

# COUNCIL

Friday, 28 July 2006

11.00 a.m.

Council Chamber, Council  
Offices, Spennymoor

# AGENDA and REPORTS

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إذا أردت هذه الوثيقة بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، أو إذا كنت بحاجة إلى خدمات مترجم، فنرجو أن تقوم بالاتصال بنا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান অথবা যদি আপনার একজন ইন্টারপ্রেটারের প্রয়োজন হয়, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

本文件可以翻譯為另一語文版本，或製作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要傳譯員的協助，請與我們聯絡。

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

ने छिह समउादेनन उगठु विमे वेर ब्रामा विच नां विमे वेर वुप विच चगीदा वै, नां ने उगठु गॉलघाउ ममझाउरु छयी विमे छिंटरपैटर ची छेइ वै, उां उमीं माठुं छेमे।

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

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**Democratic Services**



**01388 816166**

## AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
To notify the Mayor of any items that appear later in the agenda in which you may have an interest.
3. **MINUTES**  
To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on
  - (a) **30th June 2006** (Pages 1 - 4)
  - (b) **13th July 2006** (Pages 5 - 6)
4. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
5. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**  
Report of Chief Executive (Pages 7 - 14)
6. **LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE - ANNUAL REPORT AND REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE 2005-06**  
Report of Chief Executive (Pages 15 - 22)
7. **SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - CORE STRATEGY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS REPORT**  
Report of Director of Neighbourhood Services (Pages 23 - 58)
8. **MEMBERS ALLOWANCES**  
Report of Chief Executive Officer (Pages 59 - 72)

B.Allen  
Chief Executive

Council Offices  
SPENNYMOOR  
19<sup>th</sup> July 2006

Councillor Mrs. L. Hovvels (Mayor) and

All other Members of the Council

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**Liz Norrth 01388 816166 ext 4237 email: [enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk)**

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## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

Friday,  
30 June 2006

Time: 11.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs. L. Hovvels (Mayor) and

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, W.M. Blenkinsopp, D.R. Brown, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. J. Croft, M.A. Dalton, Mrs. A.M. Fleming, R.S. Fleming, A. Gray, G.C. Gray, A. Hodgson, G.M.R. Howe, M.T.B. Jones, G. Morgan, B.M. Ord, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, J.K. Piggott, Ms. M. Predki, J. Robinson J.P, G.W. Scott, A. Smith, J.M. Smith, Mrs. I. Jackson Smith, Mrs. C. Sproat, K. Thompson, T. Ward and W. Waters

**Apologies:** Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, J. Burton, Mrs. B.A. Clare, V. Crosby, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. B. Graham, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Hall, D.M. Hancock, K. Henderson, J.E. Higgin, J.G. Huntington, M. Iveson, J.M. Khan, B. Meek, J.P. Moran, D.A. Newell, K. Noble, R.A. Patchett, Mrs. C. Potts, Mrs. L. Smith and J. Wayman J.P

**C.33/06            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**C.34/06            MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006 and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2006 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Mayor. (For copy see file of Minutes).

**C.35/06            MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported that since the last meeting she had attended 15 functions and events including Tudhoe Grange School Band Concert, the official opening of the South Durham Gymnastics Centre at Spennymoor Leisure Centre, CAVOS Volunteer Awards and Thank You Evening and a Charity Fundraising Variety Entertainment Evening at Trimdon Labour Club.

The Mayor had also attended the South West Durham Horse and Pony Driving Society Event, the Bishop Auckland Scout Council Annual General Meeting and St. John's Ambulance 90 year Celebration Evening.

It was also reported that she had attended a Golden Wedding and Diamond Wedding Celebration together with a number of civic services and civic functions.

**C.36/06            MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER**

It was explained that Eleanor Hayward from the North East Regional Employers Organisation would give a presentation on the Member Development Charter. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Following the presentation the Chief Executive Officer, the Leader of the Council and the Leaders of the Liberal Democrat and 2003 Alliance Groups would sign the charter.

The presentation covered the following:-

- What is the charter was and why is it needed?
- How does the charter work?
- Charter milestones and standards
- NEREO – Supporting you in achieving the Charter
- What happens next?

It was explained that the charter was recognition of the Council's investment in Member development and was supported and endorsed by the LGA the TUC the CBI, British Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. The Regional Employers Organisation managed the charter.

There were 5 key stages in working towards the North East Charter for Elected Member Development, which were outlined in the presentation.

Following commitment to the Charter the Council would receive a certificate and a detailed report on good practice and areas for improvement. Further information on how to take the Charter forward would also be sent to each Council.

*RESOLVED: That the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Leaders of the Liberal Democrat and 2003 Alliance Groups sign the charter.*

#### **C.37/06**

#### **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2005/06**

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Financial Services dealing with the statutory requirements set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 for the production and publication of the Annual Statement of Accounts. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Under the Account and Audit Regulations 2003, Council was required to approve the Accounts of the Authority for the 2005/06 financial year by no later than 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006 prior to publication and the formal signing off by the Audit Commission.

The Chief Executive gave a short presentation outlining the key points in the Statement of Accounts and financial performance during 2005/06. Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns that they had in relation to the accounts.

It was explained that the Audit Committee had reviewed the Statement of Accounts and separately reviewed the content of the Statement on the System of Internal Control and Corporate Governance at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2006 and had recommended that Council approve both statements (Minute no. AC4/06 refers).

In view of the favourable outturn position on the General Fund the Council had been able to make a contribution of £126,000 to the Budget Support Fund as opposed to the budget use of balances of £800,000.

The financial outturn position on the Housing Revenue Account was also positive and showed a contribution to balances of £1,190,000.

Furthermore, provision had been made to carry forward an unused resource amounting to £349,500 into the current year to meet specific one-off needs which were set out in the report.

Members noted the contribution made to the Council's reserves throughout the year and were pleased with the overall level of balances available to Council at the end of year.

The Medium Term Financial Plan anticipated that £1.5m would be used over the next three years for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

In respect of the Capital Programme the Council had spent £15.093m gross on the 2005/6 Capital Programme against a gross spending target of £20.309m.

Outstanding commitments in respect of each Portfolios Capital Programme amounting to £2.055m were authorised to be carried forward into 2006/07.

As a consequence of the underspend in the Capital Programme and the buoyant level of capital receipts, the Council had usable Capital Receipts available to finance future capital works amounting to £15.151m as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. £12.824m of those capital receipts were earmarked specifically for regeneration schemes. The balance would be available to support the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme.

- RESOLVED:**
1. *That the Statement of Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 be approved.*
  2. *That the Statement on the System of Internal Control and Corporate Governance be approved.*
  3. *That the control totals for the 2006/07 Revenue and Capital Budgets be amended to take account of the Revenue Provisions highlighted in paragraphs 4.6 and the Capital Programme carried forward as outlined in paragraph 4.9 (e).*

## **C.38/06**

### **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive setting out arrangements for the development of the Council's Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period 2006/07 to 2008/09. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Member's attention was drawn to the draft Corporate Plan which outlined the linkages between the LSP Community Strategy and the Council, the Corporate and Performance Management Framework and detailed the priorities of the Council over the next three years.

The plan was supported by a series of Delivery Plans focusing on the Corporate Ambitions and the Council's Corporate Values. Each Delivery Plan provided detailed information on the progress the Council made against the relevant ambition, outlined the key performance measures used by the Council to measure its 'direction of travel' towards the ambition and set out a detailed delivery statement of the actions, tasks and targets the Council would undertake throughout the next three years.

It was pointed out the financial implications of the Plan were addressed in the Medium Term Financial Plan which set out the overall position of the Council over the medium term and identified resources to be made available to help achieve Council and community priorities.

The Medium Term Financial Plan was based on the principles of Efficiency, Investment and Improvement. Achievements of efficiency savings to deal with spending pressures and identify resources for investment were key to the medium term financial strategy.

*RESOLVED: That the Corporate Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09 and the Medium Term Financial Plan be adopted.*

**C.39/06**

**SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - ADOPTION OF THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services relating to the adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 represented a reform of the planning system. The Government's objective was to produce a more flexible plan-making system.

The Local Development Framework comprised of a Statement of Community Involvement; a range of Development Plan Documents; Supplementary Planning Documents and Annual Monitoring Reports.

The Statement of Community Involvement explained how the Council would engage those who had an interest in matters relating to development in their area and the preparation of documents.

The Submission Draft Statement of Community Involvement was subject to a public examination by written representation between January and March 2006.

The Planning Inspectorate had concluded that, subject to some minor amendments, the Statement of Community Involvement was "sound".

*RESOLVED: That the Statement of Community Involvement be adopted.*

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**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Lynsey Walker 01388 816166 ext 4237 email:lwalker@sedgefield.gov.uk



# Item 3b

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

Thursday,  
13 July 2006

Time: 11.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs. L. Hovvets (Mayor) and

Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. B.A. Clare, Mrs. J. Croft, V. Crosby, M.A. Dalton, Mrs. A.M. Fleming, R.S. Fleming, T.F. Forrest, G.C. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray, J.E. Higgin, A. Hodgson, M. Iveson, M.T.B. Jones, J.M. Khan, J.P. Moran, G. Morgan, D.A. Newell, K. Noble, B.M. Ord, R.A. Patchett, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, A. Smith, J.M. Smith, Mrs. I. Jackson Smith, Mrs. C. Sproat, K. Thompson, T. Ward and W. Waters

**Apologies:** Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, B.F. Avery J.P, D.R. Brown, J. Burton, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, B. Hall, D.M. Hancock, K. Henderson, G.M.R. Howe, J.G. Huntington, B. Meek, J.K. Piggott, Mrs. C. Potts, Ms. M. Predki, J. Robinson J.P, G.W. Scott, Mrs. L. Smith and J. Wayman J.P

### **C.40/06 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.*

### **C.41/06 APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Chief Officer Appointments Panel held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006. (For copy see file of Minutes)

The Head of Organisational Development gave details of the recruitment process. Council then interviewed the recommended candidate.

- RESOLVED*
- 1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Chief Officer Appointments Panel held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006 be received.*
  - 2. That Ian Brown be appointed as Head of Housing Management.*

#### **ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

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# Item 5

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

28TH JULY 2006

## REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

### ARRANGEMENTS FOR REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution was adopted on the 24th May 2002 as part of the Council's approach to implementing the Local Government Act 2000. A number of reviews have taken place.
- 1.2 The Constitution itself must necessarily be kept under regular review so as to ensure that it reflects existing law and its operation continues to provide an efficient and effective framework for delivering the Council's aims and objectives. This report is a further review for the purposes of Article 16 of the Constitution.
- 1.3 The recommendations in this report, based on advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer, and following meetings of the Constitutional Review Group, reflect those areas where it is considered appropriate to make some further changes, viz:
  - (a) changes to the operation of the Appeals/Review Panels to improve organisational and meeting arrangements.
  - (b) modifications to the officer delegations at Part 3C : Officer Delegations, made at the request of relevant officers.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council approves the amendments set out in the Appendix and directs the Council's Monitoring Officer:
  - (a) to amend the Constitution accordingly and make all necessary and consequential amendments; and
  - (b) to publish an amended version on the Council's website.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Work has already begun in reviewing the Constitution. A number of officers have formed a Constitutional Review Group, headed by the Monitoring Officer, and its purpose is to consider proposals for change with a view to reflecting the law and improving the efficiency of decision taking within the authority.

3.2 Previous reviews are identified in the list of background papers accompanying this Report.

#### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 It is intended that these changes shall have immediate effect.

4.2 The principal changes are referred to in paragraph 1.3 above.

#### **5. CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 Management Team and Standards Committee have been consulted on this report and their views taken into consideration.

5.2 All Departments of the Council have been consulted with regard to the amendments suggested in this report.

**Contact Officer:** D.A. Hall, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer  
**Telephone No:** (01388) 816166, Ext. 4268  
**Email Address:** dahall@sedgefield.gov.uk

**Ward(s)**

**Key Decision Validation**

#### **Background Papers**

*Reports:*

- Council - 16th May 2003
- Council - 26th June 2003
- Standards Committee - 4th November 2003
- Council - 26th November 2003
- Council - 21st May 2004
- Cabinet - 25th November 2004
- Council - 25th February 2005
- Standards Committee - 3rd November 2005
- Council - 25th November 2005
- Standards Committee - 9th February 2006
- Council - 24th February 2006
- Standards Committee - 6th April 2006
- Council - 21st April 2006
- Standards Committee – 5th May 2006
- Council – 19th May 2006
- Standards Committee – 6th July 2006

### 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 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"/>

**PROPOSED CHANGES FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL – 28TH JULY 2006**

<b>Page Reference and Proposed Amendment</b>	<b>Basis for Change</b>
<p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions A Council Functions Appeals/Review Panel:</p> <p>Page 47 - Amendments at request of Solicitor to the Council to take account of Section 129 of the Housing Act 1996 and Regulation SI 1997 No. 72 : see attached amendments.</p>	<p>Request of Solicitor to the Council to take account of regulations.</p>
<p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions C Officer Delegations:</p> <p>Page 60 – CE49: to add Solicitor to the Council as authorised officer to institute proceedings.</p>	<p>Request of Solicitor to the Council to coincide with current best practice.</p>
<p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions C Officer Delegations:</p> <p>Page 69 – NS1, paragraph 1: to be replaced and substituted by the following words:</p> <p>“Any member may, within 21 days of receipt, request that an application be referred to the Development Control Committee for determination, subject to the prior agreement of the Head of Planning Services, acting in consultation with the Chairman of the Development Control Committee, which agreement shall be given where there are grounds that the application may be, or is likely to raise, significant issues of public concern, exceptional or contentious issues or matters of planning precedent.”</p> <p>Page 83 – NS67</p> <p>Removal of Doctor A. Lowe and to be replaced by Doctors R. Gorton, K. Foster and Meng Khaw.</p> <p>Page 93 – new H26</p> <p>“Power to determine applications by owners under Right to Buy Scheme in connection with recovery of discount.”</p>	<p>Request of Solicitor to the Council to coincide with current practices.</p> <p>Request of the Head of Planning Services.</p> <p>Request of the Director of Neighbourhood Services (Environmental Health)</p> <p>Request of Director of Housing</p>



Page Reference and Proposed Amendment	Basis for Change
<p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions C Officer Delegations:</p> <p>Page 91 - Amend H3</p> <p>“Authority to request the Solicitor to the Council issue Requests for Warrants seeking Possession.”</p> <p>Page 93</p> <p>New H27</p> <p>“Notice seeking demotion because of Anti-Social Behaviour.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p> <p>New H28</p> <p>“Notice to extend the Introductory Tenancy period.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p> <p>New H29</p> <p>“Authority to issue Notice seeking Possession.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p> <p>New H30</p> <p>“Authority to issue Notice seeking Possession of a dwellinghouse let under a Demoted Tenancy.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p>	<p>Allows warrants to be requested under 1996 Housing Act (in addition to 1985 Act)</p> <p>New legislation</p> <p>New legislation</p> <p>Power to issue Notice on Introductory Tenants</p> <p>New legislation</p>



**Proposed Amendments to Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions**  
**A. Council Functions : Appeals/Review Panel**

## **Appeals/Review Panel**

The Appeals/Review Panel provides a single framework for dealing with the different kinds of appeal that arise against decisions of Officers, particularly in relation to housing matters.

The Panel shall be drawn from a pool of 22 Members of the Council for individual hearings as and when required. Five Members will sit on each individual Panel. For the purposes ONLY of reviews under Section 129, Housing Act 1996, 7 members (from the 22 member pool) will be invited to attend on the day of the review, from which 5 members will form the Panel for such a Hearing.

Due to the confidential nature of the matters to be considered, meetings of the Appeals/Review Panel will not be open to the public. However, in the interests of Human Rights the appellants will be invited to attend the meeting to address the Panel.

The following matters will be dealt with by the Appeals/Review Panel:-

- (i) To consider appeals made in writing from applicants wishing to be declared homeless who are aggrieved at the decision on their application and to consider whether the decision has been made in accordance with the relevant legislation and has taken account of all of the facts available.
- (ii) To consider applications made in writing from introductory tenants for a review of a decision to seek to end the introductory tenancy following the service of a notice of proceedings.
- (iii) To consider applications made in writing from ~~secure~~ demoted tenants for a review of the decision to seek possession ~~demote the secure tenancy to introductory tenancy status~~ following the service of a notice to such effect.
- (iv) To consider applications made in writing from introductory tenants for a review of a decision to seek to extend the term of the introductory tenancy following the service of a notice to such effect.
- (v) To consider **written applications made within 14 days from a decision of an Officer under delegated powers made** by owners under the Right to Buy that the Council consider exercising its discretion to seek recovery of the Right to Buy discount. **This panel will determine the issue within 28 days of receipt of a written application and notify the applicant of the decision within 3 working-days thereafter.**

The following powers have been delegated to the Appeals/Review Panel by Council

- (a) To determine appeals dealt with in accordance with (i) above.
- (b) To determine whether the action to seek possession of an introductory tenancy continue or be suspended and to agree the terms of any such suspension of action, in respect of (ii) above.

- (c) To determine whether the action to seek a ~~demoted~~ possession order should continue or be suspended and agree the terms of any such suspension of action, in respect of (iii) above.
- (d) To determine whether the tenancy period should be extended by six months (without the need for a Court Order), in respect of (iv) above.
- (e) To determine, whether ~~clarification~~ of the Council ~~that its~~ should exercise ~~ising~~ its discretion not to recover the discount value under a Right to Buy purchase ~~be exercised~~ and if so to what extent, in respect of (iv) above.

The Appeals/Review Panel will be responsible for carrying out the following functions, which are identified in The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000. Functions marked with an asterisk (\*) are Local Choice Functions, which are identified in the same regulations. The table identifies in the right hand column where authority has been delegated to Officers.

	<b>Functions</b>	<b>Officer Delegation Reference No.</b>
<b>1 *</b>	The determination of an appeal against any decision made by or on behalf of the authority, other than statutory appeals made direct to the Courts.	
<b>2 *</b>	The appointment of review boards under regulations under sub-section (4) of section 34 (determination of claims and reviews) of the Social Security Act 1998.	

# Item 6

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

28<sup>th</sup> JULY 2006

## REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Portfolio: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

### LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – ANNUAL REPORT AND REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE 2005/06

#### 1. SUMMARY

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance, as approved by Council in December 2002 (Minute C54/02 refers) and is an annual report detailing compliance with, content of and progress against the action plans established to develop the Councils corporate governance arrangements during the 2005/06 financial year.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED

It is recommended that ....

- 2.1 The Annual Report for 2005/06 be approved.
- 2.2 Following the review of compliance with, content of and progress against the actions plans established, the Local Code of Corporate Governance, as approved by Council in December 2002, remains unchanged.
- 2.3 The Chief Executive continues to monitor, through Management Team, progress against the Corporate Governance action plans and further reports be submitted to Council on an annual basis.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) issued a framework document “Corporate Governance in Local Government: A Keystone for Community Governance” and an accompanying guidance note in 2001. The framework defined the principles that should underpin corporate governance and every Local Authority was urged to: -
  - Review its existing Corporate Governance arrangements against the framework.;
  - Prepare, adopt and maintain an up to date Local Code of Corporate Governance, including arrangements for ensuring its implementation and ongoing application.

- Make a statement annually in its financial statements and refer to it in its Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP), on how the Council is complying with its Local Code,
- including how it monitored the effectiveness of its Corporate Governance arrangements in the year and any planned changes in the coming year.

3.2 Strong and effective Corporate Governance arrangements enable the Council to demonstrate that:

- it has community focus;
- effective service delivery arrangements;
- robust structures and processes;
- effective risk management and internal controls; and
- proper standards of conduct.

The principles underpinning these five 'dimensions' are accountability, integrity and openness and inclusivity.

3.3 Council approved the Local Code of Corporate Governance at its Special meeting in December 2002, detailing the measures the Council takes to demonstrate how it meets the requirements of the five dimensions of Corporate Governance. An action plan was compiled to ensure that any tasks that needed to be undertaken to fully comply with the Code were identified and regular monitoring of progress against these actions (to strengthen the Councils Corporate Governance arrangements) have been reported to Management Team since that date.

3.4 CIPFA and SOLACE are currently reviewing and updating the original framework and a number of key areas are being addressed:

- Partnership arrangements;
- the emerging Local Government Agenda;
- the fit with the Statement of Internal Control;
- the Operating and Financial Review;
- the good governance standard for public services;
- monitoring and review arrangements;
- the role of the Monitoring Officer;
- the role of the Standards and Audit Committees.

A first draft of the new framework is currently being drawn up and a consultation document will be issued shortly to give local authorities and other interested parties an opportunity to influence the outcome.

#### **4. IMPROVING CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE YEAR**

4.1 The Chief Executive has specific responsibility for:

- Overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the operation of the Code.
- Reviewing the operation of the Code in practice.
- Reporting annually to the 'Body charged with Governance' on the compliance with the Code and to identify any changes that may be necessary to maintain it and ensure its effectiveness in practice.

- 4.2 The Head of Financial Services is responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring progress against the action plans developed to further strengthen the Councils Corporate Governance arrangements and for preparing update reports for consideration. Management Team has considered progress made against the outstanding/ongoing tasks on three occasions in respect of the 2005/2006 financial year.
- 4.3 Whilst many of the original tasks have now been fully completed, a number of new issues/tasks, have been identified and are now included in the action plan and responsible officers assigned to each of these.
- 4.4 Members will recall that there was a schedule showing 10 tasks that were in the process of being undertaken at the end of the 2004/05 financial year. During the 2005/06 financial year, a number of those initial tasks have been completed, including:
- *Ensure Job Descriptions and Job Specifications are in place.*
  - *Undertake a full Race Equality Impact Assessment on all Council functions.*
  - *Ensure a consistent application of a Corporate Assessment process in respect of ICT capital projects.*
  - *Review Overview and Scrutiny arrangements/procedures to take into account the Audit Commission observations of the 2003/04 Corporate Governance report.*
- It is noted that whilst some of the initial tasks have now been completed, a number of Action Plans have subsequently been developed to ensure ongoing progress is being achieved or maintained and progress against these Action Plans should be considered by the Council's Strategic Working Groups.
- 4.5 An outstanding task at the beginning of the year, 'Ensure a Comprehensive Range of Accounting Instructions and Procedure Manuals for all Significant Financial Systems', was amended during the year in view of the concerns expressed worldwide by the World Health Organisation concerning the potential of an Influenza Pandemic and a Use of resources Key Line of Enquiry requirement issued by the Audit Commission. The task was revised to 'Ensure that there are Procedural Notes/Manuals in place for those Systems that are Business Critical'.
- 4.6 In March 2006 a report was presented to Cabinet seeking approval for the 2006/07 to 2008/09 County Durham Local Area Agreement (LAA) that noted that there was a potential impact upon the Council's Corporate Governance Arrangements. The report also noted that the fine detail of the LAA Governance Arrangements are still in development and the task of completing those arrangements are included as an outstanding task in the Appendix to this report.
- 4.7 A full list of outstanding tasks as at the end of 2005/06 financial year is shown at Appendix 1.

## **5. EXTERNAL AUDITOR JUDGEMENT**

- 5.1 The Audit Commission review the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements on an annual basis as part of their normal audit programme. In the 2004/05 Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, recently presented to Cabinet, the Audit Commission concluded that the Council's overall Corporate Governance arrangements are consistently above the minimum requirements in most key areas.
- 5.2 During the 2005/06 financial year the Audit Commission consulted with all local authorities on a review methodology for undertaking Corporate Governance Inspection and its associated Key Lines of Enquiry. The Audit Commission is currently considering the responses to the consultation and they will be publishing their final framework for Corporate Governance Inspection in 2006. It is intended that a small group of Heads of Service will review the revised framework and any consequent actions required to achieve full compliance will be included in a revised action plan, with progress being monitored by Management Team.

## **6. ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE ON CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

- 6.1 In accordance with recommended best practice, the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council are required to both sign a 'Statement of Assurance on Corporate Governance' for inclusion in the annual Statement of Accounts.
- 6.2 The 'Statement of Assurance' in the 2004/05 Statement of Accounts stated that, on the basis of information supplied to them, the Chief Executive and Leader were satisfied that the Council's arrangements were adequate and operating effectively. It was acknowledged that there were several aspects of the Code of Corporate Governance that were not in place but that actions were being undertaken which were being monitored by Management Team to ensure that full compliance will be achieved.
- 6.3 Given the findings of the 2004/05 Corporate Governance Audit by the Audit Commission and progress achieved in the last year, the 'Statement of Assurance' in the 2005/06 Statement of Accounts has again, in the opinion of the Chief Executive and the Leader, stated that the Council's arrangements are adequate and operating effectively. Monitoring of progress against the actions identified will continue to be undertaken to ensure that full compliance will eventually be achieved over a reasonable timescale.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) existing framework document "Corporate Governance in Local Government: A Keystone for Community Governance" is about to be revised and the Audit Commission is also about to issue its revised methodology for undertaking its Corporate Governance Inspection and its associated Key Lines of Enquiry. Officers of the Council will review these documents when available and consider the implications in order to determine the extent of the Council's compliance with their revised requirements.
- 7.2 The Councils Corporate Governance arrangements will continue to be subject to annual external and internal review and audit and the operation of the existing or revised Code in practice, through regular update reports to Management Team

on progress achieved against action plans is designed to strengthen these arrangements.

- 7.3 Therefore, there is no reason as yet to change, amend or alter the existing Local Code of Practice, until further information is available from CIPFA, SOLACE and the Audit Commission.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial issues arising directly from this report.

## **9. CONSULTATIONS**

Responsible officers allocated to the individual outstanding tasks have been fully consulted in the production of this report.

## **10. LINKS TO CORPORATE OBJECTIVES/VALUES**

Reviewing and monitoring the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements ensures that the following corporate value is being addressed:

- *Being open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive.*

## **11. RISK MANAGEMENT**

If the Council is not able to demonstrate to the Audit Commission during a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Review, that it had good governance arrangements in place, or any weaknesses were not being addressed, it would inevitably have a detrimental impact on the overall assessment and it would not be possible for the Council to achieve the highest possible score.

If there are not adequate Governance arrangements in place when the Council is engaged with partners for the delivery of services, there is also a risk that the Council may be required to deal with any financial liabilities resulting from any failure in the partnership arrangements.

## **12. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

No additional implications have been identified.

## **13. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

No additional implications have been identified.

## **14. LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL**

No new implications have been identified.

## **15. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

No other material considerations have been identified.

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**Telephone Number:** (01388) 816166 Ext. 4385  
**Email address:** [hmoses@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:hmoses@sedgefield.gov.uk)

**Ward(s)** Proposals are not ward specific

**Background Papers**

- Corporate Governance in Local Government: A Keystone for Community Governance Framework and Accompanying Guidance Note – issued by CIPFA and SOLACE.
- Local Code of Corporate Governance – Report to Special Council 20.12.02
- Local Code of Corporate Governance-Annual Report to Overview and Scrutiny 1 Committee 15.06.04
- Corporate Governance – Task Updates – Reports to Management Team 19.09.95; 09.01.06; 22.05.06
- Audit Commission Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2004/05 – Report to Cabinet May 2006
- County Durham Local Area Agreement 2006/07 to 2008/09 – Report to Cabinet March 2006

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
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"/>



<i>Task</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Responsible Officer</i>	<i>Revised Target Date for Completion</i>
1.	Develop an Organisational Development Plan.	Director of Resources	June 2006
2.	Ensure that there are procedural notes/manuals in place for those systems that are business critical.	All relevant Heads of Service	June 2006
3.	Undertake a Self Appraisal of Key Partnerships, including SRB, Sure Start, Community Safety and Develop Partnership Protocol/Framework.	Head of Strategy and Regeneration and Monitoring Officer	June 2006
4.	Develop and communicate a formal ICT System Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Plan.	Head of ICT	August 2006
5.	Develop an ICT Security Policy	Head of ICT	March 2007
6.	Review (and amend where necessary) the Contract Procedure Rules within the Constitution.	Head of Service Improvement and Monitoring Officer	October 2006
7.	Develop appropriate Governance arrangements for the Local Area Agreement.	Head of Strategy and Regeneration.	September 2006

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# Item 7

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

28 July 2006

### REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

#### Portfolio: Planning and Development

#### Sedgefield Borough Local Development Framework – Core Strategy Alternative Options Report

#### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Core Strategy Development Plan Document will provide the overall strategic spatial planning policies for the Borough up to 2018. Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 states that in order to take forward this Document, the Borough Council must undertake an early consultation exercise to identify what are the planning issues and options that the document will seek to address.
- 1.3 The Key Issues Paper was published last year, alongside the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. Following an assessment of the responses received, the Alternative Options document has been developed. The Alternative Options Document builds upon the key issues raised by the community during the consultation period and proposes a series of alternative options to address these issues. The responses received to this round of consultation will feed into the Preferred Options Report that is due to publication in February 2007.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Council endorses the attached Core Strategy Alternative Options Document, so that the document can be published.

#### **3 THE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS DOCUMENT**

- 3.1 Paragraphs 4.1-4.3 of Planning Policy Statement 12 states that the key to the success of the new system is the early identification of all issues in the preparation of a Development Plan Document. Local authorities should “front-load” the preparation of Development Plan Documents by facilitating early involvement and securing input from

its community. This is to ensure that there is full community involvement before significant decisions are taken.

- 3.2 As part of the continuing pre-production work that the Borough Council is undertaking, we are providing an additional opportunity for consultees to influence the process as early as possible. The release of this Options document will further this process. The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should consult and engage with specific consultation bodies to identify the emerging planning issues that should be considered in Development Plan Documents. This consultation will provide the opportunity for the community to consider alternative options and identify which is their preferred option and help provide evidence for the LPA to ensure that Development Plan Documents are sound when they are submitted for examination.
- 3.3 The Alternative Options Document follows a similar approach to the Key Issues Paper. The document is formatted in a way that firstly identifies the issues and responses that were raised by the Key Issues Paper, and then considers how these issues can be addressed.

### Key Spatial Issues

- 3.4 The Core Strategy will provide the strategic planning framework for the Borough. Overall, we are asking the community's views on 19 different spatial planning issues, and providing them with a range of options to address these. It is important that the community are given a chance to fully take part in the future spatial strategy of the Borough and be able to suggest different options to address these issues.
- 3.5 For example, one of the key matters to be addressed at this stage is what criteria should be used to assess how a proposal contributes to a sustainable community. The Options Report puts forward 22 criteria to assess the sustainable virtues of development proposals. The consultation exercise will be used to assess whether the community believe that we have identified the broad range of issues.
- 3.6 All these policy options will be fully appraised against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework when the Core Strategy Preferred Options Report is prepared later in the year.

## **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Whilst there will not be any direct resource implications, apart from publication costs, there will indirect cost implications in terms of Officer time spent on this consultation exercise.

## **5 CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 The Key Issues Paper, that was published last year, invited comments regarding the key strategic spatial issues affecting the Borough. During the six-week period of public consultation, we received 547 comments regarding the Key Issues Paper and 110 comments regarding the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

5.2 The consultation exercise on the Core Strategy Alternative Options Report will be undertaken with the consultation bodies, in accordance with the consultation methods outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement. The consultation period will last for six weeks.

## **6 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### Links to Corporate Objectives / Values

The publication of the document will help meet Corporate Aim 25, which is to provide a high quality, efficient and customer focussed Planning Service that supports sustainable improvement of the built and natural environment of the Borough.

#### 6.1 Legal Implications

The document must be published in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

#### 6.2 Risk Management

There are no risk management issues.

#### 6.3 Health and Safety Implications

No additional implications have been identified.

#### 6.4 Sustainability

At this stage, there is no further requirement to undertake Sustainability Appraisal.

#### 6.5 Equality and Diversity

The Core Strategy Alternative Options document will be made available in alternative languages, Braille or in audio format where requested, and will be placed on the website in pdf format.

#### 6.6 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion issues are discussed with the document.

#### 6.7 Procurement

There are no procurement issues.

## **7 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None.

## 8 LIST OF APPENDICES

### 8.1 Core Strategy Alternative Options Report

**Contact Officers:** Chris Myers  
**Telephone No:** (01388) 816166 ext 4328  
**Email Address:** [cmyers@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:cmyers@sedgefield.gov.uk)

**Ward(s):** All

**Key Decision Validation:** This is a Key Decision as a decision made by Cabinet in the course of developing proposals to Council to amend the **policy framework**.

#### Background Papers

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks  
Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

#### 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

Local Development Framework:  
Core Strategy DPD Alternative Options

July 2006

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## **Introduction**

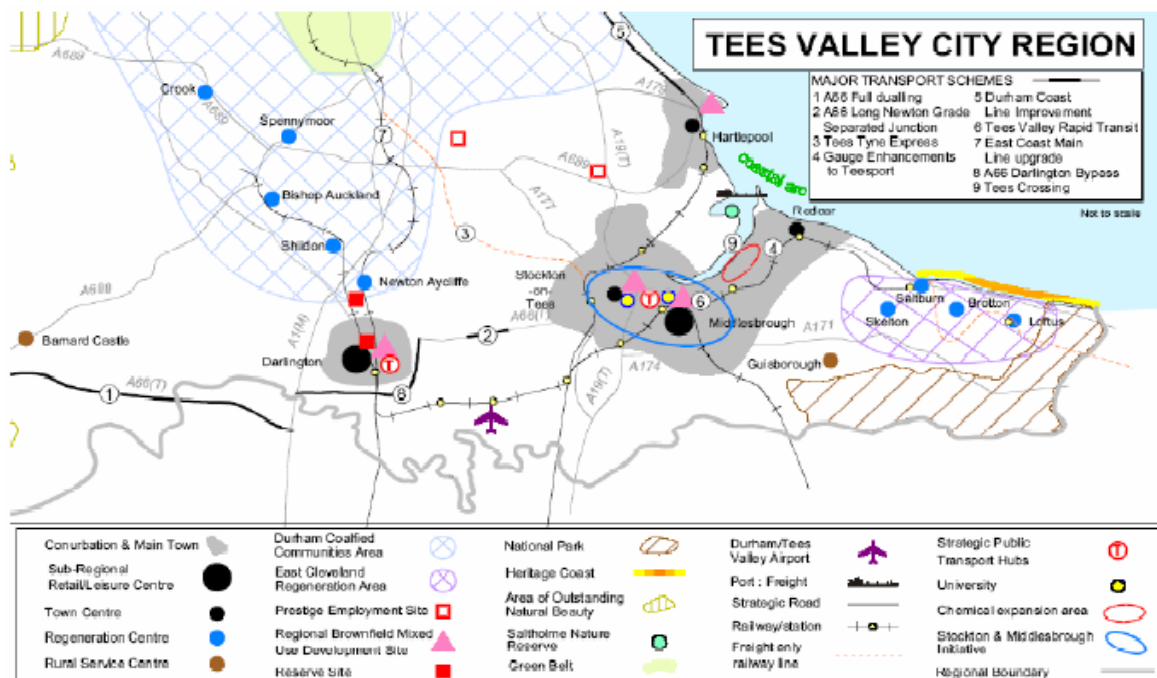
- 1.1 The Borough Council started to prepare its Core Strategy during 2005 with the publication of the Key Issues Paper and the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report in July. These documents were subject to a six-week public consultation period, which finished in September. Overall, the Borough Council received 547 comments from a variety of 72 individuals, community groups and businesses to the Key Issues Paper and 110 comments on the Scoping Report.
- 1.2 As part of the continuing pre-production work that the Borough Council is undertaking, we are providing an additional opportunity for consultees to influence the process as early as possible. The release of this Options Paper will further this process. The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should consult and engage with specific consultation bodies to identify the emerging planning issues that should be considered in Development Plan Documents. This consultation will provide the opportunity for the community to consider alternative options and identify which is their preferred option and help provide evidence for the LPA to ensure that Development Plan Documents are sound when they are submitted for examination.
- 1.3 Following the consultation exercise to be undertaken on this document, and the consideration of representations received, the Borough Council will produce its Core Strategy Preferred Options Development Plan Document in winter 2006. All alternative options will be appraised through the Sustainability Appraisal process.

### **How to respond to consultation exercise**

- 1.4 The document is structured in a way that summarises the issues and the responses raised in the Key Issues Paper during summer 2005 and puts forward alternative options to address these issues. It is important that you make your comments during this consultation period to help the Borough Council frame its Preferred Options later this year. If you do not feel that our proposed alternative options mirror your thoughts, please feel free to suggest alternatives.

## Spatial Context & Influences on Core Strategy

2.1 In February 2004, the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott invited the three northern Regional Development Agencies to show how the North could unlock the potential for faster economic growth and bridge the £29 billion output gap between the North and the rest of the UK with our partners. This process is known as the *Northern Way* and seeks to promote development within the eight City Regions in the north of England. Sedgefield Borough is located within the Tees Valley City Region. This concept has been taken forward within the Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The policy initiatives that will impact upon Sedgefield Borough are the regeneration policies for the Durham Coalfield Area, the development of Aycliffe Industrial Park and NetPark as employment hubs, and the opportunities offered by the A1 (M), East Coast Main Rail Line, and Darlington-Bishop Auckland Branch Line.



2.2 The Borough's Community Strategy 2004-2014 identifies a number of key issues that currently affect the Borough. These issues can be summarised to include health deprivation; a narrow employment base; low educational and skills attainment; a need to regenerate towns and villages; access to key services; and community development and awareness. The Community Strategy Action Plan will further develop the strategy. The Local Development Framework will need to identify how the spatial elements of this Action Plan are going to be addressed. At this stage, it is hoped that this document will be a technical appendix to the Core Strategy Preferred Options Development Plan Document.

## **Local Development Framework Vision**

- 3.1 The Community Strategy is the Local Strategic Partnership's key document. This sets out a shared vision for where the Community want to see the Borough in 10 years time and provides a number of targets to help achieve this vision. There are significant linkages between the Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework, as the LDF provides a spatial expression of the Community Strategy.

The respondents to the Key Issues Paper largely supported the proposed vision for the Local Development Framework. However, it is felt necessary to explicitly refer to the requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for local authorities to achieve sustainable development.

- 3.2 The vision of the LDF, which will be incorporated in the Core Strategy, has been developed through the formulation of the Community Strategy. Our aspiration is for Sedgefield to be a Borough in which people are happy to live, work and do business. This means being able to offer high quality job opportunities, good schools, a wide range of good quality and affordable housing, low crime rates, a pleasant and accessible environment and first class services. This will help the Borough Council achieve Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires Local Planning Authorities to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 3.3 Therefore, the vision of the LDF is 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; and,
  - People can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods.
- 3.4 In summary, we want Sedgefield to be a Borough that is healthy, attractive and prosperous with strong communities.

## **Proposed Aims and Objectives of the LDF**

- 3.5 Following consultation of the 'Key Issues Paper' during summer 2005, some of the representations to the questions posed, has resulted in a requirement for slight modifications to the aims and objectives. The revised ones can be seen below.

AIM 1: To enhance social inclusion and well being

Delivered through the objectives of:

- meeting the needs of all sectors of the population, especially the elderly;
- supporting where appropriate or endeavour to support the retention of existing community facilities, and where required, encouraging the provision of new facilities;
- promoting mixed-use developments;
- improving accessibility to goods and services;
- encouraging healthy lifestyles;
- encouraging wider community involvement in the planning process;
- improving greenspaces and access to them;
- providing for recognised housing needs in safe and attractive neighbourhoods.

AIM 2: To improve the quality of where people live

Delivered through the objectives of:

- regenerating areas suffering from deprivation and/or degradation;
- improving community safety and reducing the fear of crime;
- conserving, maintaining and enhancing the quality of landscapes and townscapes;
- securing high quality design and layout in all new developments;
- provide high quality, affordable housing for future generations.

AIM 3: To reduce the impact of development on climate change

Delivered through the objectives of:

- supporting a clean, safe and accessible public transport system;
- reducing the need to travel and reliance on the private car;
- promoting sustainable construction and design;
- promoting energy efficiency and the generation of energy from renewable sources;
- minimising the risk of flooding;
- promoting high quality design that takes account of future climate change;
- encouraging habitat creation and habitat retention as part of new development.

AIM 4: To protect and enhance natural resources

Delivered through the objectives of:

- adopting a sequential approach to land development;
- conserve, enhance and create biodiversity and geodiversity sites;
- prioritising the re-use of previously developed land and buildings in sustainable locations;
- taking account of the physical constraints on the development of land;
- reducing pollution and preventing the deterioration of land quality;
- encouraging the efficient use of natural resources.

AIM 5: To encourage and support a competitive and diverse economy

Delivered through the objectives of:

- providing opportunities for the development of a competitive and diverse economic base;
- ensuring the provision of high quality employment sites;
- encouraging the provision of tourism, leisure or artistic activities;
- encouraging the development of social and community enterprises;
- supporting vibrant town centres
- maintaining a flexible supply of business sites and premises that meet the modern needs of business.

## Achieving Sustainable Development

- 4.1 At the Key Issues stage, the Borough Council suggested that sustainable communities need sufficient, quality housing to meet the needs of the community; a flourishing local economy supported by adequate infrastructure; a high quality, safe and healthy local environment; and the amenities and sense of space and place to support a diverse and vibrant local culture.

Some of the responses to the Key Issues Paper sought to expand our view of sustainable communities. There is a need to make new buildings more adaptable to allow them to be changed to other uses during the course of their lifetime; the contribution of the Borough's historic environment to creating a sense of place to local neighbourhoods with a diverse, vibrant and distinctive culture; and, there needs to be a suitable balance between employment and housing opportunities.

- 4.2 Sustainable development<sup>1</sup> and the need to maintain and develop sustainable communities are the core principles that will underpin the policies and proposals of the Local Development Framework. The requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, SEA directive and Sustainability Appraisal regulations place a statutory obligation on the Borough Council to ensure that sustainable development is achieved. The Core Strategy and other Local Development Documents will be developed around these principles, ensuring that new development accords with a sequential approach and based around key settlements with good local services.

### Alternative options – No. 1

<u>Option</u>	<u>Achieving Sustainable Development</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide what constitutes sustainable development	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Develop a comprehensive policy to identify key sustainability criteria, based around the following issues:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The availability of previously-developed land and buildings;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The accessibility of the new development to homes;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The accessibility of the new development to employment locations;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The accessibility of the development to services, such as community centres, dentists, GP Practices, Libraries, Post Offices, Public Houses, Nurseries, and Primary and Secondary Schools;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The capacity of existing infrastructure e.g. roads, hospitals, etc. to accommodate such development;	<input type="checkbox"/>
		—

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainable development recognises that economic development in the present should take place in such a way that does not compromise the quality of life of future generations. This protection can only be achieved by ensuring that human society lives within the limits of the environment, while making sure the economy satisfies the needs of our global society.

- Physical constraints, such as flooding, on the development of land;
- The impact upon the built and historic environment;
- The impact upon the natural environment;
- The impact upon cultural assets;
- The impact upon the health of local people;
- The economic viability of the development of the site;
- The accessibility of the development to green space, footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways;
- The accessibility of the development to a diverse range of alternative transport options;
- The use of sustainable design and construction methods;
- The contribution to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geo-diversity;
- Minimising energy use in construction and use;
- Conservation of water resources in construction and use;
- Mitigating risk of pollution during construction and use;
- The suitability of mixed-use developments;
- The site's contribution to strengthening local communities;
- The ability of buildings to be adapted for other uses during their lifetime;
- The impact of the new development on future residents quality of life.

C If you believe that we have missed any sustainability criteria, please list them below:

.....

.....

## **Social Inclusion**

### **Locational Housing Strategy**

- 5.1 The Key Issues Paper identified that over the current Local Plan period 1991-2006, approximately 75% of new housing development has taken place in the four main towns of Ferryhill, Newton Aycliffe, Shildon and Spennymoor, compared with approximately 25% in the larger villages. Furthermore, the Key Issues Paper put forward that whilst everyone should have a decent home within which to live, it was suggested that the locational strategy for housing development should remain to be the four main towns.
- 5.2 Draft PPS3 outlines the Government's objective to promote mixed and sustainable communities, with high quality, affordable housing for future generations. Development should be attractive, safe, energy efficient and designed and built to a high quality. They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure. Housing sites that come forward within the Borough will have to accord with these objectives.

Following an analysis of the responses received, it is clear that there is substantial support for the continued prioritisation of development within the four main towns. However, it is also recognised that there is also some Community support for development within the larger villages to help support their ability to maintain a sustainable community.

- 5.3 Whilst it is important that sustainable patterns of development do take place and aid Housing Market Restructuring initiatives in the Borough, there should not be an over-concentration of development within the four main towns as this could lead to a decline in the viability of services and facilities in smaller settlements. Draft PPS3 (Housing) emphasises that new housing development can be provided for in villages and other small rural communities where needed to contribute to their sustainability.
- 5.4 The alternative options that will be considered for the locational strategy for new housing development in the Borough is as follows:

#### **A. Do nothing and let the market decide**

- 5.6 The house-building industry would put forward planning applications for housing development, and the authority would need to decide the attributes of each site on its own merits. However, this option would conflict with the requirements of PPG3 and Draft PPS 3.

#### **B. Maintain existing broad development patterns**

- 5.7 Existing patterns of development that has occurred over the last 15 years would continue and prioritise development in the four main towns. Overall, this would mean that approximately 3,000 new dwellings would be constructed in the four main towns and approximately 1,000 new dwellings in the villages from Sedgefield's Regional Spatial Strategy apportionment. This option would

not however take account of future patterns of new economic development e.g. the expansion of NetPark.

C. Focus development within specific regeneration areas, whilst maintaining Village development patterns

5.8 The Borough Council is currently undertaking Masterplanning exercises for the Housing Market Restructuring areas of Dean Bank, Ferryhill; Ferryhill Station; and, West Chilton. These are key Council priority areas and their regeneration should not be diluted. Under this option, no other development should come forward in either Chilton or Ferryhill until the successful completion of these projects. To further ensure the success of these schemes, housing development in the four main towns may require phasing policies to ensure that they do not have an adverse effect on these key regeneration projects. Housing development in the villages should not have an adverse effect and could continue.

D. Focusing development in regeneration areas, reduce housing development in the main towns and increase development in the villages

5.9 To provide a more balanced approach to development in the Borough, a smaller proportion of development will come forward in the main towns to help ensure that sustainable patterns of development can take place as a result of NetPark. For example, the expansion of NetPark will increase housing demand in the eastern part of the Borough. Sedgefield and Bishop Middleham has significant environmental constraints that will limit the ability of the villages to expand and this could result in more housing coming forward in Fishburn and the Trimdons to house employees of the companies operating from NetPark.

5.10 If the development pattern was altered to take account of this, approximately 70% of development (or 2,800 dwellings) should come forward in the main towns and 30% within the villages (1,200 dwellings), focusing more development in those communities surrounding NetPark with no environmental constraints.

Alternative Options – No. 2

<u>Option</u>	<u>Locational Housing Strategy</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Maintain existing broad development patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Focus development within specific regeneration areas, whilst maintaining village development patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	Focusing development in regeneration areas, reduce housing development in the main towns and increase	<input type="checkbox"/>



development in the villages

Responding to Housing Markets

- 5.11 Whilst there was support for an increased supply of housing land in the Borough by the development industry, including the Home Builders Federation, the housing debate has moved forward with the release of Draft Planning Policy Statement 3 in December 2005.
- 5.12 Draft PPS3 advocates that regional planning bodies survey sub-regional housing market areas in drawing up RSSs for demand and land availability. In sub-regional areas where demand is high, the draft suggests that regional planning bodies should aim to increase housing supply by exploring and identifying growth areas, growth points, new freestanding settlements and major urban extensions. Where demand is low, regional planning bodies should identify the need for the renewal or replacement of the existing housing stock.

Alternative Options – No. 3

<u>Option</u>	<u>Responding to Housing Markets</u>	
A	Continue current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Increase housing supply only in areas where sub-regional studies identify demand is high. In areas where demand is low, take a pro-active approach to regenerate such areas by considering the renewal or replacement of the existing housing stock to stimulate demand	<input type="checkbox"/>

Affordable Housing

- 5.13 The Key Issues Paper identified that the Housing Needs Survey and Dwelling Balance Analysis 2003 stated that there is now an Affordable Housing issue in parts of the Borough. Given that house prices are continuing to rise quicker than incomes, this situation will become more acute and more widespread. The policies and proposals in the Local Development Framework will need to address this critical issue so as to assist in developing Sustainable Communities.

An analysis of the responses received reveals that there is cross-sector support for the Borough Council to address the need for affordable housing. However, it is also clear from the house building industry that a percentage of affordable housing should not be prescriptively applied to all sites but there needs to be an appraisal on an individual site-by-site basis and in accordance with Government policy.

- 5.14 Government policy for affordable housing is enshrined in Circular 6/98, PPG3 and draft PPS3. These documents identify that sub-regional housing market

assessments should help determine whether affordable housing is needed and guide the level, size, type and location of affordable housing provision, either through new provision or as replacement provision.

- 5.15 In determining the overall target for affordable housing provision, it is important that regard is paid to the relevant sub-regional housing market assessments, the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy, Regional Homelessness Strategy, Borough Homelessness Strategy, Local Housing Strategy and Community Strategy. The target should take account of the anticipated levels of finance available for affordable housing, including public subsidy, and the level of contribution that can realistically be sought on relevant sites.
- 5.16 The Government urges LPAs to set a minimum site-size threshold, expressed as numbers of homes or area, above which affordable housing will be sought. The indicative national minimum threshold is 15 dwellings.
- 5.17 Affordable housing should be provided on sites so that it contributes towards achieving the objective of creating more mixed communities and avoids creating concentrations of deprivation. It is important that any affordable housing provided meets the needs of both current and future occupiers.
- 5.18 The Planning for Housing Provision statement encourages local authorities to provide a balanced mixture of housing type and tenure within new developments. This approach requires local authorities to be more flexible, not only in assessing housing need but also in terms of its delivery. There are a range of alternative options as to how genuinely affordable housing can be provided, such as partnership arrangements with Registered Social Landlords or low-cost market housing, and this will have to be agreed between the Council and the developer. It is important that these homes are affordable in perpetuity.
- 5.19 The Housing Needs Survey in 2003 identified that there was an emerging affordable housing issue in the Borough and suggested that to address this, 20% of all dwellings coming forward should be affordable. The Housing Needs Survey has been updated in 2005 and this identified a requirement for new affordable dwellings to be provided in the Borough over the next five years. This survey identified that within the following housing areas, there is a need for the following housing types and tenure:

<b>Housing Area</b>	<b>Identified Affordable Housing Type and Tenure Need</b>
Ferryhill	Shortfall of 2-bed flats and 1-bed houses
Newton Aycliffe	Shortfall of 1, 2 and 3-bed flats, 2-bed bungalows, and 1 and 4-bed houses
Sedgefield/Trimdons	Shortfall of 2-bed flats, 2-bed bungalows, and 1 and 3-bed houses
Shildon	Shortfall of 2-bed bungalows
Spennymoor	Shortfall of 2-bed bungalows, and 1, 3 and 4-bed houses

- 5.20 As affordable housing becomes an ever more increasing issue in the Borough, there will be a need for a dedicated Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to help developers and the Council effectively address this in terms of calculating the requirement, the delivery of the dwellings, and who will reside in the dwellings.

#### Alternative Options – No. 4

<u>Option</u>	<u>Affordable Housing</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Apply a prescriptive requirement of 20% affordable units on all sites over 15 dwellings, as advocated by the Housing Needs Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Undertake an assessment of each individual site, based upon the latest available information from the Housing Needs Survey and supported by a Supplementary Planning Document	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Housing for Special Needs Groups

- 5.21 The Key Issues Paper identified that the resident population of the Borough is ageing and a growing number of people have some form of a disability and suggested that the particular housing needs of these groups could be resolved by adapting the current housing stock or it could involve the designation of specific sites to address these issues.
- 5.22 This approach did not however receive much comment, apart from limited support to address the issue through the management of local authority housing stock. The sub-regional housing market assessment described by draft PPS3 will identify the particular accommodation needs and demands of specific groups, such as key workers, homeless households, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, first time buyers, students, disabled people, older people and Gypsies and Travellers. On completion of this assessment, the Council will have the evidence base needed to justify the requirement for accommodation for these particular groups.

#### Alternative Options – No. 5

<u>Option</u>	<u>Housing for Special Needs Groups</u>	
A	Continue with the current practices of no specific requirement for developers to provide housing for special needs as part of their schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Take a proactive policy approach to ensure that developers provide accommodation which caters for the Special Needs Groups within their development schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>

throughout the Borough

## Improving Quality of Communities

- 6.1 The need to address the housing market failure within the communities of Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and West Chilton, resulting from low demand and abandonment of properties, is widely acknowledged. Masterplanning projects to regenerate these communities have been developed. It is important that the renewal of these communities is acknowledged as a Council priority. The alternative options to ensure that this happens are discussed within the **Social Inclusion** section of this report.

### Promotion of High Quality Design

- 6.2 The Key Issues Paper identified that high quality design in the development of new housing, industry and commerce is vital to the regeneration and revitalisation of the Borough's towns and villages. The quality of the built environment is an important factor in the overall quality of life for the Borough's residents, employers and employees and visitors to the Borough.
- 6.3 It is important that the Borough promotes high quality design for new development in terms of its architectural detail but also the functionality and impact of the development on the character, quality and sustainability of its surroundings. Much greater emphasis will be placed on design issues and how developments are related to the local context.

All responses to the Key Issues Paper supported the promotion of high quality design for housing, industrial and commercial uses. Furthermore, there was clear support for the increased use of sustainable construction methods, design codes and the adherence to highest BREEAM standards.

- 6.4 There is overwhelming support for the Borough Council to promote the use of sustainable construction methods and high quality design. Planning Policy Statement 1 provides national policy support to this approach.
- 6.5 CABI and the Home Builders Federation have produced a Building for Life Standard to guide Local Planning Authorities and the development industry to identify the key issues that should be addressed in a Design Statement that will accompany major planning applications. Whilst this is primarily aimed at housing development, the same principles can be applied to other forms of development. The Borough Council has adopted this Standard as best practice.
- 6.6 If the 'business as usual' practice continues, it is clear that the current standards of design will not meet best practice. This will not make a positive impact upon the quality of design in communities. In November 2005, CABI produced a report that assessed the quality of new housing development in the three Northern Regions of England. This report was a damning assessment of the quality of design of new housing development. Current design practices need to be improved. Furthermore, PPS1 states that poor quality design should be rejected.

Alternative Options – No. 6

<u>Option</u>	<u>Promotion of High Quality Design</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design. Access and Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design. New housing development should conform to the Code of Practice for Sustainable Homes and meet the highest sustainable build quality. Access and Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Character of the Natural and Built Environment

6.7 The Key Issues Paper identified that the Local Development Framework will need to provide guidance on the protection of designated Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Similarly, new development should respect and, where possible, enhance the Landscape Character of the Borough. It is important that the design of new developments compliments rather than conflicts with the character of the natural and built environment, it will help the setting and vibrancy of the Borough’s communities and helps provide an attractive Borough.

There was little comment in the responses to the Key Issues Paper on this issue. However, those that did respond recognised the need for specific guidance for both the natural and built environment based upon Landscape Character advice and Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

6.8 The Borough does not currently have any specific areas of high landscape value. This effectively means that all landscapes in the Borough are treated equally and does not give guidance to the development industry about where development can either improve or adversely affect landscape character. This practice cannot continue. The understanding of Landscape Character has developed significantly since the adoption of the Local Plan. The County Council has produced a Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy. The guiding principles within these documents need to be taken into account when allocating land for development and determining planning applications.

6.9 The current Local Plan identifies 15 Conservation Areas within the Borough. These Conservation Areas were designated prior to the publication of best practice guidance from English Heritage. English Heritage recommends that Local Planning Authorities should undertake Conservation Area Appraisals to appraise whether the designation is necessary. Following the appraisal of Conservation Areas, there is a need to prepare Management Plans to protect

and enhance these areas. Again, it is clear that existing practices do not accord with national best practice, as some of the current Conservation Areas may not have the necessary attributes to warrant the designation.

- 6.10 The housing stock in the Borough is skewed towards high-density residential areas, with few properties having large gardens. This imbalance in the housing stock needs to be addressed through the Local Development Framework through the implementation of new housing allocations. However, there is a growing trend nationally for residential dwellings with large gardens to be subject of speculative planning applications for the intensification of the land through demolition and re-build, primarily because the Government's definition of previously-developed land includes the curtilage of residential dwellings. The Government has recognised this emerging issue in draft Planning Policy Statement 3. Should this national trend emerge in this Borough, it would exacerbate the imbalance of the Borough's housing stock and have a damaging effect on the streetscene.

Alternative Options – No. 7

<u>Option</u>	<u>Character of the Natural Environment</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development respects landscape character through the promotion of high quality design. Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Alternative Options – No. 8

<u>Option</u>	<u>Character of Conservation Areas</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design and accords with the guidance contained in the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Alternative Options – No. 9

<u>Option</u>	<u>Character of the Built Environment</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design and respects the streetscene. Access and Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Climate Change

### An accessible transport system

- 7.1 The Key Issues Paper identified that PPG 13 states that land use planning has a key role in delivering an integrated transport strategy. This can be achieved by influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of uses to reduce the need to travel, reduce length of journeys and improve accessibility to employment, retail and leisure facilities by all modes of transport. This is important to promote social inclusion and ensure access for those who do not have regular use of a car. Furthermore, the Key Issues Paper acknowledged that Sedgefield Borough enjoys a high standard of transport accessibility with both the A1 (M) and East Coast Main Line (which are the main transport routes that link the east coast of England with Scotland), dissecting the Borough. The Borough is well served by the County Strategic Transport Network, such as A167, A688 and A689. There is an opportunity to make improvements to the Bishop Auckland – Darlington rail line.

The responses to the Key Issues Paper were mixed. There was a recognition that the Borough Council will have a limited effect on the provision of an effective public transport system, given that the County Council produce the Local Transport Plan, and the inadequate level of national funding available to address this issue. However, there was also a recognition that the Borough can help in the delivery of an effective transport system by promoting and directing development to existing settlements and locations that can be well served by walking, cycling and public transport. Furthermore, the Borough can encourage the implementation of Travel Plans for major developments that will generate significant additional journeys.

- 7.2 The Borough Council has a dual role in the promotion and implementation of an accessible transport system in the County. Firstly, the Borough Council needs to work closely with the County Highways Authority in the delivery of its Local Transport Plan policies and proposals. Secondly, the Borough Council can guide new development to locations that support the viability of public transport and helps promote walking and cycling. These measures will have a positive role to play in improving the health of the Borough's residents.
- 7.3 The current pattern of development, with the majority of development taking place in the four main towns, would suggest in broad terms that the Borough is guiding developers to the most accessible locations. However, the contraction of public transport services would suggest that this development pattern is having a negative effect in some rural areas. This would inevitably lead to increasing use of private transport in these areas to access employment, services and facilities.
- 7.4 The implementation of Local Transport Plan 2 (2006-2011) in Sedgefield Borough seeks to improve access to services through the development of local service centres.



Alternative Options – No. 10

<u>Option</u>	<u>An accessible transport system</u>	
A	Continue with current development patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure new development patterns are more closely linked with transport provision to improve accessibility and reduce the need to travel	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improving energy efficiency in buildings

- 7.5 The Key Issues Paper acknowledged that, in order to reduce the effects of climate change, new development should minimise the need to consume resources and deploy energy efficiency measures. The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy supports this policy approach.

The responses to the Key Issues Paper largely supported the imposition of minimum energy efficiency measures in the construction of new buildings. Some responses suggested that these energy efficiency measures should also apply to the modernisation or re-use of buildings for alternative uses. Furthermore, there was support to this approach as fuel poverty affects approximately 2.5 million homes nationally.

- 7.6 The Borough Council has an Affordable Warmth Strategy. The aim within this Strategy is to eradicate fuel poverty within the Borough by 2016. To help achieve this aim, there are grant regimes that offer discounted cavity wall and loft insulation, through Durham Energy Savers and the government funded Warm Front scheme, which also offers central heating upgrades for those households on certain qualifying benefits.
- 7.7 There is clear support to require new development or redevelopment of existing buildings to achieve high-energy efficiency and minimise consumption to achieve BREEAM2 and Eco-Homes3 “very good” or “excellent” rating.
- 7.8 The Submission Draft RSS requires new developments to have embedded within them a minimum 10% energy supply from renewable sources. The Borough Council supports this position. The County Durham Authorities, in their submission to the RSS Examination have requested that for consistency, there should also be an aspiration to double the minimum requirement for embedded energy from renewable sources within new development to 20% by 2020.

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2 The Building Research Establishment’s Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a measure of best practice in environmental design and management of offices, industrial units and retail units. BREEAM assesses the performance of buildings, management, energy use, health and well-being, pollution, transport, land use, ecology, materials, and water.

3 The EcoHomes Assessment is the version of BREEAM for new, converted or renovated homes, covering both houses and apartments. The issues are assessed are grouped into seven categories: energy; water; pollution; materials; transport; ecology and land use; and health and well-being.

- 7.9 To support this, the Borough will expect all development (either new build or conversion) with a floorspace of in excess of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>, or ten or more residential units to incorporate embedded energy from renewable sources to provide at least 10% of the predicted energy requirements by 2010, and for this percentage to be doubled by 2020.

#### Alternative Options – No. 11

<u>Option</u>	<u>Improving Energy Efficiency in Buildings</u>	
A	Do nothing and let developers dictate how energy efficient their schemes will be	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes energy efficiency, by adopting a positive policy approach to require that developments achieve “very good” or “excellent” BREEAM and Eco-Homes ratings; and seeks to provide 10% embedded energy from renewable resources by 2010, and 20% by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Ensure that new development promotes energy efficiency, seeks embedded energy from renewable resources, and uses sustainable methods of construction and use of materials	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Renewable Energy Generation

- 7.10 The Government’s Energy White Paper has confirmed that 10% of electricity should be generated from renewable sources by 2010 and has an aspirational target to generate 20% of electricity by renewable sources by 2020. For instance, in terms of climate change, the use of renewable energy sources has clear and distinct advantages over the use of fossil fuels. The North East Region has produced a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy. This study has identified that it is attainable for the North East to achieve both Government targets for renewable energy provided that there is a positive response to its recommendations.
- 7.11 In order to accurately assess and identify the most appropriate locations for wind power development in the North East, the Regional Strategy has developed a GIS tool that identifies potential constraints to development, such as sensitivity of landscapes and accessibility to the National Grid. This GIS tool has enabled a regional spatial strategy for onshore wind to be developed and it has identified broad locations for strategic and medium sized wind resource areas, one of which is located in Sedgfield Borough in the Tees Plain. It is likely that this area would contribute up to approximately 50 Megawatts of installed capacity by 2010, out of a North East regional total of 454 Megawatts.

- 7.12 The Key Issues Paper suggested that the Borough Council develops a positive policy framework to direct renewable energy proposals to the most appropriate locations. The key sources of renewable energy in the Borough are likely to be wind power, biomass and solar technology.

The Key Issues responses supported the Borough's positive approach to renewable energy generation. Whilst recognising that large scale wind, solar and biomass schemes will generate significant quantities of energy generation, it is important that the Borough Council supports small scale schemes for individual properties.

- 7.13 The existing Borough Local Plan is becoming outdated, and is subsequently out of sync with recent national and regional guidance. As such, the issue of assessing renewable energy proposals is not covered by any specific local plan policy. This will need to be addressed in the forthcoming LDF.
- 7.14 The Borough Council needs to make a positive contribution to help the North East Region meet its contribution to the national renewable energy generation targets. Wind power will be an important element in meeting this target. However, it is important that proposed wind developments pay due regard to their landscape setting. The Regional Renewable Energy Strategy identifies the Tees Plain Landscape Character Area being an area where medium sized wind developments could be considered appropriate. However, the cumulative impact of wind development in this area needs to be effectively managed. Furthermore, it is important that potential developers actively engage with the Regional Airport Operators to ensure that the development of wind turbines does not undermine their radar systems, and the RSPB regarding the impacts upon the resident bird population and the sensitivity of bird migration routes.
- 7.15 There is also an emerging demand for smaller and domestic scale wind systems. Major manufacturing companies in the Borough are starting to investigate whether wind can help them source their energy needs by reducing their reliance upon supply from the national grid. The Hydro Polymers site at Newton Aycliffe has recently received permission to develop 2 turbines to provide 0.5Mw of installed capacity. Other similar developments are likely to take place over the period of this Core Strategy.
- 7.16 Moreover, companies are starting to develop micro wind turbines that can be fitted to domestic properties to help individual meet their energy needs and reduce their reliance on the national grid. This type of development will have an impact upon the local streetscape and will need to be managed effectively. With technological advances, it is possible for domestic properties to develop solar or photovoltaic cells on their roofs as a means of generating renewable energy. This type of development may have an impact upon the local streetscape and will need to be managed effectively. In terms of micro generation, there are a number of grants available through the Low Carbon Buildings Programme to organisations, communities, households and businesses.

- 7.17 The generation of renewable energy from biomass should be exploited in the Borough, where its impact would not have an adverse effect on either sites of biodiversity importance or ancient woodland. Wood fuel plants are being developed within the Tees Valley and it is likely that the eastern part of the Borough would form part of its catchment area.
- 7.18 It is important that the Borough promotes the use and development of a widespread portfolio of renewable energy resources, and does not focus upon one particular source. This will help the Borough to adapt to emerging technologies that may not be currently available.

#### Alternative Options – No. 12

<u>Option</u>	<u>Renewable Energy Generation</u>	
A	Let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Continue current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Develop a positive policy approach to direct all forms of renewable energy generation to the most appropriate locations	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Managing flood risk

- 7.19 The Key Issues Paper acknowledged that Local Planning Authorities should assist in reducing the incidence and impact of flooding and restrict development in flood risk areas. It is also important that surface water run-off from new development does not increase the incidence of flood risk elsewhere.

The Key Issues Paper responses supported the need to effectively manage the possibility of flood risk in the Borough. The Environment Agency suggested that the Core Strategy should direct development away from areas at risk from flooding and recommends the development of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to help allocate land for development. Whilst Northumbrian Water supports the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), they will not adopt any such systems. Further issues included the need to make space for water as a mechanism to address this issue.

- 7.20 The Borough Local Plan did not specifically address flood risk issues. However, over recent years flooding has occurred in some areas of the Borough, for example in the Woodham area of Newton Aycliffe. The lack of an effective flood risk management regime cannot be allowed to continue. The Borough Council has started to address this issue with the commission of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).
- 7.21 This SFRA has identified that there are some developed areas in the Borough that are located in high flood risk areas (1% chance per year that a flood event would occur) and recommends that further development in these areas

should be avoided. The SFRA cannot account for flash-flooding events that can occur anywhere. It will also be important that any development that takes place further upstream of these areas should not have an adverse impact on flood risk. In these instances, it could be necessary for SUDS to minimise the possibility of increased surface water run-off. However, it will be important for the Council to work with Northumbrian Water to develop an agreement concerning the adoption of such systems and their maintenance.

Alternative Options – No. 13

<u>Option</u>	<u>Managing Flood Risk</u>	
A	Continue current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Develop a positive policy approach to minimise flood risk in the Borough through the implementation of a sequential test	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Develop a positive policy approach to minimise flood risk in the Borough through the implementation of a sequential test, and encourage the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Natural Resources

- 8.1 The Key Issues Paper recognised that national and regional policy requires that development should come forward in a sequential way, promoting development in the main towns before villages. However, by over-prioritising development in the main towns, it could have serious implications for the future provision of services and facilities in the villages. Both Draft Planning Policy Statement 3 and Planning Policy Statement 7 state that limited housing may be allowed in, or next to, rural settlements where needed to contribute to their sustainability.
- 8.2 The issues raised by the responses to the Key Issues Paper are discussed in greater detail in the **Social Inclusion** section of this report.

### Provision of Open and Green Space

- 8.3 The Key Issues Paper identifies that there are some serious health issues affecting the Borough and that largely these will be addressed primarily by others. However, the LDF can contribute to the creation of healthier lifestyles for the Borough's residents. There is a need to identify suitable recreational routes within and close to centres of population to encourage walking and cycling, and ensure that areas are protected for formal and informal recreation.

The responses to the Key Issues Paper clearly advocated that there is a need for a "green infrastructure" of well-connected open spaces, woodlands, footpaths and cycleways in all communities to encourage healthier lifestyles by its residents. This should be provided in addition to formal recreation and leisure activities.

- 8.4 There are clear aspirations that the Borough's residents should have good access to high quality areas of open space within the Borough's communities, and that measures should be taken to improve the environment surrounding communities. Increasing the quantity of woodland and other informal open spaces, such as nature reserves, in close proximity to the towns and villages, and making improvements to the footpaths and cycleways network can help achieve this.
- 8.5 If the market is allowed to decide where the provision of open space, woodland, footpaths and cycleways should be improved, there would be sporadic improvements made without any overall co-ordination. This provision could also come forward in areas where it is not required and lead to an over-supply of such land.
- 8.6 To help address this issue in a co-ordinated manner, the Borough Council has commissioned consultants to undertake an Open Space Needs Assessment that will provide local standards for open space within each of the Towns and Villages in the Borough. It will also allow the Local Planning Authority to use Planning Obligations to improve the quality of open space in these communities or could help direct developers to provide some community woodland to help improve the quality of the environment surrounding

communities. The Woodland Trust has identified that certain areas of the Borough would benefit from the creation of new accessible woodland in close proximity to communities. The countryside surrounding communities is a major asset to the overall well-being and health of the Borough’s residents and the quality of this should be improved. Any increase in woodland should not have a serious adverse effect on landscape character.

Alternative Options – No. 14

<u>Option</u>	<u>Provision of Open and Green Space</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that development helps to maintain, improve, or create Community access to high quality areas of open space, woodlands, footpaths and cycleways.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

8.7 The Key Issues Paper indicated that natural environment of the Borough needs to be conserved, enhanced and valued by the community. The quality of the natural environment is sometimes undervalued but it is important to our sustainable future. It is not only important that resources are allocated for the management of the natural environment but that new development is encouraged to help diversify the biological and natural interest in the surrounding area.

The Key Issues responses suggested that in order to maintain and enhance biodiversity, it is important that the relevant species and habitat targets are adopted from the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan. There should also be strong protection to the Borough’s designated bio-diverse sites. It was also recommended that all new development should incorporate some habitat enhancement through planting of native species, SUDS, the creation of either a new habitat or wildlife corridor.

8.8 The current approach within the Local Plan seeks to protect existing designated sites from inappropriate development. The knowledge base of biodiversity and geodiversity has significantly changed since the Local Plan’s adoption. Whilst protection will be maintained for designated sites, such as SSSIs, the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan identifies those key priority species and habitats within the Borough that also need to be maintained and enhanced. These priority species and habitats will also require policy support through the Local Development Framework process.

Alternative Options – No. 15

<u>Option</u>	<u>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</u>	
A	Continue current practices in Local Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that development maintains and enhances the	<input type="checkbox"/>

biological and geological heritage of the Borough and opportunities for the creation of bio-diverse habitats are pursued





## **Competitive and Diverse Economy**

### **Key Employment Locations**

- 9.1 The key Issues Paper identified that the key locations to support the delivery of the Borough's Community Strategy are NetPark, which will be the focus for attracting new high quality jobs in research and technology, Aycliffe Industrial Park (including Heighington Lane West) and Green Lane Industrial Estate, Spennymoor. All three locations have been identified for investment to create broadband 'nodes' according to a countywide strategy. These key sites will be backed up by a portfolio of other sites in attractive and accessible locations, that are suitable for local businesses and general industrial uses, and to support measures to increase business start ups and community enterprises in localised areas of the Borough. It is key to the economic future of the Borough that these three key industrial areas are retained for employment purposes and that any speculative proposals for residential development should be strongly resisted.
- 9.2 In order to support the economic strategy's drive to attract knowledge-based companies, it is proposed that the Local Development Framework should secure high quality design in new industry and business developments, whether it is building design, landscaping or the overall layout of space. Poor quality design can detract from the attractiveness of the sites to potential investors, and if unchecked, could soon outweigh any of the advantages that have been secured by public investment on the sites concerned.

The responses supported the approach put forward in the Key Issues Paper. It was also recognised that stronger links should be forged with Universities to help retain graduates in the Region.

- 9.3 Since the publication of the Issues Paper, the Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy has been produced. This document identifies NetPark as a regionally important employment location and allocates some 77 hectares (gross) of development land to be brought forward over the next 15 years.
- 9.4 Furthermore, the Borough has now undertaken a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. This SFRA has identified that a small part of Aycliffe Industrial Park is located within a High Flood Risk Area. It is therefore proposed to delete this area from employment use.
- 9.5 The Borough Council is currently reviewing its employment portfolio in line with Government Best Practice advice. This work will help identify whether the authority has sufficient land for employment uses. If it is proven that there is a surplus of employment land, this study could lead to some land being de-allocated from employment uses. Where such land has not had any previous development, it will be de-allocated completely.

Alternative Options – No. 16

<u>Option</u>	<u>Key Employment Locations</u>	
A	Continue to provide employment land in accordance with current Local Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Protect and promote employment development at Green Lane, Aycliffe Industrial Park and NetPark. Continue to provide employment development throughout Borough in line with review of employment land. De-allocate land where it is proven necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Consider the re-use of employment land for housing or mixed use developments, where there is clear evidence that the land is no longer needed for employment use	<input type="checkbox"/>

Retailing and Town Centres

- 9.6 National guidance seeks to promote vital and viable town centres, and focus development within existing centres in order to strengthen and where appropriate, regenerate them. This approach helps to reduce the need to travel, assists with the economic and social regeneration of the towns and villages, and ensures that retail provision is easily accessible to all members of the community, regardless of whether they have access to a private car.
- 9.7 The Key Issues Paper identified that whilst Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor Town Centres are the most significant centres within the Borough, offering the widest diversity of facilities alongside traditional convenient and comparison retail offer, within the regional hierarchy of town centres, they are district centres. The Borough's other town centres of Shildon and Ferryhill offer a narrower range of day-to-day, top-up and occasional shopping options compared with Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe.
- 9.8 As a result of these factors, the Borough continues to experience significant expenditure leakages to other centres in the County and Region, such as Bishop Auckland, Durham City and Newcastle that offer a wider range of comparison and specialist shops and other facilities. If sustainability objectives are to be met, the LDF will need to set a policy framework that helps improve the diversity and quality of the retail, leisure and other uses in the Town Centres.
- 9.9 The Key Issues Paper also identified a need to review town centre boundaries and the need to address the impact of the growth in hot-food takeaways, not only in terms of the vitality and viability of centres but also the health of residents.

The Key Issues Paper responses identified that existing town centres within the Borough are in a fragile state and there is a need to diversify the uses within them. This could be achieved through the promotion of offices and speciality retail offer. There was support to review existing town centre boundaries and also to identify a new town centre boundary for Sedgefield Village. There was also support to address the growth of hot-food takeaways.

- 9.10 The adopted Local Plan sought to maintain town centres that are attractive, safe and convenient and encourage investment that helps to promote and protect the vitality and viability of the town centres, maintain local centres, improve the environment of the centres, provide good accessibility and encourage the development of vacant sites.
  
- 9.11 This strategy needs to be developed for the next Plan period to ensure that retail and other compatible development (such as office or community business use) is promoted within them to retain their vitality and viability. This could necessitate that the town centres are developed as speciality shopping areas to ensure that they maintain appeal to customers.
  
- 9.12 National guidance highlights that concentrations of single uses, such as restaurants and take-away food outlets can in some instances have a cumulative effect which causes local problems, such as undermining the role of the town centre, anti-social behaviour, crime, and an adverse effect on amenities of nearby residents.
  
- 9.13 As part of the Borough’s LDF production it is anticipated that a threshold of A5 (takeaways) uses will be applied for town centres within the Borough. It is important that the Borough’s town centres have a healthy balance within them. This balance must be preserved in order to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres, and this can only be achieved by ensuring that the prime use class within town centres is A1 (shops), and by limiting the number of A5 (takeaways) units within town centres to an acceptable level.
  
- 9.14 Another issue associated with hot-food takeaways relates to the commonality it is for these premises to include the use of roller shutters on the front of the premises. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the hours of operation are predominantly in the evening. A unit that has roller shutters down during the day does not depict vital and viable town centres, and is no more beneficial to the environment of the street scene than a vacant unit. The Council therefore seeks to exclude these ‘dead frontages’ from existing within town centres throughout the Borough, and it may therefore be appropriate in the future to produce a SPD specifying the types of shutters that will be allowed.

Alternative Options – No. 17

<u>Option</u>	<u>Retailing and Town Centres</u>	
A	Continue current Local Plan policies	<input type="checkbox"/>

- B Promote the diversification of town centres to support office development and other compatible uses
- C Promote diversification whilst imposing limits on hot-food takeaways

Alternative Options – No. 18

- | <u>Option</u> | <u>Town Centres Boundaries</u>  |                          |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|
| A             | Continue with current Local Plan boundaries   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B             | Update and revise existing town centre boundaries   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C             | Update and revise existing town centre boundaries and consider need for new boundary for Sedgefield Village | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Tourism and Arts

9.15 The Key Issues Paper identified that the tourism industry contributes about 10% of the employment opportunities in the North East Region and this figure is rising. Similarly, the tourism sector is developing in the Borough through nationally known facilities such as Locomotion, Shildon and Sedgefield Racecourse. It was identified that the LDF will need to reflect the growing importance of this sector to the Regional and Borough economy and seek to promote these cultural and tourist assets. A key element of developing this sector would also involve the need to promote the arts, especially public art, to provide a sense of place to towns and villages.

The responses supported the need to reflect the growing importance of the tourism and arts sectors as a mechanism to improve the Borough’s image and act as a catalyst for inward investment. There was encouragement to include public art within both new residential and commercial development.

9.16 Since the publication of the Key Issues Paper, the Borough Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Review Group Report into Tourism within the Borough has been completed and agreed by Cabinet. This report has made a series of recommendations, some of which the LDF can help to deliver. The delivery of these recommendations will be dependent upon the development of an Area Tourism Partnership Action Plan. Until this is developed, it will be important for the LDF to provide positive policy guidance.

9.17 Furthermore, the Government has published a good practice guide for planning for tourism. Both documents recognise the links between tourism and economic regeneration, and that tourism has wider regional significances. It is clear that the potential benefits are maximised, there is a need to improve

accessibility to tourist facilities and that the facilities are integrated within their surroundings.

- 9.18 The issues surrounding the provision of public art will be discussed in greater detail in a forthcoming Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.

Alternative Options – No 19

<u>Option</u>	<u>Tourism</u>	
A	Continue with current tourism policies within the Local Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Provide a positive framework for the development of tourism to support economic regeneration in the Borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Provide a positive framework for the development of tourism to support economic regeneration in the Borough, whilst ensuring that there is no adverse environmental harm associated with the new development	<input type="checkbox"/>

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# Item 8

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

28<sup>th</sup> July, 2006

## REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

### Portfolio: Strategic Leadership

#### **REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES**

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 At the Annual Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May the Council accepted the recommendations of Cabinet and established an Audit Committee and in doing so it also agreed that the Independent Remuneration Panel be asked to determine the appropriate level of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the new Committee. The Panel was therefore re-convened to consider the level of those allowances.
- 1.2. Whilst the Panel was meeting the opportunity was taken to invite its views on the levels of Members Basic Allowance and S.R.A.s to be paid in 2007/2008, to review Co-opted Members Allowances and also the S.R.A.s for the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Licensing Committees.
- 1.3. At the request of Spennymoor Town Council, the Panel was also asked to consider a letter and report received from that Council which appeared to be requesting the re-consideration of recommendations made in October 2003 in relation to Parish Allowances.
- 1.4 The Panel met on a number of occasions and were supported at those meetings by Officers of the Council. A significant amount of information was considered at each meeting including comparative information on schemes operated by Councils in County Durham and throughout the country.
- 1.5 The Independent Panel's report including its findings and recommendations, is attached in Appendix 1 for Member's consideration. The Council must have regard to this advice, although it is not binding.

#### **2. Recommendations:**

- a) That the findings and recommendations set out in Section 10 of the Panel's report be considered.
- b) That appropriate publicity be arranged indicating that the Panel's report and recommendations are available for public inspection in accordance with the Members Allowances Regulations.

- c) That should any amendments to the Members Allowances Scheme be agreed, then they be incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

### **3. The Independent Remuneration Panels Recommendations**

- That the SRA's to be paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee should match the allowances paid to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- That the allowances be effective from 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2006 and that the operation of the Committee be monitored and a review of its work be carried out after one year.
- That any increases in Members Allowances in 2007/2008 should mirror increases in officers pay in that year.
- That the Co-opted Members Allowances be increased to £35 per meeting to reflect the time commitment.
- That no changes be made to the level of allowances paid to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Licensing Committees.

### **4. Parish Allowances**

- 4.1 References and recommendations relating to Parish Allowances set out in Section 9 and 10 of the Panel's Report are for the Borough Council's information only. A copy of the Panel's Report has been sent to Spennymoor Town Council for consideration.

### **5. Publicity**

- 5.1 The 2003 Members Allowances Regulations require that as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving a report which sets out the Panel's recommendations, the Council must ensure that copies of the report are available for inspection at its principal office at all reasonable hours. The Council must also, as soon as reasonably practical after it receives the report, publish a notice in at least one newspaper circulating in the area which :

- States that the Council has received recommendations from an independent remuneration panel about its scheme of allowances.
- States the address of the principal office.
- Describes the main features of the Panel's recommendations including the amount of allowances the Panel has recommended should be payable to Members.



- 5.2 The Regulations also require that any member of the public may take copies of the Panel's report on payment of such reasonable fee as the local authority may determine.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 If the recommended S.R.A.'s for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee are agreed this will lead to increases in expenditure of £6,190 in the current financial year which can be found from contingencies. The additional costs in 2007/2008 will be included in the Member's allowances budget.
- 6.2 The effects of any general increases in Member's Allowances in 2007/2008 cannot be assessed at this stage, although any increases in officers pay are likely to be in line with inflation.
- 6.3 The financial implications resulting from the adoption of the proposals for Co-opted Members Allowances are expected to be minimal.

## **7. Consultations**

- 7.1 Many other local authorities were consulted by way of a questionnaire regarding the establishment of an Audit Committee. Some twenty six responses were received which were analysed and the information passed to the Independent Panel to assist in its deliberations.

## **8. Other Material Considerations**

### **8.1 Links to Corporate Objectives/Values**

The consideration of Members Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel reinforces the Corporate Value of being responsible with and accountable for public finances.

### **8.2 Risk Management**

There are no risk management implications linked to this report.

### **8.3 Health and Safety**

There are no health and safety issues raised in this report.

### **8.4 Equality and Diversity**

No implications have been identified.

### **8.5 Legal and Constitutional Implications**

The consideration of Members Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel has been in accordance with the Members Allowances Regulations 2003 which also provide for the subsequent publication of the Panel's report.

If the Panel's report is accepted the changes to the Members Allowances Scheme must be incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

**9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**10. LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Report of the Independent Panel on the Review of Member's Allowances.

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**Background Papers:**

1. Report to Council – 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2006
2. Statutory Instruments 2003 Nos. 1021 and 1022
3. Report of Independent Remuneration Panel – June, 2006

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
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. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





**SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report of  
The Independent Panel on the Review of  
Members Allowances**

**June 2006**

## **REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

### **Review of Members Allowances Scheme**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2006 Sedgefield Borough Council's Cabinet considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Resources on the implications of the establishment of an Audit Committee.
- 1.2 The Cabinet resolved to recommend to the Council that an Audit Committee be established and in doing so, also recommended that the Independent Remuneration Panel be requested to determine the appropriate level of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the new Committee.
- 1.3 At the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2006 the Cabinet's recommendations were accepted and the Audit Committee was established. The Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel were therefore asked to re-convene to consider the levels of allowances to be paid to its Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

#### **2. Constitution of the Panel**

- 2.1 The four Members of the Panel are :-

Professor Roy Boyne	-	Principal, St. Cuthberts Society, University of Durham
Mr. Jim Briggs	-	Vice-Chairman of South West Durham Training and former Chairman of Tolwood Limited, Newton Aycliffe
Mr. Carl Firmin	-	Former Chief Executive of Durham City Council
Mr. Arthur Scott	-	Trustee of Disability North former full-time Union Official with M.S.F.

- 2.2 The Panel met on a number of occasions and were supported at those meetings by officers of the Council.

### **3. Terms of Reference**

3.1 Our Terms of Reference were as follows :-

- To determine the appropriate level of SRA for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee.
- To consider the level of Basic and SRA's to be paid from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2007.
- To consider whether any changes should be made to the allowances paid to Co-opted Members.
- To review the number of meetings and workload of the two Licensing Committees since their establishment in May, 2004.
- To consider a report from Spennymoor Town Council which appears to be seeking the Panel's re-consideration of its recommendations made in October, 2003 in relation to Parish Allowances.

### **4. Written Information Considered**

4.1 We were initially provided with copies of the following documents :-

- A copy of a joint report of the Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Resources considered by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> April recommending the establishment of an Audit Committee at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2006.
- A copy of the Minute of Cabinet agreeing the recommendation and detailing the structure, role and functions of the Audit Committee.

4.2 We subsequently received and considered the following :-

- A Schedule of Members Allowances paid by the seven District Councils in County Durham and Darlington B.C., together with information from four authorities in the south of the country.
- An analysis of twenty-six responses to a questionnaire sent to a number of local authorities seeking information about their Audit Committees and Special Responsibility Allowances paid.
- A letter and report received from Spennymoor Town Council regarding Parish Allowances together with an aide memoire prepared by officers to assist the Panel's consideration.

4.3 We had also retained documents previously supplied to us regarding allowances, regulations and Government guidance.

## **5. Audit Committee**

- 5.1 The research carried out locally had revealed that only Durham City and Easington D.C. had at that time considered the payment of S.R.A.'s to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee. Durham City had decided not to pay an allowance and Easington had still to determine a figure.
- 5.2 The analysis of the twenty-six questionnaire responses was reviewed and the links to and comparisons with S.R.A.s for Overview and Scrutiny, Standards and Licensing Committees noted.
- 5.3 The work of the Audit Committee was further explained, including a review of financial statements such as the Statement of Accounts, the Statement of Internal Control, reports from the Audit Commission and the Committees involvement with Internal Audit and Risk Management arrangements.
- 5.4 We discussed and compared in some detail the role and workloads of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Audit Committee, including the numbers of meetings, noting that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees typically met eight times a year with one or two Special Meetings as necessary. The Audit Committee was to have four meetings per year plus extra meetings for training.
- 5.5 After considering all of the available information we concluded that Audit Committee S.R.A.'s should match the allowances paid to Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen. We acknowledge that there will be fewer Audit Committee programmed meetings, but consider that the level of allowances will reflect the importance of the responsibilities of the Audit Committee and its expected workload.
- 5.6. We wish to emphasise that the comparisons we have made with other levels of S.R.A.s relate to those paid at Sedgefield Borough Council and not those paid by other local authorities.
- 5.7 We further suggest that as the Audit Committee is newly established with significant responsibilities, that its operation be monitored and a review of its work be carried out after one year.

## **6. Allowances for 2007/2008**

- 6.1 In our report in October, 2004 we had recommended that Members Basic Allowance and S.R.A.'S be subject to the same increases in 2005 and 2006 as those awarded to local government officers.



- 6.2 Although we are aware that some local authorities have linked increases to changes to the Retail Price Index or to pension increases, we remain of the opinion that links to officer pay levels are still valid and therefore any increases in Members Allowances should mirror increases in officers pay in 2007/2008.

## **7. Co-opted Member Allowances**

- 7.1 The present allowances paid to Co-opted Members was noted as follows :-

Chairman of Standards Committee	=	£640 pa + £53 per meeting
Other Co-opted Members	=	£10.60 per meeting

Travelling expenses are also payable.

- 7.2 We recall that when Co-optees Allowances were considered by the Panel in October 2003 our recommendations for "other Co-opted Members had been arrived at on the basis that individuals were considered as "lay Members".
- 7.3 In receiving Co-opted Members Allowances, excluding those paid to the Chairman of the Standards Committee which we consider remain appropriate, we took into account the time needed to read papers prior to Committee Meetings, travelling time and the duration of meetings.
- 7.4 The demands on Co-optees time is assessed at approximately three hours per meeting and we therefore recommend that the Co-opted Members Allowances be increased to £35 per meeting to reflect this time commitment.

## **8. Licensing Committees**

- 8.1 Our report dated October, 2004 recommended the payment of S.R.A. allowances to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the two Licensing Committees that matched those paid to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Area Forums.
- 8.2 In doing so, we also recommended that the allowances be reviewed after a period of two years when the workload of the Committees was known and evaluated.

8.3 We have now received further information on the number of Licensing Committee Meetings held, their frequency, duration, content etc., and have decided that our previous recommendation on the level of SRA allowances was sound and that no further changes be recommended to the Council.

## **9. Spennymoor Town Council – Parish Allowances**

9.1 The letter and report received from Spennymoor Town Council which appeared to be seeking the Panel's reconsideration of its recommendations made initially in October, 2003 in relation to Parish Allowances was reviewed.

9.2 The report, which included a comparatively detailed list of activities of a Spennymoor Town Councillor, explained how a notional figure of 20½ hours of work per month per Member of the Town Council had been arrived at, although casework with individual members of the public could not be quantified.

9.3 In considering the Town Council report we recalled that when we had originally considered the payment of allowances to Members at both Borough and Parish level we took account of periods of time referred to in Government and other guidance as being voluntary and undefined.

9.4. It has been generally acknowledged in reviews carried out by other Independent Remuneration Panels where feedback on workload was obtained from Councillors of principal local authorities that the first twenty hours per month should be regarded as a voluntary contribution to the community.

9.5 We are therefore of the opinion that there is no reason to change our previous recommendation on Parish Allowances which was within the guidelines for what was considered an appropriate voluntary contribution of Members time. We would point out that Spennymoor Town Council has the power to pay its Members whatever allowances it so wishes so long as it has taken into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and has publicised the proposed allowances in the local area in accordance with Government regulations.

## **10. Recommendations**

- That the Special Responsibility Allowances to be paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee should match the

allowances paid to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

- That the allowances be effective from 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2006 and that the operation of the Committee be monitored and a review of its work be carried out after one year.
- That any increases in Members Allowances in 2007/2008 should mirror increases in officers pay in that year.
- That the Co-opted Members Allowances be increased to £35 per meeting to reflect the time commitment.
- That no changes be made to the level of allowances paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen to the Licensing Committees
- That the level of Parish Allowances remain as previously recommended and Spennymoor Town Council be informed accordingly.

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