

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
9 October 2008

Time: 10.00 a.m.

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

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

In Attendance: Councillors V. Chapman, Mrs. P. Crathorne, B. Haigh, Mrs. S. Haigh,
T. Hogan, J.G. Huntington, B. Lamb, A. Warburton and T. Ward

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. L. Hovvels

CAB.42/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A. Hodgson reported that he would be declaring a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 5b – Local Improvement Programme – Bishop Middleham Village Hall as he had been involved with the preparation of the application.

CAB.43/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.44/08 EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY (KEY DECISION)

The Lead Member for Social Regeneration and Partnership presented a report seeking approval to adopt the Empty Homes Strategy 2008 - 2009. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that the overall aim of the above strategy was to work with owners, agents and other relevant parties to reduce the numbers of empty private sector housing in Sedgefield Borough, thereby contributing to a prosperous and attractive borough with strong and healthy communities.

It was estimated that there were 132 long term empty private dwellings in the Borough. Some of the homes had remained for sale or to let for a long period of time in view of the existing market conditions, however, it was estimated that only 13% of the 132 homes, would require Council intervention to bring them back into use.

It was pointed out that the strategy would aim to use the full range of legislative tools available to deal with the issue, however, where no other

measures were possible, the Council may need to assist owners financially to bring their properties back into use. It was envisaged that assistance would be provided via a Decent Homes Grant. The sum of £100,000 had already been allocated within the Home Improvement Agency budget for decent homes works relating to replacement properties for those displaced in the Master plan area and to assist in bringing empty property back into use. Funding under this budget would be made available to owners of empty housing who could demonstrate by a test of resources that they were unable to fund a partial or full refurbishment.

Members noted that the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy which set out the qualifying criteria for housing grant assistance, was currently under review to reflect the necessary amendments required to make financial assistance available.

- RESOLVED :*
1. *That the Empty Homes Strategy 2008/09 be adopted.*
 2. *That the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy be reviewed to allow grant assistance to enable owners to bring their property back into use.*

CAB.45/08 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE ON CURRENT POSITION

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

It was explained that 38 projects had been supported since the Local Improvement Programme inception in April 2006 to a value of £1,878,874.

The Programme had been oversubscribed across all the Area Forum areas, which had resulted in the need to prioritise project activity within the Area Forum localities to ensure that the finite resource available was used to best effect.

The oversubscription totalled £1,645,021 over the original LIP budget of £3.8 m and was made up as follows:

Area 1	-	£310,317
Area 2	-	£210,182
Area 3	-	£116,501
Area 4	-	£799,956
Area 5	-	£208,065

Members noted that all five Area Forums had considered the project proposals for their locality and their comments had been fed into the prioritisation process.

Specific reference was made to paragraph 4.2 of the report which set out the criteria used when assessing LIP project applications.

It was reported that a more detailed report outlining all project activity across the Borough and the options for the allocation of funding was being developed and would be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet.

RESOLVED : That the report be noted.

CAB.46/08 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - BISHOP MIDDLEHAM VILLAGE HALL

N.B. In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor A. Hodgson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the above item and left the meeting for the duration of discussion on the item.

Consideration was given to a report regarding a Local Improvement Programme application to improve Bishop Middleham Village Hall. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The project consisted of replacing the roof, stage and hall floors, lighting and stage curtains and upgrading the zoned heating system.

The project met the Department for Communities and Local Government eligible 'Regeneration' definition and demonstrated links to the key LIP criteria of meeting elements of the Community Strategy and community consultation. It had also been supported by Area 2 Forum.

Members noted that the applicant had requested £39,128 of LIP funding, which was 92% of the total capital project cost of £42,428.

RESOLVED : That the application for LIP funds be approved.

CAB.47/08 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - SHILDON PEOPLE'S CENTRE

Consideration was given to a report regarding a Local Improvement Programme application to refurbish and extend Shildon People's Centre. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The project consisted of the erection of a conservatory, kitchen refit, flooring/carpets, double glazing and furniture for the cells and café. The refurbishment would enable the applicant to offer a flexible service to meet the needs of local people and encourage new users.

The project met the Department for Communities and Local Government eligible 'Regeneration' definition and demonstrated links to the key LIP criteria of meeting elements of the Community Strategy and community consultation. It had also been supported by Area 4 Forum.

Members noted that the applicant had requested £30,737 of LIP funding, which was 66% of the total capital project costs of £46,487.

RESOLVED : That the application for LIP funds be approved.

CAB.48/08 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - DEAN BANK AND FERRYHILL LITERARY INSTITUTE - GALA ROOM REDEVELOPMENT
Consideration was given to a report regarding a Local Improvement Programme to redevelop the Gala Room at Dean Bank Literary Institute (For copy see file of Minutes).

The project consisted of removing the wall between the Cabin and Gala rooms which would increase the capacity to 40 people. The project would also include the installation of a flexible partition to give the flexibility of splitting the room into two, if smaller rooms were required.

The project met the Department for Communities and Local Government eligible 'Regeneration' definition and demonstrated links to the key LIP criteria of meeting elements of the Community Strategy and community consultation. It had also been supported by Area 2 Forum.

Members noted that the applicant had requested £41,378 of LIP funding, which was 80% of the total capital project cost of £51,378.

RESOLVED : That the application for LIP funds be approved.

CAB.49/08 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - ST. OSWALDS PARK REFURBISHMENT, NEWTON AYCLIFFE (KEY DECISION)
Consideration was given to a report regarding a Local Improvement Programme application to undertaken improvements in St. Oswalds Park, Newton Aycliffe. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The project involved the creation of a new junior play area on the former roller skating rink, replacing the equipment in the infants play area, creating a formal garden within the park as well as a picnic area on the site of the former junior play area.

The project met the Department for Communities and Local Government eligible 'Regeneration' definition and demonstrated links to the key LIP criteria of meeting elements of the Community Strategy and community consultation. It had also been supported by Area 5 Forum.

Members noted that the applicant had requested £134,017 of LIP funding, which was 55% of the total capital project cost of £243,813.

RESOLVED : That the application for LIP funds be approved.

CAB.50/08 HEALTHY BOROUGH WITH STRONG COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting of the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9th September 2008. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the Minutes be received.

CAB.51/08 AREA FORUMS

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following meetings:

Area 2 Forum - 9th September 2008
Area 4 Forum - 23rd September 2008

(For copies see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the Minutes 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 may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12a of the Act.

CAB.52/08 PROPOSED PURCHASE OF 9, HIGH STREET, WEST CORNFORTH

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval to acquire and demolish the above premises and develop a new retail unit to provide enterprise workspace and training opportunities. (For copy see file of Minute).

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

Published on 10th October 2008

Any key decision contained in these Minutes will be implemented on Monday 20th October 2008 unless they are called in by three Members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call in procedure rules.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

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