% of callers get through to the surgery. Calls to the NEG system were charged at 4.2p per minute from a landline - 12.6p for a 3 minute average telephone call. A BT Option 1 telephone call to another local number would cost 4.26p per minute, plus 3p connection charge. A 3 minute call would therefore cost 15.78p. Calls from a mobile phone would cost more, depending on the package/provider.

Members of the Forum expressed concern regarding the length of time they could wait in the queue, which resulted in long costly telephone calls. They referred to a recent newspaper article where a caller had been charged for calls to the surgery, even though the line had been constantly engaged. They were also of the view that the 0844 telephone number was very difficult to remember and requested a shorter local telephone number, commencing with 77.

The representatives from Intrahealth explained that the system was supposed to eliminate the engaged tone. NEG had been made aware of the technical fault and would arrange refunds.

With to the actual telephone number, it was explained that when it had been introduced, fridge magnets printed with the new number and had been made available to patients at the surgery.

Mrs. B. Carr reported that she had raised the problem of the telephone system with Dr. Hilton-Dixon, County Durham PCT, who had agreed to look into the matter.

The representatives of Intrahealth also agreed to take on board the Forum's comments/concerns.

AF(4)17/07

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - APPLICATION - STAGE, SOUND AND LIGHTING SYSTEM, SHILDON CIVIC HALL

NB : In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillors V. Chapman, D.M. Hancock, G.M.R. Howe, J.G. Huntington and Mrs. I. Jackson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the above item and left the meeting for the duration of discussion and voting thereon.

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Chief Executive regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

M. Waterson, Clerk, Shildon Town Council was in attendance to present the application.

The project involved the provision of up to date sound and lighting to Shildon Civic Hall, which would increase the usage of the building and safeguard users. The existing sound and lighting systems were obsolete and a barrier to the usage of the building for many users. Updated equipment would attract further events and ensure that the existing users do not have to seek alternative venues.

It was noted that the Town Council would be looking at a feasibility study for the whole of the building, however, the lighting and sound systems had been brought forward to address an urgent need, whilst the larger renovation project was being developed.

The total project cost was £10,591 and the amount of funding requested was £7,060 (66%). The remaining funding would be sought from the Arts Council, however, Shildon Town Council would contribute, if the funding application was unsuccessful. Future revenue costs would be absorbed into the Town Council Precept.

The Forum agreed to support the project.

AF(4)18/07

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 15th January 2008 at 6.30 p.m.

Members of the Forum requested that future meetings be held at Shildon Civic Hall owing to parking difficulties at the Leisure Centre.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

Item 11b

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 5 FORUM

Town Council Offices,
School Aycliffe Lane,
Newton Aycliffe

Tuesday,
27 November 2007

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. D. Bowman (Chairman) – Sedgefield Borough Council and

Councillor W.M. Blenkinsopp	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor P. Gittins J.P.	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor G.C. Gray	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. J. Gray	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B. Haigh	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. I. Hewitson	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. S. J. Iveson	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. E.M. Paylor	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Warburton	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor S. Bambridge	– Great Aycliffe Town Council
Councillor R. Bowman	– Great Aycliffe Town Council
Councillor J.T. Ducker	– Great Aycliffe Town Council
J. D. Clare	– Greenfield School and Community Arts College
Councillor Mrs. A. Clarke	– Middridge Parish Council
Sergeant S. Rogers	– Newton Aycliffe Police

In

Attendance: A. Blakemore, Mrs. G. Garrigan and Mrs. L. Goundry

Apologies:

Councillor V. Crosby	- Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. L. Cuthbertson	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. S. Haigh	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor T. Hogan	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. B.A. Clare	– Great Aycliffe Town Council
Councillor Mrs. V. Raw	– Great Aycliffe Town Council
J. Rodwell	– Agnew Community Association

AF(5)13/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

AF(5)14/06 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

AF(5)15/06 POLICE REPORT
Sergeant S. Rogers was present at the meeting to give details of the crime figure for the area.

The figures for September and October 2007 were as follows:

<u>Type of Crime :</u>	<u>September :</u>	<u>October :</u>
Total recorded crime	155	163
Total violent crime	48	34
Violence against a person	41	34
Robbery	Nil	Nil
Burglary (Dwelling)	5	1
Burglary (Other)	5	7
Criminal Damage	37	54
Theft of Vehicle	5	2
Theft from Vehicle	6	13
Shoplifting	8	17
Total Theft	47	59
Rowdy Nuisance Behaviour	146	154

It was reported that statistics obtained from the County Durham Fire and Rescue Brigade showed that for the period 16th October to 7th November 2007, there had been 21 bonfires in Sedgfield Division, compared to 32 in the previous year.

With regard to cars being parked on the concrete verge along Stephenson Way, Newton Aycliffe, it was reported that the Police would not issue parking tickets as they felt that the vehicles were not causing any obstruction to residents.

It was reported that the request made at the last meeting for more information to be provided on the number of incidents within the Town Centre and the Washington Crescent area, had been discussed with the Community Inspector and a decision was awaited on what information could be given out.

Specific reference was made to the damage to a Town Centre bus shelter and phone boxes on bonfire night. It was noted that the incident had been recorded by the CCTV cameras, however, the image was too small for the culprit to be recognised.

Members of the Forum expressed concern that the CCTV cameras surveying the Neville Parade area had been seen the previous day pointing towards the ground. It was pointed out that when the cameras were looking downwards they were usually in need of repair. The matter would be investigated.

Specific reference was made to the recent thefts of lead from the sports complex roof in Newton Aycliffe and Middridge Village Hall. It was noted that the Police had seized some large amounts of lead at a number of scrapyards in Darlington and a number of people had been charged with handling offences.

Reference was also made to the wheelies bins stolen from Swan Walk and the fact that the Police did not respond until the following day.

AF(5)16/06 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME APPLICATIONS - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Forum considered a progress report in respect of the Local Improvement Programme, which was circulated at the meeting (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that the following applications had been approved:

➤ Great Aycliffe Way and Nature Reserve	£183,505
➤ Woodham Community Centre Improvement	£ 25,200
➤ Middridge Village Hall :	<u>£ 76,485</u>
Total :	<u>£285,190</u>

It was noted that further discussions were taking place on the following applications before they underwent the decision-making process :

➤ Neville Parade Community Centre	£ 43,603 (<i>revised</i>)
➤ Newton Aycliffe Sporting Club	<u>£256,580</u>
Total :	<u>£300,183</u>
Total Remaining if above approved:	£5,554,627

It was noted that one new application had been received and was being appraised. Expressions of interest had also been made on a range of ideas and work was taking place with the Groups involved.

Consideration was also given to a report regarding the refurbishment of Neville Parade Community Centre Refurbishment. (For copy see file of Minutes)

It was reported that a survey of the roof had been carried out by Sedgefield Borough Council Property Services Section and a number of issues regarding the capacity of the building to take the weight of the new roof and the ability of the existing drain to take the increased rainwater run off had been discovered. As a result, the total cost of the project had increased by £8,840.

The Forum agreed to support the increased cost.

AF(5)17/06 COUNTY DURHAM PCT

It was reported that County Durham PCT had indicated that it was unable to send a representative to every meeting of Area Forums, however, if there was a specific problem or issue, it would endeavour to arrange for an officer to attend.

AF(5)18/06 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
Tuesday 2nd January 2008 at 7.00 p.m.

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 email enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk

Item 12

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES PANEL

Conference Room 2,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
6 December 2007

Time: 10.45 a.m.

Present: Councillor A. Hodgson (Chairman) and
Councillors A. Gray, D.M. Hancock, Mrs. E. Maddison and A. Smith

Apologies: Councillors G.C. Gray and Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson

EIP.9/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EIP.10/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members had no interests to declare.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12a of the Act.

EIP.11/07 APPLICATION TO RETIRE UNDER REGULATION 31 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME PENSION SCHEME (LGPS)

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services/Deputy Chief Executive regarding an application to retire under Regulation 31 of the Local Government Pensions Scheme. (LGPS). (For copy see file of Minutes)

It was explained that Regulation 31 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) allowed an employee, aged 50 or over to apply to the Council to retire early. Furthermore if age and contributory service, when added together total 85, the benefits could be paid on an unreduced basis.

The Panel considered the application taking account of the guidance set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

RESOLVED: That the application to retire early under Regulation 31 of the LGPS be approved.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. Gillian Garrigan Spennymoor 81616 Ext 4240 ggarrigan@sedgefield.gov.uk

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