

Item 9e

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

PROSPEROUS AND ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
27 January 2009

Time: 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors P. Gittins J.P., Mrs. I. Hewitson and B. Lamb

In Attendance: Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, V. Chapman, Mrs. P. Crathorne, A. Gray, J.E. Higgin, A. Warburton and T. Ward

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, D.M. Hancock, G.M.R. Howe, Mrs. S. J. Iveson, Mrs. E. Maddison, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, A. Smith and B. Stephens

P&A.21/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

P&A.22/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December, 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

P&A.23/08 DRAFT GREEN SPACE STRATEGY

It was explained that Tammy Morris-Hale, Countryside Officer, was present at the meeting to give details of a draft Green Space Strategy which had been prepared and to respond to queries.

The Committee was informed that the Strategy outlined a vision for the long term management of green spaces and an action plan for their improvement. The completed document together with the Borough's Playing Pitch Strategy, Play Strategy and Open Space Needs Assessment formed a Supplementary Planning Document for the new Local Development Framework for the Unitary Council. It was noted that the document would be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal.

The presentation would cover the following areas :-

- What is a Green Space Strategy and why we have to produce one
- What the Green Space Strategy covers
- Some of the most important elements in the Strategy including vision, aims, policies and indicators
- The Green Space Framework
- What this means for the Borough and the future of green space management.

Members were informed of the national, regional, and local contexts influencing the Strategy including the Urban and Rural White Paper, the North East Regional Economic Strategy, the Regional Framework for the North East and Sedgefield Borough Council's Community Strategy and Climate Change Strategy.

It was explained that extensive consultation with stakeholders had been undertaken on the Open Space Needs Assessment which had been published in 2007. A number of recommendations had been highlighted in the Assessment including the need to produce a Green Space Strategy.

The Committee was informed of the types of green space which had been included in the strategy such as :-

- Parks and public gardens,
- Natural and semi-natural spaces
- Green/ecological corridors
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Allotments
- Cemeteries
- Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas

It was noted that the Strategy did not include areas around village halls, artificial sports pitches and areas not accessible through public Rights of Way.

With regard to existing green spaces Members were informed that Sedgefield Borough Council currently owned 536.81 hectares of green space. 8,551.53 hectares were owned by other organisations. There was therefore a need to form partnerships with other organisations to ensure holistic management of green space.

The draft Green Space Strategy set out standards for a minimum level of provision of green space. Members of the committee were informed of areas where there were gaps in provision. Maps of those areas were displayed.

Within the Strategy priorities were identified including :-

- Green spaces should be clean, safe and secure for those using them;
- There is a lack of equipped play provision for those children over the age of 8;
- Lack of provision of good quality village greens/large informal green spaces;
- There is a need for more outdoor sports facilities such as motorcycle scrambling, skateboard parks and BMX tracks;
- There needs to be better marketing of sites, both on and off site;
- We need to take advantage of disused railway lines to create wildlife-rich corridors as well as multi-user routes to promote green transport;
- There is a lack of accessible semi-natural green spaces and Local Nature Reserves;

- Access to sites needs to be improved to allow 'Access for All', where appropriate;
- There is a need for more consistent maintenance of green space across the borough, and through all the tiers of local government

The draft aims contained in the Strategy were also detailed as well as a series of policies which had been developed to ensure the aims and standards of the Strategy were achieved. The implementation of the policies would be monitored through a series of Performance Indicators.

The Committee was informed that the document was out for consultation for a six week period. A Sustainability Appraisal of the document would then be carried out to identify any further gaps. It would then be published and adopted by the Borough Council prior to 1st April, 2009. It was intended that the document would form the evidence base for the new Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of the requirements of the South and East Durham Growth Point and the County Local Development Framework.

During discussion of this item a query was raised regarding how the achievements of the Borough Council in relation to green space would be protected under the new authority. In response it was explained that a number of designated sites such as sites of Special Scientific Interest and nature reserves were protected by law. The Strategy would be a valuable document in providing evidence of how green space issues needed to be taken forward. It would provide a benchmark for the preparation of a document covering the whole of the County in relation to a strategy for green space.

AGREED : That the information be received and the Green Space Strategy document be supported.

P&A.24/08 SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY – PROGRESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report detailing progress to date on the climate change strategy and action plan. (for copy see file of minutes).

The report identified how actions were being met and the position with regard to achieving objectives.

It was explained that Stephen McDonald Energy Officer was present at the meeting to outline progress and to respond to queries.

It was explained that since the last presentation in April, 2008 there were a number of factors which had an impact on climate change policies.

With the recent global economic downturn there was a need to cover the mitigation of its significance on climate change. There had also been a number of changes to the policies and new National Indicators had been introduced.

The Climate Change Bill 2008 had been introduced which set new

legally binding targets. Greenhouse gas emissions now were to be reduced by at least 80% by 2050 compared to the previous 60% target. CO₂ emissions also had to be reduced by at least 26% by 2020 against a 1990 baseline.

The aims and objectives of the Council in relation to climate change were identified and progress outlined.

It was explained that with regard to the objective to reduce the impact of development on climate change and to ensure new developments were climate proofed key achievements were :-

- Predicted savings of over 500,000kg of CO₂ per year for new developments.
- Climate change – central theme in the development of the new Local Development Framework.

In respect of the objective to substantially reduce the consumption of national resources from council activities, key achievements included being fully compliant with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the establishment of new county wide steering group for National Indicator 185. Capital budgets had, however, been curtailed for efficiencies improvements.

It was reported that with regard to the Indicator relating to improving the energy rating of domestic properties to achieve an average SAP rating of 62 across the Borough, key achievements were £3m spend on energy efficiency measures in Council properties and a current average SAP rating of 57 out of 100.

Reference was made to the objective to manage green spaces to take account of change to the climate. The Committee was informed that as reported earlier in the Committee, the Green Space Strategy was near completion.

The Committee noted that there had been a reduction in transport emissions since 2003 from all vehicles operated by the Council.

Renewable energy events at the Locomotion and continued publicity within Inform had helped to ensure both employees business and residents had a clear understanding of the impacts of climate change.

During discussion of this item reference was made to how the Strategy would be taken forward into the new authority. It was explained that the County Council would be developing a countywide strategy bringing in all areas of expertise.

AGREED : That the Committee is satisfied with the progress being made in relation to Climate Change Strategy.

P&A.25/08 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the work programme for the Prosperous and

Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that the State of the Borough Scrutiny Review final report had been submitted to Cabinet and the recommendations had been agreed. The report would be forwarded to the new authority.

AGREED : That the Work Programme be agreed.

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

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