

# COUNCIL

Friday,

23 November 2007

11.00 a.m.

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

# AGENDA and REPORTS



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

**العربية (Arabic)**

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

**বাংলা (Bengali)**

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

**(中文 (繁體字)) (Cantonese)**

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

**हिन्दी (Hindi)**

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

**polski (Polish)**

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

**ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)**

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

**Español (Spanish)**

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

**اردو (Urdu)**

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

## AGENDA

**1. APOLOGIES**

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To notify the 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) **28th September 2007** (Pages 1 - 4)

(b) **26th October 2007** (Pages 5 - 6)

**4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**5. LICENSING ACT 2003 DRAFT STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

Report of Director of Neighbourhood Services. A copy of the Statement of Licensing Policy was circulated with Cabinet agenda for the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007. Please bring your copy to the meeting. (Pages 7 - 10)

**6. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

Report of Chief Executive. (Pages 11 - 18)

**7. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT**

Report of Chief Executive. (Pages 19 - 48)

B.Allen  
Chief Executive

Council Offices  
SPENNYMOOR  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2007

Councillor Mrs. S. J. Iveson (Mayor) and

All other Members of the Council

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**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection in relation to this Agenda and associated papers should contact  
**Liz North 01388 816166 ext 4237 email:enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk**



# Item 3a

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

Friday,  
28 September 2007

Time: 11.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs. S. J. Iveson (Mayor) and

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, W.M. Blenkinsopp, V. Chapman, D. Chaytor, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. P. Crathorne, V. Crosby, Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, P. Gittins J.P., Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, G.C. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh, Mrs. S. Haigh, Mrs. I. Hewitson, J.E. Higgin, A. Hodgson, T. Hogan, Mrs. L. Hovvels, J.G. Huntington, Ms. I. Jackson, J.M. Khan, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, C. Nelson, D.A. Newell, B.M. Ord, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, A. Smith, B. Stephens, K. Thompson, T. Ward, W. Waters and Mrs E. M. Wood

**Apologies:** Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, Mrs. D. Bowman, T. Brimm, D.R. Brown, J. Burton, D.M. Hancock, G.M.R. Howe, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson, Mrs. C. Potts, J. Robinson J.P, A. Warburton and J. Wayman J.P

**C.47/07            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**C.48/07            MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

**C.49/07            MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported that since the last meeting she had attended 39 functions and events including a Celebration of Sedgefield "Awards for Sensational Youth and Kool Kash 2007" at Ferryhill Leisure Centre, Whickham Clavering Rotary Club Meeting a Preview Evening of Railart at Locomotion, Shildon and Great Aycliffe and Peterlee Shows.

She had also met with representatives of Chinese Government Women's Federation and attended the Golf Tournament Day at Knotty Hill Golf Club as well as Sedgefield Music Festival's World Spoon Championships.

In addition the Mayor reported she had attended a number of civic functions and events including the Civic Mass and Service at St. Mary's Church, Newton Aycliffe. She had also attended four diamond weddings and seven golden wedding anniversary celebrations.

**C.50/07            STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS (FOR YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2007)**

Consideration was given to a report regarding the Audit Commission's audit of the 2006/07 Annual Statement of Accounts. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Paul Hepple from the Audit Commission was in attendance to present the report.

It was noted that an unqualified audit opinion would be issued. There were no material changes applied to the draft Statement of Accounts, however, there were some non-material amendments which needed to be approved although they had no impact on the financial standing of the Authority. Details of the amendments were outlined at the meeting.

It was noted that the report had been considered by Audit Committee earlier that day and the report had been received.

*RESOLVED : That the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2007 as amended be approved.*

**C.51/07**

**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

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

It was explained that the Electoral Administration Act 2006 required that the Council complete the review of polling districts and polling places by the end of 2007 and at least every four years thereafter.

The report outlined the review process, the work carried out to date and made recommendations regarding polling district boundaries and polling places.

Members were informed that following publication of notice of the review no requests had been received for polling districts boundaries to be changed. It was therefore being recommended that all existing polling district boundaries be approved.

These proposals needed to proceed to consultation stage to obtain representations on the proposals. Council was required to consult with Returning Officers for each of the parliamentary constituencies within the Borough area. Notices would be published inviting comments from electors and other stakeholders. Final proposals on the polling districts and polling places would be produced after taking into consideration representations and would be reported to the next meeting of Council.

- RESOLVED :*
- 1. That the existing polling district boundaries remain unchanged.*
  - 2. That the polling places indicated on the schedule detailed in Appendix A be approved.*
  - 3. That the Acting Returning Officer for the Sedgefield and Bishop Auckland Parliamentary constituencies be consulted on the proposals.*
  - 4. That the proposals be given appropriate publicity in accordance with the legislation.*

5. *The results of the review be also applied to Local Government Polling Districts and places.*

**C.52/07**

**REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive (for copy see file of Minutes) regarding representation on outside organisations.

It was explained that since the Annual Meeting of Council held on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 when appointments had been made to a number of outside organisations resignations had been received from representatives on the following organisations and nominations were therefore sought for the resulting vacancies :-

- Kool Kash Management Board
- County Durham e-Government Partnership Joint Committee

In addition it was explained that the Council had been invited to appoint a representative to a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working Group relating to a Review associated with the Childrens Trust looking at children and young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEETS).

The purpose of this report was therefore to consider representation on those outside organisation.

- RECOMMENDED :*
1. *That Councillor Mrs. L. Hovvels be appointed to the Kool Kash Management Board,*
  2. *That Councillor J.M. Khan be appointed to the County Durham e-Government Partnership Joint Committee.*
  3. *That Councillor Mrs. P. Crathorne be appointed to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working Group (NEETS).*

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

**C.53/07**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES ESTABLISHMENT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhood Services (for copy see file of Minutes) regarding a series of establishment changes within the Neighbourhood Services Department.

*RESOLVED : That the report be received and the recommendations contained therein 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 Liz North 01388 816166 ext 4237 email:[enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk)



# Item 3b

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

Friday,  
26 October 2007

Time: 11.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs. S. J. Iveson (Mayor) and

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, B.F. Avery J.P, W.M. Blenkinsopp, D.R. Brown, V. Chapman, D. Chaytor, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. P. Crathorne, V. Crosby, Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, P. Gittins J.P., Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, G.C. Gray, B. Haigh, Mrs. S. Haigh, Mrs. I. Hewitson, J.E. Higgin, A. Hodgson, Mrs. L. Hovvels, J.G. Huntington, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson, J.M. Khan, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, C. Nelson, D.A. Newell, B.M. Ord, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. C. Potts, J. Robinson J.P, A. Smith, B. Stephens, K. Thompson, T. Ward, W. Waters and Mrs E. M. Wood

**Apologies:** Councillors Mrs. D. Bowman, T. Brimm, Mrs. J. Gray, D.M. Hancock, T. Hogan, G.M.R. Howe, Ms. I. Jackson, A. Warburton and J. Wayman J.P

**C.54/07            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
No declarations of interest were received.

**MINUTES SILENCE**  
A minutes silence was held as a mark of respect for former Councillor G. Ferguson who had recently died.

**C.55/07            UPDATING THE STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL STUDY**  
Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing (for copy see file of Minutes) relating to updating the Stock Options Appraisal Study.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and the Chief Executive outlined the background and reasons for updating the Appraisal Study.

Members were reminded that Council had, in accordance with Government requirements, undertaken a Stock Options Appraisal Study on future investment and management of its housing stock in 2003. The preferred option as a result of the study was to seek transfer of the ownership of the Council stock to a registered social landlord. This option had been subjected to a tenants vote in July 2005 which resulted in the Council retaining its housing stock.

On 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2007 Cabinet had considered a report recommending revisiting the strategic options to consider how the future investment needs of its housing stock could be met whilst ensuring its ongoing effective

management. The study had been set within the context of national and local policy changes over the last two years and built on much of the intelligence available to the Council through the continuous updating of its information base around its housing stock and the wider needs of the community.

The report outlined the preferred option for the future management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock based on the following three key drivers :-

- The outcome of future investment needs of the housing stock set against the available resources over the next 5 years.
- The findings of the Council's Stock Options Appraisal Group.
- The findings of survey of all the Council tenants.

The other elements set out in the Stock Options Appraisal Guidance issued by the Government in 2003 had been considered as part of the research to support the outcome of the study.

*RESOLVED : That Large Scale Voluntary Transfer be pursued as the preferred option for the future ownership and management of the Council's housing stock subject to further consultation with relevant stakeholders.*

#### **C.56/07**

#### **LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER - CHOICE OF LANDLORD**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing (for copy see file of Minutes) regarding the preferred choice of landlord to accept the Council's housing stock following a successful ballot of tenants.

It was explained that on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2007 Cabinet considered a report recommending revisiting the strategic options to consider the future investment needs of its housing stock and its ongoing effective management. The approach adopted was to update the Stock Options Appraisal Study completed in 2003.

Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2007 had agreed to recommend to Council that the preferred option for the future ownership and management of the Council's housing stock was to seek its Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) to a Register Social Landlord.

*RESOLVED : That a new standalone Registered Social Landlord for Sedgefield Borough be established as the preferred choice of landlord for the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the Council's housing stock.*

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#### **ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

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# Item 5

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

23rd NOVEMBER 2007

## REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

### PORTFOLIO – Safer Communities

### LICENSING ACT 2003 DRAFT STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.

#### KEY CONTENT

The Licensing Act 2003 which came into force in November 2005 transferred responsibility for Liquor Licensing to Local Authorities and replaced existing legislation relating to the licensing of entertainment and provision of late night refreshment.

The Licensing Act 2003 requires the Licensing Authority to prepare and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy every 3 years.

The Statement of Licensing Policy details how the local authority intends to approach its various licensing duties when considering any application.

The current policy has recently been reviewed and redrafted and has taken into account recent changes in the Government Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act.

The Policy must be approved by Council and be published by the 7th January 2008.

Following the completion of the statutory consultation process the draft Policy was considered by Licensing Committee 2 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October when it was resolved that the draft Statement of Licensing Policy be submitted to Cabinet for information and then to Council for approval on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007.

During the consultation process written comments relating to the policy were received from the following:

British Beer and Pub Association  
Sedgefield Town Council  
County Durham Primary Care Trust

The comments from each of the above sources were taken into account when redrafting the policy. The redrafted Statement of Licensing Policy was circulated with Cabinet agenda for 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no resource implications associated with this Policy. The fees for licences and other permissions are set by Government.

## **CONSULTATION**

The Licensing Act 2003 requires that the following are consulted with regard to the policy:

- The Chief Officer of Police
- The Fire Authority
- The Head of Environmental Services with regard to health and safety and public nuisance for Sedgefield Borough Council.
- The Head of Planning Services Sedgefield Borough Council.
- Durham County Council with regard to Trading Standards and Safeguarding Children.
- Persons/bodies representative of local holders of premises licences
- Persons/bodies representative of local holders of club premises certificates
- Persons/bodies representative of local holders of personal licences
- Persons/bodies representative of businesses and residents in its area.

A copy of the Policy was also placed on the Council's website and everyone holding either a premises licence, club premises certificate or a personal licence was sent a letter informing them of the consultation process. An electronic copy of the policy was also sent to all Council members and the Clerks of all Town and Parish Councils within the Borough.

The consultation process took place between the 1<sup>st</sup> of August and the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007. Comments received during that period were taken into account when redrafting the Policy.

## **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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

The Council has adopted the Community Strategy's ambitions to creating a healthy, prosperous, attractive borough with strong communities and recognises the importance of linking its future strategic objectives to these aims together with priorities that relate to community needs and aspirations. The licensing of premises throughout the Borough enables the Authority to have greater influence in achieving the above aims and objectives.

### **Risk Management**

No risks have been identified.

### Health & Safety

No implications have been identified.

### Equality & Diversity

Full account has been taken of the Borough Council's obligation to promote equality and diversity.

### Legal & Constitutional

The approval and publication of a Statement of Licensing Policy is a statutory requirement.

### Information Communication Technology

There are no specific issues to report.

### Sustainability

No material considerations have been identified.

### Human Rights

In carrying out its Licensing functions the licensing authority will have regard to the Human Rights Act and in particular Article 6 Right to a Fair Hearing and Article 1 of the first protocol Protection of property. Everyone is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his or her possessions (including for example the possession of a licence).

### Social Inclusion

There are no Social Inclusion issues.

### Procurement

No implications have been identified

Contact Officer: Neil Smalley  
Telephone No: 01388 816166 Ext. 4454  
E-mail address: [nsmalley@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:nsmalley@sedgefield.gov.uk)

Ward(s)  
All wards in the Borough

Key Decision Validation  
Affects 2 or more wards.

### Background Papers

The Licensing Act 2003  
Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003.  
Written responses from British Beer and Pub Association  
County Durham Primary Care Trust, Sedgefield Town Council.

## Examination by Statutory Officers

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

# Item 6

ITEM NO

REPORT TO COUNCIL

23<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## Portfolio: Strategic Leadership

### Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires the Council to complete a review of polling districts and polling places by the end of 2007 and at least every four years thereafter. This report concludes the review and recommends the approval of the Borough of Sedgefield Parliamentary Polling District Order 2007.

#### 2. Recommendations

- i) That the Council approves the Borough of Sedgefield Parliamentary Polling District Order 2007.
- ii) That the 2007 Order be applied to local government polling districts and places.
- iii) That the final proposals be given publicity in accordance with the legislation.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 Local authorities are required to divide their administrative area into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections and to designate polling places for these polling districts, and to keep these under review.
- 3.2 By conducting this statutory review of polling districts and places, local authorities must demonstrate that they have, as far as is practicable, met the criteria set out in the legislation.
- 3.3 Relevant authorities must: -

- a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
  - b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- 3.4 In an ideal world electoral administrators would have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for the electors in the area. In practice, however, this is not always the case and there may be little choice available. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal then every reasonable adjustment is undertaken to provide access for all electors.

#### **4. The Review Process**

- 4.1 The first stage of the review process was reported to Council on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Council approved proposals for new polling district and polling place arrangements. These were advertised in accordance with the legislation and the Acting Returning Officers of Sedgefield and Bishop Auckland Constituencies were consulted.
- 4.2 Apart from two suggested alternatives (Borough Council Offices instead of Grouped Accommodation, Mount Pleasant Court and Silverdale House, Newton Aycliffe instead of Southerne Club, Newton Aycliffe), which have been incorporated into the polling district order, no adverse comments on the Council's proposals have been received. It is suggested that the revised proposals be approved and incorporated into the 2007 polling district order as they provide electors with reasonable facilities for voting and so far as is reasonable and practicable are accessible to all electors including the disabled. The polling places are indicated on the schedule in Appendix A.
- 4.3 Polling districts and places for local government elections are not automatically part of this review under the 2006 Act. However polling districts and places for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same so it is recommended that the results of this review be applied to local government polling districts and places also.

#### **5. Resource Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial issues arising directly from this report.



**6. Consultations**

- 6.1 Consultations have been carried out with the A.R.Os. for the two parliamentary constituencies, and appropriate notices published in accordance with the legislation.

**7. Links to Corporate Aims and Objectives.**

- 7.1 The review of polling districts and polling places supports the corporate aim of increasing democracy and inclusion and the corporate objective of encouraging greater participation in local democracy.

**8. Equality and Diversity**

- 8.1 Publication of the Notice of the review gave all disabled groups the opportunity to submit representations regarding polling districts and places and the Council's Access Officer visited polling places and made comment on accessibility for disabled persons.

**9. Risk Management**

- 9.1 If the Council did not carry out the review of polling districts and polling places then it would not be complying with the legislation and could be the subject of a complaint to the Electoral Commission by an individual or organization regarding that non-compliance.
- 9.2 The Electoral Commission could then carry out the review itself and impose its proposals on the Council.

**10. Health and Safety**

- 10.1 No additional implications have been identified.

**11. Legal and Constitutional**

- 11.1 No legal or constitutional implications have been identified other than those dealt with in the report.

**Contact Officer:** John Stubbs  
**Telephone Number:** (01388) 816166 Ext. 4304  
**Email address:** [istubbs@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:istubbs@sedgefield.gov.uk)  
**Ward(s)**

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**Background Papers**

Electoral Administration Act 2006  
Representation of the People Act 1983  
Electoral Commission Circular EC28/2007

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

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

**THE BOROUGH OF SEDGEFIELD PARLIAMENTARY POLLING DISTRICTS ORDER**  
**2007**

**SCHEDULE 2**

<b><u>Polling District</u></b>	<b><u>Polling Place (Polling Station)</u></b>
CA	Catholic Club, Dean Road, Ferryhill
CB/CC	St. Luke's Parish Centre, Church Lane, Ferryhill
CD	Grouped Accommodation Cleves Cross Grange, Ferryhill
CE	Ferryhill Leisure Centre, Lambton Road, Ferryhill
CF	Literary Institute & Community Centre, Dean Bank, Ferryhill
CG	Holy Trinity Church Hall, West Cornforth
CI	Ferryhill Station (Mainsforth Community Association/Royal British Legion Club)
CJ	Catholic Club, Sacred Heart Community Centre, Brooklyn Road, Chilton
CK	Rosewood Grange, Chilton
CL	Village Hall, Bishop Middleham
CM	Community Centre, Butterwick Road, Fishburn
CN	Community Centre, Rear Peel Avenue, Trimdon Colliery
CO	Trimdon Village (Tremeduna Grange/Village Hall)
CP	Community Centre, Trimdon Grange
CQ1	Eden Arms, Rushyford
CQ3	Woodham Village (Agnew Community Association/Woodham Village Community Centre)
CR/CS	Village Hall, Mordon
CT	Parish Hall, Front Street, Sedgefield
DA	Grouped Accommodation, West Close, Shildon
DB	Sunnydale Leisure Centre, Middridge Lane, Shildon

DC	Area of Polling District (Civic Hall/Garbutt Close G.A.)
DD	Jubilee Fields Community Centre, Jubilee Road, Shildon
DE	Portable Office, Dalton Cottages, Shildon
DF	Grouped Accommodation, Harrison Close, Shildon
DG/DH	Timothy Hackworth Primary School, Byerley Road, Shildon
DI	St. Marks Church, Main Road, Eldon
DJ	Village Hall, Middridge
DK	Greenfield Meeting Hall, Newton Aycliffe
DL	Byerley Park Co.J.M.I. School, Newton Aycliffe
DM	Methodist Church, Burnhill Way, Newton Aycliffe
DN	Scout HQ, Bluebell Way, Newton Aycliffe
ES	Village Hall, Aycliffe Village
ET	Methodist Church Hall, Greville Way, Newton Aycliffe
EU	Grouped Accommodation, Simpasture Court, Newton Aycliffe
EV	Shafto, Newton Aycliffe. (Pavilion St. Oswald's Park/Sugar Hill Primary School/Vane road Primary School)
EW	St. Mary's RC Primary School, Central Avenue, Newton Aycliffe
EX1	St. Joseph's RC Primary School, Garburn Place, Newton Aycliffe
EX2/EX3	Stephenson Way Primary School, Newton Aycliffe
EX2A	Silverdale House, Silverdale Place, Newton Aycliffe.
EY	Community Hall, School Aycliffe

FA	Tudhoe (St. David's Church Hall/Tudhoe Community Centre)
FB	Sedgefield Borough Council, Green Lane, Spennymoor
FC	Tudhoe Grange, Spennymoor (Hartley Terrace G.A./King William Grange/Day Centre)
FD	Youth and Community Centre, Rushmoor, Spennymoor
FE1	Spennymoor Town Centre/Greenways Estate (Town Hall/Ox Close Nursery School)
FE2	Ox Close Nursery School, Spennymoor
FF	St. Paul's Church Hall, Clyde Terrace, Spennymoor
FG	Middlestone Moor (Community Centre/Portable Office/Grayson Grange)
FH	Community Centre, Kirk Merrington
FI	Parish Hall, Byers Green

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# Item 7

**REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**23 NOVEMBER 2007**

**REPORT OF CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE**

## **ANNUAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REPORT 2007**

### **SUMMARY**

This report presents the Annual Scrutiny Report to Members for approval.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1 That the Annual Scrutiny Report be approved.

### **DETAIL**

In accordance with Paragraph 6.03 (c) of Part 2 of the Council's Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must report Annually to Council detailing their work over the previous year, and in relation to future work programmes and working methods.

The Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2007 is attached in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution.

### **Financial Implications**

None associated directly with this report.

### **Consultation**

None associated directly with this report.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Implications**

Report relates directly to Overview and Scrutiny.

**Contact Officer:** J. Slee  
**Scrutiny Support Officer**  
**Telephone No:** (01388) 816166 ext. 4362  
**E-mail Address:** [jslee@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:jslee@sedgefield.gov.uk)

**Ward(s)** Not Ward Specific

### **Background Papers**

None

## 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

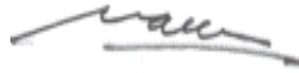




**ANNUAL  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
REPORT  
2007**



I am particularly grateful for the input from our communities and partner organisations, without which our scrutiny reviews would be incomplete.



Brian Allen  
Chief Executive

**Overview & Scrutiny plays a central role in Sedgefield Borough Council. It provides a means of holding the Cabinet to account and reviews policies and services on behalf of the public. It therefore has an essential role in making sure the Council continues to improve.**

Overview and scrutiny has been proactive in looking at issues that matter to local people. A number of major reviews have taken place during 2006/07 which will lead to improvements in key areas.

It was particularly pleasing to see that an evaluation conducted by the Improvement & Development Agency concluded *“it is very clear that Sedgefield Borough Council has made real progress in developing overview and scrutiny and that Members and Officers have a shared commitment to the continuous improvement of the function”*. The evaluation has enabled further improvements to be made, thus demonstrating the Council’s commitment to continuous improvement.

I am thankful to all those who have been involved in the work of overview and scrutiny, current and former members of the Council, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Committees and Review Groups and officers of the Council who have supported the processes.

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# Introduction by Chairmen of Overview & Scrutiny Committees

**We are pleased to introduce Sedgefield Borough Council's Annual Scrutiny Report for 2006/07, which sets out in some detail what Overview & Scrutiny Committees have been doing over the last year and also sets the scene for 2007/08.**

2006/07 has been a demanding period for all involved with Overview & Scrutiny. We have continued to keep a watching brief on key decisions made by the Cabinet, contributed to the development of a number of new policies in significant areas and have scrutinised the performance of the Council's services.

We have also monitored the implementation of agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews and it has been particularly satisfying to see the impact these have made.

A number of Scrutiny Reviews were completed during 2006/07 covering many important issues for the Council and local people. The Cabinet has considered the recommendations made by each Review Group and agreed all but a few. We look forward to seeing the fruits of our labours as they are implemented and the plans monitored by the relevant Committees.

The overview and scrutiny function itself has been subject to an evaluation by the Improvement and Development Agency. We feel that it is essential to open our own processes to examination, not just because of the positive benefits of the exercise, but also that it demonstrates that we genuinely believe in the concept of scrutiny in its widest meaning. The fact that the outcome of the evaluation was complimentary was heartening, but more importantly it gave us a number of recommendations that have helped us improve still further.

We cannot mention the success of scrutiny without thanking those who have contributed to this achievement. We are truly grateful to the former Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees for leading the way and for current and former elected Members, co-opted members and Scrutiny Support Officers for their efforts and commitment. We would also like to express our gratitude to our partner organisations and members of the public who have participated in the reviews and scrutiny meetings.

With the reorganisation of local government within County Durham on the horizon there are many uncertainties for our communities. We will however continue to work to ensure that service standards remain high. We are also keen to ensure that the needs, priorities and concerns of residents are a prominent part of our focus in the forthcoming year and in the run up to the formation of a unitary council.



**Councillor  
A. Gray**

Chairman of  
Strategic Leadership  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee



**Councillor  
J. E. Higgin**

Chairman of Healthy Borough  
with Strong Communities  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee



**Councillor  
G.C. Gray**

Chairman of  
Prosperous and Attractive  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

# Section 1: What Is Overview & Scrutiny?



The Improvement & Development Agency (I&DeA) defines scrutiny as ‘the mechanism by which public accountability is exercised. Councils make decisions on behalf of the public and spend public money. They make decisions about the future management of public services that affect the daily lives of constituents. Public scrutiny is what representation really means – holding executives to account for decisions taken on behalf of the public and in the public interest’.

In May 2002 Sedgefield changed the way it makes decisions in accordance with the Government’s modernising agenda for local government. The aim was to make local government, and particularly its decision-making processes, more open and accountable to the people it serves.

## Decision-making processes in Sedgefield Borough Council

The Borough Council formally introduced executive arrangements based on a Leader and Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2002. This was done following the introduction of a pilot Leader and Cabinet scheme and extensive consultation with local people that concluded with a Mayoral referendum.

The Council has 50 Councillors who are democratically elected by and accountable to residents of their wards. The role of all elected members is to develop strong links with their wards and maintain regular contact with the people and communities they serve and represent.

### Council

a meeting of all councillors, is responsible for determining the composition, membership and terms of reference of the Cabinet, committees, and other bodies.

Council determines schemes of delegation and has responsibility for approving the overall policy framework and for setting Council Tax and related budgets.

Meetings of Council are chaired by the Mayor. To maintain independence, the Mayor is not a member of Cabinet or an Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### Cabinet

is responsible for ensuring that the Council achieves its ambitions within budgets and is comprised of the Leader of the Council, who chairs meetings, and 8 other Cabinet members.

Cabinet members are responsible for a specific portfolio of services/functions which they lead at a political level.

Portfolios have recently been aligned to the Council’s Corporate Ambitions to ensure clear lines of responsibility at a political level. Responsibilities are set out in Table 1.

### Overview and Scrutiny Committees

support the work of Cabinet and Council as a whole and monitor the decisions of Cabinet.

They can ‘call-in’ key decisions of Cabinet before they are implemented to consider whether it was appropriate. They can recommend the Cabinet reconsider a key decision if they think it was inappropriate.

They can also establish review groups to examine issues in detail in order to improve services or to tackle a problem being experienced within Sedgefield Borough.

Three Overview & Scrutiny Committees have been established by the Council. They are aligned to the Council's ambitions and reflect Cabinet portfolios. Responsibilities are set out in more detail in Table 1 below.

*Table 1 – Overview & Scrutiny Committee Responsibilities*

Corporate Ambition	Portfolio	Key Responsibilities	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
<b>Strategic Leadership</b>	<b>Leader</b>	• <b>Resource Management</b>	<b>Strategic Leadership</b>
		• <b>Corporate Planning</b>	
		• <b>Community Engagement</b>	
		• <b>Governance</b>	
<b>Healthy Borough</b>	<b>Community Health</b>	• <b>Public Health</b>	<b>Healthy Borough with Strong Communities</b>
		• <b>Community Care</b>	
	<b>Leisure &amp; Culture</b>	• <b>Leisure</b>	
		• <b>Culture</b>	
<b>Strong Communities</b>	<b>Housing</b>	• <b>Strategic Housing</b>	<b>Healthy Borough with Strong Communities</b>
		• <b>Landlord Functions</b>	
	<b>Safer Communities</b>	• <b>Antisocial Behaviour</b>	
		• <b>Crime and Disorder</b>	
<b>Prosperous Borough</b>	<b>Learning &amp; Employment</b>	• <b>Economic Development</b>	<b>Prosperous and Attractive Borough</b>
		• <b>Education and Lifelong Learning</b>	
	<b>Social Regeneration &amp; Partnership</b>	• <b>Social Regeneration</b>	
		• <b>Social Inclusion</b>	
<b>Attractive Borough</b>	<b>Environment</b>	• <b>Cleaner, Greener Issues</b>	<b>Prosperous and Attractive Borough</b>
		• <b>Environmental Management</b>	
	<b>Planning &amp; Development</b>	• <b>Planning Policy</b>	
		• <b>Planning Delivery</b>	

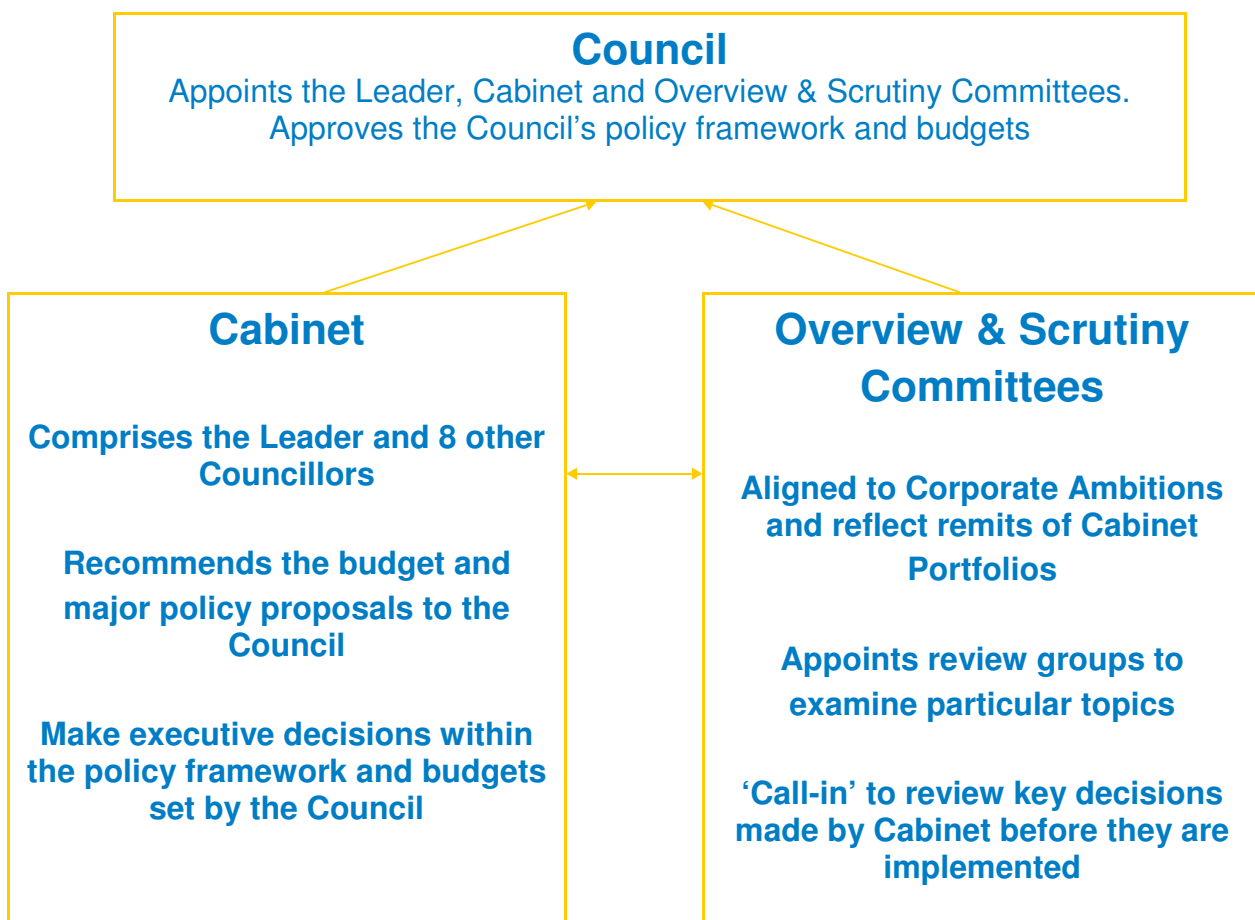
Apart from the Mayor, councillors who are not members of Cabinet, sit on an Overview & Scrutiny Committee or the Audit Committee. Two Council tenants' representatives have been co-opted onto the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In addition during 2007/08, the Prosperous & Attractive Borough Overview & Scrutiny Committee are to co-opt two members to its Committee.

The three committees have the potential to review, or scrutinise, the full range of Council services and activities. This can be done by the committees themselves or by smaller topic-based Review Groups.

In addition, the work of external agencies and bodies may also be examined. Durham County Council is responsible for carrying out the overview and scrutiny function relating to local health service provision. Two councillors are appointed to the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee to represent the Borough and its residents. Minutes of that committee are reported to the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information and comment.

A diagram showing the roles and relationship of Council, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Roles and Relationship of Council, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny



Procedures in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny process are contained in the Council's Constitution and are explained in full in the Council's published "Overview and Scrutiny Guide".

## Section 2: What Have We Done? Achievements

Last year's Annual Report set out an ambitious programme for each Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The following section details the work which has been undertaken by the Committees during this period. Particular attention is drawn to the following achievements which are presented in accordance with the four main aspects of Overview and Scrutiny.

- Holding the Executive to Account
- Policy Development and Review
- Performance Review and Service Improvement
- External Scrutiny

### Holding the Executive to Account

According to the Centre for Public Scrutiny (Guidance for District Councils), holding the executive to account through scrutinising their activities is self-evidently a vital component of the overview & scrutiny function. It goes on to say that it is important to remember that scrutiny is about more than call-in and that there are many other ways in which committees can scrutinise the work of the executive.

The I&DeA recognise that this role involves scrutinising executive decisions at a number of different stages of the decision making process: before decisions are made; before they are implemented; and after they are implemented. This role is largely interpreted as the 'scrutiny' side of the overview & scrutiny role.

The following methods have been identified for holding the executive to account

#### *Examining the Forward Plan*

The Leader of Cabinet prepares a Forward Plan on a monthly basis which lists the key decisions that are likely to be taken in the following four months.

The Forward Plan includes a description of the decisions to be made, when they will be taken and by whom, details of proposed consultation and documentation which will be taken into consideration.

The Forward Plan is published two weeks before the start of the period covered. It is published on the Council's website and also distributed to all Members of the Council for their information. Members of Overview & Scrutiny Committees use this information to keep abreast of planned key decisions and may also use it to inform their Committee's work programme.

The Forward Plan is also considered at the Scrutiny Chairs meetings which are held at the end of each cycle of Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings to co-ordinate and help plan future scrutiny activities.

Cabinet agendas are published at least 5 clear days before a meeting. As well as being available for public inspection at the Council Offices they are also published on the Council's website.

Agendas are issued to both Cabinet and Non-Cabinet Members at the same time. Minutes of Cabinet meetings are normally published within 2 working days of the meeting being held. Minutes are available for public inspection, published on the Council's website and distributed to all Members of the Council within this timescale.

### ***Calling-in Decisions***

The Call-in procedure allows Members of the appropriate Overview & Scrutiny Committee to request the Cabinet to reconsider a key decision they believe to be contrary to the Council's decision making principles (Article 14 of the Constitution) which are:-

- a) proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome);
- b) due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers;
- c) respect for human rights;
- d) a presumption in favour of openness;
- e) clarity of aims and desired outcomes;
- f) an explanation of what options have been considered and giving reasons for decisions.

3 Members of an appropriate Overview & Scrutiny Committee can call-in a key decision within 5 days of it being published.

During 2006/07 municipal year no key decisions were called-in.

### ***Cabinet Member Attendance at Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meetings***

Members have raised concerns about a number of issues which have resulted in the appropriate Cabinet Member attending a Committee meeting to respond to Overview and Scrutiny Committee's concerns.

There have been a total of 22 attendances by Cabinet Members at meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2006/07 to respond and provide information to the Committee on CCTV, Budgets and Recycling Services .

### ***Scrutiny of Budget Proposals***

The procedure for developing the budget is detailed in Part 4 C of the Council's Constitution.

Overview & Scrutiny Committees may consider the Cabinet's initial budget proposals and comment on them within a 4 week consultation period.

As Overview & Scrutiny Committees have responsibility for determining their own work programme it is open for them to consider and comment prior to the end of the consultation period.



The procedure states that ‘the Cabinet will take any response from an Overview & Scrutiny Committee into account in drawing up firm proposals for submission to the Council.’ The report will reflect the comments made by consultees and the Cabinet’s response.

During 2006/07 all Overview & Scrutiny Committees made arrangements to hold a special meeting during the consultation period in order to consider the Cabinet’s initial budget proposals relating to their respective portfolio areas. Following detailed consideration all 3 Overview & Scrutiny Committees gave support to the Cabinet’s initial budget proposals.

## **Policy Development and Review**

***“Council policies should reflect the community plan and provide an adequate framework to ensure community well-being. It is the role of scrutiny to maintain an overview of policies as they are developed and reviewed. Policy development involves shaping the formulation of key policies, by examining alternative options against needs, priorities and resources”.***  
**(I&DeA, A Councillor’s Guide 2004/05).**

Overview & Scrutiny Committees have managed their own work programmes to enable a small number of high quality reviews to be undertaken that make a real difference to the work of the Authority, rather than high numbers of reviews on more minor issues.

Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee has therefore identified and undertaken two reviews during 2006/07. In each case the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee has established a Review Group, comprising of 5-6 Members, to undertake the review.

The following reviews have been completed during 2006/07:-

- **Review of the Council’s Community Newspaper Inform**
- **Review of Sickness Management**
- **Provision of Affordable Housing**
- **Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme**
- **Future Recycling Services**
- **The Council’s Contribution to Reducing Economic Inactivity (Increasing Employability)**

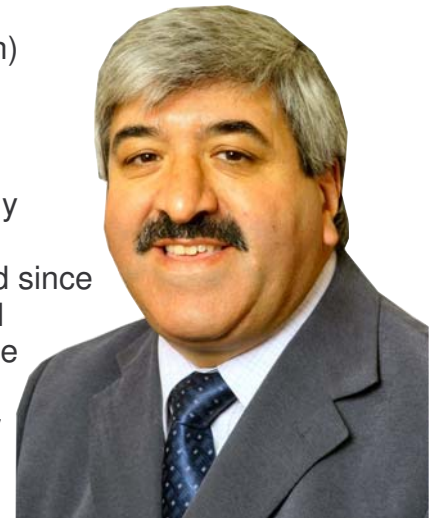
The Chairmen of these Review Groups have prepared the following summaries.

# Review of Inform the Council's Community Newspaper

**Members of the Review Group:** Councillors J.M. Khan (Chairman) and Councillors A. Gray, J.G. Huntington, B. Meek and J.M. Smith

## Rationale

The Council produces a community newspaper, Inform, on a monthly basis as a means of promoting the Council and keeping the public informed about Council related activities. Inform has been produced since 1975. Initially produced on a quarterly basis and has been produced monthly since 1991. The objectives of the Review are to examine the Council's Community Magazine Inform and assess that it is fulfilling its purpose, is comparable to Best Practice examples and to identify areas for improvement.



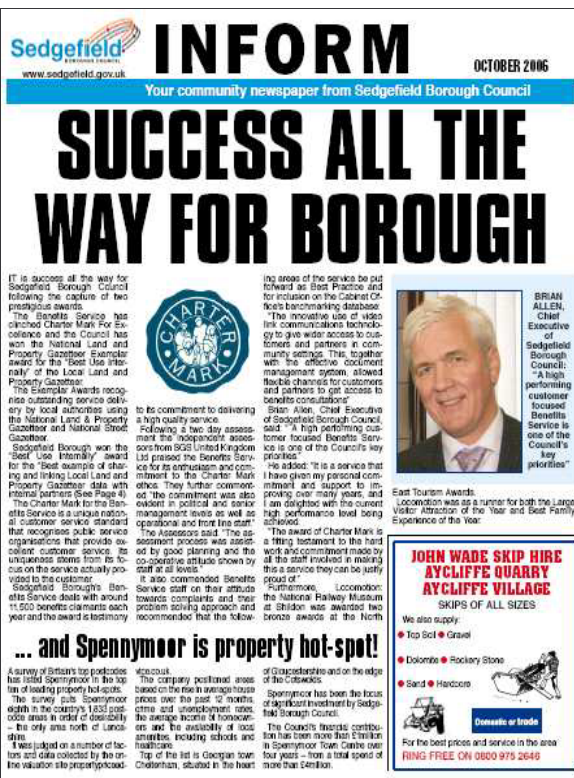
**Councillor J. M. Khan**  
Chairman of the Review Group

## Links to Corporate Aims

The Review contributes to towards the Council's Corporate Value of engaging local communities. The objectives of the Review are to examine the Council's Community Magazine Inform and assess that it is fulfilling its purpose, is comparable to Best Practice examples and to identify areas for improvement.

## Findings and Recommendations

The Review Group gathered its evidence through meetings and presentations with officers and carrying out a Satisfaction Survey with Residents, Sedgefield Borough Council Members and Chief Officers to obtain their views and opinions of Inform. An exercise was also carried out by the Review Group to compare Inform with copies of Local Authority Newspapers and Magazines that have received accreditations and examples from a selection of North East Councils.



## Is Inform fulfilling its purpose?

The Review Group concludes that Inform fulfils its purpose of highlighting Council issues, success stories and informing residents of what is happening within the Borough. As it is published on a monthly basis, information contained within it is timely and relevant. Inform also contributes to the Council's commitment to the core actions of the Local Government Association Reputation Initiative.

This view has been supported by information received and survey findings from Officers of the Council and Residents.

## Comparisons with Best Practice Examples

When compared to Best Practice examples of Council Newspapers and Magazines identified, the Review Group agreed that Inform compares favourably and recommended that the existing format of Inform should therefore be retained. The Review Group did recommend that advertising should also be retained at its existing level to enable Inform to focus on providing information on Council news stories and events.

The Review Group noted that the budget had remained the same for 2006/07 from 2005/06 and that the size of Inform had increased from 8 to 16 pages and recommended that appropriate budget provision be made to support a 16-page publication.

### **Improvements to Inform**

Through information received and survey findings, the Review Group identified areas for further improvement. This included reviewing procedures for identifying stories to be included within Inform, re-designing the Masthead on the front page of Inform and enabling Inform to be available to download from the Home page of the Council's website.

### **Cabinet's Response**

The Review Group's report was considered by its parent committee, Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1, who supported the recommendations and forwarded it to Cabinet for consideration. Cabinet subsequently agreed all ten recommendations from the Review Group. An Action Plan to implement recommendations, which identifies responsibilities and timescales, has been agreed.

### **Follow Up**

The Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the Action Plan, which will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

### **Councillor J.M. Khan**

Chairman of the Review Group

## **Review of Sickness Management**

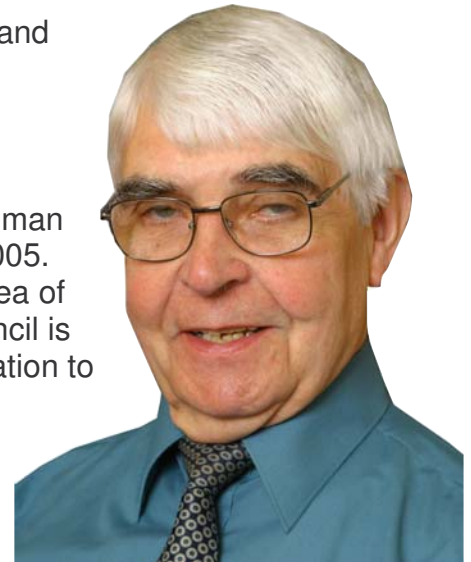
**Members of the Review Group:** Councillor B. Hall (Chairman) and Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, D.M. Hancock, G. Morgan, Mrs. I. Jackson Smith and K. Thompson

### **Rationale**

Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 considered progress on the Human Resource Best Value Service Improvement Plan in September 2005. Members of the Committee identified Sickness Absence as an area of Concern. A Review was established to investigate what the Council is doing now and to determine what can be done in the future in relation to sickness management and the control of sickness absence.

### **Links to Corporate Aims**

This Review contributes towards the Council's Corporate Values of Investing in Our People (Employees), Be responsible with and accountable for public finances and Being open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive to the public.



**Councillor B. Hall**  
Chairman of the Review Group

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The Review Group gathered evidence from presentations and discussions with the Council's Human Resources Section, Payments Section and Company Health Ltd who provide the Council's Occupational Health Service. A series of meetings with Chief Officers and focus group sessions with Staff and Trade Unions was carried out to undertake research relating to sickness management procedures within the Council. A survey was issued to 250 members of staff. The Review Group was invited to attend an event on proactive measures to deal with Sickness Management and General Health and Safety at 3M in Newton Aycliffe.

Findings from research gathered by the Review Group highlighted the following areas:

- Code of Practice & Procedures
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Information
- Training
- Occupational Health

### **Code of Practice and Procedures**

The Employee Survey reported that staff have a good understanding of absence procedures. The Review Group acknowledged work that had been undertaken over recent years to update the Code of Practice and the introduction of Company Health Ltd to provide Occupational Health Services. The Review Group considered proposed procedures contained within a revised Code of Practice for sickness management.

Management of Sickness Absence within the Council requires focus on early intervention and procedures that are applied consistently throughout the Council. The Review Group recommended that the proposed procedures for the Management of Sickness Absence, Occupational Health Referrals and Occupational Sick Pay be supported.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Management of Sickness requires expertise to proactively monitor absence rates, deal with Occupational Health referrals and provide performance information on a monthly basis. The Review Group believe this expertise lies within Human Resources Section, and recommended that specific elements of Sickness Management administration be transferred to Human Resources in order to better enable Occupational Health referrals and performance monitoring.

### **Performance Information**

Throughout the review, Chief Officers and Trade Unions identified reducing sickness absence as a priority. Detailed performance information is available and the Review Group recommended that this information should be reported to Members on a regular basis to effectively monitor sickness absence within the Council. Sickness information should also be made available to managers as necessary so they can effectively manage sickness and a performance indicator be included in departmental service plans.

### **Training**

The Review Group identified a need for training to be undertaken for managers to ensure that sickness management procedures are delivered consistently and enable managers to have the relevant skills to carry out their role. The Review Group recommended that the Organisational Development Plan specifically include training for appropriate managers relating to 'Absence Management'.

### **Occupational Health**

There is evidence of proactive working between Occupational Health, Human Resources and Council Departments. Company Health Ltd have a fundamental role to play in proactively managing sickness absence. The Review Group recommended that Company Health's key objectives should be monitored and the services they provide promoted to employees of the Council.

### **Cabinet's Response**

The Review Group's report was considered by its parent committee, Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1, who supported the recommendations and forwarded it to Cabinet for consideration.

Cabinet subsequently agreed all nine recommendations from the Review Group. An Action Plan to implement recommendations, which identifies responsibilities and timescales, has been agreed.

### **Follow Up**

The Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the Action Plan, which will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

### **Councillor B. Hall**

Chairman of the Review Group

## **Provision of Affordable Housing**

**Members of the Review Group:** Councillors J. Wayman J.P. (Chairman), W.M. Blenkinsopp, J.E. Higgin and J.P. Moran and Mrs. M. Thomson (Co-opted Tenant Representative)



**Councillor J. Wayman J.P.**  
Chairman of the Review  
Group

### **Rationale**

The review was undertaken after members recognised that the housing market in the Borough of Sedgefield had changed significantly over the past three years, with rapid increases in house prices and an increased demand for social housing.

### **Links to Corporate Aims**

The Council's ambitions and community outcomes are shown in its Annual Corporate Plan. The Review contributes towards the Council's ambition to create a Borough with strong communities and the community outcome of securing quality affordable housing.

### **Findings and Conclusions**

The review heard evidence from the Council's Housing Strategy Manager, Forward Planning Manager and Senior Development Control Officer. The group also heard evidence from applicants to the Authority's first affordable housing scheme, which allowed the review to adopt a more user-focused perspective in its deliberations. A site visit was also conducted to observe Tees Valley Housing Group's approach to providing affordable housing.

The conclusions of the Review Group are focused on four main themes:

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

The review forwarded a definition it considered refined what affordable housing meant for Sedgefield borough and would give a clear steer to the development of the policy. Furthermore, since the housing market is moving so rapidly, the Group recommended that the Housing Needs Study be updated during this Council year (2007-08) to reflect these changes.

The Review Group also concluded that information relating to affordable housing needed to be monitored continuously and reviewed so that the Authority was able to be in a position to provide housing that best reflected the needs of the market.

The review urged the Council to consider how best to make effective use of, not only its existing stock but also private sector stock.

In conclusion, the Review Group's report comprehensively looked at the issue in hand and made a series of recommendations to improve the current situation. Furthermore, members of the Review Group also benefited from gaining an increased knowledge of affordable housing.

### **Cabinet Response**

The Cabinet agreed with all of the recommendations of the Review Group and formulated an Action Plan of responses. This has been presented to the Prosperous and Attractive Boroughs Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### **Follow Up**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall continue to monitor progress as it pertains to the implementation of their recommendations, in order to ensure that the actions it proposed bring about the desired changes.

### **Councillor J. Wayman J.P.**

Chairman of the Review Group



## **Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme**

**Members of the Review Group:** Councillor Ms. M. Predki (Chairman) and Councillors J. Burton, Mrs. J. Croft and Mrs. E.M. Paylor.

### **Rationale**

The rationale is to review the current Concessionary Pricing Scheme and identify solutions to improve communication to the residents of the Borough and increase take up of the scheme.

### **Links to Corporate Aims**

The Review of the Council's Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme will aim to contribute to the Council's Ambition to create a healthy Borough and the associated Community Outcome of creating leisure opportunities.



**Councillor Ms M. Predki**  
Chairman of the Review Group

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The Review Group gathered evidence from presentations and meetings with the Council's Leisure Services, Neighbourhood Wardens and the community groups of CAVOS and Cornforth Partnership. A focus group meeting was also held with existing users of the Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme at Ferryhill Leisure Centre and information on existing schemes and research was gathered from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Executive.

The Review Group made recommendations to improve access to Leisure Facilities through the Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme. This included undertaking a feasibility exercise to extend the Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme to clubs and associations based in the Council's Leisure Centres, and consideration be given to extend concessionary usage of the Lifestyle suites between 7.30 p.m. and 9.00 p.m.

To improve communication and marketing of the Scheme the Review Group made recommendations that information, advertising and case study examples be promoted through the Council's Community Newspaper Inform. The Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme Communications Plan be monitored on a monthly basis and include bespoke marketing communications materials relevant to the targeted group.

The Department of Health profile for 2006 highlighted that the Borough has above average levels of health deprivation. The Review Group recommended that Partnership working be undertaken with County Durham Primary Care Trust to promote the Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme in GP Practices within the Borough and information be provided to Primary Care Health Workers to promote the scheme when discussing the health benefits or exercise with patients.

Prior to the review commencing the Council rolled out the B:Active Membership Scheme with the aim to eliminate any potential stigma of the previous 'Leisure Saver' Card. Information from the B:Active Scheme is used to provide information to support Performance Indicators and Marketing Information. To create accurate information to assist Performance and Marketing Information the Review Group the Review group recommended that all Members be transferred on the B:Active Scheme by September 2007.



The Review Group considered information regarding initiatives and research that has been put into practice by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Executive.

Research reports evaluating these initiatives are due to be reported in early 2007, the Review Group recommend that the Council's Leisure Services take account of the findings of these reports to identify if any points for future improvements could be made to Concessionary Leisure Pricing Scheme.

The Review Group concluded that the Leisure Centre Concessionary Pricing Scheme meets the objectives of the pricing principles identified by the Council's Leisure Services. The pricing scheme has reduced barriers and encouraged participation in physical activity for the economically inactive via reduced concessionary prices to generate associated health benefits.

The reduction in prices, implementation of the B:Active Membership card and a marketing campaign to promote the scheme has contributed to the 38% increase in Membership of the B:Active Scheme. Therefore the Review Group recommended that Leisure Centre Concessionary Prices remain at their current level for 2007/08

This review has evaluated areas of the existing concessionary leisure scheme and has identified areas for further development to achieve the aims of the pricing principles and may increase membership and take up of the Concessionary Scheme.

Feedback from the Focus Group gave support to retain the scheme, attendees were supportive of the pricing structure and the benefits to which the scheme offered.

### **Cabinet's Response**

The Review Group's report was considered by its parent committee, Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2, who supported the recommendations and forwarded it to Cabinet for consideration.

Cabinet subsequently agreed all ten recommendations from the Review Group. An Action Plan to implement recommendations, which identifies responsibilities and timescales, has been agreed.

### **Follow Up**

The Healthy Borough and Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the Action Plan, which will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.



**Councillor Ms M. Predki**  
Chairman of the Review Group

## Future Recycling Services

**Members of the Review Group:** Councillors G.C. Gray (Chairman), D.R. Brown, Mrs. B.A. Clare, Mrs. J. Gray and M.T.B. Jones



**Councillor G.C. Gray**  
Chairman of the Review Group

### Rationale

Sedgefield Borough Council's Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan ended in March 2006. Whilst the Council was on track to reach its 18% recycling target set by the Government by that date, new targets are awaited. And within the drive towards greater recycling rates, it was anticipated these targets would be more challenging. A review of current service provision, including kerbside collection, green waste, bring sites, bulky items/white goods and waste minimisation initiatives, together with consideration of the options available to the Council to provide improved recycling services, was required.

### Links to Corporate Aims

The review contributed to the Council's ambition of delivering an attractive borough through reducing waste and managing natural resources in order to ensure a cleaner, greener environment.

### Findings and Conclusions

It was recognised by members that the effective promotion of any new recycling scheme is essential to achieve optimum participation rates and ensure the success of new arrangements.

The Council's kerbside collection contract with Premier Waste Management will come to an end in March 2008 and alternative recycling services need to be agreed to ensure residents have access to appropriate recycling services and the Authority is able to achieve these Government targets.

Decisions were still awaited from Durham County Council, as the waste disposal authority, in respect of its Waste Management Strategy and procurement options post-2008. As a result, members had to consider that there was no assurances about the disposal facilities that will be available to the Borough Council.

In considering the preferred options, the Review Group established four key objectives for future recycling services:



- Achieve current and future recycling/composting targets.
- Convenient to use and accessible to residents.
- Financially sustainable.
- Operationally feasible.

In concluding the investigation, the opinions and views of residents gathered through the stakeholder consultation survey were considered. This was supported by knowledge gained following a visit to Derwentside District Council, to investigate the experiences of an alternative service provision Authority. Finally, the Group evaluated the evidence collected on the advantages and disadvantages of each option and its ability to meet the key objectives.

The Review Group concluded that the introduction of a co-mingled system for collecting dry recyclables (materials not sorted at kerbside), utilising twin wheeled bins, will most effectively meet the key objectives established for future recycling services. It was considered that weekly household waste collections should continue, but collections should alternate between recyclable material and residual household waste. The collection of glass for recycling post-2008 was supported and an assessment of glass collection methods at a future date would allow full appraisal of up to date collection, separation and disposal options.

It was felt that there was a need to rationalise the Authority's 29 bring sites to ensure effective targeting of resources. The 6 high yield bring sites located throughout the Borough at Newton Aycliffe (Tesco), Sedgefield (Library), Shildon (Co-op), Spennymoor (Asda), Tudhoe Civic Amenity Site and Aycliffe Civic Amenity site should be retained, with the remaining 23 sites phased out.

The continuation of existing arrangements for the separate collection of white goods and televisions for recycling was supported. However, the continuation of a free green waste collection service in a selected area of the Borough does not align itself with the Authority's corporate value to *"Be open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive to the public"*. Therefore, the continuation of this scheme cannot be justified following the cessation of grant funding in 2007/08. However, the collection of green waste ought to be encouraged. Therefore the provision of a service throughout the Borough should be explored. However, in order to ensure the financial viability of such a scheme, the service should be offered on a discretionary chargeable basis, on an opt-in/opt-out basis.

### **Cabinet Response**

The report was presented to Cabinet on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2007. As yet, their response has not been forthcoming to the Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### **Follow Up**

Pending the acceptance of the recommendations of the Review Group, the Cabinet shall draw up an Action Plan. This shall be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee and members shall monitor the Plan through to completion.

### **Councillor G.C. Gray**

Chairman of the Review Group

# ***The Council's Contribution to Reducing Economic Inactivity (Increasing Employability)***

**Members of the Review Group:** Councillor V. Crosby (Chairman), K. Henderson, A. Smith, Mrs L. Smith and Mrs. C. Sproat.



**Councillor V. Crosby**  
Chairman of the Review Group

## **Rationale**

Whilst the Borough's official unemployment rate has fallen to 2.7%, the number of people who are economically inactive, i.e. do not have a job but are capable of working, remains high. Both the employment rate and the economic activity rate in the Borough are significantly lower than the national average; with over 13% of the Borough's working age population in receipt of incapacity benefit. Whilst awaiting Government policy measures to help tackle the problem, there is a need to assess the Borough Council's own services and those of other providers in order to provide comprehensive access to employment.

## **Links to Corporate Aims**

The Review supports the Council's ambitions to create a prosperous and healthy Borough, and the community outcomes of tackling disadvantage and promoting social inclusion and working in partnership with others.

## **Findings and Conclusions**

There is considerable evidence that worklessness can damage a person's life chances, significantly influencing aspirations, especially those of children and young people.

People in areas where there are lots of other people who are able to work but do not, have lower expectations of starting a job, and a lower probability of actually starting one. Individuals living in deprived areas are significantly more likely to be out of work than similar people living elsewhere.

Over the past few decades, working and workless people have been moving apart geographically in the UK. Living in the most deprived areas with the very highest levels of unemployment has particularly strong negative effects on a person's chances of leaving poverty.

A significant number of children are in danger of growing up in families and neighbourhoods with little contact with the world of work, and limited aspirations to join it. This has the potential to derail progress towards Government objectives on child poverty, educational attainment and employment.

People who live in concentrations of worklessness tend to be from groups who are known to do badly in the labour market. For example:

- Almost half of the working age population in areas of worklessness have no qualifications.
- Half of all households in concentrations of worklessness have at least one person with a limiting long-term illness.
- A third of carers in these areas provide more than 50 hours of unpaid care each week.

The review undertook a range of methods in the course of its investigations. It heard evidence from officers, including the Authority's Head of Strategy and Regeneration as well as the Regeneration Manager as well as the Cabinet Portfolio holder. Externally, the Group also questioned representatives of Job Centre Plus, the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative and the County Durham & Darlington Primary Care Trusts Public Health Improvement Team.

The Chair attended an Employability Workshop to consider initiatives regarding employability in County Durham, identifying strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and drawing on examples of good practice. Members also attended Finchale Training College in Durham in order to gain an insight into its initiatives and programmes linked to referrals from Jobcentre Plus.

The Review Group found that employability was a complex and emotive issue with many causes and consequences. Current unemployment figures for the Borough mask the numbers who are economically inactive, and it is usual for levels to be highest in certain pockets of the Borough. Therefore, to reflect this the Review Group recommended that the Council operate a specific three-pronged attack to tackle the three main facets of low employability, i.e. health, employment, education. As part of this the Review Group felt that the Authority should focus its aim on encouraging entrepreneurship and reconsider its support infrastructure to provide grants for individuals starting businesses. Support should also be available to these businesses.

In order to tackle the problems associated with worklessness, the Review Group recognised the importance of partner organisations in ensuring the issues are resolved. Therefore recommendations included the Authority engage in the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative programme as well as utilising the skills in the Local Strategic Partnership and the voluntary and community sector.

### **Cabinet Response**

The report has been presented to Cabinet. At the time of publishing, their response has not been forthcoming to the Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### **Follow Up**

Pending the acceptance of the recommendations of the Review Group, the Cabinet shall draw up an Action Plan. This shall be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee and members shall monitor the Plan through to completion.

**Councillor V. Crosby.**  
Chairman of the Review Group

# Performance Management and Improvement

The Overview & Scrutiny Committees have an important role in monitoring progress on Service Improvement Plans (SIP's) agreed following a Best Value or Service Review. Progress has been monitored on the following SIP's during 2006/07:-

- Human Resources Best Value Review SIP
- Benefits SIP
- Housing Department SIP
- Development Control SIP

Members have also highlighted concerns with regard to certain services and have requested the relevant Cabinet Member and/or the Head of Service to attend a meeting in order to consider the particular service. Issues examined by the Committee include:-

- Public Sector Efficiency
- Percentage of Women in Top 5% of earners
- CCTV Arrangements within the Borough
- Disabled Person Adaptations
- Regeneration of Town Centres
- The percentage of Appeals allowed against the Authority's Decision to Refuse a Planning Application
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

In addition to this, Performance Indicator (PI) information has been reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committees on a regular basis to enable Members to monitor performance. This process assists Overview & Scrutiny Committees to identify issues to include in their work plans. Members are able to invite relevant Cabinet Members and senior officers to meetings so that performance can be challenged where it is not achieving targeted outcomes. The process also provides an opportunity to highlight and acknowledge areas of achievement, as well as highlighting areas for a future reports and/or reviews.

Following a Performance Management Workshop with Members, a recommendation was agreed to change the format of the reports to exception reports that will enable a full and frank discussion on indicators that are not achieving target.

Under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 Councils have the power to 'promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area in order to respond to the needs of their local communities'. This inevitably involves an increasing amount of partnership working and some examination of the contribution of partner agencies.

## Scrutiny Network

A Scrutiny Network has been established in County Durham, which is developing into a vibrant and active alliance. The Network includes representation from all District Councils within County Durham as well as the



County Council. The network was primarily set up as a learning set to share expertise and experience and establish build on best practice. It also enables issues that cut across boundaries to be discussed and builds a collaborative approach to problem solving.

The Network has been commissioned to carry out an investigation into transport provision in the County. All Councils in the County are contributing to this investigation, which is planned to conclude early in 2008.

In addition County Durham's Children's Trust has requested that a Countywide scrutiny review be carried out in relation to young people not in education, employment or training, known as NEET's. The Scrutiny Network will be used to co-ordinate these activities.

## Health Scrutiny

The Health and Social Care Act 2001 gives responsibility to the local authority with social services functions to carry out scrutiny of health matters. Therefore in this area Durham County Council hold this responsibility. Health scrutiny has a key role in challenging and holding the health bodies to account. Many health issues cut across county/district responsibilities and therefore district Councillors are co-opted to the County's Health Sub-Committee to represent their councils and, more importantly, local people.

During 2006/07, the Committee has scrutinised various aspects of the following local NHS providers, County Durham Primary Care Trust, County Durham & Darlington Acute NHS Trust, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust and the North East Ambulance Service Trust.

In addition Members of the Committee have undertaken an in-depth Scrutiny Review on the Misuse of Alcohol and Drugs by Young People in County Durham.

## Section 3: I&DeA Review of Overview and Scrutiny

Sedgefield Borough Council has taken part in the Leading Edge Programme, which is supported by I&DeA and assists the ongoing development of elected members in the areas of Political Leadership, Community Leadership and Overview and Scrutiny. A key component of the Overview and Scrutiny strand of the programme was a light touch scrutiny challenge to ascertain how scrutiny processes were developing within participating authorities (Sedgefield, Derwentside, Durham City, Easington, Wansbeck, Wear Valley and Tyndale).

Following the evaluation a report was prepared by I&DeA which states that “the Overview and Scrutiny structure in Sedgefield Borough Council appears fit for purpose in terms of tackling corporate issues, policy review /development and service delivery issues. The Committee remits are linked to those of Portfolio Holders and to the Council’s Corporate Ambitions”. The report goes on to say that “Sedgefield Borough Council has evidenced its clear commitment to the scrutiny process by resourcing a dedicated scrutiny support team”.

The report concluded that;

*“...it is very clear that Sedgefield Borough Council has made real progress in developing overview and scrutiny and that Members and Officers have a shared commitment to the continuous improvement of the function”.*

A number of recommendations were made to assist the Council in its development of vibrant and meaningful scrutiny. These recommendations have been used to form an Action Plan in order to achieve progress on the areas highlighted by the Leading Edge programme.

### ***So far the following has been completed***

- Overview & Scrutiny Committees have been re-branded to increase transparency of function
- The format of the Annual Scrutiny Report has been reviewed
- Consideration has been given to moving Committee meetings away from more formal venues to more local, accessible and community friendly venues
- Seating arrangements have been altered to reflect the differing roles of Members and Officers within Scrutiny
- The format and presentation of Performance Management Information has been reviewed to ensure that Members receive information which is meaningful and comprehensible to them
- Public Information Leaflets on Overview and Scrutiny has been made available to the public.
- Internet pages have been developed to help promote Overview & Scrutiny

### ***The remaining actions are to be completed in the forthcoming year***

- The public have participated in a number of Reviews. The internet pages and public leaflets will allow an additional way to encourage their input.
- Members have received training on various aspects of Overview & Scrutiny. Further training is planned



## Section 4: What Are We Doing? Work Programme 2007/08

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are responsible for agreeing a realistic, achievable and considered work programme on the understanding that, from time to time, more urgent or immediate issues will require scrutinising. Issues may, for example, be raised by Cabinet reports, Members' constituency business or be referred to Overview and Scrutiny by Cabinet in advance of a Cabinet decision.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees review their Work Programmes at each meeting to identify issues that Members wish to consider. This process will continue during the forthcoming year to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny continues to be Member led.

The Minister for Local Government, John Healey, announced on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2007 that the Secretary of State was 'minded to implement 9 unitary proposals which councils had submitted in response to the Government's invitation to Councils issues on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006'.

Included in the 9 unitary proposals that are to be implemented is a single unitary council for County Durham. The establishment of a single council within County Durham will mean that the 7 existing district councils and the county council will be abolished and replaced by a new council covering the whole of the county. It is expected that the new council will be up and running from April 2009.

The Borough Council's medium-term plan, the Corporate Plan sets out the Council's aims and also outlines how it will work with its partners to achieve its stated ambitions. Given that the Borough Council will be abolished in April 2009 the Corporate Plan is to be reviewed so that short-term priorities can be addressed. Overview & Scrutiny Committees will then need to reflect the short-term priorities within their own work programmes.

In the period running up to the establishment of the new council Overview & Scrutiny is continuing to work to ensure that service standards remain high and that implementation plans from previous reviews are on track.

Members are keen to ensure that the needs, priorities and concerns of the residents of Sedgefield Borough are a prominent part of the plans for the new Authority, and that Sedgefield Borough leaves a lasting legacy for its community. Scrutiny is an extremely effective tool to help achieve this and members are keen to work within the Authority and with neighbouring Authorities to see that this transition is a smooth and positive process.

## Section 5: Overview & Scrutiny Committee Membership

### Strategic Leadership Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Chairman:**

Councillor A. Gray

**Vice Chairman:**

Councillor B..F. Avery J.P.

**Members:**

Councillor D.R. Brown  
Councillor V. Chapman  
Councillor D. Farry  
Councillor T.F. Forrest  
Councillor Mrs. J. Gray  
Councillor B. Haigh  
Councillor T. Hogan  
Councillor Ms. I. Jackson  
Councillor B.M. Ord

### Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Chairman:**

Councillor J.E. Higgin

**Vice Chairman:**

Councillor P. Crathorne

**Members:**

Councillor W.M. Blenkinsopp  
Councillor D. Bowman  
Councillor J. Burton  
Councillor Mrs. S. Haigh  
Councillor Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson  
Councillor Mrs. E.M. Paylor  
Councillor K. Thompson  
Councillor T. Ward  
Councillor J. Wayman, J.P.  
Councillor Mrs. E.M. Wood

Mrs. M. Thomson

(Co-opted Tenant Representative)

### Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Chairman:**

Councillor G.C. Gray

**Vice Chairman:**

Councillor B. Lamb

**Members:**

Councillor Mrs. L. Cuthbertson  
Councillor P. Gittins  
Councillor D.M. Hancock  
Councillor Mrs. I. Hewitson  
Councillor G.M.R. Howe  
Councillor Mrs. E. Maddison  
Councillor B. Stephens  
Councillor J. Robinson, J.P.  
Councillor A. Smith  
Councillor A. Warburton

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