

COUNCIL

Friday, 27 March 2009

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 پوچھئے۔

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 correct records the Minutes of the meetings held on:

(a) **27th February 2009** (Pages 1 - 4)

(b) **16th March 2009** (Pages 5 - 6)

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**5. HANDING OVER OF CIVIC AND CEREMONIAL REGALIA TO SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**

To formally hand over to Sedgefield Town Council, for safe keeping, the Civic and Ceremonial Regalia of Sedgefield Borough Council.

6. AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2007/2008

To consider the attached report. (Pages 7 - 28)

7. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2008/09

The attached report of the Director of Resources will be considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting to be held on 23rd March 2009. Audit Committee's recommendations will be reported to Council for consideration. (Pages 29 - 40)

8. CORNFORTH CONSERVATION AREA - ARTICLE 4 (2) DIRECTION - 2009

Report of Director of Neighbourhood Services. (Pages 41 - 50)

9. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

To confirm as correct records the Minutes of the following meetings:

(a) **Licensing Committee 2 - 22nd October 2007** (Pages 51 - 52)

(b) **Chief Officer Appointments Panel - 27th March 2008** (Pages 53 - 54)

(c) **Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th January 2009** (Pages 55 - 56)

(d) **Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 13th January 2009** (Pages 57 - 60)

(e) **Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 27th January 2009** (Pages 61 - 66)

(f) **Standards Committee - 5th February 2009** (Pages 67 - 70)

(g) **Area 2 Forum - 17th February 2009** (Pages 71 - 74)

(h) **Area 3 Forum - 25th February 2009** (Pages 75 - 78)

- (i) **Area 4 Forum - 3rd March 2009** (Pages 79 - 82)
- (j) **Development Control Committee - 6th March 2009** (Pages 83 - 90)
- (k) **Area 1 Forum - 9th March 2009** (Pages 91 - 94)
- (l) **Area 5 Forum - 10th March 2009** (Pages 95 - 96)
- (m) **Cabinet - 19th March 2009** (Pages 97 - 98)
- (n) **Audit Committee - 23rd March 2009** (Pages 99 - 104)
- (o) **Licensing Committee 1 - 25th March 2009** (Pages 105 - 106)
- (p) **Employment Issues Panel- 27th March 2009** (Pages 107 - 108)

B.Allen
Chief Executive

Council Offices
SPENNYMOOR
19th March 2009

Councillor J. Robinson J.P (Mayor) and

All other Members of the Council

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,
27 February 2009

Time: 11.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor J. Robinson J.P (Mayor) and

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, W.M. Blenkinsopp, T. Brimm, D.R. Brown, V. Chapman, D. Chaytor, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. P. Crathorne, V. Crosby, Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, D. Farry, P. Gittins J.P., A. Gray, G.C. Gray, B. Haigh, Mrs. S. Haigh, Mrs. I. Hewitson, J.E. Higgin, A. Hodgson, T. Hogan, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson, J.M. Khan, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, C. Nelson, D.A. Newell, A. Smith, A. Warburton, T. Ward, W. Waters and Mrs E. M. Wood

Apologies: Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, Mrs. D. Bowman, J. Burton, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. B. Graham, Mrs. J. Gray, D.M. Hancock, Mrs. L. Hovvels, G.M.R. Howe, J.G. Huntington, Mrs. S. J. Iveson, Ms. I. Jackson, B.M. Ord, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. C. Potts, B. Stephens and K. Thompson

C.56/08 MINUTES SILENCE

A minutes silence was held as a mark of respect for former Borough Councillor Mrs. Margaret Bell who had recently died.

C.57/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J. Robinson, JP., and Councillor W. Waters indicated that they had a personal interest in Item 6 on the agenda relating to Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the Council's housing stock to Sedgefield Borough Homes. They would not, however, be leaving the meeting.

C.58/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th December, 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

C.59/08 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported that since the last meeting held on 18th December, 2008 he had attended 19 functions and events including charity evenings, civic functions and civic balls.

The Mayor made reference to an official welcome to the school delegation from India which had been held at the Locomotion Museum, Sedgefield Rotary Club's Presidents Evening at Hardwick Hall Hotel and the Mayor of Durham's "Last Hurrah" at Ushaw College.

In addition the Mayor had attended a golden wedding anniversary celebration and also two 100th birthday celebrations.

C.60/08

HANDING OVER OF SEAL AND CHAINS OF OFFICE OF THE FORMER DARLINGTON RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

The seals and chains of office of the former Darlington Rural District Council were formally handed over to the Mayor of Darlington Borough Council, Councillor I. Haszeldine for safekeeping. The Mayor presented Councillor Haszeldine with a memento of the occasion.

In response Councillor Haszeldine thanked the Mayor and expressed his appreciation for the work which Sedgfield Borough Council had undertaken.

C.61/08

LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER OF THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK TO SEDGFIELD BOROUGH HOMES

NB In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Members Code of Conduct Councillors J. Robinson JP and W. Waters declared a Personal Interest in this item and remained in the meeting.

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive (for copy see file of Minutes) seeking approval for the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Sedgfield Borough Homes.

It was explained that the report summarised the assets which would transfer together with the overall financial consideration. The report also covered key elements of the transfer and other legal agreements.

Members were reminded of the background to the transfer including details of Sedgfield Borough Council's Option Study which, in terms of the outcome of financial modelling, concluded that whilst the Council could meet the minimum Decent Homes Standards, tenants aspirations for their homes and estates would require an additional £65m for the next 5 years. A Stock Options Appraisal Group therefore concluded that LSVT was the preferred option for future ownership and management of the housing stock to deliver both tenants aspirations and the Council's wider strategic objectives.

On 6th August, 2008 Members agreed that the Council proceeds with transfer to Sedgfield Borough Homes subject to the Council's final approval of the valuation, the terms of the transfer and to the obtaining of all necessary statutory consents.

It was noted that in respect of the terms etc., of transfer all land transferred to Sedgfield Borough Homes, with the exception of previously developed land, would be protected under a development agreement which would ensure that the land could not be developed without the prior consent of the Council or its successors.

The report also outlined areas of land and assets which would be retained by the Council.

RESOLVED : 1. *That Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of housing and related assets to Sedgfield Borough*

Homes be approved as set out in the transfer agreement and subject to the terms and conditions therein.

2. *That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be delegated to make final adjustments for the transfer agreement up to the date of transfer.*
3. *That the Chief Executive consults with the Corporate Director of Resources at Durham County Council to ensure that he is appraised and satisfied with any final alterations to the details of the transfer agreement.*

N.B. In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rule 13.4 Councillor W. M. Blenkinsopp requested that his name be recorded as having voted against the resolution.

C.62/08

ANNUAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT 2008

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

The report, which was submitted on an annual basis in accordance with the Council's Constitution, identified scrutiny reviews which had been undertaken and achievements which had been made by Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the year.

RESOLVED : That the Annual Scrutiny Report be approved.

C.63/08

APPOINTMENT OF ALDERMEN - REVIEW OF POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer (for copy see file of Minutes) informing Members of changes that had been made as a result of new regulations under the provisions of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Under Regulation 32 of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (Number 2) Regulations 2008 the Council had powers to select Honorary Aldermen not only past Members of the Council but also serving Members.

The Council was requested to either confirm existing practice or adopt a new practice in the event that it may wish to appoint Aldermen prior to abolition.

RESOLVED : That the Council adopts the practice of appointing Honorary Aldermen from those Members with 3 consecutive terms of office by 2011 or appropriate eminent service.

N.B. In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rule 13.4 Councillor Mrs. E. Maddison requested that her name be recorded as having voted against the resolution.

C.64/08

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES PANEL

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting of the Employment Issues Panel held on 18th February 2009 (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the Minutes be received.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

Item 3b

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Monday,
16 March 2009

Time: 11.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor J. Robinson J.P (Mayor) and

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, B.F. Avery J.P, W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. D. Bowman, 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. I. Hewitson, J.E. Higgin, Mrs. L. Hovvels, J.G. Huntington, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson, Mrs. S. J. Iveson, Ms. I. Jackson, J.M. Khan, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, D.A. Newell, B.M. Ord, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. C. Potts, T. Ward and W. Waters

Apologies: Councillors T. Brimm, D.R. Brown, J. Burton, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh, Mrs. S. Haigh, D.M. Hancock, A. Hodgson, T. Hogan, G.M.R. Howe, C. Nelson, A. Smith, B. Stephens, K. Thompson, A. Warburton and Mrs E. M. Wood

C.65/08

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs. E. Maddison stated that she had a personal interest in Item 3 relating to Honorary Aldermen as she had voted against the amendment at the meeting on 27th February for the change of criteria to appoint Honorary Alderman. Mrs. Maddison indicated that she would remain in the meeting and take no part in any vote.

C.66/08

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 249 HONORARY ALDERMEN

N.B. In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the members Code of Conduct Councillor Mrs E Maddison declared a personal interest in this item and remained in the meeting but took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive (for copy see file of Minutes) in respect of the office of Honorary Alderman.

It was explained that a Special Meeting of Council had been convened in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the purpose of conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on 22 Members of Sedgefield Borough Council.

The title was to be bestowed on persons who have, in the opinion, of the Council rendered eminent service to the authority in accordance with the criteria agreed on 27th February 2009

The Members outlined in the report had indicated their willingness to accept the title of Honorary Alderman.

RESOLVED : That the office of Honorary Alderman be bestowed on the 22 Members outlined in the report.

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Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

Sedgefield Borough Council

Audit 2007/08

March 2009



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Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
 - any third party.
-

Key messages

- 1 This is our last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter before Sedgefield Borough Council ceases to exist on 31 March 2009. In this letter we comment upon the arrangements that are being put in place to manage the transfer of responsibilities to the new unitary council. We also draw attention to the specific key issues specific to the Council that should be considered by the new unitary council.
- 2 The Council's capacity to deliver its strategic priorities and maintain business as usual has been, and will continue to be, significantly weakened by the impact of impending local government reorganisation (LGR). In common with other LGR bodies nationally, increasing staff vacancies and secondments, coupled with limited opportunities for replacement mean that key skills and capacity shortfalls are developing within the Council. Two areas in particular will prove challenging for the council in its remaining few weeks specifically:
 - completing a large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) of the Council's housing stock before vesting date; and
 - liaising with the new unitary council to ensure that arrangements are in place to enable the accurate and timely production of the Council's 2008/09 accounts.

Prospects for successful delivery of these important projects areas have been impacted by the recent loss of senior managers and finance staff in the last few months, primarily to Sedgefield Borough Homes.
- 3 In September 2008 we gave an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts for 2007/08 and gave an unqualified conclusion on its arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- 4 For the purposes of the final Comprehensive Performance Assessment we assessed the Council's use of resources arrangements as performing well - scoring 3 out of 4 overall. Given that this year's assessment represented a harder test incorporating some new requirements, and given the additional challenges posed by impending LGR, it is to the Council's credit that it has maintained its overall performance.
- 5 During the year we also carried out specific pieces of work on the Council's approach to access to services, health inequalities and absence management. We undertook these reviews on a county wide basis and our reports have identified a number of strengths and areas for improvement that could usefully be considered by the new unitary council.

Action needed by the Council

- 6 As the Council enters the final phase of its existence Members need to maintain an appropriate focus on delivering services - particularly as key staff take up posts in the new Council or elsewhere. The Council will wish to continue its focus upon securing deliver of its Transition Plan objectives (particularly the LSVT of its housing stock), meeting its statutory obligations and maintaining service performance. Approaches and tools to assist the Council in this process include:
 - updating project and resource plans to take account of the loss of senior management and financial staff; and
 - continuous and timely prioritisation, switching resources from low risk and low importance tasks in order that core services and governance arrangements are maintained and key projects are delivered on time.
- 7 In addition the Council needs to liaise with the new unitary council, as well as other demising districts in the area, to ensure that a coordinated closure plan for the preparation of its 2008/09 accounts is produced, including details of responsibilities, resources and timing.
- 8 In terms of service performance there are a number of key issues arising from our work on access to services, health inequalities and managing sickness absence that will need to continue to be addressed by the new unitary council and we therefore suggest that our reports are made available to the new unitary council.

Purpose, responsibilities and scope

- 9 This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council for 2007/08 and from any inspections undertaken since the last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.
- 10 We have addressed this letter to members as it is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that it safeguards and properly accounts for public money. We have made recommendations to assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities.
- 11 This letter also communicates the significant issues to key external stakeholders, including members of the public. We will publish this letter on the Audit Commission website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk. In addition the Council is planning to publish it on its website.
- 12 As your appointed auditor I am responsible for planning and carrying out an audit that meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, I review and report on:
 - the Council's accounts;
 - whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money conclusion); and
 - whether the Council's best value performance plan has been prepared and published in line with legislation and statutory guidance.
- 13 This letter includes the latest assessment on the Council's performance under the CPA framework, including our Direction of Travel report, and the results of any inspections carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. It summarises the key issues arising from the CPA and any such inspections. Inspection reports are issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.
- 14 We have listed the reports issued to the Council relating to 2007/08 audit and inspection work at the end of this letter.

How is Sedgfield Borough Council performing?

15 Sedgfield Borough Council was assessed as Good in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out in 2004. These assessments have been completed in all district councils and we are now updating these assessments, through an updated corporate assessment, in councils where there is evidence of change. However the opportunity for the Council to apply for an updated corporate assessment was not available once the LGR process commenced. The following chart is the latest position across all district councils.

Figure 1 Overall performance of district councils in CPA



Source: Audit Commission

Direction of Travel report

- 16 The Audit Commission undertakes Direction of Travel (DoT) work at each local authority body in England and Wales every year. The main purpose of this work is to assess the progress each council has made over the last year.
- 17 Direction of travel reports provide not just a commentary on past performance but they are also used to identify issues or areas of concern for the individual authority in the future. In the case of the Durham authorities however the implementation of local government reorganisation (LGR) means that the existing authorities will cease after March 2009. The approach being taken for district councils in Durham is:
- to use the DoT assessment to identify any risks and issues to help inform the new Durham unitary council; and

How is Sedgefield Borough Council performing?

- to produce a separate DOT report for each council which they have agreed can be shared amongst those councils in Durham subject to reorganisation for the purposes of informing the issues relevant to reorganisation.

Summary

- 18** Sedgefield Borough Council (The Council) comes to the end of its final year with some very good achievements. The prospect of abolition through local government reorganisation (LGR) has not distracted the Council from maintaining, and in some cases further improving, already high quality services, focusing on its priorities, while supporting workstreams for the new Council. It has continued to maintain its good performance, with 38 per cent of performance indicators (PIs) in the best 25 per cent, compared to 33 per cent nationally.
- 19** While performance was good and overall satisfaction with the Council remains high, performance has not been improving as fast as other councils. This is in line with the Council's strategy, in preparation for the new unitary, to concentrate on maintaining current performance, supporting staff and the new council through workstream leads and ensuring major projects continue to progress, rather than service improvement.
- 20** Those areas which have improved are planning, housing and environmental health. Corporate health, local environment, sustainable communities and transport are the areas improving less quickly than other councils.
- 21** Good progress is being made in major projects including redeveloping Newton Aycliffe town centre and Spennymoor leisure centre and a training centre partnership with Bishop Auckland College is proceeding well. However the current economic climate is expected to have an adverse effect on the Council's ability to generate capital receipts and progress development schemes planned with private sector partners.
- 22** The Council is heavily dependent upon manufacturing for its employment base, and job opportunities in the area have suffered in line with the general and prolonged decline in this sector of the economy. The Council's approach of improving the employability of the labour force and other labour supply initiatives has seen a steady increase in the rate of employment, but unemployment remains high and has fallen behind other coalfield areas nationally.
- 23** More recently the Council, in partnership with One North East, is gap funding the Durhamgate initiative which will see £200m invested on the former Black & Decker factory site to potentially house an additional 2,500 jobs in the area. However a number of other development schemes have slowed due to the current economic climate which puts future progress at risk. This is an area which the new council will need to tackle.
- 24** Value for money is generally good. Service standards and satisfaction are generally high and the Council has achieved its Gershon efficiency targets. Some improvements have been made in processing planning applications, council tax collection and repairs and maintenance. However the Council's sickness absence rates are high and this area will need to be kept under review by the new unitary council to ensure costs are reduced and service standards maintained.

- 25 Until recently the Council has retained its management team despite the uncertainty of LGR and this has enabled it to support the new unitary council through staff involvement in key workstreams as well as maintaining systems and developing performance monitoring for new national performance indicators.

What evidence is there of the Council improving outcomes?

- 26 Given LGR, the Council examined its priorities and rationalised them. It identified its priorities in its transition plan under the themes of Healthy Borough, Attractive Borough, Prosperous Borough, Strong Communities and Corporate Values and the key activities and projects required to achieve them. These are all on track with the exception of the regeneration of Hawkshead Place where the Council is considering implementing a HomeBuy Scheme to ensure sustainability during the current economic climate. Key projects include the following.
- The Council has largely completed preparations and secured funding for the LSVT of its 8,500 housing properties to a purposely established registered social landlord (RSL) - Sedgefield Borough Homes. As a direct result of this transfer an additional £100m will be invested in tenants' homes over the next five years in order to improve the quality of the housing stock.
 - Newton Aycliffe Town Centre master plan is progressing well with agreement to move remaining PCT services and library services to alternative premises to allow demolition and redevelopment. Preparation for other improvement works is underway including plans for a discount food store and a former supermarket unit has been let.
 - The Spennymoor Leisure Centre's redevelopment as an Arts Resource Centre including a café and theatre and sports facilities to provide opportunities for community development and cohesion, learning and skills acquisition and access to arts and cultural programmes is proceeding well but has had to be scaled down as the library move couldn't be agreed in time.
 - Planning approval has been gained for the 'Durhamgate' project, a major mixed use redevelopment providing offices, homes, a hotel and services on the Black and Decker site.
 - The extension work to the one stop shop Pioneering Care Centre with £750,000 lottery funding and £200,000 from the Council is imminent and in line with government policy on transfer of community assets.
 - The training centre partnership is proceeding well. It will mean a further education college in Sedgefield for the first time and links with Sunderland University. The Council were one of only ten in the country to win first round Local Enterprise Growth Initiative funding.
 - The Coalfields Housing renewal programme of demolition and regeneration focussed on Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and West Chilton is making progress in property acquisitions, demolition and repairs.

How is Sedgefield Borough Council performing?

- Local Improvement Programme (LIP) – the LIP scheme was devised to devolve resources to the community to facilitate community led regeneration. The Council has funded £3m over the last 3 years, leveraging in a further £3m from other sources. These monies have been devolved to the five area forums resulting in 50 projects to date with 15 completed. The largest award to date is in respect of Ferryhill Town Youth Football club for £320,000, which levered in a further £720,000.
- 27** The Council performs well overall and has 38 per cent of PIs in the best 25 per cent compared to 33 per cent for other councils. Performance is improving but not as quickly as other councils nationally. Improvement in performance over the last three years has slowed in comparison to other councils and the Council ranks relatively poorly with only 40 per cent of performance indicators (PIs) improving. Overall satisfaction with the Council is still in the best 25 per cent. Because it is performing well, it is less easy to achieve further improvement so this may explain why improvement has slowed. Corporate health, local environment, sustainable communities and transport are the areas improving less quickly than other councils. Performance has improved for environmental health and planning where overall performance is not as good as other councils, and housing where overall performance is better than other councils. PIs in the worst 25 per cent which are not improving are as follows.
- Sickness absence, which remains high at 12.24 days per employee. The Council has employed consultants to deal with this and slight improvements have been made in 2008/09 has shown a decrease from the 2007/08 outturn.
 - The percentage of top five per cent of earners that are women, percentage of staff with disabilities or from black and minority ethnic communities all remain low. This is difficult for the council to tackle during LGR as it cannot employ new staff.
 - The recycling and composting rate reduced due to problems with the anaerobic digester owned by Premier Waste. However a new recycling scheme for cardboard and plastics is in place and rates rose to 23.39 per cent for the first six months of 2008/09.
- 28** PIs in the worst 25 per cent which are improving are:
- time to respond to complaints to the ombudsman;
 - percentage of council tax collected. Changes in staffing and technology have resulted in improved in-year collection rates;
 - time to decide major planning applications where an improvement plan has resulted in better processing times; and
 - time to complete non urgent repairs, where the partnership with Mears Group PLC has improved the service.
- 29** Our county wide access to service review highlighted a number of initiatives that Sedgefield Borough Council has in place to improve access and consider the needs of diverse communities.

How is Sedgefield Borough Council performing?

- The Sedgefield Information Service is a one-stop-shop where people can search or view map based data about a local area. This includes information on council tax rates, bin collection arrangements and planning applications.
 - The integrated housing teams where homelessness and social services work in a co-located office and are fully integrated.
 - Outreach leisure services have been set up in the east of the district where there are no council leisure centres.
- 30** Initiatives to reduce inequalities are having an impact. The Council, with its partners has achieved a significant outcome for its community in Trimdon which has moved out of the areas of severe deprivation this year, achieved through targeting resources on this area. The Council has also put £800,000 into neighbourhood enhancement programmes this year, topped up in areas of severe deprivation to further reduce inequalities
- 31** The Council has been working well with partners to improve community outcomes. In particular it has developed its training partnership to develop a further education college for the first time in Sedgefield, and has worked with the Primary Care Trust in delivering the Walking the Way to Health scheme and developing an alcohol harm reduction strategy.
- 32** Value for money (VfM) is generally good. Although the Council is relatively high spending compared to similar councils, this includes Neighbourhood Renewal Funding which is only given to England's most deprived local. High spend areas are in line with the Council's priorities. Service standards and satisfaction are generally good and in general quality is high. Areas which need improvement are tackled. For example changes to staffing levels and the introduction of new information technology systems meant there were small improvements in council tax collection rates, during 2007/08 which have increased in 2008/09. Planning turnaround times also improved in 2007/08. Recent changes made to the housing maintenance arrangements through the partnership with Mears Group PLC, a new capital and repairs and maintenance service have yet to achieve all the planned outcomes, but early indications are that the partnership is working well and tenant satisfaction has been maintained.
- 33** The council has exceeded its Gershon efficiency targets and has made savings across its functions, with cumulative savings of £4.2 million.
- 34** The Council has lost a high number of jobs since 1998 (15 per cent), but it has still managed to lower its worklessness slightly. Overall, the Council has the worst figures for job creation, low employment and high unemployment of the 59 authorities the Audit Commission looked at in analysing data for its national coalfields review. It has fallen behind the other 58 coalfield districts, reflecting the relatively high proportion of employment in the area within the manufacturing sector which has declined in recent years. This is an area that will need to be tackled.

How is Sedgefield Borough Council performing?

How much progress is being made to implement improvement plans to sustain future improvement?

- 35 The Council's Transition Plan brings together the priorities from its corporate plan and the Sedgefield Local Strategic Partnership Plan. It rationalises the Council's priorities, sets out clearly the arrangements for the management of the authority up to the handover period and how the Council will participate in the development of the new authority. It set out the Council's key priorities for service improvement, investment and savings during the transition period and the key capital projects to be progressed.
- 36 The Council has prioritised to ensure it has capacity to deliver plans and supported staff through training . It has not lost many key staff although it has committed more than 30 officers to relevant workstreams to help shape the development of the new council and this has reduced its capacity to develop services but it has maintained service levels in line with its transition plan. Establishment controls have been relaxed to allow temporary staff to fill the gaps. However sickness absence remains a problem which could threaten the quality of services. Although rates have reduced slightly from a high of 14.51 days per employee in 2007/08, they are still high at 12.24 days (quarter two 2008/09).
- 37 The Council has curtailed its Making Change Happen programme to allow it to focus on supporting the new unitary council while maintaining services, but VFM was reviewed throughout 2007/08. For example for council tax and benefits services were reviewed and improved in line with recommendations. The scrutiny function continues to function and transition plan updates are standing items on Management Team and Cabinet agendas.
- 38 Improvement plans are mainly limited to major schemes rather than service improvement, due to officers concentrating on maintaining service levels and preparation for the new Council. Good progress is being made in all of the capital schemes included in the transition plan including the regeneration of Sedgefield and Newton Aycliffe town centres, the one stop shop Pioneering Care Centre and the training partnership with Bishop Auckland College.
- 39 Performance management continues to be robust. The transition plan is monitored regularly and reviewed by management team. Quarterly monitoring of key performance indicators continues and systems have been updated to capture data for new national performance indicators.

Access to Services inspection

40 An inspection of access to services in County Durham covering all eight local councils in the county was undertaken in 2008. The inspection was not a detailed review of the approach taken by each individual district or the county council and therefore does not make judgements about individual councils or have scored judgements. The purpose of the inspection was to gain a county wide perspective on access to services and identify key issues for the new unitary council. The final report was published in July 2008 and the key findings were as follows.

- All councils in County Durham have a strong commitment to improve the way in which local people can access their services and they have taken a broad range of approaches. There is strong leadership across the county which is championing customer care, together with a genuine commitment and positive attitude to developing new approaches. All of the councils have had an explicit vision or priority to improve customer services for some time. However several councils have halted their improvement programmes due to LGR.
- All councils have made some good, but recent, progress but overall arrangements across the County are fragmented and lack coherence. Arrangements are still relatively underdeveloped compared to higher performing councils nationally. How easy it is to access services depends very much on where people live and whether their preferred contact method has been actively promoted by the council in that area.
- Front line customer service staff in all councils demonstrate genuine commitment to delivering a high quality service to the public and appear well skilled to handle enquiries efficiently. They also have good local knowledge.
- All councils demonstrate a genuine commitment to responding to the needs of local people but the overall approach is variable and knowledge of residents' access needs is mostly out of date. There is good engagement with some groups, for example, Gypsies and Travellers, faith networks, young people, area forums and tenant and residents groups. However councils do not consistently and proactively seek the views of people who do not access their services and work is only just beginning in this area.
- The councils generally work well with partners, but partnership working to allow cross-organisational access to services is generally under-developed.

The audit of the accounts and value for money

- 41 As your appointed auditor I have reported separately to the full Council on the issues arising from our 2007/08 audit and have issued:
- my audit report, providing an unqualified opinion on your accounts and value for money (VfM) conclusion on 26 September 2008; and
 - the report on the Best Value Performance Plan confirming that the Plan has been audited.

The key issues arising from the audit

- 42 The closure of the 2007/08 accounts was very challenging due to the significant demands placed on key officers, including:
- the introduction of a number of complex new accounting requirements;
 - ongoing involvement in LGR workstreams dealing with finance related issues; and
 - involvement in the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) project at critical times during the year.
- 43 Nevertheless the Council complied with statutory deadlines for approving and publishing the accounts and the quality of financial reporting was adequate. There were however a number of non-trivial errors which required amendment and re-approval of the accounts by the Council before the unqualified audit opinion was given. The detail behind these errors was reported to Council in September 2008, in our Annual Governance Report. These issues led us to reduce the use of resources score for the financial reporting element to level 2 (see below).
- 44 Looking forward the loss of key accountancy staff and the need to account for the complex LSVT of housing assets will make the 2008/09 closure equally challenging. This emphasises the importance of working closely with the new unitary council to prepare and implement a clear plan and programme for how the 2008/09 final accounts will be produced.
- 45 Overall the Council has good management arrangements for ensuring data quality and during the past year has made further improvements in a number of areas. Our testing of two national performance indicators for the speed of processing of housing and council tax benefit claims and the speed of processing of housing and council tax benefit changes found that they were fairly stated.

Use of Resources

- 46 The findings of the auditor are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made by the auditor in the following areas.
- Financial reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public).
 - Financial management (including how the financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities).
 - Financial standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position).
 - Internal control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances).
 - Value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).
- 47 For the purposes of the CPA we have assessed the Council's arrangements for use of resources in these five areas as follows. These results will be published by the Audit Commission in March 2009.

Table 1 Use of resources scores

Despite the additional demands placed upon the Council due to the implementation of LGR, the Council has continued to maintain and, in some areas, strengthen its arrangements

Element	2007/08 assessment	2006/07 assessment
Financial reporting	2 out of 4	3 out of 4
Financial management	4 out of 4	3 out of 4
Financial standing	3 out of 4	3 out of 4
Internal control	3 out of 4	3 out of 4
Value for money	3 out of 4	3 out of 4
Overall assessment of the Audit Commission	3 out of 4	3 out of 4

Note: 1 = lowest, 4 = highest

- 48 The use of resources assessment continues to be a harder test with a number of new requirements to be met in 2007/08. Despite this, and the additional pressures and uncertainties created in the period leading up to LGR, the Council has improved or maintained its performance in most of the areas assessed. There was one issue which led to a reduction in the score for financial reporting, which is summarised in paragraph 43 above.

The audit of the accounts and value for money

- 49 This means that overall the Council is 'performing well' in its use of resources and has effective and embedded arrangements to deliver adequate or better performance across all those areas that have been assessed.
- 50 The Council is particularly strong at financial management, which received a level 4 score. Notable practice in this area included:
- conducting a self-assessment of budget holders during the year with very positive results; and
 - issuing quarterly accrued management reports to budget holders to illustrate the impact of financial performance on balance sheet items.
- 51 The Council has also managed a large capital programme well and the outsourcing of housing repairs and maintenance has not reduced service quality. Tenant satisfaction remains relatively high and time taken to complete housing repair work is low compared to other councils.

Local Risk Work

Managing sickness absence

- 52 In light of Sedgefield's high sickness absence statistics, in common with those of other council's in the area, the Commission produced a report in May 2008 on how well councils across Durham and Tees Valley manage sickness absence. The report indicated issues particular to each council, but also made a number of overall findings, which are relevant to the operation of the new unitary council. These are as follows.
- There were clear policies and procedures in place and comprehensive data available to monitor and improve sickness absence levels, but the application of the policies and procedures was inconsistent.
 - Those councils that were reducing levels of sickness tended to have a corporate focus on reducing sickness and good levels of timely information provided to line managers who were well supported in managing sickness.
 - Those most effective at reducing sickness absence placed responsibility with managers to provide information on a regular basis, although information was not always reported in a timely, consistent or comprehensive format or provided as required at different levels of the organisation.
 - Improvement was not consistently focused on challenging targets for services to reduce sickness absence.
 - The implications of high levels of sickness absence and hence the need for challenging targets were not well understood or communicated, with little understanding or attempt to understand individual departments' contribution to corporate targets.
 - Councils generally provided a good working environment with a good range of health and well-being initiatives in place for staff, although these were in some cases on an ad-hoc basis and are not always well communicated to staff.

- 53 At Sedgefield the 2007/08 average sickness peaked at 14 days per FTE, which was the highest in the County. The Council agreed an action plan with us to address the problem and introduced a new sickness policy to apply across all departments. Sickness is now reducing, partly due to the outsourcing of the housing repair service mentioned earlier, but remains relatively high and stubbornly above target.

Health Inequalities

- 54 The Audit Commission and Deloitte have been reviewing how organisations across the North East work together to address health inequalities and what the challenges are. Last year we looked at how councils, police, primary care trusts (PCTs), health trusts and other public sector bodies and the community and voluntary sector partners within areas across the north east were working together. This work concluded that in general, organisational partners were good at identifying the problem and agreeing priorities but less good at developing targeted strategies, commissioning and delivery of services and monitoring and evaluating.
- 55 As part of the final phase of our work we have reviewed how partners are working together to reduce alcohol harm in County Durham. This was selected for review in recognition of the significant issues arising from alcohol.
- Adults in the North East are more likely to drink heavily than adults in the rest of England.
 - There is a higher prevalence of 'hazardous' or 'dependent' alcohol consumption in the North East than in other English regions.
 - There are higher rates of alcohol related morbidity in the North East among men and women than in the rest of England;
 - The overall cost of alcohol misuse in the North East is approximately £1billion per year.
 - All the Durham Districts have higher rates of hazardous, harmful and binge drinkers than nationally.
- 56 The review has assessed how agencies are addressing the challenges and working together to reduce health inequalities and the harm caused by alcohol. The report focuses on the outcomes of that work and will feed into a region-wide report on health inequalities.
- 57 Recent developments and activity is promising.
- There has been increased mainstream investment of £1.3 million this year and £1 million next (amounting to £4.66 per head of population across Durham County) and a focus on strengthening the arrangements across all agencies. It is too early to see the results of this effort but the key elements necessary to achieve the huge changes needed are in place or developing.
 - Needs assessment has identified gaps in services and informed the investment of sustainable funding to address this agreed priority. Good progress is being made. Arrangements are being strengthened in line with national recommendations and local piloting has been used to evaluate initiatives before they are rolled out across the county.

The audit of the accounts and value for money

- Sustainable funding has been secured to support initiatives but there is still some short-term funding which could result in valuable expertise being lost. There are still gaps in services particularly specialist inpatient services.
- Considerable effort is being made to target services on the areas identified through joint needs assessment, but much of the information is based on estimates and needs to be strengthened by collecting actual alcohol consumption data. The proposed new GP enhanced service should strengthen the identification of needs and subsequent treatment including hard to reach groups.
- Accountability within the partnership groups is clear and performance relating to high level national targets is monitored.

58 However there are areas that require further development.

- Agreement of a new County wide commissioning strategy to target outcomes that reduce the harm caused by alcohol.
- Reduced reliance on nationally recognised estimates of alcohol consumption by collecting local data to more accurately inform service plans and coverage.
- Strengthening of arrangements to ensure data quality between partners.
- Detailed performance measures and targets to ensure that commissioned services deliver the required outcomes to reduce the harm caused by alcohol.

59 The links between the health and community safety aspects of alcohol related harm are clear in partnership arrangements and strategies. There is wide representation across all partners. However not all agencies have a named alcohol lead and front line staff across the County need to be trained to use the new audit tool and brief interventions to address alcohol misuse.

Looking ahead

- 60 The Council will be all too well aware that Sedgefield Borough Council will demise on 31 March 2009, and may therefore question the relevance of a section in this letter devoted to 'Looking Ahead'. However:
- even in the short period remaining to vesting day there are important projects and responsibilities that remain to be delivered; and
 - some members will continue to represent the Sedgefield public through their role in the new Unitary council or activity within the local political parties.
- I therefore felt it appropriate to provide some comment on the coming few months and beyond, some of which summarises issues already raised early in this letter.
- 61 The key focus for the Council throughout the LGR period has been to ensure that service performance and standards of conduct and probity are at least maintained, if not improved. It is commendable that this has been largely achieved to date and that no significant failure of service have occurred to date. However as vesting day approaches the pressures and risks will increase, not least through the quickening erosion of capacity as staff leave or are seconded into the new organisation.
- 62 It is therefore crucially important that the Council maintain its effort to secure the objective of seamless handover and maintained service. This will require:
- dynamic and rigorous evaluation of risks, to track and respond to developing issues which 'flare up', together with robust action plans to address them;
 - frequent and timely performance monitoring updates, so that early warnings are provided of developing 'pressure points' and diminishing services;
 - refinement and delivery of plans to ensure that staff resource shortfalls are addressed, so that sufficient capacity is maintained in all key areas; and
 - actively engage the new Unitary Council to clarify responsibility, plans and timetables for the closure of the 2008/09 accounts. It is perhaps surprising that even at this relatively late stage, we are unable to confirm some of the basic arrangements for accounts closure, including crucially the role of the new Unitary Council and its officers.
- 63 With regard to the audit work programme, we will not be carrying out an assessment of the Council's use of resources arrangements for the 2008/09 financial year. We will however audit the Council's financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2009 and give our conclusion on the adequacy of your arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's use of resources. We expect to report our value for money conclusion and opinion on the 2008/09 accounts, along with our 2009 Annual Audit Letter to the new unitary council in September 2009.
- 64 In the final months of the Council's existence we will continue to work closely with officers to ensure that any remaining audit work is completed and reported efficiently.

Closing remarks

- 65 This letter has been discussed and agreed with Brian Allen (Chief Executive). A copy of the letter will be presented at the full council on 27 March 2009. Copies need to be provided to all Council members.
- 66 Further detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations on the areas covered by audit and inspection work are included in the reports issued to the Council during the year.

Table 2 Reports issued

Report	Date of issue
Audit and inspection plan	March 2007
Interim audit memorandum	May 2008
Review of sickness absence	May 2008
Access to Services Inspection Report	July 2008
Annual Governance Report	September 2008
Opinion on financial statements	September 2008
Value for money conclusion	September 2008
Final accounts memorandum	September 2008
Review of capital expenditure	September 2008
Annual audit and inspection letter	February 2009

-
- 67 In a period of significant change, we remain grateful for the Council's continuing positive and constructive approach to audit and inspection work. With this in mind we wish to thank the Council's staff for their support and cooperation during the audit. We would also like to take this opportunity to wish the staff and members of the Council well for the future.

Availability of this letter

- 68 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk, and also on the Council's website.

Marion Talbot
Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead

Cameron Waddell
District Auditor

March 2009

The Audit Commission

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23rd March 2009

REPORT OF
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

Portfolio: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Annual Governance Statement 2008/09

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Account and Audit Regulations 2003 and 2006, requires the Council to ensure that its financial management arrangements are adequate and effective and that there is a sound system of internal control in place which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.2 The Regulations also require the Council to conduct a review at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its system of internal control.
- 1.3 To facilitate this requirement, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) have produced guidance for Local Authorities to follow. Individual Heads of Service and Directors have been requested to review their current internal control and governance arrangements and a Corporate Annual Governance Statement (AGS) covering all aspects of the Council's activities has now been compiled.
- 1.4 The AGS will eventually be incorporated into this Council's Annual Statement of Accounts (SOA) which will be considered by the new authority in due course after the final accounts have been completed later this year.
- 1.5 A Statutory Instrument has recently been issued, which requires those Councils that are to be abolished with effect from 1st April 2009, to approve a Statement of Internal Control for the 2008/09 financial year, prior to their demise.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is therefore for this Committee to review the content of the Annual Governance Statement, prior to its submission to the Council on 27th March 2009. Any comments that this Committee may have on the content of the Statement will be conveyed to the Council for its consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Audit Committee approves the Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09, as shown in the Appendix, and recommends its acceptance by Council

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Regulation 4 of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006, requires the Council

to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and to prepare an appropriate statement in accordance with “proper practices”.

3.2 “Proper practice” for the purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE framework document “Delivering Good Governance in Local Authorities - Guidance Note for English Authorities”. This document suggests the form and content of a governance statement to meet the requirement to prepare and publish a statement on internal control in accordance with the above regulations.

3.3 The Framework document suggests that the governance statement should include the following information:

- An acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control).
- An indication of the level of assurance that the systems and processes that comprise the Council’s governance arrangements can provide.
- A brief description of the key elements of the governance framework.
- A brief description of the process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance arrangements, including some comment on the role of :

The Council
The Executive
The Audit Committee
Internal Audit
Other explicit review/assurance mechanisms

- An outline of actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance issues, including an agreed action plan.

3.4 The Framework also points out that it is important to recognise that the governance statement covers all significant corporate systems, processes and controls, spanning the whole range of the council’s activities, including in particular those designed to ensure that:

- The Council’s policies are implemented in practice.
- High quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively.
- The Council’s values and ethical standards are met.
- Laws and regulations are complied with.
- Required processes are adhered to.
- Financial statements and other published performance information are accurate and reliable.
- Human, financial, environmental and other resources are managed efficiently and effectively.

3.5 The Governance Statement is therefore expected to cover performance issues – good governance promoting good service but poor service performance reflecting a failure of governance.

- 3.6 Consequently, the Framework document suggests that approval and ownership of the governance statement should be at a corporate level and should be confirmed by the most senior officer and the most senior member signing the statement on behalf of the Council.
- 3.7 Equally, it goes on to point out, that the review and approval of the governance statement by a member group separately from the accounts will help ensure its robustness and reinforce its corporate standing. They must therefore be satisfied that the document is supported by reliable evidence and accurately reflects the internal control environment.
- 3.8 As a result of the re-organisation of Local government in some areas of the Country with effect from 1st April 2009, the Government has introduced a number of transitional arrangements for those authorities affected to implement.
- 3.9 Usually the Annual Governance Statement, which incorporates a Statement of Internal Control, is prepared and considered by the Council after the end of the financial year and as part of the arrangements to approve the Council's Statement of accounts, normally at the end of June.
- 3.10 As a number of authorities will be abolished from 1st April 2009, the Government require those authorities to prepare and approve an up to date statement of the way in which their financial affairs are controlled internally (a Statement of Internal Control) prior to their demise
- 3.11 Any ongoing or incomplete audit issues at 31st March 2009 will be discussed and handed over to the appropriate officers of Durham County Council.

4. ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS

- 4.1 A group of senior officers with involvement in corporate management, who have been tasked with monitoring the Council's governance arrangements, met to consider how to provide the necessary assurance statement for the 2008/09 financial year, bearing in mind that this Council will be abolished on the 1st April 2009. This group subsequently prepared a draft AGS highlighting appropriate Transition Plan issues and any other areas of concern they were aware of. This draft was circulated to the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service for comments/approval and any comments received were considered and a revised AGS was then produced.
- 4.2 The group also reviewed evidence submitted by the Audit Resources Manager to demonstrate the effectiveness of the system of internal control, which is also recommended best practice. The review included the following:
- A self assessment measuring Internal Audit compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government, which was issued in 2006.
 - The Audit Commission's Use of Resources score on the Internal Control theme.
 - The Audit and Resources Manager's Interim and draft Annual Reports to the Audit Committee on the internal audit activities throughout the year.
 - Customer satisfaction survey results.
- 4.3 The work undertaken by the LGR Workstreams, with appropriate involvement of the Council's officers, has effectively provided another layer of governance in terms of

identifying risk issues and implementing appropriate actions to maintain/improve services and associated governance.

5. CORPORATE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

- 5.1 As mentioned above, the resultant Corporate Annual Governance Statement for the 2008/2009 financial year is attached to this report as an Appendix.
- 5.2 In accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE guide and best practice, the statement covers the following areas.
- The scope of responsibility
 - The purpose of the governance framework
 - The governance framework itself
 - A review of its effectiveness
 - Outstanding issues from previous statements
 - Any significant governance issues
- 5.3 Whilst the statement is generally very positive, there are a number of issues identified in the document where there is recognition of the importance of having sound internal control and governance arrangements in place at the new Council during 2009/2010 to improve the governance environment, in particular in connection with some of the Council's Transition Plan projects and in dealing with ongoing issues involved in the re-organisation of local government in the County.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

7. CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 Directors and Senior Officers from all Departments have been involved in the production and approval of this Statement.

8. LINKS TO CORPORATE OBJECTIVES/VALUES

- 8.1 Reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal controls ensures that the following corporate values have been addressed.
- Being responsible with and accountable for public finances.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 If the Council is not able to demonstrate to the Audit Commission that it has effective systems of internal control and governance arrangements in place, or any weaknesses were not being addressed, it would inevitably have a detrimental effect on any Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) review by the Audit Commission.
- 9.2 If there were not adequate control arrangements in place, there is the possibility of financial losses being sustained by the Council as a result of fraud, overpayments to creditors, loss of income etc., with such risks potentially continuing within the new authority.

9.3 If detailed procedural notes were not available to support the control environment, there could be a possibility that the business critical services provided by the Council could be affected by events such as a pandemic flu outbreak, a major fire or flood or utility supply disruption etc.

10. HEALTH AND SAFETY

10.1 No additional implications have been identified.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

11.1 No additional implications have been identified.

12. LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL

12.1 The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Further Transitional and Supplementary Provision and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2009 which has recently been introduced, requires Councils that are to cease to exist from the 1st April 2009 to approve a Statement of Internal Control for the 2008/09 financial year, prior to their abolition. The Council is therefore complying with its statutory responsibilities to produce this Statement.

13. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

13.1 No other material considerations have been identified.

14. LIST OF APPENDICES

14.1 Appendix 1 Annual Governance Statement 2008/09

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Ward(s) Proposals are not ward specific

Background Papers: Various Account and Audit Regulations
CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Document – “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”

Statutory Instrument 2009 No. 276 - The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Further Transitional and Supplementary Provision and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2009.

Examination by Statutory Officers:

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

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2008/2009

Scope of Responsibility

Sedgefield Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty, under the Local Government Act 1999, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'*. A copy of the Local Code is on our website at www.sedgefield.gov.uk or can be obtained from the Head of Financial Services. This Statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 in relation to the publication of a Statement of Internal Control.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The Governance Framework comprises the systems and processes and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled, and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of Internal Control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not

absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of Internal Control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The Governance Framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31st March 2009 and this Governance Statement has been prepared immediately prior to the demise of Sedgefield Borough Council from 1st April 2009 as a result of the establishment of the new Durham County Council as a unitary authority.

The Governance Framework

The Council has maintained and developed comprehensive governance processes designed to ensure the achievement of objectives, quality of service and public accountability through proper systems of internal control and management arrangements. Key areas of good governance include the setting of strategic and operational objectives, quality performance management information, risk awareness, financial regulations compliance and internal check procedures, all supported by an appropriate management structure with supervision, delegation and accountability accepted as fundamentals.

The present governance arrangements include the following, and are subject to continuous improvement by management:-

- Regular establishment and review of the Council's priority areas, including both strategic and major operational activities.
- Comprehensive performance management processes to ensure targets are established and monitored on major activity areas.
- A Council Constitution which includes clear decision-making processes, responsibility for functions, a scheme of delegation, financial/budgetary/procurement regulations, codes of conduct and management structure.
- Ongoing development of risk management arrangements, to ensure both strategic and operational areas across the Council are addressed.
- Comprehensive budgeting processes supported by effective budgetary control information systems.
- Management review of operational performance efficiency.

- Well developed and controlled systems covering the Council's major financial activities.
- Financial performance reviews against forecasts, to ensure best use of available resources.
- Capital programme framework designed to maximise quality project delivery in accordance with the strategic visions of the Council.
- Project management principles applied to ensure project delivery compliant with expectations.
- Well developed and communicated codes of conduct for Members and Officers, supported by processes for declarations of interest.
- Maintenance of an Internal Audit service responsible for reviewing all significant resource and performance areas of the Council.
- Well developed consultative arrangements with the Audit Commission, which complement their statutory role in reviewing and reporting on the Council's control framework.
- Regulatory and review responsibilities maintained by the Council's Audit Committee.
- Responsibility for compliance with relevant laws, regulations and policies placed with senior managers, with Legal Section support as necessary.
- Comprehensive public complaints processes maintained.
- Well developed public consultation and communications strategies to ensure participation and accountability.
- Appropriate governance arrangements developed to cover major Council partnerships in existence around the Borough.

Review of Effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its Governance Framework, including the System of Internal Control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Directors and Heads of Service within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the work of the Council's Internal Audit team and also by comments made by the Audit Commission in their role as the Council's external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

Arrangements are in place to maintain and review the effectiveness of the Governance Framework. The Council's Constitution requires an annual review of the Governance arrangements to be undertaken and reported to Council as the "body charged with

Governance". The Audit Committee is also involved in reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's Governance arrangements when considering the progress being made by the internal audit team during the year in achieving the Annual Audit Plan objectives. A final report on the work of Internal Audit during 2008/09 was considered by the Audit Committee on 23rd March 2009.

Significant Governance Issues 2008/09

Transition Plan

The 2007/08 Governance Statement highlighted the major initiatives identified in the Council's Transition Plan and the importance of appropriate governance arrangements on the initiatives. The position on these is as follows:-

Housing Partnering Arrangements:

The partnering with Mears Ltd., for housing construction services, has operated since February 2008, and appropriate management and monitoring of performance has been developed during 2008/09.

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of the Council's Housing Stock:

Following a positive result in the July 2008 LSVT ballot of tenants, intensive actions were undertaken, aimed at ensuring that Sedgefield Borough Homes (SBH) was established from 30th March 2009. Project Teams for both the Council and SBH were established, supported by appropriate professional advisers. The Tenants Services Authority will be responsible for ensuring that the management, performance and governance of SBH are satisfactorily developed and maintained. From 1st April 2009, Durham County Council will be responsible for the monitoring of the Transfer Agreement to ensure that SBH meets its delivery promises made to tenants.

Coalfields Housing Renewal:

The renewal of the Borough's former coalfield areas is progressing well. The Council has worked with neighbouring local authorities regarding English Partnerships funding, and a Joint Venture Collaboration agreement is almost in place.

This work will be incorporated within a wider New Growth Points programme across South and East Durham.

New Training Service and Centre for the Borough:

The transfer to Bishop Auckland College was completed in November 2008. A new governance structure has been agreed for monitoring progress against the main project vision and objectives. A Construction and Skills Sub-Committee will be established as part of the overall College Corporation. The nomination will be 4 / 4 split between SBC (then the Durham County Council as the successor authority) and Bishop Auckland College.

Redevelopment of Newton Aycliffe Town Centre:

The regeneration of Newton Aycliffe town centre is progressing well.

Round-table discussions between the town centre owners, Durham County Council, Sedgefield Borough Council, County Durham PCT and District Valuers continue to agree a series of property transactions to facilitate next phase of redevelopment.

Arts Resource Centre:

Design work on the Arts Resource Centre within Spennymoor Leisure Centre has progressed well and physical works on site are expected to commence during March 2009.

Contractual arrangements with the Council's fitness suite partner Competition Line are integral to the development at Spennymoor, as well as to the further development of the fitness suites within Shildon and Ferryhill Leisure Centres. The proposals are to be considered shortly by Durham County Council.

The major financial implications on the partnership arrangements with Competition Line will require ongoing corporate governance review by the new authority

Other Governance Issues

Local Government Reorganisation in County Durham:

The Council's initial approach to strategic risk has been revised to better accommodate the requirements of the re-organisation of Local Government in County Durham from April 2009. Many of the most important issues affecting the Council will have been highlighted by the various Workstreams established under LGR. All Workstreams are required to operate using sound risk management practice to address identified risks.

Major Financial Systems:

The Council's major financial systems have operated satisfactorily during the year and commitment to operate within a sound internal control environment, with fully reconciled

systems, has been maintained. It is understood that these important systems will continue to operate within the new authority for some time, before being replaced. It is essential, therefore, that the well developed and long-standing financial controls associated with these systems are maintained by the new authority.

The Council is working with the new authority to ensure risks in relation to financial systems, feeder systems, reconciliations, data, security of assets and accounts close down arrangements have been appropriately managed during the transition process.

ICT Security Policy:

A number of the documents that would form the overall ICT Security policy have been approved and introduced by the Head of ICT but there are still a number of other documents to complete.

This is an important issue for the new County Council to address and has been flagged up in the appropriate workstream for further consideration in a County wide context.

Treasury Management:

Following recent turmoil in financial markets, and potential investment losses faced by many public authorities (but not Sedgfield), the Council has reviewed its treasury management investment principles to provide an enhanced level of protection of assets.

Overall Governance Conclusion

We are satisfied that the Council has maintained and operated within a governance framework appropriate to the provision of services, throughout the financial year.

Signed on behalf of Sedgfield Borough Council:

Councillor Mrs. Agnes Armstrong (Leader of the Council)

Brian Allen, C.P.F.A. (Chief Executive)

Item 8

REPORT TO COUNCIL

27TH MARCH 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Portfolio: Planning and Development

Cornforth Conservation Area—Article 4(2) Direction—2009

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Article 4(2) Direction has been made in order to introduce additional planning control within Cornforth Conservation Area where changes to the visual elements of all dwelling houses facing a highway or The Green are likely to have a direct impact upon the special character of the conservation area.
- 1.2 Under provisions in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 the Borough Council can make an Article 4(2) Direction which would assist the Council's positive policy of enhancing the Cornforth Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The draft Article 4(2) Direction was subject to consultations between 16th February and 13th March 2009 by way of a notice served on individual householders, local news paper advertisement and an entry in the Council's web site. The consultation did not produce a single response.
- 1.4 A copy of the draft Article 4(2) Direction and accompanying plan is attached to this report.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Council agree the report and formally adopts the Article 4(2) Direction within Cornforth Conservation Area.

3 THE ARTICLE 4(2) DIRECTION WITHIN CORNFORTH CONSERVATION AREA

- 3.1 The Cornforth Conservation Area has been and is the subject of considerable enhancement works under a Conservation Area Partnership Scheme jointly funded by English Heritage, Durham County Council, Cornforth Parish Council and Sedgefield Borough Council. It is a three year programme terminating at the end of 2009/10 financial year.

The enhancement works have comprised environmental improvements to The Green surrounded by predominantly residential properties and restoration and repairs to many of these properties by way of reinstatement of architectural features that have been lost over the years.

3.2 Article 4(2) Direction

The legislation contained in the Planning Acts does not seek to prevent development in Conservation Areas, but rather to ensure proposals do not detract from their wider character. It is, however, recognised that even minor works of alteration that are not classified as “ development “ within the terms of the Planning Acts, can have an effect on the wider character if they result in the erosion or loss of features that contribute to a strong feeling of local identity. This identity can be the result of architectural detailing, materials, street layout and surface treatment.

A rolling programme of Conservation Area Character Appraisals within the Borough is currently being undertaken, the Appraisal for Cornforth Conservation Area and Management Plan having just been endorsed by the Development Control Committee on 6th March 2009.

When undertaking these Appraisals various considerations are taken into account, including the appropriateness of the existing planning controls. Where deemed appropriate the mechanism for tightening planning controls over changes that are likely to directly impact on public views-usually the front of the house facing the street or The Green, is termed an Article 4(2) Direction, which Direction can be served by an appropriate local planning authority under provisions in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

Once served the Direction takes immediate effect and lasts for up to six months pending a decision to confirm, modify or revoke taking into account any representations received during the 21 days consultation period offered to all those owner and occupiers of every dwelling house within the relevant part of the Conservation Area to which the Direction relates.

The need for an Article 4(2) Direction within Cornforth Conservation Area has also arisen from a condition of the English Heritage grant aid being provided as part of the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme referred to above. It is expected by English Heritage that this Direction is in place

before the end of the current financial year in order that the public investment committed towards enhancement of the Conservation Area is not lost in the future by uncontrolled alterations and development of the very features made possible by public grant aid.

It can be seen from the above that the making of an Article 4(2) Direction is essential not only in order to comply with the condition of English Heritage grant but to serve as an important Development Control tool that will ensure that the enhancements achieved through public grant aid are secured for the future and that the special character of the Cornforth Conservation Area can continue to be preserved and enhanced for the next generation. The consultation exercise has not generated any objections or comments.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no resource implications associated with the adoption of the Article 4(2) Direction.

5 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 The Draft Article 4(2) Direction was subject to a period of over 21 days public consultation in February and March 2009. The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the consultation methods outlined in Section 6 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

6 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Links to corporate Objectives/Values

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

6.2 Legal Implications

The Direction must be confirmed in accordance with Section 7 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

6.2 Risk Management

If the Article 4(2) Direction is not confirmed then inappropriate uncontrolled alterations may be proposed to the visible elevations of dwelling houses that would materially harm the special character of the Conservation Area which is currently being enhanced with the help of public money.

6.3 Health and Safety Implications

No implications have been identified.

6.4 Sustainability

There are no sustainability issues

6.5 Equality and Diversity

The Article 4(2) Direction will be made available in alternative languages, Braille or in audio format where requested and will be placed on the council's website in pdf format

6.6 Social Inclusion

There are no social inclusion issues.

6.6 Procurement

There are no procurement issues.

7 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None.

8 **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Cornforth Conservation Area--Article 4(2) Direction—2009

Contact Officer: Bill Katakay

Telephone No: (01388) 816166 ext 4522

Email Address: bkatakay@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s): Bishop Middleham & Cornforth

Key Decision Validation: This is a key decision as it will in future affect the Development Control functions of the Local Planning Authority.

Background Papers : Cornforth Conservation Area Appraisal
Cornforth Conservation Area Management Plan
The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

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"/>

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Scale: 1:1,250 @ A3

- CORNFORTH CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- PROPOSED BOUNDARY OF ARTICLE 4 (2) DIRECTION
- ARTICLE 4 (2) DIRECTION BUILDINGS

MAYOR

AUTHORISED SIGNATORY

David Lee

DATE

6th February 2009

THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF SEDGEMOUTH TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT) ORDER 1995

ARTICLE 4 (2) DIRECTION - 2009 CORNFORTH CONSERVATION AREA

DESIGN AND CONSERVATION, LANDSCAPE & TREES TEAM

G. HALL DIRECTOR, NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

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SECOND SCHEDULE

Properties within the area of the Cornforth Conservation Area to which the Direction relates:-

- Peartree Cottage
- Peartree House
- The Green - 1,2,3,4,5,6,9,10,11,12,12a,13a,13,14,15,16,17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 45, 46, 47, 49, 53, 54, 55
- East View - 1, 2, 3
- Village Farm - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Braemont
- Stonesdale
- Barcroft
- Bria Way
- The Old School House

and for the purpose of identification only edged by a dotted line on the plan annexed hereto.

Dated this 6TH day of FEBRUARY 2009

Given under the Common Seal of Sedgefield Borough Council, Green Lane, Spennymoor, Co Durham, DL16 6JQ

Mayor JP
Authorised Signatory Demi ailes



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Item 9a

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE 2

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Monday,
22 October 2007

Time: 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor T.F. Forrest (Chairman) and

Councillors D. R. Brown, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. E.M. Maddison and

N. Smalley - Inspection and Licensing Services Manager
D. Rackstraw - Principal Assistant Solicitor

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. D. Bowman, P. Gittins J.P., G.C. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray, Mrs. S. Haigh, G.M.R. Howe, Ms. I. Jackson, Mrs. C. Potts, A. Warburton and W. Waters.

LC2.4/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D. R. Brown declared a personal interest in Item No : 3 as he was a Member of Sedgfield Town Council.

LC2.5/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 31st August, 2007 were confirmed as a correct record. (For copy see file of Minutes).

LC2.6/07 LICENSING ACT 2003 DRAFT STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

NB : In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Members Code of Conduct, Councillor D.R. Brown declared a personal interest in this item and remained in the meeting.

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

Members of the Committee were informed that the Licensing Act 2003 required all Licensing Authorities to prepare and publish a Licensing Policy on a 3 yearly cycle.

It was explained that the draft document had been submitted to Licensing Committee on 31st August, 2007 and following the conclusion of the statutory public consultation process, comments had been received from :-

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

Details of the comments received were highlighted in the report together with any consequent amendments to the Policy and any other action taken.

It was noted that since the preparation of the report additional observations had been received from the Association to Licensed Multiple Retailers relating mainly to door supervision on premises after midnight and sale of alcohol to underage drinkers.

Following consideration of the report a query was raised regarding the recent introduction of smokefree legislation and the potential problem which could arise from music being played on premises and doors being left open causing noise and nuisance. In reply Members were informed that such situations would be monitored and if necessary Environmental Health had the power to service enforcement notices.

It was also explained that if premises wanted to provide outside entertainment for smokers, an application for a Variation of a Licence would be required.

Members also queried whether the Policy, which was to be in existence for the next three years would be adopted by a new unitary authority. It was explained that the new unitary would formulate one major document for the County.

Members raised a query concerning the way in which new applications were be advertised. It was pointed out that copies of the relevant Notice were displayed on the premises itself and in local newspapers.

Members raised concerns regarding the problem of underage drinking. It was explained that it was very difficult in some cases for Licensees to identify underage drinkers and that training and instruction could be given to the licenceholder to pass on to all staff.

It was also pointed out that although the whole of Sedgefield Borough area was covered by Pubwatch, unfortunately not all premises had signed up to the scheme.

RECOMMENDED : *That the draft Statement of Licensing Policy subject to any amendments recommended by this Committee be submitted to Cabinet for information and then to Council for approval on 23rd November, 2007.*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

Item 9b

SEDGFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHIEF OFFICER APPOINTMENTS PANEL

Chief Executive's
Conference Room,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
27 March 2008

Time: 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong (Chairman) and
Councillors V. Crosby, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. B. Graham, T. Hogan and
Mrs E. M. Wood

Apologies: Councillors Ms. I. Jackson

COAP.1/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

COAP.2/07 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2007 were confirmed as
a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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 items of
business on the grounds that they may involve the
likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in
Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12a of the Act.*

**COAP.3/07 RESOURCES DEPARTMENT - ESTABLISHMENT - HEAD OF ICT
SERVICES**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Resources seeking
approval to upgrade of the Head of ICT Services to reflect the changes in
responsibilities and enable the continuation of the joint management
arrangement for ICT with Wear Valley District Council. For copy see file of
Minutes)

It was pointed out that grade referred to in paragraph 3.3 of the report
should read HPO3(1) not HPO2(1).

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

COAP.4/07

**SHARED MUTUAL SUPPORT - PROPOSED TEMPORARY
RELOCATION ARRANGEMENT - SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive regarding the Council's response to a request from Durham County Council for legal support to cover certain duties arising from a vacancy within the County Council Legal Division. (For copy see file of Minutes)

RESOLVED: That the arrangement detailed in the report be approved.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. Gillian Garrigan, Council Offices, Spennymoor Tel (01388) 816166 Ext 4240

Item 9c

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
6 January 2009

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor A. Gray (Chairman) and
Councillors V. Chapman and T.F. Forrest

**Observer
with
Chairman's
Consent** Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong and V. Crosby

**In
Attendance:** Councillors G.C. Gray, J.E. Higgin, J.G. Huntington, B. Lamb and
A. Smith

Apologies: Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, D.R. Brown, D. Farry, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh,
T. Hogan and B.M. Ord

SL.19/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received.

SL.20/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th November, 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

**SL.21/08 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY - CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN -
PROGRESS UPDATE**
Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Organisational Development setting out progress made to date on equality issues within the Council against the Corporate Equality Plan (CEP). (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report set out progress to date on the following :-

- Equality Standard for Local Government
- Corporate Equality Plan Action Plan
 - Leadership and Corporate Commitment
 - Community Engagement and Accountability
 - Service Delivery and Customer Care
 - Employment and Training
 - Future Issues

It was pointed out that the Council's Corporate Equality Plan had been updated to reflect recent legislation.

Reference was made to the Council's challenging target of achieving Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by February, 2009. It was explained that this would leave a positive legacy for the Borough in terms of Equality and Diversity. The Corporate Equality Plan was a pre-requisite for achieving this and was key to strengthening and formalising corporate commitment to equalities which would be carried forward to the new Council in April, 2009.

Members were of the opinion that Sedgefield Borough Council had made significant progress in relation to Equality and Diversity and thanked all staff involved.

Cabinet Members then left the meeting to allow the Committee to deliberate.

- AGREED :*
- 1. That the progress made to date be noted.*
 - 2. That the revised Corporate Equality Plan associated schemes and Action Plan be supported.*

SL.22/08

WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Work Programme for the Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that no items had been identified for the final meeting of the Committee on 10th February, 2009.

- AGREED :* *That the Work Programme be noted.*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

Item 9d

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL HEALTHY BOROUGH WITH STRONG COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
13 January 2009

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor J.E. Higgin (Chairman) and
Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. P. Crathorne, Mrs. S. Haigh,
Ms. I. Jackson, A. Warburton and T. Ward

Mrs. M.Thomson (Tenant Representative)

In

Attendance: Councillors V. Chapman, Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, A. Gray, G.C. Gray,
B. Haigh, D.M. Hancock, J.G. Huntington, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison and
A. Smith

**Observer
with
Chairman's
Consent**

Councillors V. Crosby and W. Waters

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. D. Bowman, J. Burton, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson,
K. Thompson and Mrs E. M. Wood

H&S.25/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received.

H&S.26/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November, 2008 were confirmed
as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**H&S.27/08 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT - THE
PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING - PROGRESS ON ACTION
PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report detailing progress to date on the
Cabinet's response and action plan following consideration of its
recommendations arising from the Provision of Affordable Housing
Review. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the Head of Community Services was present at the
meeting to outline progress and respond to any queries.

Members were reminded of the background to the Review and
recommendations provided by the Review Group, the action plan which
had been drawn up and suggested timescales.

Details on progress of each action were outlined. It was explained that
some areas were completed whilst others were still ongoing.

With regard to the key recommendation on the adoption of a local definition of affordable housing, it was explained that a definition had been agreed and was currently in use in relation to all relevant planning applications. The definition could be subject to adjustment in terms of Local Government Reorganisation.

In respect of a Housing Needs Assessment and house price data it was noted that a Durham Housing Market Assessment had been published in December, 2008. This Assessment replaced the previous Housing Needs Survey.

Reference was made to the implementation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme. It was explained that Sedgefield Borough Council had worked in partnership with other County Durham District Authorities to produce a Durham Key Options Common Lettings Policy which had been approved by Durham County Council's Cabinet in December, 2008.

With regard to the formalising of links with Registered Social Landlords, in respect of nominations, it was reported that a formal nomination agreement with all Registered Social Landlords had recently been agreed.

The Committee was informed of progress in relation to the recommendation on working to ensure effective use of private sector stock through regeneration and action to bring empty properties back into use. It was explained that a Selective Licensing Scheme covering Dean Bank and West Chilton had been implemented in February, 2008. 86 licences to date had been awarded. A Landlord Accreditation Scheme had been launched in May, 2008. An Empty Homes Strategy had also been devised and approved by Sedgefield Borough Council's Cabinet in October, 2008.

Members noted that the publication of a Supplementary Planning Document had been overtaken by Local Government Re-organisation.

In respect of the production of model Section 106 Agreements this had been completed and the Council now used that model.

During discussion of this item a query was raised regarding the criteria for the Provision of Affordable Housing and in particular the number/percentage of properties to be provided on new developments. In response it was explained that discussions were held with the developers before reaching a figure. It was extremely difficult to be prescriptive. However, the Council have a strong evidence base to indicate to developers the need for affordable housing.

Reference was also made to local needs and in particular information contained in the Taylor Report. Further information would be sought in relation to that report and the query would be responded to directly.

Cabinet Members then left the meeting to allow the Committee to deliberate.

AGREED : That the Committee is satisfied that the actions following the Overview and Scrutiny Review on the Provision of Affordable Housing had been implemented or are ongoing and that no further reports are required.

H&S.28/08 DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th September, 2008 and 21st November, 2008 (for copies see file of Minutes).

Members were updated on the public consultation exercise “Seizing the Future” which NHS County Durham were undertaking. Durham County Council had undertaken a scrutiny review in relation to the consultation. A report had been prepared which would be submitted to the County’s Health Scrutiny Committee and then forwarded to NHS County Durham.

AGREED : That the Minutes be received.

H&S.29/08 WORK PROGRAMME

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

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

AGREED : That the Work Programme be agreed.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss. E.A. North, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4237, enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk

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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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Item 9f

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
5 February 2009

Time: 1.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor L. Petterson (Chairman) and
Councillors A. Gray, T. Hogan and Mrs. E. Maddison

Independent Member
Mr. I. Jamieson

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. L. Hovvels and Ms. I. Jackson

Parish Town Council Members
Councillors J. Marr, R.S. Fleming and D. Waters

Independent Member
Mr. B. Argyle

ST.16/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ST.17/08 STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND - LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS - QUARTERLY STATISTICS - QUARTER 2
Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council concerning the above. (For copy see file of Minutes)

It was reported that Sedgefield Borough Council complied with the recent change in the composition of Standards Committees.

Members were informed that there had been quite a large number of complaints received since 7th May, 2008. This may have been a result of a misunderstanding on the behalf of complainants as to the purpose of the assessment procedure. Members of the public seemed to be under the impression that the procedure was to take corrective action or punish Councillors, rather than training and ethics improvements. Members conduct outside their capacity as Councillors could not as yet be considered by Standards Sub-Committees, however, this would change in the future.

A query was raised regarding articles being published in local newspapers and whether this was done only after a judgement had been made. Members were informed that there were restrictions on publications of standards issues and that all letters sent out by the Monitoring Officer were done so in confidence. It was not the role of the Monitoring Officer to consider any instances where information had been released

inappropriately. However, anyone affected by this would be able to submit a complaint.

Members queried the average time taken to process complaints which were received. It was reported that as a result of the lack of clarity surrounding most complaints, the average time taken to prepare each one was between 5 and 6 hours. Assessment Committees usually last between 30 – 45 minutes. If a complaint was to be investigated, this would require an external agent and would be expensive. Therefore the need to properly educate people on the standards procedures was stressed.

AGREED : That the report be noted.

ST.18/08

LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS - UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council updating Members on complaints that had been received during the period 8th May to 31st December, 2008. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were informed that 9 complaint forms had been returned, some involving a complaint against more than one Councillor. All these complaints had been determined by an Assessment Sub-Committee. A request for a review of a decision had also been made and referred to a Review Sub-Committee for re-assessment. The report gave information on the types of complaints made and the decisions made by the Assessment Sub-Committee.

AGREED : That the report be noted.

ST.19/08

REVIEW OF CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive Officer providing details of the findings of the review of the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were informed that the policy had only been invoked on two occasions since its introduction in April, 2001. Minor amendments had been made to the policy since April, 2001 to represent changes in the Council's organisation structure and the constitutional requirement to review the policy annually.

AGREED : That the report be noted.

ST.20/08

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

As this was the last meeting of the Standards Committee before Local Government Reorganisation, the Monitoring Officer gave a closing statement.

It had been 8 years since the Local Government Act, 2000 brought into effect the regime for the ethical Code of Conduct for elected members. The agenda had been challenging for members of the Standards Committee as a result of the significant changes that had taken place.

The Monitoring Officer stated that it was to the great credit of all members of the Committee that they had shown a consistent and dedicated approach to implementing those changes and supporting the role of the committee as a respected, independent and impartial body within the Authority. He thanked all members of the Committee, in particular the chairman and Councillor Gray, for their continued support. He also thanked the Independent Members of the Committee who had served over the years and the support staff, in particular Julie Johnson who had stepped in as the Standards Support Officer.

Thanks were also extended to the political leadership and Chief Executive of the Council who had demonstrated a clear commitment to ensuring that the Standards Committee and its Sub-Committees could operate effectively.

The Monitoring Officer then announced that he would be leaving Local Government service at the end of March. The new Monitoring Officer from then on would be the Acting Head of Legal Services for the new authority, Lesley Davies.

Members of the Committee expressed their appreciation towards the Monitoring Officer and his staff for all of their hard work and dedication.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss J. Stubbs, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4508, juliestubbs@sedgefield.gov.uk

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Item 9g

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 2 FORUM

Dean Bank and Ferryhill
Literary Institute

Tuesday,
17 February 2009

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. C. Potts (Chairman) – Sedgefield Borough Council and

Councillor B. Avery J.P.	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs P. Crathorne	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor D. Farry	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor T. F. Forrest	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs Z. Roddam	–	Ferryhill Town Council
Councillor S. C Drew	–	West Cornforth Parish Council
A Rutherford	–	Chilton Partnership
L. Dixon	–	Chilton Partnership
M. Taylor	–	Chilton West Residents Association
M. Mitchell	–	Chilton West Residents Association
B. Sheppard	–	Dean Bank and Ferryhill Literary Institute
B. Gibson	–	Ferryhill Community Centre
J. Weston	–	Dean Bank Resident
K. Tracey	–	Chilton Resident
O. Tracey	–	Chilton Resident
P. Forrest	–	Resident
R Greenwell	–	Resident
K Dare	–	NHS County Durham

In

Attendance: N. Woodgate and J. Stubbs (Sedgefield Borough Council)

Apologies:

Councillor T. D Brimm	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs K. Conroy	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J. E. Higgin	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Hodgson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B. Lamb	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor D. A. Newell	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
C Heal	–	Chilton Partnership

AF(2)26/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

AF(2)27/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes)

AF(2)28/08 POLICE REPORT

There was no representative from the Police available to attend the meeting. This was a result of an emergency situation involving the execution of a warrant.

AF(2)29/08 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on project activity as part of Sedgefield Borough Council's Local Improvement Programme. (For copy see file of Minutes)

With regard to the football facility at Dean Bank Park, in January 2009 Ferryhill Town Council had received clarification that a grant of £705,839 had been awarded from the Football Foundation. Combined with LIP funding this would result in a £1m proposal in Dean Bank Park. Subject to a tender exercise, it was hoped that work would start on the project in early summer.

The Number 66 Cornforth Partnership, Chilton Environmental Improvement Programme, Mainsforth Community Centre and Dean Bank Institute Gala Room projects were now complete. Work was ongoing with the West Cornforth Community Centre and Bishop Middleham Village Hall projects. Additional funding for the West Cornforth Community Centre project had been obtained, which would enable the whole project to go ahead as outlined in the application. £26,245 was contributed by Section 106 and £26,000 by Banks. A planning application had been submitted for the Pentlands Play Area project.

It was reported that the Regeneration Team would continue supporting the groups who had received grants in the implementation and monitoring of projects.

The Regeneration Officer thanked all of the Area Forum participants for their involvement in, and support for the LIP Programme over the past 3 years.

Members of the Forum also thanked the Regeneration Section for all of their hard work in making the Programme a success.

AGREED : That the report be noted.

AF(2)30/08 CHILTON HEALTH CENTRE

K. Dare from NHS County Durham was present at the meeting to give an update on the progress being made on Chilton Health Centre.

It was reported that the purchase of the land for the centre was in the hands of solicitors, however, could not be completed until the whole project was secure and costs finalised. Work was ongoing with the developer to negotiate costs. When this was complete the final business case, which was expected to be received in the next few weeks, would go through the approval process. The medical practice also had a possible alternative site in mind in the event that any issues developed.

Members were informed that maintenance and improvements would be made to the existing centre in order to meet Health and Safety and healthcare standards. This was necessary as it was expected to be 18 months until the new facility would be complete.

NHS County Durham would continue to liaise with County Councillors and Area Action Partnerships in order to keep residents informed of progress.

Parish Councils would also be kept informed and it was suggested that notices would be placed in the existing health centre.

AF(2)31/08 QUESTIONS

Area Action Partnerships

A query was raised regarding the final constitution of the Area Action Partnerships. It was reported that this had not been decided yet. However, there was a draft, which was out for consultation.

The importance of partnerships and residents associations meeting informally to discuss problems and issues to feed into the Area Action Partnerships for consideration was stressed.

AF(2)32/08 AREA 2 FORUM

As this would be the last Area 2 Forum to be held before Local Government Re-organisation, the Chairman thanked residents and Members for all of their support.

The Forum also thanked the Chairman for all of her hard work.

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Item 9h

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 3 FORUM

Youth and Community
Centre,
Fishburn

Wednesday,
25 February 2009

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor T. Ward (Chairman) – Sedgefield Borough Council and
Councillor D.R. Brown – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor D. Chaytor – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. L. Hovvells – Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor P. Brookes – Durham County Council
Sergeant B. O'Connor – Sedgefield Police
Councillor Mrs. M. Brown – Sedgefield Town Council
Mrs. L. Swinbank – Sedgefield Town Clerk
Councillor Mrs. B. Thomson – Trimdon Parish Council
L. Oliver – Trimdon Parish Clerk
Mrs. G. Norton – Local Resident

In Attendance: Mrs. L. Walker and Mrs. N. Woodgate (Sedgefield Borough Council)

Apologies: Councillor J. Burton – Sedgefield Borough Council
J. Robinson J.P – Sedgefield Borough Council
J. Irvine – Fishburn Parish Council

AF(3)21/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received.

AF(3)22/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 7th January, 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

AF(3)23/08 POLICE REPORT
Sergeant B. O'Connor was present at the meeting to give details of crime statistics in the area.

It was reported that crime statistics during the period 8th January, 2009 to 25th February, 2009 were as follows :-

<u>Type of Crime</u>	<u>Sedgefield</u>	<u>Fishburn</u>	<u>Trimdon Village</u>	<u>Trimdon Grange/ Station</u>
Burglary (Dwelling)	3	0	0	0
Burglary (Other)	1	1	2	0
Theft	3	0	1	1
Criminal Damage	5	3	2	2
Assault	4	0	0	
Vehicle Crime	10	5	5	4
Violence against a person	0	0	0	2
Total Incidents reported	240	101	75	44

Reference was made to the theft of vehicles. It was reported that as a result of improved vehicle security it was now common for car keys to be stolen in order to take the car.

Reference was made to motor cycles being ridden by youths in the open space behind Fishburn Industrial Estate. It was explained that the Police were aware of the problem and would make every effort to get the off-road motor cycle unit to target the area.

Discussion took place in relation to the Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. It was pointed out that attendance at these meetings was beginning to increase.

Particular reference was made to the neighbourhood priority of littering at Skerne Avenue, Trimdon Village. It was pointed out that wardens had carried out a litter picking exercise and only a small amount of litter had been collected. The main problem was people disposing of litter in residents gardens.

It was highlighted that rats were also a problem around Skerne Avenue play area. This would be reported to Sedgefield Borough Council's Environmental Health Department the following day.

Concern was expressed regarding anti-social behaviour emanating from privately rented properties in Fishburn. It was suggested that the Selective Licensing Scheme be rolled out across the Borough.

As this was the last meeting of the Area 3 Forum, the Forum thanked the Police for their attendance at Area Forum meetings.

AF(3)24/08

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Chief Executive providing an update on project activity as part of the Sedgefield Borough Council's Local Improvement Programme. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the purpose of the LIP programme was to improve community assets and support community engagement in the regeneration of local areas.

It was noted that Area 3 Forum had been allocated £532,000 of LIP capital resources between 2006/09. It was reported that Area 3 was over-subscribed by £116,501 following the cut-off date of 31st July, 2008. Cabinet had considered all project applications received from the Area 3 locality and had allocated funding accordingly. The current position with approved Area 3 Forum projects was set out in the report.

It was reported that the application process for LIP was closed, work would continue supporting the Groups who had received grants to assist with the implementation of the project. This would include monitoring of the

intended outcome to ensure that targets outlined in the applications for the residents within the locality were met.

The Regeneration Officer thanked all of the Area Forum participants for their involvement in and support for the Lip Programme over the past three years.

Members of the Forum also thanked the Regeneration Section for all of their hard work in making the Programme a success.

AF(3)25/08 LAST MEETING OF AREA 3 FORUM

As this would be the last Area 3 Forum to be held before Local Government Re-organisation the Chairman thanked residents, members and officers for all of their support.

The Forum also thanked the Chairman for his hard work.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. L. Walker Tel 01388 816166 ext 4240 email lwalker@sedgefield.gov.uk

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Item 9i

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 4 FORUM

Shildon Civic Hall,

Tuesday,
3 March 2009

Time: 6.30 p.m.

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

Councillor V. Chapman	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor D.M. Hancock	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Ms. I. Jackson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
PC Mughal	–	Durham Constabulary
J. Johnson	–	New Shildon Residents Association
C. Thompson	–	New Shildon Residents Association
D. Saddler	–	Shildon Nifty Fifties
C. Hind	–	Shildon Resident
H. Nicholson	–	Shildon Resident
A. Walker	–	Shildon Resident

Apologies: Councillor G.M.R. Howe - Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J.G. Huntington - Sedgefield Borough Council

AF(4)1/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

AF(4)2/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

AF(4)3/08 POLICE REPORT
PC Mughal was present to provide details of crime statistics and initiatives taking place in the area.

The reported crime figures for December 2008 and January 2009 were as follows:

	DECEMBER	JANUARY
All Theft	20	34
Burglary Dwelling	13	7
Burglary Other	3	9
Theft of a Vehicle	0	2
Theft from a Vehicle	8	8
Fraud	2	0
Robbery	0	0
Criminal Damage	39	30
Drug Offences	1	1
Assaults	11	8

It was reported that Neighbourhood Policing Priorities were discussed at the Police and Community Together meetings. (PACT). The next PACT meetings were scheduled for:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Thickley | - 10 th March 2009 at 6.30 p.m. at Jubilee Fields Community Centre |
| Byerley | - 18 th March 2009 at 6.30 p.m. at Shildon Civic Hall |
| Sunnydale | - 18 th March 2009 at 7.30 p.m. at Shildon Civic Hall |

It was explained that the meetings would be attended by a representative from the Neighbourhood Policing Team and individual neighbourhood priorities would be discussed. All members of the community were welcome to attend.

Concern was expressed regarding the number of motorists speeding through Eldon and the fact that there had been a number of accidents lately which had resulted in three horses being killed. It was requested that the problem be considered prior to the new community centre at Eldon coming into operation. PC Mughal reported that he would refer the matter to Michael Straugheir, Traffic Management, Durham Constabulary.

Concern was also expressed regarding the number of motorists in Shildon parking on double yellow lines.

AF(4)4/08

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - OVERVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which gave an update on project activity in relation to the Sedgefield Local Improvement Programme (LIP) (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that Cabinet had considered all the project applications received from the Area 4 Forum locality and funding had been allocated accordingly.

The Forum's attention was drawn to the table detailed on the front page of the report which gave the position to date.

It was pointed out that although the application process for the Local Improvement Programme was closed, officers would continue to support the groups who had received grant funding to implement the projects and monitor the intended outcomes to ensure that the targets outlined in the application were met.

Officers would also work with the sponsors of projects who had been unsuccessful to try and secure additional external grant monies.

The Forum thanked the officer for the support given by the Regeneration Section to all project sponsors.

AF(4)5/08

CHAIRMANS APPRECIATION

Councillor B. Stephens thanked all Members of the Forum for their attendance at meetings and hoped that the Area Action Partnership would continue the good work for the benefit of the residents of Sildon.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

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Item 9j

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Friday,
6 March 2009

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor A. Smith (Chairman) and

Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, W.M. Blenkinsopp, D.R. Brown, V. Chapman, D. Chaytor, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. P. Crathorne, V. Crosby, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, G.C. Gray, B. Haigh, Mrs. I. Hewitson, A. Hodgson, T. Hogan, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, D.A. Newell, B.M. Ord, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. C. Potts, J. Robinson J.P, K. Thompson, A. Warburton and W. Waters

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, Mrs. D. Bowman, T. Brimm, J. Burton, Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, P. Gittins J.P., Mrs. J. Gray, Mrs. S. Haigh, D.M. Hancock, J.E. Higgin, Mrs. L. Hovvels, G.M.R. Howe, J.G. Huntington, Mrs. S. J. Iveson, Ms. I. Jackson, J.M. Khan, C. Nelson, B. Stephens, T. Ward and Mrs E. M. Wood

DC.99/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were received :-

Councillor V. Crosby	-	Item 4(1) – Borough Matters – Personal and prejudicial – involved in discussions at Chilton Town Council
Councillor J. Robinson., JP.,	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal and prejudicial – Member of Durham County Council
Councillor B.F. Avery, JP.,	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal and prejudicial – Member of Durham County Council
Councillor Mrs. E.M. Paylor	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal and prejudicial – Member of Durham County Council

Councillor B.M.Ord	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal and prejudicial – Member of Durham County Council
Councillor K. Thompson	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal and prejudicial – Member of Durham County Council
Councillor Mrs. C. Potts	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal and prejudicial – Member of Durham County Council
Councillor Mrs. B. Graham	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal – Member of Durham County Council
Councillor D. Brown	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal – Member of Durham County Council
Councillor D. Farry	-	Item 6 – County Matters – Personal – Member of Durham County Council

DC.100/08

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 6th February, 2009 and 20th February, 2009 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

DC.101/08

APPLICATIONS - BOROUGH MATTERS

Consideration was given to a schedule of applications for consent to develop (for copy see file of Minutes).

Application 1 – Installation and Operation of a Biomass Fired Heat and Power Plant and Ancillary Facilities including offices, storage and processing plant and equipment and reconfiguration of existing wood pellet factory – WPE Site Chilton Industrial Estate – Dalkia Bio Energy Limited, Staines, Middlesex – Plan Ref : 7/2008/0522/DM.

NB : In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act and the Member’s Code of Conduct, Councillor V. Crosby declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon.

It was noted that Members of the Committee had recently received a letter from Dalkia Bio Energy Limited outlining various points and raising various issues in relation to the report on the application.

The Committee considered that, bearing in mind the points raised in the letter and the need to ensure that all relevant information was considered when determining the application, the application should be deferred for further investigation.

RESOLVED : That the application be deferred pending further discussions.

Application 2 – Outline Application for Business Accommodation (Use Class B1) and associated car parking to include ancillary facilities including retail units (Use Classes A1, A3 and A5) Public House (Use Class A4), Hotel (Use Class C1), Day Nursery (Use Class D1), Health and Fitness Unit (Use Class D2) and Health Centre (Use Class D1) with associated car parking, residential development, detailed design of means of access and associated highway work – Black and Decker Limited, Spennymoor – Cast Leeds – Plan Ref : 7/2008/0488/DM.

It was explained that the application sought outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the site currently occupied by Black and Decker Limited for a mixed development of business use, ancillary uses including retail, public house, hotel, day nursery and health centre, health and fitness unit and residential development.

Members were informed that the application had been accompanied by a comprehensive range of documents which were outlined in the report. The application included comprehensive details of access arrangements within the application site boundary. It was noted that if the application was approved matters including appearance, landscaping, layout and scale would be reserved for future consideration. It was likely that there would be a significant number of reserved matters applications during the next few years.

It was considered that the proposal represented a scheme of local and regional significance in its potential to regenerate that part of Spennymoor and to create employment opportunities.

It was reported that the provision of affordable housing had been agreed in principle, subject to assessment of need and viability at the beginning of the scheme, and subsequently at key points throughout this long term development project. This matter is intended to be embodied within a Section 106 legal agreement. It was also reported that the Council's appointed consultants had indicated that there might be a need for an affordable housing condition attached to any consent granted. As this matter was raised immediately prior to the meeting, Committee were asked for authority to add an appropriate condition if this proved necessary.

It was also noted that if the application was approved it would need to be referred to Government Office for the North East for the Secretary of State to determine whether the application should be called in for determination.

The Committee was informed that Mr. MacMillan, of Carillion the Project Architect, was present at the meeting to outline the project. He explained that the developers had the confidence and commitment to deliver the project which would bring new businesses to the site. The site location was at the southern gateway to Durham close to transport links etc., which would attract businesses to the area.

Mr MacMillan explained that the quality of the development was imperative and paramount to the developers.

The development would include the reconfiguration of highways to allow access to the site.

In relation to employment the development would create around 2,800 jobs in the long term. There would also be opportunities for construction training apprenticeships.

In terms of sustainability the development would take place on a phased basis over the next 15 years and represented an efficient use of the land. Discussions were being held with One North East regarding funding.

The infrastructure/highway works were key to the development.

In conclusion he considered that the development provided a potential unique vision and would be of regional significance. There would be an opportunity to increase the employment base and the infrastructure works were to be welcomed.

RESOLVED : That the application be approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report and an additional affordable housing condition if considered necessary.

Application 3 – Reserved Matters Application for the Approval of the Means of Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Scale and Layout for the Erection of 182 Dwellings – Land at Watson Court, Green Lane Industrial Estate – Persimmon Homes, Newcastle-upon-Tyne – Plan Ref : 7/2008/0639/DM.

The Committee was reminded that on 19th December, 2005 outline planning permission had been granted for residential development on land at Watson Court, Spennymoor. This decision was made following a Public Inquiry after the Committee had originally refused the proposal on the grounds that it would be a noise sensitive development in an industrial area which would be incompatible with its surroundings.

The Secretary of State granted outline planning permission subject to a variety of conditions including a condition requiring details of the siting design and external appearance of the buildings to be submitted together with details of the means of access and landscaping of the site.

Persimmon Homes had sought approval in January, 2008 for the siting, design and external appearance of 232 residential units. This application was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant and ongoing negotiations had taken place between officers and the developers which had culminated in the submission of a revised proposal.

The revised proposal sought reserved matters approval for the appearance, scale and layout, landscaping and means of access. The scheme entailed 146 houses and 36 apartments.

The application was accompanied by a design and access statement and also a detailed landscaping scheme.

It was suggested that if the application was approved the following additional condition would need to be included:-

Prior to the occupation of 75th Dwelling the existing access road from Enterprise Way shall be removed and the area top soiled and seeded in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to comply with Policy T6 (Improvements in Road Safety) of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan.

RESOLVED : That the application be approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report and the following additional condition:-

Prior to the occupation of 75th Dwelling the existing access road from Enterprise Way shall be removed and the area top soiled and seeded in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority
Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to comply with Policy T6 (Improvements in Road Safety) of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan.

Application 4 – Erection of New Research and Development Facility Incorporating Ground Floor Reception, Production and Clean Room Areas with Associated Office and Conference Facilities to First Floor – Plot 3 Netpark, Sedgefield – County Durham Development Company – Plan Ref : 7/2009/0001/DM

The application sought full planning permission for the erection of a new research and development facility incorporating ground floor reception, production and cleaning room areas with associated office and conference facilities at First Floor level.

The application site was located within the grounds of the former Winterton Hospital site on Netpark. The site was located to the south of Thomas Wright Way and was bounded to the east, west and south by a combination of footpaths and cycle route. Existing premises were located to the north and west of the application site whilst St. Lukes Church was located to the south of the application site with residential located to the south west.

The application was accompanied by a design and access statement, biodiversity report, economic statement, foul sewerage and utilities assessment, a tree survey and supporting information relating to land contamination and a site waste management plan.

The Committee was informed that Mr. Karney was present at the meeting to outlined his concerns with the application.

Mr. Karney explained that the site was green land next to an area used for recreational purposes and was close to St. Lukes Church – a listed building. He was concerned regarding noise, pollution and also the parking situation which was limited.

It was also pointed out to the Committee by Mr. Karney that a number of trees had already been cut down and building materials placed on site.

Mr. Karney explained that local residents were not against the development merely the site that had been chosen.

RESOLVED : That the application be approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report.

DC.102/08 APPLICATIONS - COUNTY MATTERS

NB : In accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Act and the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillors D. Brown, D. Farry and Mrs. B. Graham declared a personal interest in this item and remained in the meeting. Councillors J. Robinson, JP., B. F. Avery, JP., Mrs. E.M. Paylor, B.M. Ord, K. Thompson and Mrs. C. Potts declared an interest in this item and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon.

Consideration was given to a schedule of applications which were to be determined by Durham County Council and upon which this Council had been consulted (for copy see file of Minutes).

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

DC.103/08 DELEGATED DECISIONS

Consideration was given to a schedule detailing applications which had been determined by officers by virtue of their delegated powers.

RESOLVED : That the schedule be received.

DC.104/08 APPEALS

Consideration was given to a schedule of appeals outstanding up to 25th February, 2009 (for copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the schedule be received.

DC.105/08 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - CORNFORTH CONSERVATION AREA - REVISED CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND CORNFORTH CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services (for copy see file of Minutes) seeking Committee's approval of the revised Cornforth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the Cornforth Conservation Area Management Plan which had recently been produced by consultants in consultation with the Council and the local community.

In relation to the Appraisal the draft Appraisal had been subject of a public meeting and consultations in July, 2008 and observations and comments were made by the local community.

Following completion of the area appraisal and public consultation in September, 2008 a management plan was prepared having taken into account views arising from the consultation exercise.

RESOLVED : That the Committee approve the revised Cornforth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and management plan.

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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 6 of Schedule 12a of the Act.

DC.106/08 ALLEGED BREACHES OF PLANNING CONTROL

Consideration was given to a schedule detailing alleged breaches of planning control and action taken (for copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : That the schedule be received.

DC.107/08 AUTHORITY TO SERVE A NOTICE UNDER SECTION 215 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT FOR REMEDIAL WORKS

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services (for copy see file of Minutes) regarding the above.

RESOLVED : That the report be received and the recommendations contained therein adopted.

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

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Item 9k

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

AREA 1 FORUM

Memorial Room,
Town Hall,
Spennymoor

Monday,
9 March 2009

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor A. Smith (Chairman)	–	Sedgefield Borough Council and
Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. E. Maddison	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs E. M. Wood	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Inspector W. Bentham	–	Durham Constabulary
Councillor N. Foster	–	Durham County Council
C. Darkes	–	Greenways Residents Association
G. Darkes	–	Greenways Residents Association
J. Brown	–	Middlestone Moor Community Centre
S. Brown	–	Middlestone Moor Community Centre
Councillor C. Maddison	–	Spennymoor Town Council – Member for Tudhoe Grange Ward
D. Gordon	–	Local Resident

In

Attendance: C. Walton, G. Wood and Mrs. G. Garrigan

Apologies:

Councillor Mrs. B. Graham	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Gray	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J.M. Khan	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor C. Nelson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B.M. Ord	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor K. Thompson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor W. Waters	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Miss. S. Armstrong	–	Spennymoor Town Council

AF(1)25/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
No declarations of interest were received.

AF(1)26/08 **MINUTES**
The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

With regard to Minute AF(1)22/08 Library, Cheapside, Spennymoor – it was reported that the concerns regarding the amount of litter found on the steps and paths outside the library at Spennymoor had been reported to the Library Manager and the area was now cleaned on a regular basis.

AF(1)27/08 POLICE REPORT

Inspector W. Bentham, Community Inspector for Spennymoor and Ferryhill, was present at the meeting to give a report on crime statistics and initiatives in the area.

The reported crime figures and road traffic accidents for the period 1st January to 28th February 2009 were as follows:

	<u>January :</u>	<u>February :</u>
Vehicle Crime	11	14
Violent Crime	9	12
Burglary	7	3
Burglary (Other)	4	10
Rowdy Nuisance Behaviour	71	97
Criminal Damage	23	23
Drugs Offence	7	3
Damaged Accidents	9	19
Minor Injuries	5	3
Serious Injury/Deaths	0	0

It was reported that total crime for the period had reduced by 9%. Anti-social behaviour showed a reduction of 3.3%, with youth related anti-social behaviour down by 21.3%. It was noted that two people were currently in prison awaiting sentencing with regard to burglary offences.

With regard to the problem of drug dealing in the Spennymoor area, it was noted that the Police would be making use of the powers introduced by the Government to close houses/flats taken over by drug dealers and users and would be exercising a crack house closure within the next week or two. The Order could last up to three months and can be extended for a further three months. During which time the property would be sealed and it was an offence to enter or remain in the property.

With regard to recent publicity regarding Durham Police Authority budget for 2009/010, Members questioned whether the manpower for the Spennymoor area would reduce. The Inspector reported that Spennymoor Police Station would continue to be manned 24 hours. The proposed staffing reductions would relate to backroom staff.

Members expressed concern regarding the problem of youths congregating underneath the Festival Walk shopping centre and consuming alcohol. The Inspector agreed to investigate the problem.

AGREED : That the information be received.

SPENNYMOOR TOWN CENTRE

C. Walton, Head of Planning Services and G. Wood, Corporate Policy and Regeneration Manager, were present at the meeting to give an update on Spennymoor Town Centre.

Members were reminded that the Council had commissioned consultants to assist in the preparation of an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor Town Centre. The aim of the plan was to create a robust planning policy framework which would facilitate the creation of a vibrant and progressive town centre that was well positioned to provide the facilities and services demanded by Spennymoor's growing population

It was reported that a public participation issues and options document had been produced which had been subject to consultation at the end of 2008. The following points had been raised by local residents, property owners and key consultees:

- There was recognition that the boundaries of the town centre needed to expand to allow the town to grow and attract the facilities required by residents.
- The expansion could be controlled through the introduction of a policy which recognised core and secondary areas of the town
- Many respondents expressed concerns about the volume of grocery retail and the lack of choice/product range beyond the various supermarkets.
- Festival Walk should be a retail-led solution rather than grocery retail or mixed use which would reflect the above concerns.
- The former Gas Works site should also come forward as a retail led scheme although a number of people had expressed opinions and support for a leisure/retail mixed use scheme consisting of shops, hotel and family type pub.
- Cheapside was also felt to be best dealt with by retaining a mixed use focus rather than investigating opportunities for some form of public sector administrative use.
- A slight preference was expressed for re-opening the town to car access.

It was explained that it was the original intention to review the Area Action Plan proposals in the light of the above comments and produce a document which would be submitted to the Government Office and then subject to a public inquiry before hopefully becoming planning policy for the town.

As well as working on the Spennymoor Area Action Plan, officers of the Council were also developing a Masterplan for Merrington Lane and looking at the Blacker and Decker site – Durham Gate.

With regard to the Black and Decker site, the Council's Development Control Committee at its meeting on 6th March 2009 had approved an outline planning application for business accommodation, ancillary facilities including retail units, public house, hotel, day nursery and health centre with associated car parking.

The above two schemes formed part of the Growth Point Programme which stretched across the Borough and included sites in Wear Valley and Easington. In addressing these schemes, the County Council had resolved that its new Planning Framework – the Local Development Scheme would include the Area Action Plans for the whole settlements of Spennymoor, Bishop Auckland and Peterlee.

With regard to Spennymoor, the consultants were now working in the detailed implications of development on the other surrounding sites and how all would become fully integrated.

It was pointed out that the new Area Action Partnerships would be used as a main route for consultation. The Spennymoor Area Action Partnership would be launched on Wednesday 6th May 2009 at Spennymoor Leisure Centre.

Concern was expressed regarding the condition of the bandstand in Spennymoor Town Centre which had a number of tiles missing or broken. Officers agreed to request the necessary repairs.

Concern was also expressed regarding the plot of land to the rear of the 'Martin Currington' premises which was strewn with rubbish. It was requested that officers work with the owners to try and improve the area.

Specific reference was made to the issue of fixed penalty fines for littering and dog fouling. It was noted that the Council's Neighbourhood Wardens had been invited to the Town Council meetings to report on their actions. Members of the Forum reported that dog fouling was a problem in Dene Valley area of the town and requested that more enforcement action be taken.

Reference was also made to use of Section 106 monies to support the development of play areas. It was reported that £159,000 had been spent within the past few weeks and a new protocol would be developed by the new unitary authority.

AGREED: That the information be received.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. Gillian Garrigan Spennymoor 816166 Ext 4240

Item 9I

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 5 FORUM

Town Council Offices,
School Aycliffe Lane,
Newton Aycliffe

Tuesday,
10 March 2009

Time: 7.00 p.m.

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

Councillor W.M. Blenkinsopp	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor V. Crosby	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs.L.M.G.Cuthbertson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor P. Gittins J.P.	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. J. Gray	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B. Haigh	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. I. Hewitson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Warburton	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B. Hall	–	Great Aycliffe Town Council
Councillor Mrs. A. Clarke	–	Middridge Parish Council

Apologies:

Councillor G.C. Gray	-	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. S. Haigh	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor T. Hogan	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. S. J. Iveson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. E.M. Paylor	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor V. Raw	–	Great Aycliffe Town Council
Mrs. B. A. Clare	–	Great Aycliffe Town Council
J.P. Rodwell	–	Agnew Community Association

AF(5)27/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received.

AF(5)28/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th January, 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

AF(5)29/08 POLICE REPORT
It was explained that representatives from the Police force were unable to be present from the start of the meeting due to a previous commitment.

AF(5)30/08 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - UPDATE REPORT
Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (for copy see file of Minutes) providing an update on project activity as part of Sedgefield Borough Council's Local Improvement Programme.

The Forum was reminded that the purpose of the Programme was to improve community assets and support community engagement in the regeneration of local areas. Resources were released to improve sites

and improve the useability of communities facilities and buildings across the Borough.

Area 5 Forum had been allocated £1,140,000 of LIP capital resources between 2006 and 2009. The Programme had been over-subscribed by some £208,065 at the cut-off date of 31st July, 2008.

Details were given of the projects which had been approved and their progress.

It was explained that most of the projects were now complete, work was ongoing in relation to Moor Lane refurbishment Newton Aycliffe sporting club and St. Oswalds park.

In respect of Agnew Centre a planning application had been submitted and it was anticipated that works could commence towards the end of March. Appreciation was shown for everyone who had taken part in the LIP Programme bringing forward various ideas and initiatives.

Agreed: That a letter be sent to the Local Improvement Programme Team expressing the Forum's appreciation of the work they had undertaken.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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Item 9m

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
19 March 2009

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong (Chairman) and
Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Hodgson, J.M. Khan and
W. Waters

In Attendance: Councillors V. Chapman, Mrs. P. Crathorne, G.C. Gray, J.E. Higgin,
Ms. I. Jackson, B. Lamb and T. Ward

Apologies: Councillors V. Crosby, Mrs. L. Howvells and D.A. Newell

CAB. 100/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

CAB. 101/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th February 2009 were confirmed as
a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB. 102/08 REDEVELOPMENT OF 'THE ROWS', FERRYHILL STATION
Consideration was given to a report regarding a request from Three Rivers
Housing Group to alter the tenure mix of properties on the above
development site. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the former area of Chapel Row, Ferryhill Station had
been released for new housing development to Three Rivers Housing
Group through a joint venture partnership agreement. The development
which was due for completion by the end of April 2009, consisted of ten
units for sub market rent, ten for shared ownership and ten for outright
sale.

Members noted that as there had been little interest shown in the ten units
available for outright sale in view of the existing market conditions, Three
Rivers Housing Group had requested to move the units into sub market
rent to prevent them remaining empty.

The proposed change would enable Three Rivers Housing Group to assist
applicants who were registered for re-housing with the Council and where
required, those residents displaced from Phase 1 of the Masterplan.

- RESOLVED :*
1. *That the request from Three Rivers Housing Group to alter the tenure mix of the properties be agreed.*
 2. *That nominations be submitted from applicants who are being displaced through Phase 1 of the Masterplan and applicants from the Council's Housing Register.*

CAB. 103/08 AREA FORUMS

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the following:

- Area 2 Forum - 17th February 2009
- Area 3 Forum - 25th February 2009

(For copies see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : *That the Minutes be received.*

CAB. 104/08 EMPLOYMENT ISSUES PANEL

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2009. (For copy see file of Minutes).

RESOLVED : *That the Minutes be received.*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

Item 9n

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Monday,
23 March 2009

Time: 5.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor D. Chaytor (Chairman) and
Councillors J.G. Huntington, Mrs. C. Potts and B. Stephens
B. Argyle – Co-opted Member

Apologies: Councillors T. Brimm and C. Nelson

AC.19/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

AC.20/08 APPRECIATION
The Chairman thanked Councillor J.G. Huntington, Vice-Chairman for his support over the past two years.

He also expressed his appreciation of the support he had received from Paul Heppell and Ross Woodley from the Audit Commission and the work of Alan Smith, Director of Resources and his officers.

He then paid tribute to Brian Argyle for giving up his time to attend and participate at meetings.

AC.21/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

AC.22/08 AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2007/08
Consideration was given to the above letter which included the latest assessment on the Council's performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework, including the Direction of Travel report and the results of any inspections carried out by the Audit Commission under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. (For copy see file of Minutes)

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

The key messages arising from the Inspection were as follows:

- Value for money was generally good. Service standards and satisfaction levels were generally high and the Council had achieved its Gershon efficiency targets.

- The Audit Commission had given an unqualified opinion on the Council's Accounts for 2007/08 and an unqualified conclusion on its arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. For the purpose of the final Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the Council's use of resources arrangements had scored 3 out of 4 overall. Given that the assessment represented a harder test, incorporating some new requirements and in view of the additional challenges posed by impending Local Government Review, it was to the Council's credit that it had maintained its overall performance.
- The prospect of abolition through Local Government Re-organisation had not distracted the Council from maintaining and in some cases further improving already high quality services, focusing on its priorities whilst supporting workstreams for the new Council. It had continued to maintain its good performance, with 38% of Performance Indicators in the best 25% compared to 33% nationally. Some improvements had been made in processing planning applications, council tax collection and repairs and maintenance. However, the Council's sickness absence rates were high and would need to be kept under review by the new unitary Council to ensure costs were reduced and service standards maintained.
- Good progress has been made in major projects, including redeveloping Newton Aycliffe Town Centre and Spennymoor Leisure Centre and the training centre partnership with Bishop Auckland College was proceeding well. However, the existing economic climate was expected to have an adverse effect on the Council's ability to generate capital receipts and progress development schemes planned with private sector partners.
- Until recently the Council had retained its management team despite the uncertainty of Local Government Review, which had enabled it to support the new unitary Council through staff involvement in key workstreams.

Members welcomed the letter which was very positive and noted that it would be published on both the Audit Commission's and the Council's website.

RESOLVED : That the report be received and Council be informed of the Committee's findings.

AC.23/08

REVIEW OF HOUSING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT

Ross Woodley from the Audit Commission was in attendance to give details of the above review.

Members were reminded that Mears Ltd. had been appointed as the Council's strategic partner to undertake construction works from February 2008 to January 2013.

Officers of the Audit Commission had reviewed the tender documents and the partnership agreement to ensure that appropriate controls were in place. They had also met with appropriate officers to discuss the arrangements and had reviewed tenant satisfaction surveys.

Members were pleased to note that the Audit Commission had no issues for concern. All the proper processes had been followed. The contract would appear to offer value for money over the contract period and tenant satisfaction had been maintained.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

AC.24/08

DRAFT INTERIM AUDIT REPORT- MARCH 2009

Consideration was given to the above draft report which summarised the results of the Audit Commission's interim review. (For copy see file of Minutes)

Ross Woodley from the Audit Commission presented the report.

The Audit Commission found that the Council's objective of ensuring business as usual right up to vesting day appeared to have been achieved. Controls were operating similarly to previous years, which was commendable given the significant level of vacancies that the Council had carried in its final year and the involvement of staff on Local Government Re-organisation projects. The Council had an effective control environment and strong budgetary control had delivered considerable assurance that the accounts would not be materially misstated.

Members' attention was drawn to the Action Plan detailed in Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

AC.25/08

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2008/09

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Resources regarding the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2008/09 (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that the Account and Audit Regulations 2003 and 2006 required the Council to ensure that its financial management arrangements were adequate and effective and that there was a sound system of internal control in place which facilitated the effective exercise of the Council's functions and included arrangements for the management of risk.

Members' attention was drawn to the Annual Governance Statement 2008/09 which had been attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

It was explained that in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE guide and best practice, the statement covered the following areas:

- The scope of responsibility
- The purpose of the governance framework
- The governance framework itself
- A review of its effectiveness
- Outstanding issues from previous statements
- Any significant governance issues

The document recognised the importance of having sound internal control and governance arrangements in place at the new Council during 2009/10 to improve the governance environment, in particular, in connection with some of the Council's Transition Plan projects and in dealing with ongoing issues involved in the re-organisation of local government in the County.

RESOLVED : That the Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09 detailed in Appendix 1 be approved and recommended for acceptance by Council.

AC.26/08 INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE - ANNUAL REPORT 2008 - 09 TO 1ST MARCH 2009

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Resources which provided performance information for the first eleven months of the financial year, with details of specific areas of work undertaken in the latter part of the year. (For copy see file of Minutes)

The report had been prepared in accordance with the standards defined in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2006.

Members were reminded that the Internal Audit Plan had been approved by Audit Committee at its meeting on 15th April 2008. The plan had scheduled a total of 808 days for the full year. Actual audit work due to be carried out up to week ending 1st March 2009, totalled 559 days, resulting in a shortfall of 249 days less than planned. The reason for the shortfall was that the Section had been operating with staffing vacancies during the year. As a consequence, audit work had been prioritised during the year, with greater emphasis given to areas of higher risk to ensure that internal audit was able to complete work in those areas and provide a sufficient opinion on the inadequacy of the control environment, with particular emphasis given to the completion of core financial systems work.

Thirty two formal audit reports had been issued during the period of which 21 reports contained recommendations that required implementation by the client department.

RESOLVED : That the content of the Internal Audit Annual Report 2008 - 09 to 1st March 2009 be noted.

AC.27/08 CLOSING REMARKS

Paul Heppell from the Audit Commission paid tribute to the Council's positive and constructive approach to audit and inspection work and thanked officers and Members for their support and cooperation.

Councillor Mrs. C. Potts thanked the Chairman and officers for their work.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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Item 9o

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE 1

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Wednesday,
25 March 2009

Time: 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor C. Nelson (Chairman) and

Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. P. Crathorne,
Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, Mrs. L. Hovvels,
J.G. Huntington and J.M. Khan

Apologies: Councillors D.M. Hancock, Mrs. I. Hewitson, J.E. Higgin, A. Hodgson,
T. Hogan, Mrs. S. J. Iveson, B. Lamb, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, K. Thompson and
T. Ward

LC1.16/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received.

LC1.17/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2009 were confirmed as a
correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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 items of
business on the grounds that they may involve the
likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in
Paragraphs 1,7 and 9 of Schedule 12a of the Act.*

**LC1.18/08 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVERS
LICENCES**
The Committee considered reports of the Director of Neighbourhood
Services regarding applications for Hackney Carriage Drivers Licences.
(For copies see file of Minutes)

Applicants were interviewed on an individual basis and given the
opportunity to outline their case for being granted a licence.

Members of the Committee were given the opportunity to question each of
the applicants.

*RESOLVED: 1. That applicant 4a be granted a Hackney
Carriage Drivers Licence.*

2. *That applicant 4b be refused a Hackney Carriage Drivers Licence on the basis that the Committee considered that the applicant was not a fit and proper person to hold such a licence and was advised of his right to appeal.*
3. *That applicant 4c be refused a Hackney Carriage Drivers Licence on the basis that the Committee considered that the applicant was not a fit and proper person to hold such a licence and was advised of his right to appeal.*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss. J. Stubbs Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4508 email juliestubbs@sedgefield.gov.uk

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL EMPLOYMENT ISSUES PANEL

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Friday,
27 March 2009

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor A. Hodgson (Chairman) and
Councillors A. Gray, G.C. Gray, B. Haigh, Mrs. E. Maddison and A. Smith

Apologies: Councillors D.M. Hancock

EIP.25/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

EIP.26/08 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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 items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12a of the Act.

EIP.27/08 APPLICATION FOR EARLY RETIREMENT/VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY
Consideration was given to a report of Chief Executive regarding an application for early retirement/voluntary redundancy. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the appendix attached to the report which showed how the capitalised costs were to be set against the ongoing savings to be accrued by the new unitary authority. The payback period was well within the requirements of the Council's Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Policy.

RESOLVED : *That the application for early retirement/voluntary redundancy be approved in accordance with the terms set out in the report.*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. Gillian Garrigan, Spennymoor (01388) 816166 Ext 4240

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