

Public Document Pack

27 March 2008

Dear Councillor

A meeting of the Executive will be held in the **Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Monday, 7th April, 2008 at 3.00 pm**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy Templeman', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

R TEMPLEMAN

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of Meeting held 3 March 2008 (Pages 1 - 6)
3. Public Speaking
4. To Receive Declarations of Interest
5. Forward Plan and Work Programme (Pages 7 - 20)
6. Executive Decision Tracker (Pages 21 - 30)
7. Review into Environmental Enforcement in relation to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act 2005 - Cost Benefit Analysis Report (copy to follow)

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|-----|---|----------------------|
| 8. | Housing Strategy
Report Of Acting Head of Regeneration | (Pages 31 -
102) |
| 9. | Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels | (Pages 103 -
148) |
| | (i) Partnership and Efficiency OSP -
Review into Community Partnerships | (copy herewith) |
| | (ii) Regeneration and Housing OSP | (no referrals) |
| | (iii) Leisure and Neighbourhood OSP | (no referrals) |
| 10. | Exclusion of Public and Press. To RESOLVE:
"That, in accordance with Regulation 21 (1) (b) of the Local Authorities
(Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000, the
public be excluded during the transaction of the following business because it
involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs
1, 2, and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972." | |
| 11. | Write-Off Irrecoverable Debts
Report Of Head of Corporate Finance | (Pages 149 -
152) |
| 12. | Provision of Environmental Services to External Partners
Report Of Environmental Services Manager | (Pages 153 -
156) |
| 13. | Regeneration Quarterly Report
Report Of Acting Head of Regeneration | (Pages 157 -
178) |
| 14. | Land Matters
Report Of Acting Head of Regeneration | (Pages 179 -
186) |

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Monday, 3 March 2008 at 3.00 pm.

PRESENT:

Councillor S A Henig, (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Value for Money)
Councillor S Barr, (Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnership Working)
Councillor C J Jukes, (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning)
Councillor M Potts, (Portfolio Holder for Health and Well-being)
Councillor S C L Westrip, (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services)

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), J Henderson (Acting Head of Resources Directorate), J Bradley (Assistant Solicitor), L Howley (Chief Environmental Health Officer), J Johns (Economic Development and Tourism Officer), A Stephenson (Executive Assistant), Mitchinson (Environmental Health Technical Officer) and D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant)

145. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor L Ebbatson.

146. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 4 FEBRUARY 2008

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 4 February 2008, copies of which had previously circulated to Members be agreed as a correct record."

147. MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF EXECUTIVE HELD 18 FEBRUARY 2008

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the Special meeting held 18 February 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members be agreed as a correct record."

Councillor Henig proceeded to sign the minutes.

148. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no questions or representatives received from members of the public.

149. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

150. FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Henig introduced the Forward Plan and Work Programme. Councillor Westrip made reference to the review into Environmental Enforcement in relation to clean neighbourhoods, which was scheduled to come to this Meeting, and requested an update on this. The Director of Development Services explained that unfortunately the report was unable to be completed in time and suggested that this be presented at the next Meeting of the Executive.

It was agreed that the Empty Property Strategy would now be considered in June 2008, as additional information was required to complete this report.

RESOLVED: "That the Forward Plan and Work Programme be noted and updated accordingly."

151. EXECUTIVE DECISION TRACKER

Members considered the Decision Tracker and were updated on the progress on the following items:-

Neighbourhood Management – The Director of Development Services suggested that he report back on this item within the next two months. It was suggested that he speak to the Director of Corporate Services on linking this item to the Council's 'people and places' priority.

Development Framework Principles for the Heart of Pelton Fell – The Chief Executive updated Members on this development particularly in relation to the work on the new community centre and advised that procurement options were now being considered and discussions were taking place with the community. It was suggested that the progress key date for this item be added to the tracker for June 2008.

Report into the review into Leisure Services for Young People – The Director of Corporate Services advised that this item would be drawn into the 'People and Places' priority and be included in the delivery plan undertaken by the action learning set for Strengthening Partnerships and be brought back to Executive in May 2008.

Report into the review of Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – The Director of Development Services confirmed that this item would now be presented in April 2008.

Updates Community Resources Centre at Sacriston – The Chief Executive gave an update on this development. He advised that work on the resource

centre was progressing well even though there had been delays due to the adverse weather conditions and was due to open as scheduled.

Corporate Governance Framework Action Plan – The Director of Corporate Services advised that this information would be reported through the Corporate Performance Report in future and that the next report would be presented in June 2008

RESOLVED: “That the Decision Tracker and the amendments be noted.”

152. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE APRIL TO DECEMBER 2007

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Corporate Services to present a summary of key areas of performance from achieving the corporate plan to complaints from April to December 2007.

The Director of Corporate Services briefed Members on his report and drew their attention to Section 15 of the report, which detailed the key performance summary. This performance information had been looked at by the Performance clinic, extended Management Team and CMT and whilst there was some disappointing performance on BVPI's generally there seemed to be a positive direction of travel overall.

He referred to the draft annual audit letter that had been received from the Audit Commission, which he reported was really positive in terms of the Council's overall performance and that he would be reporting back on this once the final draft had been received.

Councillor Westrip updated Members in relation to the equalities and diversity training and awareness initiatives, which were progressing well and were to be rolled out across the Council in areas of awareness raising and mental health first aid.

In relation to the decent housing standards performance, which were included in the report, Councillor Westrip queried whether these would continue to be reported. The Director of Corporate Services clarified that these would no longer be included in the Corporate performance report and new national indicators would be set as from 1st April 2008.

The Chief Executive clarified that Cestria would monitor the day-to-day performance issues, however they would be required to report back on the homelessness service and the delivery of the offer document.

Councillor M Potts referred to the Local Performance Indicators on page 7 of the report and advised that it was encouraging to see that out of all new housing development in Chester-le-Street District 30% was affordable housing.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED: “That it be noted that Members considered and commented on the progress on improvements and the contents of the Performance in Appendix 1 of the Report which addressed the learning and remedial measures and identified other areas where improvements were required to corporate performance.”

153. PARTNERSHIPS FOR FUTURES

Consideration was given to a report from the Economic Development and Tourism Officer to recommend to Executive the establishment of a dedicated resource, Partnerships for Futures.

The Economic Development and Tourism Officer briefed Members on the report and outlined the scope of activity proposed to be undertaken by Partnerships for Futures which would include workforce development planning with employers and the appropriate connections with support agencies, other employees, prospective employees and apprenticeships. A critical aspect of Partnerships for Futures would relate to working with the education sector to influence the skills supply of the future workforce.

To achieve the Partnership for Futures she outlined the funding that would be required within the budget for 2008/09, the need to appoint an Executive Director and to establish a Board of Partnership for Futures and develop a revised business plan.

She advised of the consultation activity that had been undertaken with a wide range of partners, key employers and internal departments within the Council.

Councillor Barr welcomed the report and queried whether the scheme would include an element to target young people who were not in employment, education and training (NEETs).

The Chief Executive confirmed that NEETS were included as one of the target groups within this project. He explained that the main drive would be to get people into employment and train them so that they would take advantage of job opportunities.

He referred to the recommendations in the report and highlighted the importance that Partnerships for Futures should not be seen to be public sector driven, but the Council still be part of the Board. He asked that Members give consideration to the appointment of a Council Member representative on the Board through a nomination process at the Council Meeting.

He spoke in relation to the appointment process of the Executive Director which could be done through direct employment with the Council or by financing one of the other partnership bodies to act as employer and suggested the recommendations in the report be amended to reflect this.

Councillor Westrip advised that he welcomed the involvement of the secondary schools and referred to a scheme that was being run by Cestria to engage with the schools, which he felt would be a good opportunity to engage them in this project.

The Chief Executive clarified that although Cestria were not indicating their wish to be on the Board of Partnerships for Futures at present he could foresee them engaging in the future. He confirmed that he would report back to Cestria on the views expressed by Members.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations to the report be agreed, subject to the suggested amendments.

RESOLVED:

- (1) "That the Executive approve a commitment of £90,000 in 2008/09 budget to assist in the establishing of Partnerships for Futures, subject to the council approving the budget for 2008/09.
- (2) That it be noted that the Executive supports the establishment of a Partnership for Futures Board and the development of a revised business plan for Partnerships for Futures and that delegated authority be granted for the Chief Executive to look to appoint an Executive Director either through direct employment by the Council or through financing one of the other partnership bodies to act as employer.
- (3) That the Executive recommends that nominations for a Member representative to be appointed onto the Partnership for Futures Board be considered at the Council Meeting."

154. REVISION OF CONTAMINATED LAND STRATEGY

Councillor Henig introduced Marie Mitchinson the Environmental Health Technical Officer to the Executive.

Consideration was given to a report from the Chief Environmental Health Officer to consider the revised Contaminated Land Strategy, which was attached as Appendix A to the report.

The Chief Environmental Health Officer gave a background to Members on the report which had been revised due to the restructuring of the Council and changes to the legislation that drives Contaminated Land. He outlined the areas that needed to be amended and highlighted the three principle changes in the document as well as the timescales involved in taking this forward.

Councillor Barr spoke in relation to engaging with the public on matters surrounding contaminated land and the risk of blight and queried how this was managed. He also referred to land surrounding the District which had been

subject to wrongful use in terms of materials being tipped and whether this strategy would help this situation.

The Chief Environmental Health Officer spoke in relation to the contaminated land process and advised of a risk communication strategy that was to be developed. He summarised the situation in relation to present sites and advised that once this document had been approved specific site surveys could then be carried out to help resolve the problems highlighted.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED: "That it be noted that the Executive considered the draft Contaminated Land Strategy and recommends its adoption by Council."

155. REFERRALS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

There were no referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

The meeting terminated at 3.40 pm



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Executive Forward Plan and Work Programme



April 2008

About this document

Chester-le-Street District council is committed to continuous improvement. We want to make sure that we engage people in the decisions we make wherever we can. We want to let people know what decisions we are going to make and when.

The council's Executive, which is made up of the Leader and five Executive Members have powers to make certain decisions on behalf of the council. This document aims to go further than what the law requires us to do and let people know as far in advance what decisions the Executive is to make on the councils behalf. Where possible and in relation to what are called key decisions, it will let you know how you can make representations and who they can be made to. This document will be published every month at the Civic Centre and on the council's website at www.chester-le-street.gov.uk.

This document is in two parts:

Part One: Chester-le-Street District Council's formal Executive Forward Plan

Part Two: the Executive's Decision Work Programme for the next year

Part One

The Executive Forward Plan is a statutory document which the council must produce every month covering a four month period. It is published fourteen days before it comes into effect. This is the first day of each month. It includes:

- a list of all 'key decisions' the councils will make on the council's behalf;
- details of the nature of the decision;
- details of the decision taker, which in the councils case is normally the council's Executive;
- when the decision is to be made;
- who are the principal consultees and the means by which consultations will be undertaken;
- a list of documents to be considered by the decision maker; and
- details of how and by when representations can be made.

What are 'key decisions'?

'Key decisions' are defined as executive decisions which are:-

- decisions likely to result in the District Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the District Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates, or
- significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the Council

Part Two

The Executive's work programme is not a statutory document which the council must produce. It is advance notice of all other important decisions the Executive will take either on behalf of the council or in making recommendations to the council. It includes:

- a list of the non 'key decisions the councils will make;
- details of the nature of the decision;
- details of the decision taker, which in the council's case is normally the council's Executive as a group;
- when the decision is to be made;
- who are the principal consultees and the means by which consultations will be undertaken;
- a list of documents to be considered by the decision maker; and
- details of how and by when representations can be made.

Who are the Executive?

The Executive is made up of the Leader of the Council and five other Executive Members as follows:

Cllr. Linda Ebbatson	Tel: 0191 387 2090
Leader of the Council with responsibility for Human Resources, Equalities, and Young People	E-Mail: lindaebbatson@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Cllr. Simon Henig	Tel: 0191 387 2090
Deputy Leader and Resources and Value for Money Portfolio Holder	E-Mail: simon.henig@sunderland.ac.uk
Cllr. Chris Jukes	Tel: 0191 389 1136
Regeneration and Strategy Planning Portfolio Holder	E-Mail: chris.jukes1@btopenworld.com
Cllr. Maureen Potts	Tel: 0191 370 0828
Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder	E-Mail: maureenpotts@aol.com
Cllr Simon Westrip	Tel: 0191 387 3512
Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder	E-Mail: simon.westrip@bigfoot.com
Cllr Steve Barr	Tel:0191 388 9907
Community Engagement and Partnerships Portfolio Holder	E-Mail: steve@link1970.fsnet.co.uk

How do I find out when the Executive is meeting?

Information about the time and venue for a particular meeting of the Executive may be obtained from the agenda available from the Reception Desk at the Civic Centre, from the District Council's website or from the Executive Assistant. Public Speaking is allowed at Executive meetings so long as you comply with the council's procedures. To find out more contact Democratic Services.

How do I contact Members of the Executive or the Council Chief Officers?

Contact details for Members of the Executive and for the Council's Chief Officers are set out in this Forward Plan.

If you have any queries about the Forward Plan, please contact the Executive Assistant at the Civic Centre on 0191 387 2010 or e-mail the Executive Assistant at: amandastephenon@chester-le-street.gov.uk.



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Part One: Executive Forward Plan



April 2008



Executive Forward Plan

Summary of Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
Bad Debt report Quarterly Report	Executive	April 2008	Ian Herberson 0191 3872343	Head of Revenue and Benefits Accountancy Manager Internal Auditor	In writing or by telephone, to the Head of Corporate Finance or by email to ianherberson@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Land Matters	Executive	April 2008	Leila Dawson 0191 3872233	Portfolio Holder Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone to the Acting Head of Regeneration or by email to leiladawson@chester-le-street.gov.uk

Summary of Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
<p>Review of the Community Partnerships Report from Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel</p>	<p>Executive</p>	<p>Revised date April 2008</p>	<p>Nigel Cummings</p>	<p>OSMB Relevant Executive Members Key Stakeholders & Partners</p>	<p>In writing or by telephone to the Scrutiny Officer or by email to nigelcummings@chester-le-street.gov.uk</p>
<p>Services to External Partners</p>	<p>Executive</p>	<p>April 2008</p>	<p>Tony Galloway 0191 3872100</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder Corporate Management Team Legal Services</p>	<p>By phone, or in writing to the Director of Development Services or by email to Tonygalloway@chester-le-street.gov.uk</p>
<p>Adoption of People and Place Delivery Plan</p>	<p>Executive</p>	<p>May 2008</p>	<p>Tony Galloway 0191 3872100</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder Corporate Management Team Legal Services</p>	<p>By phone, or in writing to the Director of Development Services or by email to Tonygalloway@chester-le-street.gov.uk</p>

Summary of Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
Land Matters	Executive	May 2008	Leila Dawson 0191 3872233	Portfolio Holder Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone to the Acting Head of Regeneration or by email to leiladawson@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Communities Facilities Working Group Report	Executive	May 2008	Jorge Lulic 0191 387 2232	Relevant Executive Members Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone to the Community Development Manager or by email to jorgelulic@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Land Matters	Executive	June 2008	Leila Dawson 0191 3872233	Portfolio Holder Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone to the Acting Head of Regeneration or by email to leiladawson@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Bad Debt report Quarterly Report	Executive	July 2008	Ian Herberson 0191 3872343	Head of Revenue and Benefits Accountancy Manager Internal Auditor	In writing or by telephone, to the Head of Corporate Finance or by email to ianherberson@chester-le-street.gov.uk

Executive Work Programme

Summary of Non Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
Review into Environmental Enforcement in relation to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act 2005 - Cost Benefit Analysis Report	Executive	Revised date April 2008	Tony Galloway 0191 3872100	Portfolio Holder, Corporate Management Team	By phone, or in writing to the Director of Development Services or by email to Tonygalloway@chester-le-street.gov.uk

Summary of Non Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
Housing Strategy	Executive	Revised date April 2008	Leila Dawson 0191 3872233	Relevant Executive Members Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone to the Acting Head of Regeneration or by email to leiladawson@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Regeneration Quarterly Report	Executive	April 2008	Leila Dawson 0191 3872233	Relevant Executive Members Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone to the Acting Head of Regeneration or by email to leiladawson@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Employee Survey Results	Executive	Revised date May 2008	Ian Forster 0191 3872130	Corporate Management Team Portfolio Holder Employees Trade Unions	In writing or by telephone to the Director of Corporate Affairs or by email to ianforster@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Training and Development Plan	Executive	May 2008	Ian Forster 0191 3872130	Corporate Management Team Portfolio Holder Employees Trade Unions	In writing or by telephone to the Director of Corporate Affairs or by email to ianforster@chester-le-street.gov.uk

Summary of Non Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
Review of Medium Term Financial Strategy	Executive	May 2008	Ian Herberson 0191 3872343	Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone, to the Head of Corporate Finance or by email to ianherberson@chester-le-street.gov.uk
DFG's Revised Policy	Executive	May 2008	Tony Galloway 0191 3872100	Corporate Management Team Portfolio Holder Executive Members	By phone, or in writing to the Director of Development Services or by email to Tonygalloway@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Taxi Licensing Policy	Executive	May 2008	Tony Galloway 0191 3872100	Corporate Management Team Portfolio Holder	By phone, or in writing to the Director of Development Services or by email to Tonygalloway@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Empty Property Strategy	Executive	Revised date June 2008	Tony Galloway 0191 3872100	Corporate Management Team Portfolio Holder Executive Members	By phone, or in writing to the Director of Development Services or by email to Tonygalloway@chester-le-street.gov.uk

Summary of Non Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
Corporate Performance Report April 2007 to March 2008	Executive Corporate Performance and covering report	June 2008	Ian Forster 0191 3872130	Relevant Executive Members Corporate Management Team Internal consultation e-mail	In writing or by telephone to the Assistant Chief Executive or by email to ianforster@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Enforcement Policy	Executive	June 2008	Tony Galloway 0191 3872100	Portfolio Holders, Corporate Management Team	By phone, or in writing to the Director of Development Services or by email to Tonygalloway@chester-le-street.gov.uk
Regeneration Quarterly Report	Executive	July 2008	Leila Dawson 0191 3872233	Relevant Executive Members Corporate Management Team	In writing or by telephone to the Acting Head of Regeneration or by email to leiladawson@chester-le-street.gov.uk

Summary of Non Key Decision	Decision Taker and Documents to be considered	Decision Date	Contact Officer	Consulted Parties and means of consultation	How to make representations and when by (If making representations in writing, please address them to the Director/Manager named at: Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3UT)
<p>Review of Industrial/Business Sites</p> <p>Findings of Overview and Scrutiny Ad Hoc Panel</p>	<p>Executive</p>	<p>February 2009</p>	<p>Leila Dawson 0191 3872233</p>	<p>Relevant Executive Members Corporate Management Team Ad-hoc scrutiny panel on industrial estates Industrial Estate tenants</p>	<p>In writing or by telephone to the Acting Head of Regeneration or by email to leiladawson@chester-le-street.gov.uk</p>

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EXECUTIVE DECISION TRACKER

	<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/ Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
1	4 July 2005	<p><u>Poets Estate, Pelton Fell – Environmental Improvement Strategy (EIS)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The EIS for the Poets Estate with the exception of the demolition and refurbishment of Area 4 were endorsed ▪ Agreed with the principle of prioritising investment from the Capital Programme to support the implementation of the EIS for the Poets Estate ▪ The scale of that investment will be subjected to a Full Council report that will consider the needs of the local community against the availability of resources and other Council investment priorities ▪ The site of the existing Village Hall is declared surplus to requirements and the Regeneration Manager is authorised to prepare development options for the site. 	April 2008	Ongoing	Work started on site on 26 th February and is nearing completion.	Leila Dawson

<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
2 4 July 2005	<p><u>Pelton Fell Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Pelton Fell as summarised in Annex A is endorsed with the addition of physical and emotional well being included in statements of health ▪ The creation of a Pelton Fell Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership is agreed with the provision that the interests of the whole District are protected ▪ Agreed that Council funds are used to support the appointment of a Project Co-ordinator for the Pelton Fell Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership as described in the report 	April 2008	On target	<p>Key future milestones:</p> <p>Phase 1 new build: ongoing.</p> <p>Scheme complete: 2009.</p>	Leila Dawson
3 5 September 2005	<p><u>Neighbourhood Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street clean card and in your ward profile rolled out a week beginning 12 March 2007. ▪ Pride in our neighbourhoods information leaflet to be distributed in June 2007. ▪ Formal evaluation to take place on first two phases. ▪ The Council is working closely with the communities in Waldrige Village to produce an action plan that will identify areas for improvement delivery. ▪ Executive Members agreed to visit Waldrige Village. 	New date required.	Progressing	<p>September 2007 Update:</p> <p>Review of Ward profiles to be undertaken.</p> <p>Key milestones for the project not agreed as yet.</p>	Tony Galloway

	<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/ Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
4	6 February 2006	<p><u>Development Framework Principles for the Heart of Pelton Fell</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That the Executive confirm the support given to the Pelton Fell Community Association to date and the principle of them seeking to establish the community facility, but it be recognised that the Council is unable to commit to any additional funding and that in order for them to move forward they be required to produce a sustainable business plan which is viable. ▪ That the Officers report back with advice on supplementary planning policy to secure the long-term protection of the Pelton Fell Village Heart. ▪ Agreement subject to business plan, to support the Pelton Fell Community Group requests as agreed. ▪ Negotiations to take place for the purchase and disposal of land. Report back to Executive prior to any acquisition. ▪ A written report was received at the August 2007 Executive. It was agreed the Head of Regeneration be authorised to commission a detailed public consultation process on the development framework principles in August and September 2007. ▪ The option of a refurbishment / conversion of the existing village hall at Pelton Fell, as a new community facility was agreed. ▪ It was agreed that £350,000 from the SHIP resources be put towards the heart of the village at Pelton Fell (including the community resource centre). ▪ The revised plans for the Heart of the Village, Pelton Fell will be presented to the people of Pelton Fell for consultation. 	June 2008	Progressing	Negotiations under way with landowners and prospective interested parties in the village.	Leila Dawson
3	December 2007					

<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/ Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
5 5 November 2007	<p><u>Procurement Strategy Action Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be included in the Quarterly Corporate Performance Report. 	April 2008	Ongoing		Linda Chambers/lan Forster
6 5 June 2006	<p><u>Regeneration of Priority Villages using Single Housing Investment Programme Round Two (SHIP 2) and other opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Framework of activities to be undertaken and regular reports be brought back to Executive as part of the Quarterly Regeneration Projects board ▪ Monitoring via the quarterly Regeneration Report, cross referenced with work of the Capital Programme Working Group and the Director of Resources Financial Monitoring Reports ▪ A strategic bid for regeneration is worked on with the Durham Coalfields Housing Renewal Programme and an Area Development Framework is considered as a priority ▪ Update provided in quarterly regeneration report in April 2007 and progress noted. 	April 2008	Ongoing	July 2007 update: Update included in the quarterly regeneration report.	Leila Dawson
7 3 July 2006	<p><u>Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP 1)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreed that the space next to the chapel between Stone Row and Pine Street to provide top quality open space and a play area for younger children is agreed. 	Scheme now complete. Included within quarterly regeneration report, April 2008.	Ongoing	July 2007 update: Update included in the quarterly regeneration report.	Leila Dawson

	<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
8	3 October 2006	<p><u>Medium Term Financial Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring reports to be included on the Forward Plan ▪ Agreement strategy to be reviewed twice a year although recognised that this may need to be more frequent during the housing transfer. ▪ Agreement that only amended sections will be considered by Executive in the future. Key financial issues to remain part of the report. ▪ The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved. 	<p>April 2008</p> <p>To include Surplus Land Proposals.</p>	Progressing	Report submitted to March 2007 Executive.	Ian Herbertson
	7 January 2008					

<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
<p>2 April 2007</p>	<p><u>Communities for Health Programme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Action plan to be devised to indicate time scales and outcomes ▪ Press release to be drafted regarding the launch of the programme. ▪ A written report was submitted to the August 2007 Executive. Members gave their approval 'in principle' to the Commissioning proposal. 	<p>April 2008</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Report submitted to August 2007 Executive.</p>	<p>Tony Galloway</p>
<p>1 October 2007</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delegated authority was granted to Councillor Westrip and the Director of Development Services to agree the commissioning of the work referred to within the report and action plan with the successful bidder, subject to it being within budget. 				
<p>3 December 2007</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A SMART Action Plan to be created for the work to be carried out and be brought back to the Executive for information via the Decision Tracker. ▪ The Action Plan/Work Programme was circulated to Executive Members. Delegated authority was granted to the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services to agree the Action Plan/Work Programme. 				

	<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/ Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
10	2 April 2007	<p><u>Review of Industrial/Business Sites (findings of Overview and Scrutiny Ad Hoc Panel)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further investigations to be conducted into the future of employment site provision. Dependent on this data and alternative site provision, including the Sacriston workshops, consideration be given to disposing of the industrial estates portfolio with generated receipts being recycled into future employment site provision. ▪ The Management and Maintenance Plan was noted and further actions to be taken were approved. ▪ Further report into the Councils Industrial Portfolio will be considered once the LDF Core Strategy, identifying potential alternative employment sites, has been adopted and approved. 	Report to February 2009 Executive	Ongoing	Report submitted to September 2007 Executive.	Leila Dawson
3	September 2007					

<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/ Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
<p>4 June 2007</p>	<p><u>Review of Community facilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Head of Regeneration was authorised to lead the review of community facilities in the District ▪ Discussions are currently underway with Legal and Financial consultants with regards to communal rooms in the context of the LSVT. ▪ The Head of Regeneration was authorised to identify any early wins that can be brought forward for consideration by the Executive that can contribute to the agreed vision for community facilities within the Council's existing policy and funding framework and reported back to the Executive in December 2007. 	<p>Update to be provided April 2008</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Leila Dawson</p>
<p>1 October 2007</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Head of Regeneration was authorised to continue with the further progress in developing a strategic approach and action plan for community facilities, as outlined in Section 5 of the report. ▪ The wider stakeholder consultation was deferred until further investigation work on community facilities had been undertaken. 				
<p>3 December 2007</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council will open discussions with the Enterprise Agency about MILE House, with a view to extend the lease on existing terms. The Leader and Chief Executive were granted delegated authority to resolve this matter. A verbal report will be provided to the Executive once a resolution has been identified. ▪ The Executive re-iterated their support for the principle of transfer of the asset, the Pelton Fell community resource centre, and provide support on how to manage resources through the Council's Community Development Team. ▪ That it be recommended to Council that the Council open discussions with the CVS about Bullion Hall, with a view to extend the lease on existing terms. Delegated authority for resolving this matter was granted to the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning. A verbal report will be provided to the Executive once a resolution has been identified. 				

	<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/ Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
12	4 June 2007	<p><u>Report into the review into Leisure Services for Young People</u></p> <p><u>Outcomes requiring action:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portfolio holder for community engagement and partnership working investigate greater partnership working. 	May 2008	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ian Forster/Chris Potter/Nigel Cummings
13	4 June 2007	<p><u>Report into the review of Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005</u></p> <p><u>Outcomes requiring action:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost benefit analysis of the recommendations to the report to be undertaken 	April 2008	Ongoing	Report to be submitted to September Executive	Tony Galloway
14	6 August 2007	<p><u>Review into public toilet provision in Town Centre - Report from Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further investigation is to be carried out into the viability of a community toilet scheme or similar innovative approach within Chester-le-Street town centre to increase current public toilet provision. 	April 2008	Ongoing	Further investigations to be carried out.	Leila Dawson

<u>Date of decision</u>	<u>Decision</u>	<u>Progress/ Key Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Officer Lead</u>
15 6 August 2007	<p><u>Sacriston Area Development Framework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A written report was submitted to the August 2007 Executive. The Area Development Framework for Sacriston was approved as the basis for future regeneration of Sacriston. ▪ The Head of Regeneration was authorised to progress the regeneration of Sacriston through developing a detailed action plan for the delivery of the priority proposals identified within the report. ▪ The action plan and early delivery priorities contained within the plan were approved. 	April 2008	Ongoing	Action plan has been drafted.	Leila Dawson
16 1 October 2007	<p><u>Updates Community Resource Centre at Sacriston</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular updates to be given to Executive on the progress on the Community Resource Centre 	Verbal update April 2008 Executive.	On schedule		Tony Galloway
17 1 October 2007	<p><u>Corporate Governance Framework Action Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular updates to be given to Executive on the progress of the Corporate Governance Framework action plan ▪ To be included in the Corporate Performance Report 	June 2008	Ongoing		Ian Forster
18 13 December 2007	<p><u>Update of the Communities Facilities Working Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultations have taken place and there will be three stages for the review into Community Facilities. ▪ Terms of reference have been created for the Communities Facilities Working Group. 	May 2008	Ongoing		Jorge Lulic



Chester-le-Street District Council

Report to:	Executive
Date of Meeting:	7 th April 2008
Report from:	Acting Head of Regeneration
Title of Report:	Housing Strategy
Agenda Item Number:	8

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy has been reviewed and amended following the transfer of stock to Cestria Community Housing.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Among the parties consulted on this proposal have been:

- Extended CMT
- Chief Officers
- Housing Strategy Focus Group
- RSL's
- Housing Strategy Team
- LSP

3. CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The publications of the Housing Strategy would make a contribution to:
- Priority 1, Customer excellence, providing a Housing Strategy Service accessible by all the community.
 - Priority 2, Working in Partnership to deliver the Community Strategy - The Sustainable Community Strategy seeks to "promote sustainable communities through better quality and access to housing"
 - Priority 4, Regenerating the District, working with partners and customers to regenerate services amongst the diverse community who may be in Housing Need.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications and Value for Money Statement

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Value for Money has been a key consideration in the development of the Strategy. The Housing Strategy Focus Group will work with the Housing Strategy Manager to oversee the Strategy and progress on the key actions

An Annual Review will be conducted with questionnaires being sent to a sample of residents of stakeholders

4.2 Legal

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report however it is a legal requirement that the Council has a Strategic Housing Function and this Strategy will set clear objectives for the Council.

4.3 Personnel

There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

4.4 Risk

The risk associated with not producing a Housing Strategy would be:

- Not complying with the Statutory Duty to deliver a Strategic Housing Function
- Failure to provide the Council with a planned delivery of the Strategic Housing Service
- The deliver of the Homes to those in need would not be met
- Failure to identify how we will reached the decent homes standard within all stock within the District

4.5 LGR

There are no direct implication local government.

5. BACKGROUND, POSITION STATEMENT AND OPTION APPRAISAL

- 5.1 Local Authorities are taking an increasing strategic role in Housing. They have the ability to take an overview of housing across all tenures using planning powers and housing policy to deliver national, regional and local priorities.

The Communities and Local Government see Local Authorities as Community Leaders that are best placed to develop and drive forward Housing Strategies for their areas including stakeholders and partners in the process.

- 5.2 Everyone in Chester-le-Street should have the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford. Housing is at the centre of any sustainable community and this Strategy will set the overall direction for improving the quality and choice of housing in Chester-le-street. The Strategy will ensure the housing needs and aspirations of the district are identified and that resources are geared towards the objectives.

- 5.3 Chester-le-Street will aim to provide high quality housing in:

- Design
- Choice
- Condition
- Affordability

The Strategy has four Strategic Objectives to achieve real outcomes for local residents:

- Objective 1 Rejuvenating Housing Markets
- Objective 2 Affordable Housing – providing quality and choice
- Objective 3 Decent homes – improvement and maintenance of existing housing
- Objective 4 Meeting specific community and social

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Executive are asked to approve the Strategy and to agree that this can be taken forward for to full Council for approval.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS / DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO

- 7.1 Housing Strategy

AUTHOR NAME	Lynn Hall
DESIGNATION	Housing Strategy Manager
DATE OF REPORT	17th March 2008

VERSION NUMBER
AUTHOR CONTACT

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Leila Dawson – Acting Head of Regeneration



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Housing Strategy

March 2008

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2	Context of Chester-le-Street	
3	Chester-le-Street as a Strategic Housing Authority	
4	Partnership Working	
5	Vision and Strategic Objectives	
6	Consultation Process	
7	Monitoring and Reviewing	

Introduction

Local Authorities have a statutory role to provide a strategic role in Housing. They have a duty to take an overview of housing across all tenures using planning powers and housing policy to deliver national, regional and local priorities.

The Communities and Local Government see Local Authorities as Community Leaders that are best placed to develop and drive forward Housing Strategies for their areas including stakeholders and partners in the process.

What is a Housing Strategy?

A Strategy should be an over-arching document that reviews all housing related issues, furthermore setting out its housing objectives and priorities for action. Included should be an analysis of the consultation from partners and stakeholders together with a clear action plan.

The Housing Strategy should:

- Set out in detail the local vision for housing and sustainable communities.
- Provide links between housing and other social, economic and environmental programmes within the Community Strategy.
- Translate the regional housing priorities into local priorities.
- Understand local priorities in terms of location, size and types of homes needed.

The Chester-le-Street District Housing Strategy will be consistent with national policy and designed along side the regional and sub-regional strategies. The Strategy will also meet the Authorities wider objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Housing Strategy will set out clear priorities for actions based on the current and projected future position and furthermore demonstrate the authority is taking into consideration the views of residents and partners.

Section 1 - Housing Strategy and the wider Strategic Context

Everyone in Chester-le-Street should have the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford. Housing is at the centre of any sustainable community and this Strategy will set the overall direction for improving the quality and choice of housing in the District. The Strategy will ensure the housing needs and aspirations of the District are identified and that resources are geared towards the objectives.

The key requirements of Sustainable Communities should be:

- A flourishing local economy to provide jobs and wealth.
- Strong leadership to respond positively to change.
- Effective engagement and participation with local people, groups and businesses.
- A safe and Healthy local environment.
- Good public transport and other transport infrastructure both within the community and also linking to other areas.
- Buildings that meet the needs over time.
- A well integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures
- Good quality local public services, including education and training opportunities.
- A diverse community.
- The right links to the wider regional and national community.

And components of a Sustainable Community include:

- Active, Inclusive and safe.
- Well run.
- Environmentally sensitive.
- Well designed and Built.
- Well connected.
- Thriving.
- Well served.
- Fair for everyone.

When reviewing the Strategy key consideration has been given to the national policy perspective along with regional priorities.

Government perspective

Housing Strategies should have:

- The knowledge of the dynamics and trends in the housing markets.
- The ability to assess existing and future housing needs and aspirations for the different types of Housing. Knowledge of the condition and popularity of housing in all tenures.
- Involved a range of stakeholders and partners in the development and implementation of the Strategy.
- Have an understanding of the skills and expertise of their stakeholders and partners.
- The ability to work with others by commissioning, funding and co-ordinating activities to implement the Strategy.
- Procedures to monitor and review the Strategy.

National Policies:

The **Sustainable Communities Plan** (February 2003) and the subsequent **'Homes For All' (Five Year Plan)** (January 2005) have sought to change housing quality and supply; encouraging wider home ownership, promoting mixed communities, encouraging greater choice for those renting property (including the introduction of choice based lettings by 2010) and promising greater support for the homeless. The Government believes everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home which they can afford within a sustainable mixed community. The Communities and Local Government document **Delivering Affordable Housing** sets out how the government can support local authorities and other key players in delivering more high quality affordable housing within mixed sustainable communities.

Kate Barkers Review of Social Housing analysed the problems with supply of Housing throughout England. The review recommended there should be an increase in the provision of social rented housing. It further suggested that continuing at the current rate of housebuilding is not a realistic option and that there is a need to accept increasing problems of homelessness, declining affordability and social division, decline in standards of public service delivery and increasing costs of doing business in the UK. The Review sets out a series of policy recommendations to address the lack of supply and responsiveness of housing.

The **Government's response to Kate Barker's Review of Social Housing** seeks to create sustainable communities. It also recognises that its not just

about housing estates but communities supported by infrastructure with the involvement of local communities.

The Government's housing policy aims to deliver:

- A step on the housing ladder for future generations of homeowners;
- Quality and choice for those who rent; and
- Mixed, sustainable communities

The recent report by Martin Cave **Every Tenant Matters: A review of social housing regulation** looks at current housing regulations and the shortcomings within them. The review identified three principal objectives for the regulation of social housing:

- To ensure continued provision of high quality social housing.
- To empower and protect tenants.
- To expand the availability of choice of provider at all levels in the provision of social housing.

It was acknowledged by Central Government that Local Government could not tackle these issues alone therefore in the **Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'** (October 2006) it was underlined the importance of local accountability and the control that empowered citizens should have in the governance of their neighbourhoods, towns and cities. It also stresses the role that partnerships play in the delivery of local services and indicates that local housing and homelessness strategies will become part of local community strategies in time. It also recognises that regional housing strategies must be built up from an analysis of sub regional housing markets.

Generally property within the private rented sector is much more likely to be in poor condition and in a state of disrepair. The **2004 Housing Act** has strengthened the control of management standards in the private rented sector and at the same time has brought in new standards for health and safety in the home. The provisions within the act include:

- The new Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Changes in right to buy.
- Empty Homes Management.
- Accommodation needs for Gypsy and Travellers.

The Chartered Institute of Housing was then subsequently commissioned in April 2006 to examine the range of tools available to local authorities to assist them in working with the private sector. The **Way and Means: local authorities work with the private Sector was published** for use by council staff to be used when working with the private sector.

The document considers the government's priorities to:

- Make better use of the private rented sector
- Deliver decent homes within the private sector (PSA7)
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

Further consideration has also been given to regional and sub regional policy to make the North East as a whole a more successful region. Key policies include:

The **Regional Housing Strategy** contains the North East Housing Board's (NEHB's) aims and priorities for all housing in the region. It provides a framework to encourage the development of housing solutions at regional, sub-regional and local levels. It seeks to influence private and public sector investment decisions and sets the strategic context within which housing providers can operate.

The four strategic objectives of the strategy are aimed at enabling and providing the best quality housing for the 21st century. The objectives are:

- rejuvenating housing stock and markets ;
- providing choice through a better mix of types of new homes;
- improving and maintaining existing homes; and
- meeting specific housing requirements within our communities.

The **Sub-Regional Housing Strategy** has been developed by the Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group and is the first housing strategy for the Durham sub-region. It describes the housing market in Durham and seeks to set out future strategic and service developments. It includes a set of costed priorities for 2008-11 to assist the North East Assembly allocate their funds.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing sets out the government's policy framework for delivering the governments housing objectives. It was developed in response to Kate Barkers review of housing supply. This policy is designed to achieve the governments proposed outcomes:

- High quality housing
- A mix of housing that is affordable
- Sufficient quantity of housing
- Housing developments in suitable locations with access to job and key services
- A flexible responsive supply of land

The **CLG Public Service Agreement (PSA) 7** aims to make all homes with vulnerable households in the private sector decent by 2010. It was estimated that in 2001 there were 1.6 million (57%) vulnerable households living in decent accommodation in the private sector. The target is to increase this to 65% by 2010 and to 75% by 2020.

A vulnerable household is a household that receives one or more of a number of income-related or disability benefits i.e. income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit, attendance allowance.

Section 2 Context of Housing within Chester-le-Street

The following section highlights the current situation and the key trends which are currently affecting the housing market within the District. There are many variables to take into consideration when understanding the current context within the Chester-le-Street Housing market but in order to keep the process useful and informative to the reader a selection of those key variables have been included in the chapter below. The reader should be aware that the housing market is dynamic and therefore continually changing so whilst the most up-to-date information has been used in this section changes to certain market variables can take place very quickly which can have a positive or negative effect on other variables (e.g. an interest rate decrease may increase levels of demand) and this might render some of the enclosed information obsolete at an earlier date than expected.

Brief history of housing the Chester-le-Street District

Whilst the history of Chester-le-Street dates back to the Roman era it would be the discovery of “coal” in the early 18th century that would have the most effect on the landscape of the District. Nearly every outlying town and village boasted a colliery of some description and the continuing need to attract many workers from other parts of the UK and beyond required the mining companies to build housing and infrastructure such as shops, schools and community buildings for the local community. Many of these houses and the accompanying infrastructure were purpose built for the mining community by the owners of the colliery and planning and design was less important than the increase in supply. As 19% of housing stock dates back to before 1919 it is envisaged there are still a number of these early properties remaining within the District.

In the early part of the 20th Century Council housing was being introduced to many parts of the District and developments would continue to expand over the coming decades especially after the second world war.

During the early to mid 1960's many of the collieries were either taken over by the National Coal Board or closed and some communities faced the challenge of diversifying to cope with the consequence of these closures. Whilst many properties would continue to fulfil the accommodation needs of the community in the short term the diversification would bring new wealth to the area and more people were beginning to consider home ownership. In 1985 the Government provided tenants with the opportunity to purchase their properties under the “Right to Buy” scheme which proved very popular with tenants over this period. Present day figures reveal that over half of all the Council stock has now been transferred to owner occupation.

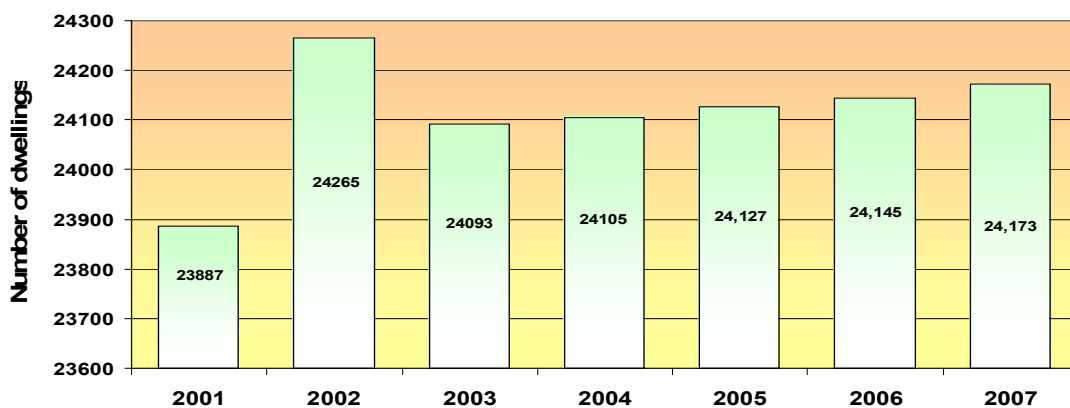
Housing developments continue up to the present day which benefit both the residents of this District and attracts inward migration from people in other areas who see the District as a “location of choice” due to its rural setting and convenient access to the A1M motorway and the East Coast mainline.

Housing Stock in District

Before looking at the current trends which could affect the housing market in the near future it is necessary to understand the make-up of the current housing stock within the Chester-le-Street District.

Chester-le-Street District’s housing stock has grown very slowly over the last six years since 2001. Table 2.1 below indicates that a significant amount of new housing was introduced to the District between 2001 and 2002 but due to a number of regeneration schemes taking place in areas such as Pelton Fell and Sacriston a percentage of old stock has been demolished therefore having a temporary effect of reducing housing stock within the District. Stock is expected to soon reach levels seen in 2002 as new housing is currently being built on these sites to replace these demolished properties. There are also a number of other developments currently taking place within the District.

TABLE 2.1



SOURCE:- HIPS Returns

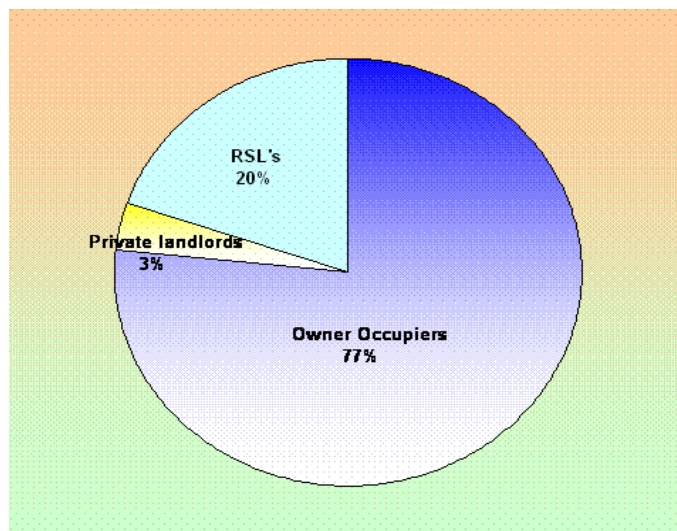
Ownership

At 77% the District has one of the highest owner occupier rates in the whole of County Durham (See Table 2.2 below) and whilst new build properties introduced to the District have contributed to the major share of private ownership the successful “Right to buy” and more recently “Right to Acquire” schemes operated by the Registered Social Landlords (RSL’s) continue to attract tenants into the private sector through the purchase of their homes.

A total of nine RSL's now own and operate 20% of all properties owned throughout the District. This figure has increased from only 2% last year following the successful transfer of the Council's housing stock to Cestria Community Housing Association in February 2008.

Private Landlords make up the final 3% but a warning rider must be placed on this figure supplied from census data in 2001. Identifying both new and existing Private Landlords continues to be a challenge to local authorities as unlike new builds, there is no mandatory registration mechanism which exists to monitor landlord developments and investments.

TABLE 2.2

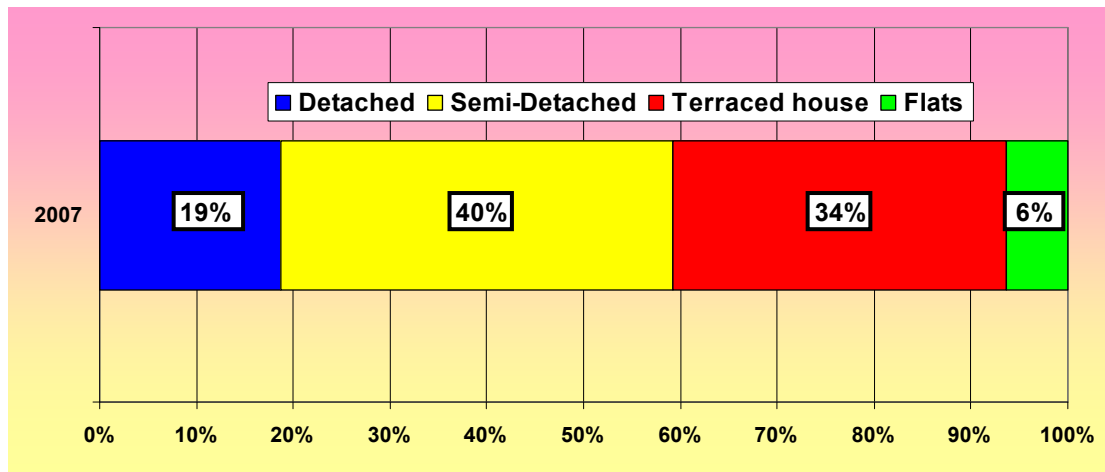


Source: National Statistics

Dwelling stock by type

The North East of England has traditionally been associated with a large number of terraced properties which assisted the mining community during the late 19th/early 20th century. Whilst the history of the District should indicate a dominance of terraced housing it actually has the second lowest number of properties of this type within County Durham. Semi-detached properties are actually the most common tenure type driven by the large number of semi-detached council houses constructed after the war and more recently new build housing schemes in later years (See Table 2.3).

TABLE 2.3

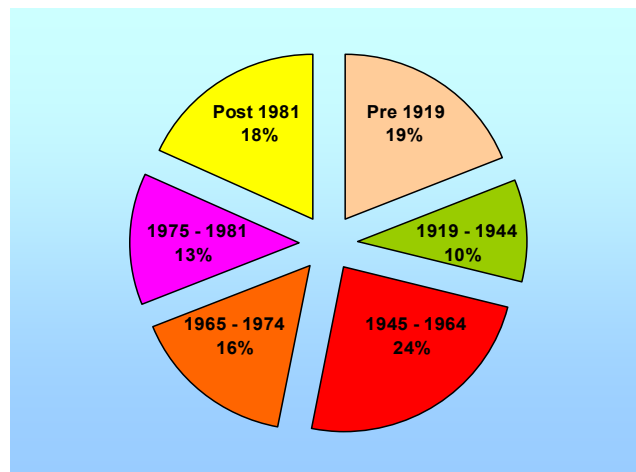


Source: National Statistics

Age of Stock

The age of the stock is very well spread out over the six periods as indicated in Table 2.4 below and there is no particular period which dominates indicating the gradual expansion of housing development within the District.

TABLE 2.4



Source: National Statistics

Condition of Housing

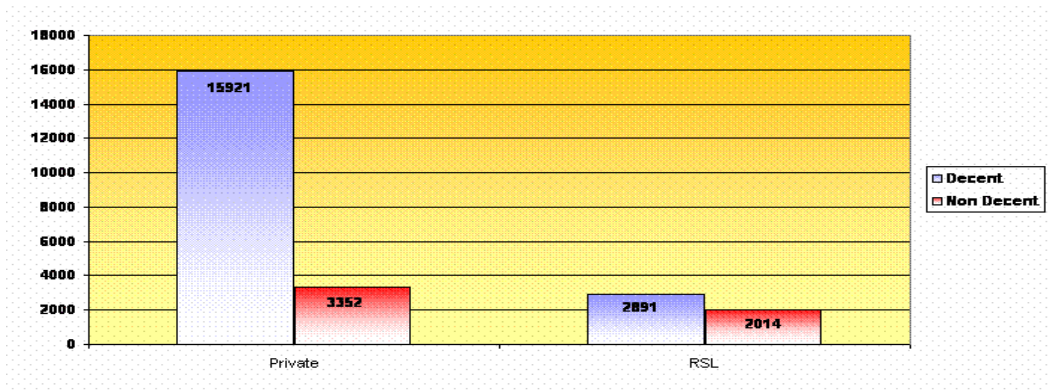
The “*Decent Homes Standard*” was introduced by the Government in the early part of this century to highlight the minimum standards which a property should meet in order for it to be habitable and it set targets for both private and public owned properties to be made decent by 2010. Within the decent homes standard is a “fitness standard” which was introduced to make sure that those properties in the poorest condition were identified and rectified as soon as possible.

In 2003 Chester-le-Street District Council commissioned David Adamson and Partners to carry out a Private Stock Condition Survey on 1700 households (9% of all dwellings in the District) and 2297 homes failed the Decent Homes Standards with 983 dwellings failing the Fitness Standard (317 of these properties were classified as unfit to live in)

In June 2006 the Government replaced the *Fitness Standard* with the *Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS version 2)* which is a more thorough investigation based 29 hazard ratings which are given a “Category 1” or “Category 2” rating. Category 1 hazards are the most dangerous and Chester-le-Street District Council has a duty to address these issues. The survey has recently been updated (see table 2.5 below) and non-decent properties have increased to 3352 homes or 17% of all private sector stock (an increase of 1055 properties on 2003) but more worryingly there are 2158 dwellings which contain a category 1 hazard and the estimated cost for the Council to address these hazards is estimated at £8.357m (based on £3873 per property).

A further 2010 properties have been identified by Cestria Community Housing Association as being non decent within the Social Housing Sector and a five year modernisation programme will begin in 2008 to address this issue. Table 2.5 highlights levels of non-decency within the District.

TABLE 2.5

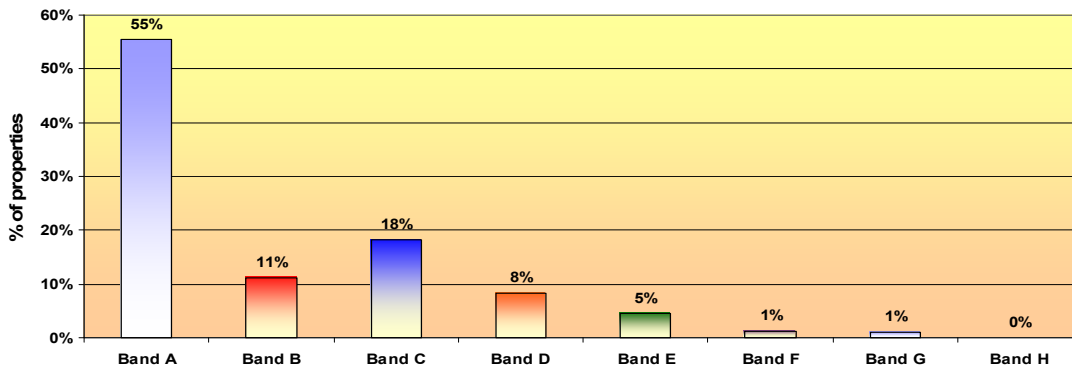


Chester-le-Street Private Stock Condition Survey 2008

Council Tax bandings

Over 55% of all properties were banded in the “A” group when Council Tax was assessed in 1991 (See Table 2.6). This banding rated properties at a value of £40,000 at the time of the assessment indicating a significantly large level of low value properties in the area. The table also illustrates the small number of bandings in the later groups such as Band F and G i.e. properties worth £120,000 or above at this time therefore showing the small number of executive housing offerings within the District.

TABLE 2.6

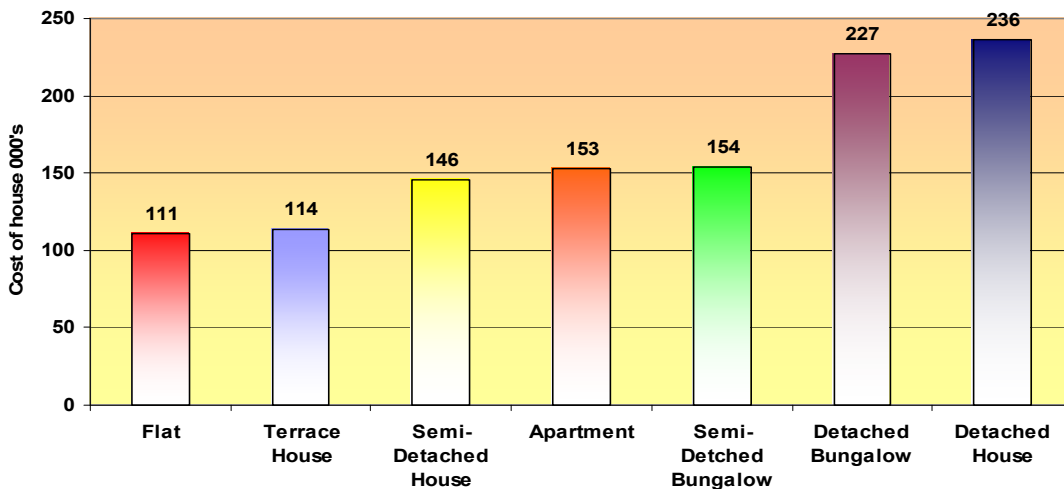


SOURCE:- CLS Council Tax Records 2007

Chester-le-Street House Prices

Chester-le-Street has some of the highest prices in the County Durham region due to it being a location of choice for many residents who commute to work in the Tyne and Wear and Durham regions.

TABLE 2.7

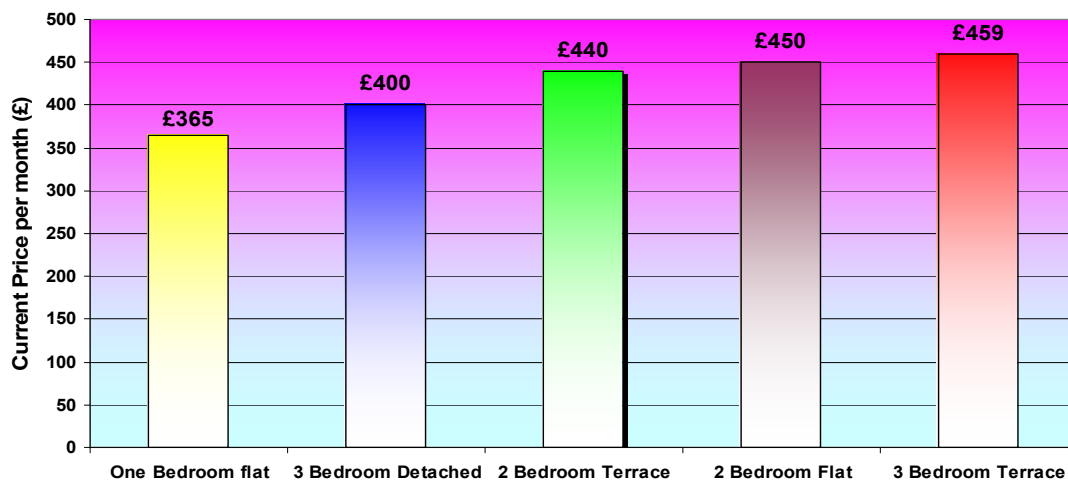


An analysis of local Estate agents average asking prices in January (see Table 2.7) reveals that there are no properties in the District which average is under one hundred thousand pounds. Prices do vary by settlement for example Terrace housing in Chester-le-Street is about average for the District but buyers will pay much higher prices for Semi-detached and Detached houses including bungalows. Properties in Ouston, Great Lumley and Woodstone Village all fetch high prices on the open market. Sacriston and Pelton tend to offer similar types of tenure at more affordable prices

Chester-le-Street Rental Prices

A comparison of open market Rental prices (See Table 2.8) was carried out in January and like house prices they also vary depending on tenure type, location and rental offer. Rental prices are seen to be more affordable than the monthly fee a person/household would pay back on a mortgage and it is becoming the first choice for first time buyers who are unable to enter the property market.

TABLE 2.8



Current Demographics trends within the Chester-le-Street District

Brief deprivation profile of Chester-le-Street

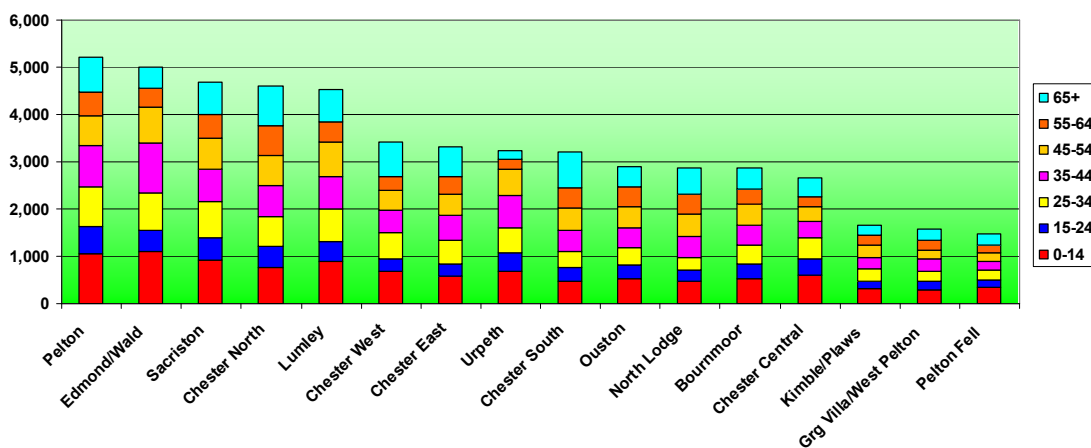
Chester-le-Street is not as deprived as other areas within the North East and beyond. Out of 354 authorities Chester-le-Street is ranked 140 and it only contains one super-output area in the top 10% of deprivation. The average gross weekly pay for an individual within the District currently stands at £338.20 per week or £17,586 p.a. (NOMIS DEC 2006). The average wage is well below the current house prices in the District and this explains why affordability is such an issue in the District. Unemployment based on Job Seeker Allowance claimants for the area currently stands at 5% (DWP – Nov 2006) and 12% of people are not in good health (National Statistics). Many wards have over 50% of working adults with low or no qualifications but Crime is much lower than some other areas

Population

Population is one of the key drivers considered in this housing strategy to determine the level of supply and demand. Population is normally determined by the “natural rate of change” in the District i.e. the number of births minus the number of deaths, inward and outward migration is also considered as well as any international migrants who chose the District as a place to live. The future population of Chester-le-Street is a key consideration.

The population of Chester-le-Street currently stands at 53,200 people (National Statistics Mid Year 2006). Over 17,000 people live in the five wards which make up Chester-le-Street itself whilst the populations of outlying wards such as Pelton, Sacriston, and Lumley all exceed 4,500 residents (See Table 2.9).

TABLE 2.9



Source: National Statistics Mid Year 2006

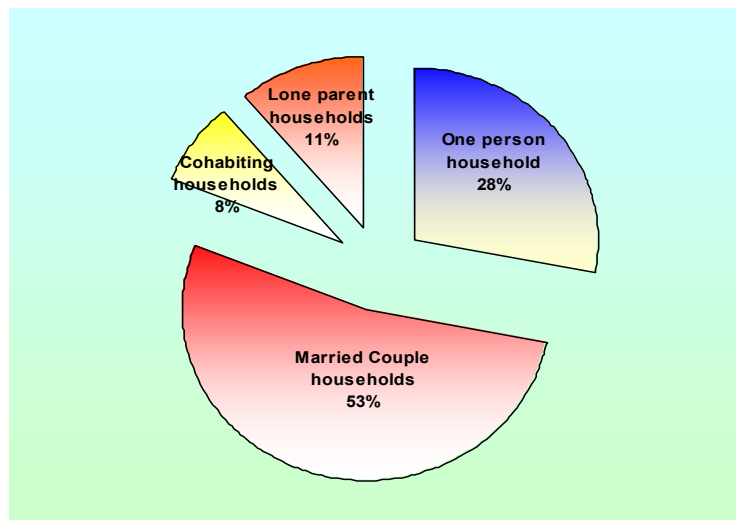
Age

Age and family composition also plays a significant role when determining the type of housing an individual or family requires at different stages of the life cycle. Table 2.9 highlights the variance in age groups between different wards. Significant variances include higher levels of 0-14 year olds living in Pelton, Chester Central, Edmondsley, Pelton Fell, Sacriston and Urpeth. At the other end of the age scale there is an over-average number of people aged 65 and above living in all of the Chester-le-Street wards (excluding Chester Central). The variances therefore indicate the possible demand for more family type properties in some areas and the introduction of more appropriate and suitable accommodation for an ageing population in other wards.

Family Composition

Whilst the population of the District is not growing significantly there are a number of changes occurring with the family composition (see Table 2.10) and this can directly affect housing supply. Whilst there is still a significant number of married households living within the District there is a growing trend towards an increase in single person households as live expectancy levels improve resulting in the slowdown in the turnover of housing stock. A second trend is the increase in Lone Parent families through separation and divorce, in this instance pressure is placed on housing because when a couple split up they will now be living in two separate properties.

TABLE 2.10



Source: National Statistics Mid Year 2006

Household Size

It is important to match Household size against the available stock within the District to understand if any overcrowding issued could be identified. It is known that there are 53,200 people living in the areas and that there are currently 24,178 houses in the District. An average of 1,000 houses are for sale at any time within the District and many are unoccupied, 28% of the stock is also owned or rented by one-person households (6770 houses/6770 people) so it can be assumed that the remaining 46430 people live in 16408 houses within the District making an average household size of “three” people.

Inward and Outward Migration

A additional pressure which can affect the supply of housing stock is a term called “Migration”. A study commissioned by Newcastle University titled the CURDS report (Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies) monitored the movements of households throughout the North East and beyond when they moved home. It was discovered that this District is a very popular choice with people from Gateshead, Derwentside and Tynedale and as a local authority we must now understand why this is a location of choice for people from these areas. The report also highlighted the number of households which left the District in this instance they tended to move to other Districts within County Durham. Again as an authority we must understand the trends behind these conclusions. The report concludes that the number of people who have moved into and left the District are very similar.

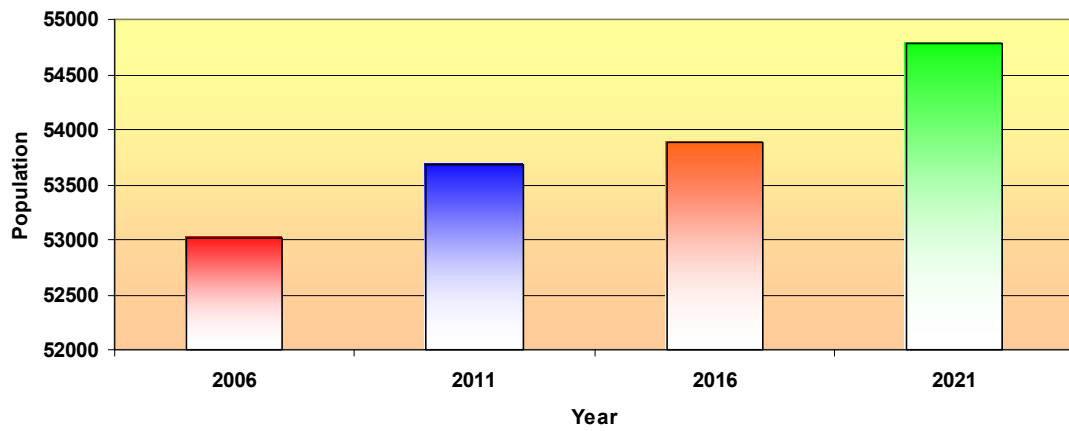
International Migration

International migrants can place a heavy strain on the housing supply with any local Authority but in this instance foreign migrants do not see the District as a location of choice as these groups prefer living in the Tyne and Wear area where local services are more tailored to their needs.

Future Population Projections

According to figures supplied from Durham County Council the population of the District is expected to grow by 3% by 2021 to a population of 54,785 (see Table 2.11).

TABLE 2.11



Durham County Council February 2008

The increase is due to an increased population within the 65+ age group. This group currently make up 17% of the Districts population but by 2021 this will rise to 24%.

A potted history to National and Regional Housing Trends 2002 - 2008

2002 - 2006

The growth in house prices begun in 2002 when interest rates were low and there was a good period of economic growth. The demand for all types of properties increased dramatically in a very short space of time fuelled primarily through changes in family composition, migration and property investment. Between 2002 to 2005 some properties in the UK had doubled or even trebled in price. From 2005 prices began rising more slowly (*Nationwide Building Society 2006*) as the price of properties became more challenging to the likes of first-time buyers.

2007

At the beginning of 2007 an average house price in the UK stood at £198K and there was evidence to suggest that people were finding it difficult to repay mortgages with one third of homeowners at risk. Ratios of mortgage to income continues to exceed the “3 times salary” requirements and the Council for Mortgage lenders were announcing record borrowing rates on a month by month basis.

Higher interest rates were introduced in March to slow the property boom but it was soon recognised that only a downturn in the economy would see house price falls and Charities soon began to call on the Government to help first time buyers.

May and June saw a continued rise in repossessions and some experts believed that a few house prices were thirteen times higher than the equivalent salaries. The “buy to let” market was also recognised as restricting first-time buyers as they both competed to purchase properties at the lower end of the market.

In August properties prices continued to rise as did mortgage lending but applications from first time buyers were beginning to fall with the rise in interest rates.

London house prices continued to grow in September but it was also recognised that a crisis was looming in other parts of the UK as mortgage rejections climbed 60% indicating that the UK was heading for a crash.

An interest rate cut was introduced in November to combat falling sales in the property market as house prices tumbled at its fastest rate since 1995 and this continued into December. Problems with the American economy had a knock-on effect in the UK and higher borrowing costs were introduced following the recent collapse of the Northern Rock Building Society and the problems other financial institutions were having.

2008

The year began with a slight rise in prices for London. People with mortgages were finding that some banks and building societies were not passing on base-rate cuts to customers. The limited demand for new build properties forced the building industry to scale back projects and lay off workers and the RICS recorded the worst decline in house prices since the 1990's. The Bank of England warned that they could not reduce Interest Rates any further as the UK economy was experiencing high price rises in fuel and food.

Prices fell for the fifth month in February and building projects continued to be scaled back with the CML reporting that applications and acceptances of new mortgages was one of the lowest on record.

Present situation

There is currently a period of uncertainty to the direction of the housing market. Borrowing is high and many people are finding it difficult to obtain finance, interest rates are high and house prices have still not fallen to levels that first-time buyers can access, builders are now reluctant to continue building for the limited return on their investment and they are either scaling back production or postponing new projects. The media are predicting that the UK is facing a period of economic instability with job losses and whilst assumptions can be made it is still uncertain how this will actually affect the property market in the near future.

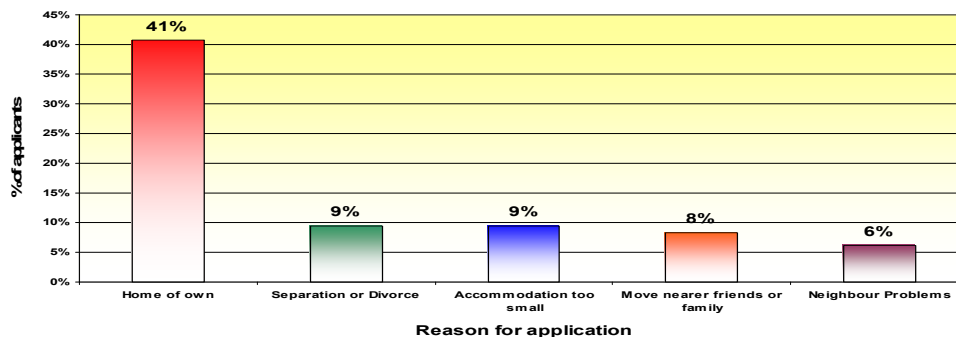
Housing Need within Chester-le-Street

The recommended measure to assess the housing “need” for a Local Authority is to analyse the trends occurring within the current “housing register”. Chester le-Street District Council’s housing register currently has 2172 household on the waiting list.

Reasons for moving

Most applicants provided reasons as to why they want to move into social rented properties. Table 2.12 highlights the top five reasons

TABLE 2.12



It is interesting that we know first times buyers are struggling to enter the property ladder due to house prices and this is reflected in 48% of people who are aspiring to a “home of their own”. It has also been identified that changes to family composition is putting pressure on the housing market within the District and this is backed up by 9% of applicants who want a house following separation or divorce. Overcrowding is another issue to address as people require larger properties. Location is one of the key decision-making factors when looking at properties and this will be tackled in a separate table below. Neighbour Problems indicate levels of possible crime and Anti-social behaviour.

Location of Choice

Applicants are given the opportunity to choose locations which suit their needs. Whilst this system is not foolproof (as it indicates where most of the available social housing is located and some potential tenants may choose areas where they stand a better chance of obtaining a property than where they necessarily would like to live) it is still an acceptable method of analysis as seen in Table 2.13.

TABLE 2.13

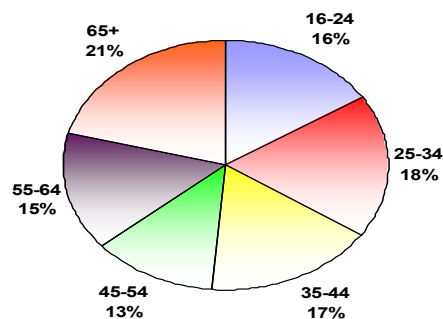
Ward	Total	% of total
<i>Chester West</i>	3916	18%
<i>Pelton</i>	2487	12%
<i>Sacriston</i>	2349	11%
<i>Chester Central</i>	1872	9%
<i>Chester North</i>	1505	7%
<i>Great Lumley</i>	1370	6%
<i>Pelton Fell</i>	1256	6%
<i>Kimbleworth & Plawesworth</i>	1139	5%
<i>Ouston</i>	1091	5%
<i>Chester South</i>	621	3%
<i>Urpeth</i>	573	3%
<i>Edmondsley & Waldrige</i>	565	3%
<i>West Pelton</i>	556	3%
<i>Bournmoor</i>	514	2%
<i>Grange Villa & West Pelton</i>	484	2%
<i>Chester East</i>	391	2%

There is clear demand for all ward areas throughout District. Whilst it is no surprise that bigger settlements such as Chester-le-Street, Pelton, Sacriston and Great Lumley feature highly it is the demand in smaller settlements of Kimbleworth and Plawesworth and Ouston that are more interesting. In Ouston for example social housing is less common but applicants are high and people are still prepared to wait indicating a choice of location rather than immediate supply.

Age Group demographics

In order to understand those age groups most in need it is necessary to look at the age groups stated in the register as indicated in Table 2.14 below.

TABLE 2.14

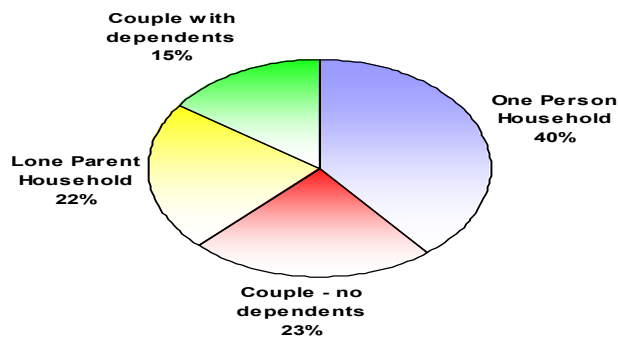


Whilst there is an over-average number of people aged 65+ waiting for properties many applicants will also be transferring between properties. The younger age groups are the more important from a trend perspective and as this is clearly spread between different age groups it highlights the need for properties of all age groups in the District.

Household Composition

Table 2.15 illustrates the type of individual(s) who are applying for properties within the District.

TABLE 2.15



One person households make up the majority of applicants. Whilst this age group in the past has been made up of older residents there is now a considerable number of 16-35 year olds which make up this group backing up the increasing trend towards more single people living alone. Lone parent households and couples with dependents tend to be aged between 25 to 44 years old.

Tenure Type(s) required

The type of tenure indicates the properties in demand throughout the District.

TABLE 2.16

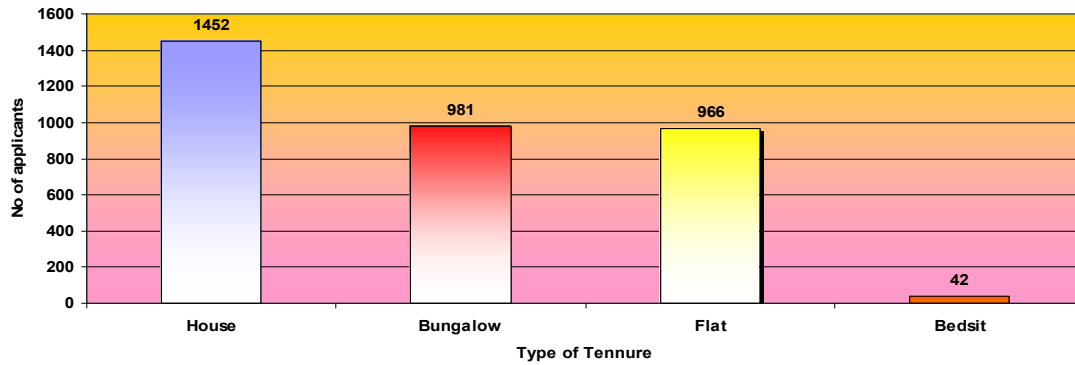
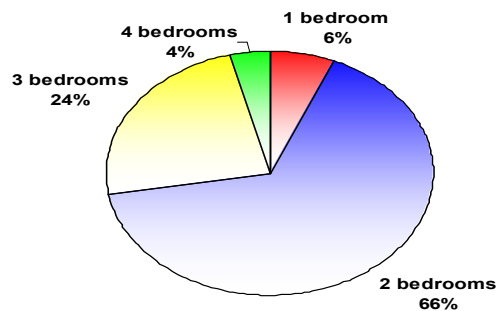


Table 2.16 shows demand for houses is very popular with all of the younger age bands between 16 to 44 years old whilst Bungalows are preferred by the 55+ age groups. Flats and bedsits are in the most demand by single 16 to 25 year olds.

Number of bedrooms

The number of bedrooms helps to determine the type of tenure required

TABLE 2.17



It can clearly be seen by Table 2.17 that one third of demand is for 2 bedroom accommodation. A further quarter is for 3 bedroom houses. There is very limited demand for 1 and 4 bedroom houses and flats.

Section 3 – Chester-le-Street as a Strategic Authority

The aim of this section is to demonstrate how the Housing Strategy feeds into other Strategies, policies and plans. Furthermore how other Strategies and policies are required to assist in delivering the objectives within the Housing Strategy.

The Sustainable Community Strategy sits at the heart of all the Councils Strategies (see diagram 1). All other Strategies together with the Housing Strategy feed into one another therefore the Housing Strategy cannot be seen or delivered in isolation.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The Sustainable Community Strategy seeks to “promote sustainable communities through better quality and access to housing”

The Strategy sets out a framework for action by the public, private and voluntary sectors and local communities working together. The aim is to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to Chester-le-Street District by creating sustainable cohesive and inclusive communities.

Building Communities is the core theme of the Strategy with the following being the four aspects to the vision:

- A Strong and diverse economic base
- Inclusive Communities
- Excellent communication networks
- An attractive and protected environment

The following are brief summaries of the various strategies adopted by the Council. The summary is intended to show how they all fit in with the Sustainable Community Strategy and how all the strategies fit together.

Regeneration Strategy

The first Regeneration Strategy for Chester-le-Street was published in 2007. The Strategy covers all aspects of regeneration: economic, social and physical therefore links well into the Housing Strategy.

Objective 3 of the Strategy aims to contribute to delivering sustainable communities through better quality and access to housing in the neighbourhoods and also making the district a better place to live. In addition, the strategy will also assist in the delivery of community engagement and that there is greater opportunity for participation.

Homeless Strategy

A new Homelessness Strategy has been published this year, the first being developed in 2003 as a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002.

The main objectives of the Homelessness Strategy are:

- Preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness in the district
- Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation
- Improving Support Services for homeless households
- Implementing service improvements
- Raise Homeless Policy issues with Central Government

Crime and Disorder Strategy

The council and its partners agreed a crime and disorder strategy in 2005 with the main aim to further reduce crime and disorder making the Chester-le-Street District a better and safer place to live, work and visit.

The priorities of the Crime and disorder strategy are:

- To reduce total crime
- To increase public reassurance and tackle anti-social behaviour
- To tackle drugs, substance and alcohol misuse to reduce the harm they cause
- To tackle Domestic Violence
- To tackle hate crime

Supporting People Strategy

The Supporting People Strategy has been published in June 2007 following consultation from November 2005. This consultation included over 600 written responses from people using the service. Key messages were received and have been drawn together in the Strategy "Supporting Independence: Next Steps in our Supporting People Strategy". The Strategy will focus on:

- Keeping Service Users at the heart of the programme
- Building on already successful partnerships
- Delivering effectively
- Working towards better efficiency

The supporting people programme provides the means that the most vulnerable people receive help and support to live independently. Furthermore it enables vulnerable people to participate fully in the social and economic life of their communities. By assisting people to live independently it helps to reduce homelessness, rough sleeping and anti social behaviour, helping the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

The vision of the Anti-Poverty Strategy for Chester-le-street is:

‘To ensure that the whole of the District benefits from wealth creation and to work with our partners, stakeholders and other organisations to provide a staircase out of poverty’

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Address health inequalities
- Maximise incomes
- Work with partners to promote the opportunities for training and education
- Work with partners to promote economic growth within the district
- Ensure the less affluent or disadvantaged are not excluded from initiatives to address anti-social behaviour
- Work with partners to promote culture and leisure activities

Corporate Plan

The Corporate plan sets the vision and framework for which the Housing Strategy links:

The seven priorities are:

- Customer Excellence – improving customer care and improving access to services.
- Working in partnership to achieve the Community Strategy – continue work with partners within the LSP to deliver the actions within the sustainable community strategy.
- Meeting the decent Homes Standard – bring our homes up to the decent homes standard by 2010.
- Regenerating the District – working with stakeholders and partners to deliver the Regeneration Strategy.
- Neighbourhood Management – working with the community to improve the quality of public services, engaging people in local democracy and as a result helping to create an improved environment and sustainable communities.
- New ways of working in Leisure- consider options for delivery of the councils leisure services
- Maximising Efficiencies – find new ways of working within all services by working in collaboration with others to achieve economies of scale and better service delivery

Local Plan and Policies

The following are local plans and policies adopted by the Council and similar to that of the Strategies which feed into the Housing Strategy to assist in delivering the key objectives

Planning Policy and Local District Plan

The planning system in Local Authorities can ensure that new homes are provided in the right places at the right times. Local Authorities must be aware of the needs of the housing markets and take into consideration issues such as Homelessness, Affordable Housing and the aging population.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) states that “everyone should have the opportunity of living in a decent home which they can afford”. Furthermore, it seeks to achieve mixed communities stating local authorities should have a detailed understanding of the types of housing that is required to meet the needs of the community. The local plan should look to identify suitable sites for development of a 15 year period the first 5 years focussing on sites which are readily available

Equalities and Diversity Plan

Chester-le-street District Council is committed to promote Equalities and Diversity in both service delivery and employment.

A range of service is provided by the Council and the communities we serve are many and diverse. The same levels of service may not meet every ones needs therefore we must ensure our services meet the needs of all communities and groups.

Chester-le-Street District Council is committed to ensuring that all citizens in the District, its staff and all those associated with the Council receive fair and appropriate services and treatment, irrespective of their nationality, ethnicity, race, sex, marital status, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or other social factor.

LAA

Local Area Agreements are part of the Government's ten year strategy to build a better relationship between central and local government. They are three year agreements that set out the priorities for a local area.

The County Durham Local Area Agreement (LAA) brings together partners from all sectors within County Durham (including Local Government, the Police, the Primary Care Trust and the voluntary and community sector) to examine and identify areas of major change that will most benefit local communities. The LAA is based around the four key themes of:

- Children and Young People - to improve the quality of life of Children and young people and raise their profile in our communities.
- Safer and Stronger Communities - to make our communities safer for everyone as well as making places more attractive so people can feel proud about where they live.
- Healthier Communities and Older People - to improve the quality of life and well being of our most vulnerable residents and address inequalities that exist.
- Economic Development and Enterprise - to improve the quality of life of all our communities by encouraging and supporting business activity.

Local Strategic Partnerships play a key role in the delivery of the Local Area Agreement.

Powers within the Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004 is a key piece of legislation for local authorities giving them additional powers to protect the most vulnerable groups in society and also helping to create a better and fairer housing market.

This act gives local authorities the powers to deal with poor conditions in the private sector. Furthermore it strengthens the government's requirements to meet the decent homes standard and creating sustainable communities.

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The HHSRS assesses 29 broad categories of housing hazard and provides a rating for each hazard. The rating is based on the risk to the occupant therefore making any residential properties a safe and healthy environment. The hazards are summarised as:

- Dampness, excess cold/heat
- Pollutants e.g. Asbestos, carbon monoxide
- Lack of space, security, lighting or excessive noise
- Poor hygiene, sanitation, water supply
- Accidents-falls, electric shocks, fires, burns and scalds
- Collisions, explosions, structural collapse

The council will approach the Landlord informally however we do not have powers to move to formal action if the Landlord does not co-operate.

Empty Dwellings

The Empty property strategy is to be developed by the Council in July 2008. The empty homes strategy should identify:

- The local and regional priorities
- Where resources should be targeted
- Action Plan to implement solutions
- Publicity for the strategy and approach

Ensuring that empty homes become occupied can result in improved environmental and social conditions and a reduction in the level of crime, anti-social behaviour often associated with empty, derelict properties and the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) are a mandatory grant made available by the council to owner occupiers to help fund adaptations to properties to ensure disabled people live as comfortably and as independently as possible in their homes.

Disabled Facilities Grants are awarded for essential adaptations to give a disabled person better freedom of movement around the house. This work includes:

- Widening doors or installing ramps.
- Providing a specially adapted room in which it is safe to leave a disabled person unattended.
- Installing a stair lift so there is better access to a bathroom, kitchen, or bedroom.
- Installing a downstairs bathroom.
- Improving or installing a heating system which is suitable for the disabled person.
- Adapting heating or lighting controls so that they are easier to use by a disabled person.

Recent Studies

In order to inform the Regional, Sub-regional and local Housing Strategies various studies have been carried out. The following is a summary of such studies

Gypsy & Traveller Study

Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group commissioned consultants to carry out a survey of the services around Gypsy and Travellers in County Durham. This report was published in July 2007. The survey was to include:

- The type of accommodation needed
- The demand for permanent sites
- The demand for alternative housing options
- The need for the expansion and/or improvement of existing sites
- The need for transit sites to meet seasonal, commercial and irregular demand
- The geographical gaps in provision
- The affordability of existing and proposed accommodation options

The following were recommendations highlighted in the report:

- A minimum of a further 3 to 5 small pitches are required although more work needs to be done to identify where these are needed.
- Urgent refurbishment of existing sites.
- A need for stop-over sites in certain areas
- A County Task Group to co-ordinate a response to the needs highlighted in the study
- The need for housing related support services
- The need for training among a number of agencies

Housing needs survey

Government guidance in Circular 6/98 and the Good Practice Guidance for Local Housing Needs Assessment requires that local authorities have a robust and up to date assessment of the housing needs in their area. These are required for the support of the Housing Strategy and bids for resources and Local Plan for affordable housing provision. In 2002 Chester-le-Street District Council commissioned consultants to undertake a comprehensive housing needs survey within the district. This was subsequently updated in 2004. The key issues from this were:

Chester-le-Street Housing Market, costs and income

- The house price inflation increase for the District over the last three years is 71.1%.
- The entry level stock, (terraced houses) has increased by 104.9% and average terraced house prices have increased by 43.7% alone in the last 12 months to September 2004.
- In terms of the entry level stock, terraced houses are assessed to be the main access property for first time buyers, due to sales levels being almost half of all sales in the District and the average price at £86,195, significantly lower than semi-detached stock.

- The sales levels of terraced and flat / maisonette properties in 2004, 40.0% and 5.8% respectively are similar to 2002 levels (37.4% and 6% respectively). Although flat prices are cheaper the volume of sales and therefore availability is still very low.
- The increase in the price of terraced houses (104.9%) and flats / maisonettes (74.8%) is massively in excess of wage inflation in the two year period. Incomes in the District are assessed independently to have increased by 10.7% for the 2 year period up to April 2004. 5.6.6 Access to market housing has therefore become more difficult for new households than it was in 2002, increasing the need for subsidised housing.

Population Growth and Household Information Projection

- The most significant feature here is the growth of the population in the over 65 age group. An increase of 2,453 individuals is seen over the forecast period, the largest increase is seen between 2011 and 2016 (1,482; 15.0%).
- Another prominent feature is the fall in the 30-44 age group. This main economically active group shows a significant decrease over the forecast period (2,259; 17.0%). A steady decline can be seen throughout the wide forecast period, with the largest decline seen between 2006 and 2011 (1,224; 10.3%).
- Numbers in the 20-29 age group are projected to rise overall (611; 10%). As this age range comprises new households forming this will have implications for future affordable housing need both in the short and longer term.
- The "older" retirement group, those 80 and over grows by 42.2%, 733 more people by 2016. This group represents 2,468 people in the area by 2016 who are much more likely to have care and support needs which should now be assessed in detail

Housing Needs

- The total affordable housing need annually is now 832 units. Net re-lets of the existing social stock after the RTB impact average 429 units, based on the 2003/04 levels. Re-lets shows a decreasing trend which should continue through stock rationalisation and RTB.
- Even after allowing for this level of supply, there will still be an annual affordable housing shortfall of 403 units a year. These units will need to come from new sites, conversions and market purchase by RSL's to reduce the shortfall figure each year.
- This level of demand exceeds the number of units likely to be able to be delivered resulting in growing levels of unmet need each year. There has been virtually no new delivery over the last three years.

- This suggests that the target of new units negotiated should be increased to address the need for both affordable housing for rent and subsidised low cost market housing.
- Essentially planning should be providing for balanced communities, which acknowledge the need for social compatibility if the problems of housing in the past are not to be repeated. The increases in average house prices of between 43% and 96% for flats and terraced houses over the last two years have excluded a large proportion of 'first-time buyers' from the owner occupied market.
- We believe therefore that the proportion of affordable housing provided on new sites should encompass more subsidised low cost market housing than would have been the case two years ago when it was a more marginal element of affordable need, even although there was only a limited expressed need from respondents in 2002. However the majority need is for social rented units.
- In 2002 we assessed there was a need for 125 unsubsidised small units in the general market to 2006, required to meet the needs of households whose incomes were sufficient to enable them to access the market without any subsidy or discount. The changed relationship between incomes and prices will mean that the number who can access housing in the private sector without subsidy will have reduced significantly and increased the scale of subsidised low cost market housing need.
- We believe the overall target should be 30% with around a third of provision 10%, as low cost market housing, provided it is delivered at a cost below the cheapest entry level costs in the general market and would be available on a similar basis to subsequent purchasers.
- Both the affordable housing target and the tenure balance within it may vary on a site by site basis.

Private Stock Conditions Survey

In 2003, the Council commissioned a district-wide survey of housing conditions in the private housing sector. Involving a sample of 1700 dwellings the survey generated information on housing conditions not only District-wide but across the Electoral Ward framework. This information has formed a central input to the development of private sector renewal strategies in the District. Each sample had a full internal and external inspection accompanied by a short interview or the resident. Key stats include:-

- Owner occupied = 94% (owner occupied)
- 18413 dwellings were occupied, (454 dwellings vacant)
- Private housing stock typically semi or terraced.
- 19% of stock is pre 1919

Housing conditions

- Standard of fitness applied using Section 604 of the Housing Act 1985.
- Comprehensive repairs costing > £10,000.
- 5.2% of properties (983 dwellings) considered unsatisfactory.
- 317 of the above were considered unfit, the meaning 666 were not unfit but in disrepair.
- Significantly below the national and regional averages!

The 317 unfit dwellings were in Grange Villa and Pelton Fell wards.

The 666 properties that were unfit were found in Chester North, Chester West and Grange Villa

The cost of repair is £5,153m (Unfit £3.279m) and disrepair (£1.874m)

While normal expectations are for house condition survey data to remain effective for a minimum 5 year period, housing standards in England have changed post-survey. In this respect the Fitness Standard was replaced as the minimum statutory housing assessment in April 2006 by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS Version 2). Therefore, to ensure the continued effective use of the 2003 House Condition Survey the Council has commissioned the consultants to re-analyse 2003 survey data. This was possible through the range of HHSRS data collected during the survey and its re-expression within the Housing Act 2004 framework.

This up to date report concluded:

The introduction of the HHSRS and its integration within the Decent Homes Standard impacts negatively on housing conditions within the District - increasing the scale of the condition problem and the level of investment required:

- Under the Fitness Standard, 323 dwellings were assessed as unfit representing 11.5% of all private dwellings in the District. Under the HHSRS, 2158 dwellings experience Category 1 hazards representing 11.2% of all private dwellings in the District.
- The increases in statutory housing problems are somewhat mitigated in overall dwelling performance against the Decent Homes Standard due to multiple failures within this standard. Overall levels of non-Decency nevertheless increase from 2121 dwellings (11.0%) under the Fitness Standard to 3352 dwellings (17.4%) under HHSRS.
- Costs to address non-Decency in private housing across the District will rise from £5.153M within the Fitness Standard framework to £11.619M using HHSRS. This is an increase of £6.466M or 125%.

Patterns of non-Decency and statutory failure within the District remain focused on the private-rented sector and on pre-1919 terraced housing. Strategies developed to target non-Decent dwellings within the Fitness Standard should therefore remain effective. Previous geographical concentrations of poor housing conditions at a Ward level are not as marked within the new condition framework with a broader distribution of non-Decent housing now apparent.

575 vulnerable households (23.2%) live in housing which is non-Decent; the remaining 1904 vulnerable households (76.8%) live in Decent Homes. Key groups and areas remaining below the previous National PSA Target 7 threshold of 70% of vulnerable households in Decent Homes by 2011 include:

- The Electoral Wards of Chester Central, Chester West, Grange Villa and West Pelton, Kimblesworth and Plawesworth, and Pelton Fell
- The Private Rented Sector
- The pre-1919 and inter-war housing sectors.

The costs of achieving Decent Homes for vulnerable households are estimated at £2.139M.

Public Stock Conditions Survey

The Council carried out a detailed stock condition survey in 2002 which was then updated in 2004. The key findings of the report were:

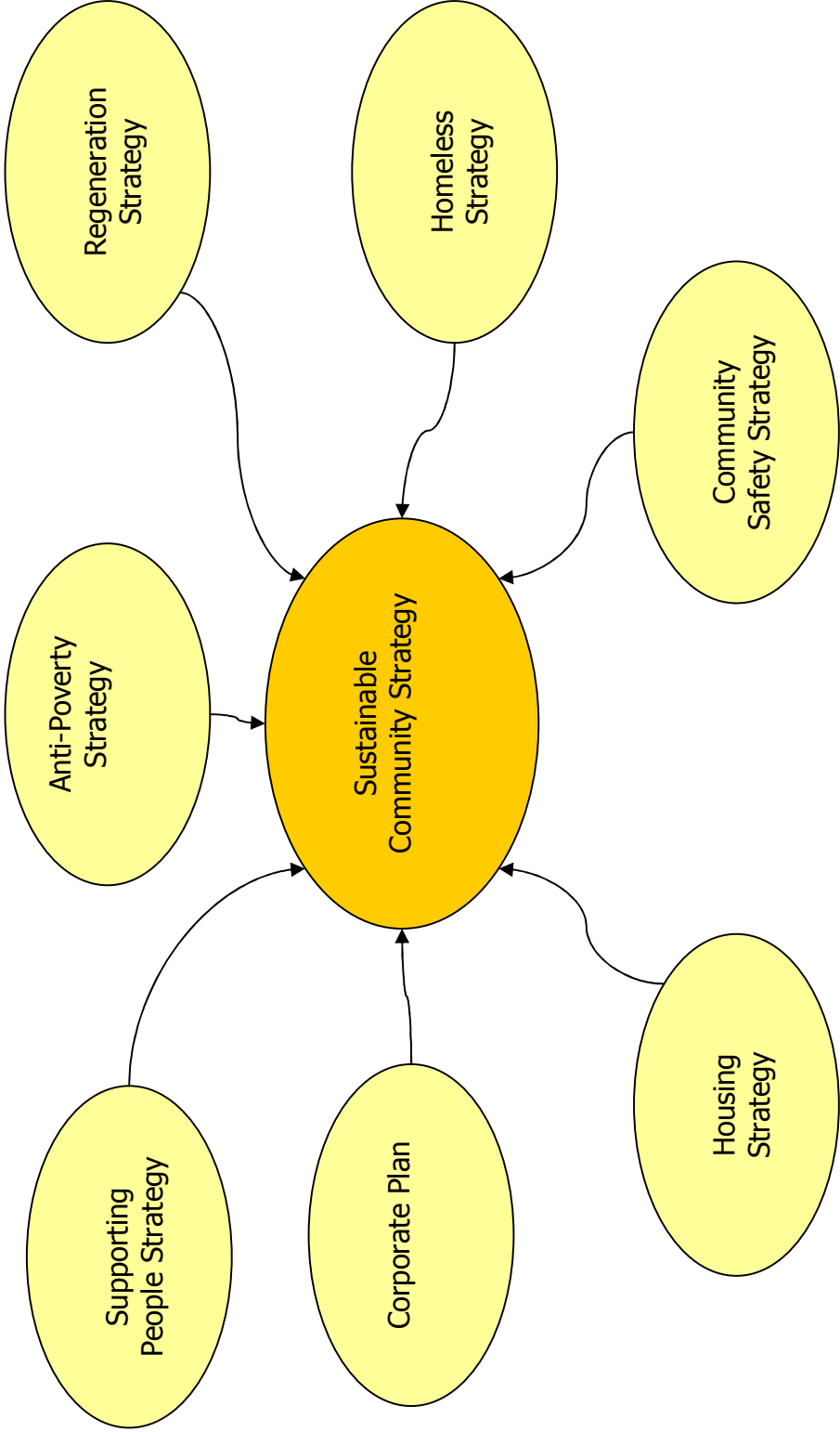
- The total cost to carry out all repair and improvements over the next 30 year would be £234 million.
- An estimated £4.4 million would need to be spent on catch up repairs.
- Future investment would need to be in the region of £113 million.
- A total of £3.02 million will need to be spent annually over the next 30 years on responsive and cyclical maintenance.

At the time of the survey 22% of council dwellings failed to meet the decent homes standard and the associated cost of bringing these up to the basic decent homes standard would be £13.71 million.

The Council has consulted widely with tenants to find out what was important to them. All of the information was fed back to the Council along with the information from the stock condition and subsequently the Council has decided that transfer of the housing stock to a housing association, set up specifically to provide a local housing service, appears to be the best available option.

The Council transferred all the Council's housing to a newly formed, not-for-profit housing association called Cestria Community Housing with effect from 4th February 2008.

Diagram 1



Section 4 Partnership working

We cannot successfully deliver the objectives set within the Strategy without the help and support of our partners.

This section will list our partners at the role they currently play. In addition it will demonstrate how we will work together to deliver the objectives.

Consultation has also taken place when writing this Strategy and this section will also demonstrate what recommendations were needs based on the outcome of the consultation.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

LSPs are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships bringing together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors; allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively.

Lack of joint working at local level has been one of the key reasons why there has been little progress in delivering sustainable economic, social and physical regeneration, or improved public services, that meet the needs of local communities. A combination of organisations, and the community, working co-operatively as part of an LSP will have a far greater chance of success.

Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group (DHNG)

The Purpose of the Group is to act as the strategic partnership within County Durham for the consideration of housing and related policy issues to assist the development of more sustainable communities and to support the well being of County Durham.

Functions of The Group is to:

Provide a strategic policy advice function in relation strategic housing and neighbourhoods issues to:

- The North East Housing Board and Executive.
- County Durham Strategic Partnership.
- County Durham Local Area Agreement Interim Executive Board.
- County Durham Chief Executives Group.

Membership of the Partnership Board

The composition of the Partnership will comprise representatives of the following organisations:

- Strategic Housing Authorities in County Durham.
- Adult Social Care Authority for County Durham.
- County Durham Primary Care Trust.
- National Housing Federation.
- Market and Social Housing providers operating in County Durham

All members of the Partnership have a duty to promote the work of the Partnership.

Housing Strategy Focus Group

Membership of the group is:

Head of Regeneration (Chair)
Head of Planning and Environmental Health
Housing Strategy Manager
Housing Strategy Officer
Senior Environmental Health Officer

The aims of the Group are:

- To review all strategic housing issues which impact across the Council's Housing, Planning and Environmental Health functions
- To support the development of, and oversee the implementation of, the Housing Strategy and related strategic documents.

The Group members will be expected to:

- Work within their own organisations to develop mechanisms to ensure that the objectives of the Housing Strategy are delivered.
- Ensure that the Housing Strategy informs policy and strategy development within their own organisation.

Homelessness Action Partnership

The Homelessness Action Partnership (HAP) is a Strategic multi-agency partnership which aims to tackle and prevent homelessness. Furthermore it will work to ensure that homeless households or those threatened with homelessness will have access to decent accommodation with the appropriate support to assist them to live independently.

The membership of the HAP is made up of representatives from:

- The seven District Councils within County Durham
- Government Office North East
- National Housing Federation
- Probation Service
- County Durham Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- Durham and Districts Supporting People Partnership
- The ALMO or Housing Association from districts where the housing stock is not managed by the local authority

Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)

There are currently eight Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) with properties within the Chester-le-Street District Area. (see Appendix 2)

Meetings are held between key staff in the Housing Strategy team and the RSL to discuss the nomination procedure. The staff within the Housing Strategy Team will monitor the number of properties and nomination to and from the RSL's

Cestria is the largest RSL in the Chester-le-Street District and will manage the Waiting List and Homeless Decision making process on behalf of the Council, with Service Level Agreements in place to ensure that the council's statutory function is carried out.

Private Landlords

There are in the region of 850 Private Rented properties in the Chester-le-Street District. There are 38 of these members of the Private Landlord Association Scheme with 146 properties of which 80 are accredited. The Private Landlord Association Officer will continue to work with the Private Landlords to accredit the remaining properties. Furthermore work will continue to encourage more Landlords to join the scheme.

The Council recognises the role in which Private Landlords play in providing accommodation to meet the housing need within the district therefore we have:

- Continued to fund a Private Landlord Accreditation Officer through various funding streams.
- Established a Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Hold monthly meeting with the Landlords via the Accreditation scheme.
- Deliver training as required to the Private Landlords.
- Offer advice and support to Landlords and tenants through the Housing Options Team.

Section 5 Vision and Strategic Objectives

VISION – Making Chester-le-Street a place where people want to live with decent homes at a price they can afford

Chester-le-Street will aim to provide high quality housing in:

- Design
- Choice
- Condition
- Affordability

The Strategy has four Strategic Objectives to achieve real outcomes for local residents

Objective 1 Rejuvenating Housing Markets

Housing is key element of any sustainable community and this objective will ensure that we strengthen the housing markets in the district. In addition we will ensure that the housing needs and aspirations of the residents of Chester-le-Street District are identified.

There are currently 24,173 dwellings in the Chester-le-Street District. The condition of the current public and private sector accommodation within the district is generally in good condition seeing the area well below the regional and national average. The District has seen a significant rise in house prices together with a reduction of social rented accommodation over recent years making it more difficult for first time buyers to get onto the housing market or into social housing. The reduction in social housing is two fold in that RTB sales increased and no new build are replacing this lost stock

With the average income for the District currently standing at £17,586 and unemployment (based on Job Seeker Allowance claimants) for the area currently stands at 5%, again reflects the need for affordable housing.

What we need to do (Action Plan)

We want a better understanding of the housing markets. Why people rent, buy, sell or invest in the District. We need to understand what influences peoples decision to stay or leave the areas. This information will assist us in identifying areas which are now sustainable and will remain so. In addition it will identify areas where work needs to be targeted.

Housing policies will be developed to reflect the findings ensuring we meet the housing needs of the future. We need to ensure the Housing Market within the District is stable, demand for the area is high and that properties are of a decent and high standard.

Action Point 1 Obtain an up-to-date Housing Needs and Market assessment for the Chester-le-Street area Lead person DHNG by March 2008

Action Point 2 Obtain from RLSs and keep up to date Data base of waiting list and demand info Lead Person Housing Strategy Manager/Officer Ongoing

Action Point 3 Forge links with Major Estate Agents in the district to obtain information on house sales and buyers Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer Ongoing

Action Point 4 Draft action plan with Environmental Health from Private sector stock conditions a survey Lead Housing Strategy Manager/Officer by July 2007

Action Point 5 Update Neighbourhood profiles and circulate Lead Officer Housing Strategy Officer Annually

Action Point 6 Information made available for residents on housing choices in the District. This will include RSL accommodation, Private Rented, Owner Occupation, Affordable Housing Schemes and housing for the elderly and vulnerable groups Lead Housing Strategy Manager by September 2008

Action Point 7 Continued work with the Private Landlords in the private sector to ensure their properties are well managed and making sure tenants successfully maintain their tenancies. Lead Officer Private Landlord Accreditation Officer Ongoing

Action Point 8 Encourage Landlords to be members of the Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme Lead Officer Private Landlord Accreditation Officer Ongoing

How will we know when we are there?

- All Housing becomes part of mixed sustainable communities
- Have places where people want to live and a price they can afford
- Have an understand the Housing needs and markets in the in the district

Objective 2 Affordable Housing – providing quality and choice

Any new supply of housing needs to be a response to the identified need and demands of households within the district and of those wanting to move into the district.

The planning system at both regional and local levels has a crucial part to play. Affordable housing is defined by PPS3 as both social rented housing and other housing that are below market prices or rents. It is for those who cannot access or afford market housing. The council will ensure any new developments offer a minimum of 30% affordable housing. In order to deliver the mixed communities as advocated in PPS3 the Council will not support any planning application that does not show 'pepper potting' of the affordable housing units.

The Council will expect the design of the affordable units to be built to a high standard and should be of similar size and quality to those offered on the open market. Furthermore, it would be expected that the affordable units will be offered with the same facilities i.e. car parking spaces.

To ensure that the housing is delivered to those most in need the Council has an Affordable Housing Policy. The objective of this Policy is to contribute to the creation of sustainable communities by ensuring that a proportion of affordable homes for sale, within new private developments, are allocated to those people with the greatest need, in a fair and transparent manner at an affordable price.

Information to go in here from planning when received

What we need to do (Action Plan)

We will ensure that there is a mix of tenure types throughout the district and that these are accessible by all. The affordable housing policy will be adhered to and reviewed to ensure we are meeting the needs of local people.

Action Point 9 Review Affordable Housing Policy Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager Annually

Action Point 10 Ensure all Planning Applications of over 15 dwellings include 30 % affordable housing Lead Officer Head of Planning Ongoing

Action point 11 Ensure the design of new affordable housing meets the same standard as those on the housing market Lead Officer Head of Planning Ongoing

Action Point 12 Ensure that the Affordable Housing in pepper-potted on any new Housing Developments Lead Officer Head of Planning Ongoing

How will we know when we are there?

- All households will have access to housing that meets their needs at a price they can afford
- All future developments will have an agreed percentage of affordable homes

Objective 3 Decent homes – improvement and maintenance of existing housing

Consideration must be given to existing housing the majority of which is in good condition. The Council has a duty to existing residents to improve current sustainable stock.

The minimum “Decent Homes” standard for both social and private housing is set to ensure that homes:

- Are free from serious risks to health and safety (the Health and Housing Safety Rating System)
- Are in a reasonable state of repair
- Have reasonably modern facilities and amenities
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

In the social sector this applies to all housing. In the private sector we focus on those who are the most vulnerable.

The Council stock stood at 4294 and had a 46% of non decent accommodation before transfer to Cestria Community Housing. Cestria Community Housing’s major programme of improvement and repair will bring all homes up to a decent and modern standard. This was the promise the Council made to tenants when you voted for transfer.

**ADD IN INFO FROM Andy Stephenson then include some actions
Energy Efficiency/Fuel Poverty/SAP ratings**

What we need to do (Action Plan)

Action Point 13 Work with the Regional Loan Steering Group to develop the regional loan scheme Lead Officer Environmental Health Ongoing

Action Point 14 Promote the availability of the Disability Facility Grants Lead Officer Environmental Health Ongoing

Action Point 15 Monitor the offer document against Cestria’s actions and deliveries Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager Ongoing

Need Actions on Energy Efficiency & Enforcement/Empty Homes from Env. Health

Action Point 16

How will we know when we are there?

- Public Sector Homes will have been improved to a decent homes standard and beyond in many cases
- Owner Occupiers will have access to the means to maintain and improve their homes
- Private tenants will occupy properties that have received investment from their Landlords to improve their homes

Objective 4 Meeting specific community and social needs

The aim of this objective is to meet the housing needs of a diverse range of people. Looking at both long term and short term needs of residents which can be resolved with appropriate advice or assistance for example:

- **SOCIALLY EXCLUDED** - the provision of homes and services to meet the housing needs of those people experiencing or at risk of social exclusion.
- **HOMELESS PEOPLE** - the provision of services that can prevent homelessness and effectively respond to the needs of the homeless.

Homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 required Councils to carry out a review of homelessness and homelessness services in their area, and to then formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on this review. The Council complied with this part of the 2002 Act by producing its first Homeless Strategy in July 2003. The 2002 Act also requires local authorities to formally review their homelessness strategies at least every 5 years and the Council completed this in 2007.

The Homeless Strategy seeks to:

- Identify the groups at risk from homelessness in the Chester-le-Street District.
- Identify the current and likely future levels of homelessness and its causes.
- Map the supply of homelessness provision in the District.
- Identify gaps in provision then work with partners to develop services and increase provision.

Whilst the Council has statutory responsibilities to deal with homelessness, it cannot solve the challenges and problems of homelessness alone, nor can it deliver all of the services that are needed to give support, assistance and advice

to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It is therefore essential that we have strong and established partnerships that are effective with both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Teenage Parents

Britain has the highest rate of teenage births in Western Europe. In 1998 there were around 41,000 conceptions to under 18s in England, resulting in 23,600 live births.

In June 1999 the Government produced a National Teenage Pregnancy Report with two main goals:

- To halve the rate of conceptions among under 18 year olds in England by 2010 and to set a downward trend in conception rates for under 16s.
- To reduce long term social exclusion for teenage pregnancy and their children.

Guidance from the Teenage Pregnancy Unit stated that ten year strategies (to include three year action plans) should be produced at local authority level. A County Durham Strategy was subsequently developed

To secure partnership working a county wide Steering Group and sub groups were established for County Durham with representatives from Housing, Health, Education, Social Services and the Voluntary Sector.

Offenders

Offenders and returning prisoners experience difficulties in gaining housing. Historically:

- Many housing providers were reluctant to accommodate offenders.
- Prisons have largely focussed their attention on security.
- The Probation Service has been reliant on the voluntary sector for offender housing.

The development of the **HARP** protocol in the North Of England has been a joint venture between local authority housing departments, the voluntary sector, the prison & probation service and GONE. The aim of the protocol is to provide a regional framework to plan for the housing needs of returning prisoners.

Substance misuse

Nationally Policy stresses the importance of improving access to aftercare service and move –on accommodation for problematic drug users. This could

include supported housing which would deliver planned interventions. The County Durham Drug and Action Team (DAAT) are a member of the Homelessness Action Partnership and as such working closely with the Council.

Chester-le-Street Council has in addition to the DAAT the “New Leaf Project”. This project is a tenancy support programme for individuals who engage in substance misuse and can provide help and support to an individual to assist them in sustaining a tenancy/

Children leaving care

Care leavers with accommodation and support needs require CYPS, strategic housing authorities and housing providers to work together in their best interests. This need for co-operation is recognised in legislation and its accompanying guidance (see appendix two for further information on the *Housing Act 1996*, *Homelessness Act 1996*, *Housing Act 2004*, *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006*, *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000*, and *Children Act 2004*). This guidance highlights an expectation from government that CYPS and strategic housing authorities forge proactive links with each other to ensure they can comply fully with the inter-relating pieces of legislation.

Subsequently the Council are working with Social Care and Health to deliver a County Wide Leaving Care Protocol. This protocol is an agreement that is designed to ensure that CYPS, the seven strategic housing authorities, and housing providers within County Durham work together to ensure that the accommodation and support needs of care leavers are met. It outlines each agency’s respective role and responsibilities to achieve successful transition to independence among this group.

Gypsy/Travellers

Consultants were appointed by the Durham Housing and Neighbourhood partnership to carry out a research project in May 2006, with the overall objective to gain a robust indication of accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers and the appropriate mechanisms for meeting these needs, including analysis of:

- The type of accommodation needed
- The demand for permanent sites
- The demand for alternative housing options
- The need for the expansion and/or improvement of existing sites
- The need for transit sites to meet seasonal, commercial and irregular demand
- The geographical gaps in provision
- The affordability of existing and proposed accommodation options.

Following this research County Wide Sub Group has been established to try and tackle the issues raised in the research.

What we need to do (Action Plan)

Action Point ** Continue with Homeless Forum meetings quarterly to develop with partners service for vulnerable Groups Lead Officer Housing Options Manager Ongoing

Action Point ** Participate in the Gypsy & Traveller Sub Group to enhance and deliver services for the Gypsy and Traveller Community Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager

Action Point ** Adhere to the HARP protocol ensuring we are pro-active is assisting this group find accommodation and advice Lead Officer Housing Options Manager Ongoing

Action Point ** Develop a local protocol with prisons to offer advice and support to prisoners and staff Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager December 2008

Action Point ** Be a pro-active member of the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board Lead Officer Ongoing

Action Point ** Work locally with the local Teenage Pregnancy Group to deliver services to reduce the conception rate amongst this group Lead Officer Housing Options Manager Ongoing

Action Point ** Continue to work with Supporting People Commissioning Group to deliver services to the most vulnerable groups

Action Point ** Expand the availability of information on Housing Options/Choices for residents of Chester-le-street Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager July 2008

Action Point ** Identify the vulnerable groups within the district Lead Officer Housing Strategy Manager March 2009

How will we know when we are there?

- Support available to those groups that wish to remain in their own accommodation
- Reduction in socially excluded people
- People at risk of Homelessness receive the correct advice and assistance

Section 6 Consultation Process

As part of the process to update the Housing Strategy a questionnaire has been issued to seek the views of residents and key stakeholders throughout the Chester-le-Street District. A full response to the survey is available in Appendix 1

A questionnaire was drafted by the Council and each question was chosen on the basis that it fitted with the objectives of both the Regional and sub-regional housing strategies so the Council can then understand the similarities and differences between regional/sub-regional plans and what actually needs to be delivered at a local level, the objectives include:-

- 1/ Rejuvenating the Housing Stock.
- 2/ Provide Quality and Choice.
- 3/ Improvements and maintenance of existing housing.
- 4/ Meeting specific community and social needs.

There was a total of 860 questionnaires sent out with 109 (13%) being returned. An excellent response was received from the community and voluntary groups and tenants panel members. It is suspected that a number of those respondents who did “not state” their group were either individual residents or councillors.

Organisation	Number sent	Number received	% of total
Community/Tenants panel member	35	33	94%
Ward Councillor	33	11	34%
Housing Association	8	2	25%
Private Landlord	41	4	9%
Resident/Tenant	750	18	2%
Not Stated	N/A	41	0
TOTAL	860	109	13%

The following conclusions were taken from the report:

- The report highlights a need for more affordable starter homes for first time buyers and families who cannot currently get on the property ladder. Some residents believe that whilst housing is being built in the District much of it is designed for the executive market and many families cannot afford to purchase this type of property. Building more Council Housing or affordable rented properties have been suggested.
- The rented sector is failing to provide a good range of rented properties in the District where people who cannot afford to buy properties will look. Not only is the range poor but the price of a quality rented property can

also be as high as a mortgage resulting in many individuals living on lower incomes in sub-standard accommodation.

- Low demand and abandonment is occurring in isolated areas of the District. The Avenues in Chester-le-Street have been mentioned more than once as well as areas of Sacriston. There are specific areas of low demand highlighted in Edmondsley, Great Lumley, Ouston and Pelton.
- The most popular tenure types requested are 2 bedroom bungalows and 2 bedroom terrace houses. This comes as no surprise as a recent analysis of the Housing Waiting list indicates the large demand for these types of property. What is more surprising is the large number of respondents who would like to see more semi-detached properties which indicates more family requirements and whilst the District has a large number of semi-detached properties than other places in County Durham the affordability issue must be considered.
- It would appear that there are pockets of land availability for development. The key areas which were highlighted include Bournmoor (next to the school), Lambton and the corridor between Waldrige, Chester-le-Street and Chester Moor. Smaller pockets of land have also identified in Edmondsley, High Hold, Pelton, Sacriston, Waldrige and West Pelton.
- People's perception of prices for different tenures varied accordingly highlighting that as prices rise many people perceive the increases as acceptable and in accordance with the property on offer. It is therefore acceptable that a large detached house will be over £100,000 but a semi-detached should be sold lower at £60,000 to £80,000. Terrace Houses will also sell for a similar sum. The price for a bungalow varies between £60,000 and £100,000 but it is expected that properties are more expensive as they cover more land surface.
- There are no real issues with second home owners in Chester-le-Street.
- Transport links, health facilities, employment prospects and retail outlets were all indicated as needing improvements. Again this is no surprise to the outlying towns and villages who have evolved from the self-sustaining days when mining was the main employer and brought the community together. Many of these villages now rely on transport links to work, shopping and access to community services. Whilst the question on leisure and recreation was not asked it highlighted that open spaces and places for youngsters to play such as ice rinks and youth clubs were also important issues to consider. Whilst question 11 is a more generalised question relating to the regeneration of the District it is one of the major determining factors when people look to buy or rent a home and in many cases the services are as important as the house itself.

- There was an excellent response to question 12 which asked the respondent if they had any other comments to make and whilst this stretched to two pages various themes emerged to include ASB, repairs and maintenance, parking, house affordability, traffic congestion and calming measures, leisure, recreation and road investment.

The development of this Strategy has also been overseen by the Housing Strategy Focus Group.

Section 7 Monitoring and Reviewing

The purpose of this Section is to set out how the Council will review and update the Strategy in the future. Chester-le-Street District Council will:

- Work with partners within the Homelessness Strategy Focus Group to oversee the implementation of the strategy, ensure that it is reflected within relevant local plans and strategies.
- Undertake an Annual Review of the strategy
- Report 6 monthly to the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- Annual Sample Survey to residents and partners on progress
- BVPIs
- HIP Returns

Appendix 1

Introduction

As part of the process to update the Chester-le-Street Housing Strategy (due in January 2008) a questionnaire has been issued to seek the views of residents and key stakeholders throughout the Chester-le-Street District. This is in response to the Housing Strategy guidelines set out by the Government which specifically states the importance of engagement with the Community and this document will provide evidence in support of this request.

It is hoped that the findings from this questionnaire will help to understand the community's views regarding the current Housing Situation in the District and this feedback will be incorporated into the final Housing Strategy document.

Methodology

A questionnaire was drafted by the Council – each question was chosen on the basis that it fitted with the objectives of both the Regional and sub-regional housing strategies so the Council can then understand the similarities and differences between regional/sub-regional plans and what actually needs to be delivered at a local level, the objectives include:-

- 1/ Rejuvenating the Housing Stock.
- 2/ Provide Quality and Choice.
- 3/ Improvements and maintenance of existing housing.
- 4/ Meeting specific community and social needs.

The questionnaire was dispatched by post on the 13th August 2007 with a covering letter and a pre-paid envelope stating a deadline of the 7th September 2007 and sent to the following groups and individuals:-

Ward Councillors	=	33
Community Groups	=	21
Tenants Panel Members	=	6
Voluntary Group	=	1
Tenants & Residents	=	750
Private landlords	=	41
Registered Social landlords	=	8
TOTAL	=	<u>860</u>

No incentives were given for the document's return and the questionnaire remained anonymous.

All returns were compiled using M/S Excel.

Questionnaire Responses

1/ Which organisation do you represent?

A total of 109 questionnaires (13%) were returned. An excellent response was received from the community and voluntary groups and tenants panel members. It is suspected that a number of those respondents who did "not state" their group were either individual residents or councillors.

Organisation	Number sent	Number received	% of total
Community/Tenants panel member	35	33	94%
Ward Councillor	33	11	34%
Housing Association	8	2	25%
Private Landlord	41	4	9%
Resident/Tenant	750	18	2%
Not Stated	N/A	41	0
TOTAL	860	109	13%

2/ Which ward do you currently live in or represent?

A response was received from all wards within the Chester-le-Street District. Nearly 40% of these respondents live or represent Chester Central, Chester East, Pelton and Lumley.

Chester Central	11	10%
Chester East	11	13%
Pelton	11	12%
Lumley	10	4%
Grange Villa & West Pelton	8	4%
North Lodge	7	3%
Edmondsley and Waldrige	7	8%
Chester West	7	5%
Chester South	6	6%
Kimbleworth & Plawsworth	6	7%
Bournmoor	5	4%
Ouston	4	2%
Urpeth	4	4%
Sacriston	4	4%
Chester North	4	2%
Pelton Fell	2	1%
Not stated	2	1%

3/ Do you agree or disagree that your ward is meeting the needs and aspirations of the current residents in terms of the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
Starter homes for first time buyers	11	29	38	15	16	109
Housing for vulnerable people	10	32	35	9	23	109
Sheltered housing	10	44	26	6	23	109
Adapted bungalows	16	43	24	8	18	109
Social housing	10	37	29	8	25	109
Executive housing	14	38	25	5	27	109

When the number of respondent are analysis (taking out the "Not Stated" element) the following results occur:-

The wards ARE meeting the needs and aspirations of the following:-

- Sheltered housing (63%)
- Adapted bungalows (65%)
- Social housing (56%)
- Executive housing (63%)

The wards are NOT meeting the needs and aspirations in terms of the following:-

- Started homes for first time buyers (57%)
- Housing for vulnerable groups (51%)

Whilst housing for vulnerable groups is just over 50%, the evidence regarding starter homes for first time buyers is more robust.

Unedited Comments received included:-

As far as I am aware all new accommodation built in the past 3/5 years have been priced above the affordable price bracket.

Housing in Chester-le-Street area is designed for the 'purchases' only market - mainly executive style homes or apartments / retirement accommodation. There are a large number of families who cannot afford to purchase this type of property.

Need for more social housing e.g. relatives (of ex-residents) who want to stay in village have a wait a long time for a house.

There are no Council houses in North Lodge.

Affordable rented property for young people.

4/ Do you agree or disagree that your ward is meeting the needs and aspirations of the current residents in terms of the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
Good choice of quality homes	18	40	30	9	12	109
Good design of current home	14	50	19	8	18	109
Good choice of location	17	51	21	3	17	109
Good selection of private rented accommodation	6	34	38	11	20	109
Good design of neighbourhoods	8	39	31	10	21	109
No areas of low demand or/and abandonment	13	26	36	7	27	109
Residents wish to remain living in ward	10	44	19	2	34	109

When the number of respondent are analysis (taking out the "Not Stated" element) the following results occur:-

The wards ARE meeting the needs and aspirations of the following in order of importance:-

- Good Location (74%)
- Residents want to remain in ward (72%)
- Good Design of current home (70%)
- Quality Homes (60%)
- Good design of Neighbourhood (53%)
- No areas of low demand (52%)

The wards are NOT meeting the needs and aspirations in terms of the following:-

- Good selection of rented property (55%)

Unedited Comments received included:-

The regenerated area of Pelton Fell is forcing people into the Avenues and they have brought with them the same problems as when they lived in Pelton Fell. The council's solution to regenerating appears to be "move one bad apple to another area to spoil and it will go away. This is only the spoiling the area and disrupts the lives of 'decent' people living in our area.

There are areas of my parish where rented property changes hands 2/3 times a year because of ASB.

Residents don't stay long in our ward.

Small ghetto areas within social housing.

Not just the housing which needs to be addressed. It is whole social structure, i.e. doctors, community centres, to be more welcoming + youth clubs are a must

5/ If your ward suffers from areas of low demand or abandonment from the above question can you please specify the neighbourhood(s) affected in more detail (comments left unedited)?

Bournmoor Gardens left to rot same as houses (Bournmoor).

Avenues (x 7) – especially 3rd Ave (x2) and 4th Ave (x3) (Chester-le-Street).

My address is Jacques Terrace. It did go down hill but seems to be improving (Chester-le-Street).

Lots of families do not stay very long in village because of lack of facilities (Edmondsley).

Warriors Arms between the club & pub, it is in a disgusting state (Great Lumley).

The area of low demand I refer to is The Oval and The Brooms (Ouston) (x2).

Kings Lane (Pelton).

The Avenue in Pelton always has houses boarded up and police are regularly visiting certain houses. It is always strewn with rubbish (Pelton).

We live in Pelton Fell. Most houses need refurbishing (Pelton Fell).

The old Coop building on Plawsworth Road could be turned into flats/ apartments and land at the bottom of John Street/ Water Street (Sacriston).

Holly Crescent (x 2), one bedroom bungalows need to be demolished (Sacriston)

Cross Lees (Sacriston)

Lingey Close + Charlaw Close areas, 100% worse since the 'Open Plan' areas were changed (Sacriston).

Sacriston has suffered years of Local Government neglect. Recently the renaissance has made an improvement but not enough. Old Co-op could be improved and roads from plawsworth carry too much heavy traffic, a ring road is needed (Sacriston).

6/ In order to meet the needs and aspirations of your ward in the 20th Century do you agree or disagree that the following types of housing will be required in the future?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
3 Bedroom Detached Houses	19	47	19	4	20	109
4 Bedroom Detached Houses	10	36	29	8	26	109
3 Bedroom Semi-Detached Houses	21	53	10	4	21	109
2 Bedroom Terrace	20	54	10	2	23	109
3 Bedroom Terrace	22	50	13	3	21	109
2 Bedroom Bungalow	42	43	10	1	13	109
3 Bedroom Bungalow	23	36	18	5	27	109

When the number of respondent are analysis (taking out the “Not Stated” element) the following results occur:-

All types of housing have been highlighted as required to meet the needs and aspirations of the ward in the 20th Century. The list below indicates the level of importance placed against each tenure type:-

- 2 Bedroom Bungalows (89%)
- 2 Bedroom Terrace Houses (86%)
- 3 Bedroom Semi- Detached Houses (84%)
- 3 Bedroom Terrace Houses (82%)
- 3 Bedroom Detached Houses (74%)
- 3 Bedroom Bungalows (72%)
- 4 Bedroom Detached Houses (55%)

The results are indicative of other research which shows a shortage of 2 bedroom bungalows and 2 bedroom terrace houses within the District. Interestingly a high importance has been placed on 3 bedroom semi-detached properties.

Unedited Comments received included:-

The is enough housing within area

More assisted living options

More 1 bedroom bungalows (x 2)

Secure housing for elderly residents seems to be in very short supply. I can't remember any new ones being built at all. Unmarried mothers seem to be a priority - elderly are ignored.

Lack of eco-friendly housing.

More 3 and 4 bed family homes not necessary detached

Accommodation for single people (affordable)

7/ Do you believe that there is suitable land available to build new homes within your ward?

Yes	33
No	66
Not stated	10

Over 67% of respondents believe that there is no suitable land available to build new homes.

8/ - If you answered "yes" to the above question can you give details of where this land is located?

Next to Bournmoor School (Bournmoor) (x2)
 Lambton (Bournmoor)
 Kell's, Cragside, 12th Avenue (Chester-le-Street)
 Linget Farm, John Street (Chester-le-Street)
 Land beside Allotment down from Cross Lanes (Chester-le-Street)
 Land behind Mafeking Terrace (Chester-le-Street),
 In middle of Pine Street, Stone Row and behind Front Street (Chester-le-Street)
 The area 'down from Chester Health Centre', by the Whitehill Club (Chester-le-Street)
 Old 4th Ave (Chester-le-Street)
 Along Holmside Road, (Edmondsley)
 There is land opposite Baytree Terrace (High Hold)
 Some parts of The Wynd could be used (Pelton)
 Waste land behind Acorn Close (Sacriston)
 Land running pararell with 'Ashford Drive' to Deneside (Sacriston)
 Sacriston old colliery land and land near Fellforth Way (Sacriston)
 Land between Aged Miners Homes and Deneside (Sacriston)
 Holmeside Road past bungalows (Sacriston)
 West Pelton is surrounded by empty land (West Pelton)
 Between Waldrige and Chester-le-Street and down towards Chester Moor (Waldrige) (x2)
 Area near Waldrige Fell (Waldrige)
 Whitehill Farm and various brownfield spots for infill development (?)

9/ - What price banding do you consider "reasonable" and "affordable to potential home owners within your ward for the following types of tenure?

	Below £60,000	£60,000 to £80,000	£81,000 to £100,000	Above £100,000	Not stated	Total
3 Bedroom Detached Houses	8	18	25	40	18	109
3 Bedroom Semi-Detached Houses	8	32	23	23	23	109
2 Bedroom Terrace	36	38	13	3	19	109
2 Bedroom Bungalow	27	27	27	10	18	109

The key price which is considered reasonable and affordable is as follows:-

A 3 bedroom Detached house is expected to sell for over £100,000.

A 3 bedroom Semi-detached should sell between £60,000 and £80,000 although this price does rise which may indicate the price difference between a privately owned semi-detached and an ex Council house.

A 2 bedroom Terrace should sell between £60,000 to £80,000.

A 2 bedroom Bungalow is evenly split between £60,000 to £100,000.

Unedited Comments received included:-

I am a single parent of twin boys - we had to leave or privately bought property / sale (owned by my ex partner), since I have struggled to keep a roof over our 'heads'. (If I was working and gained full time employment my average wage would be £12,000 - £13,000 – 3 x would be £39,000 of which I may obtain a mortgage. The majority of my 'neighbours' could never afford to buy a property. So where would they live??

Council flats below £60,000.

10/ Are you aware of any rural housing issues regarding second home owners which could be affecting the supply and price of property in your ward?

Yes	7
No	95
Not stated	7

The majority of respondents are not aware of an issue with second home owners in their neighbourhood.

11/ Do you agree or disagree with the following improvements which will benefit your community?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not stated	Total
Improved transport links	47	37	11	3	11	109
Road Access	23	38	24	1	23	109
Employment Prospects	40	36	14	1	18	109
Retail outlets	41	34	12	2	20	109
Health Facilities	38	38	13	1	19	109
Educational Facilities	30	40	13	3	23	109
Community groups	29	45	16	1	18	109

When the number of respondent are analysed (taking out the "Not Stated" element) the following results occurred in order of importance:-

- Improved transport link (86%)
- Health Facilities (85%)
- Employment Prospects (84%)
- Retail Outlets (84%)
- Education Facilities (81%)
- Community Groups (81%)
- Road Access (71%)

Unedited Comments received included:-

More Youth Clubs (x2).

Open spaces central to developments.

Leisure space.

Play/recreation area.

An ice rink would provide a place for entertainment - majority of people.

Speeding through Edmondsley - traffic control measures needed. Community Hall needs to be refurbished.

More transport to Chester-le-Street.

Facilities to remove cars from streets.

Drain improvements so existing housing doesn't get flooded.

12/ Do you have any other comments which would you like to be seen taken into considered within the Chester-le-Street Housing Strategy?

(Please note that the following comments have not been edited)

Clear out anti-social tenants.

Car security garages have never seen a community support patrol. Camera on Twizell Crossroads? Anti-social behaviour, illegal motorbikers (ASB)

Yes, our village greens are disappearing and this is causing feuds. People need space to play, relax and integrate. Please, please give us back our village greens and spaces central to estates.

Review the existing rented homes and make sure they are up to standard. My bathroom is still in the 1960s. I am an invalid and need some help. I need a shower stall. Please help! No else seems to be listening.

Do the repairs / maintenance within a reasonable time.

I would like to see all council house gardens tidied up by tenants and be made to keep them tidy

More considered parking.

Parking on estates is causing traffic problems. Speed restrictions on all roads within area. Since the new drinking laws have come into force drinkers have come into the street and Lumley has become noisy, congested & littered. To some this atmosphere is intimidating & this situation needs to be addressed.

Many of the new houses are too small for your old furniture.

Better maintenance of hedges. Faster response times for repairs & maintenance. Chester-le-Street is dying as a place to shop. There are too many charity shops / empty units. Chester is a town that is used to commute from.

I strongly agree with this questionnaire which is being delivered to tenants. Please continue with any questionnaires for important decisions such as this. Road access to this area is inadequate and not suitable for modern day families. (ie cars) sometimes 2 per home. The easiest way to alleviate this major problem (which causes congestion) is to convert some street to one way only. Not too difficult and reasonably inexpensive.

The 'majority' of people do not wish to be tenants in Council properties (like myself) - they are being forced into situations of poverty through no fault of their own). As less and less Council social housing becomes available this is a MAJOR concern. It is unrealistic to think or plan to build houses for people to own 50% of them. I investigated this option and it is an expensive way of owning half a house. It is not the solution. 'Decent' families are suffering and so unfortunately are the children involved.

Stop using the flats in Kings Lane as a dumping ground for heroin addicts and ex convicts and there won't be as many complaints.

Home prices to be kept low. Public transport should introduce more routes so that traveler's can have more access towns.

Traffic calming measures needed throughout village. Planning restrictions should be enforced vigorously. Public spaces and rights of way should be protected. There is a big problem with dog fouling and children which ride on unlicensed motorbikes (mini). Lack of youth facilities.

We need more 2 bedroom houses in this area to be allocated to more needy people e.g. people living in caravans etc. I know of two people living like this who have had points removed instead of finding them suitable houses. People from other areas are being moved here when there are not enough houses for people who have lived here for all their lives.

Car parking facilities are needed for Hylton Terrace residents. There is spare land at the top of the street. Also the back lane at Hylton Terrace is private as previous tenants bought the land but never aren't any signs to show it is private and lorries and vans use it daily.

I Would like to see more green belts in Chester-le-Street. Chester-le-Street Council seems focused on building on every bit of land that becomes available. Let's have some space!

Play areas for young people not swings and roundabouts. Designated for playing sports, football, cricket etc.

If there are any available plots of land, then affordable houses should be built for the young people of Chester-le-Street. Stop wasting money on stupid looking arches in the market place!!!

I would like to see new doors and windows made available for Jubilee Close bungalows. The windows and door frames are rotting away.

Better use of community group services.

More homes for single people.

Parking outside/ new our homes should be an improved. Cleveland Avenue is a major road now we should have a wider road / car parking area for tenants.

A major problem of Hilda Park is the parking. Could something be done to encourage people to block pave these front gardens and ease the congestion.

More control on anti-social behaviour.

There are no old people's retired homes in Lumley.

More carefully observe control over problem families being relocated to the village.
Build more houses for rent.

Car ports needed in new houses.

If CDC can waste £1m plus on an arch why cant they spend the public and Government money by developing a ring road around Sacriston to stop the enormous amount of traffic through the village. Plawesworth Road is now a hazard.

13/ Conclusions

1/ The report highlights a need for more affordable starter homes for first time buyers and families who cannot currently get on the property ladder. Some residents believe that whilst housing is being built in the District much of it is designed for the executive market and many families cannot afford to purchase this type of property. Building more Council Housing or affordable rented properties have been suggested.

2/ The rented sector is failing to provide a good range of rented properties in the District where people who cannot afford to buy properties will look. Not only is the range poor but the price of a quality rented property can also be as high as a mortgage resulting in many individuals living on lower incomes in sub-standard accommodation.

3/ Low demand and abandonment is occurring in isolated areas of the District. The Avenues in Chester-le-Street have been mentioned more than once as well as areas of Sacriston. There are specific areas of low demand highlighted in Edmondsley, Great Lumley, Ouston and Pelton.

4/ The most popular tenure types requested are 2 bedroom bungalows and 2 bedroom terrace houses. This comes as no surprise as a recent analysis of the Housing Waiting list indicates the large demand for these types of property. What is more surprising is the large number of respondents who would like to see more semi-detached properties which indicates more family requirements and whilst Chester-le-Street has a large number of semi-detached properties than other places in County Durham the affordability issue must be considered.

5/ It would appear that there are pockets of land availability for development. The key areas which were highlighted include Bournmoor (next to the school), Lambton and the corridor between Waldrige, Chester-le-Street and Chester Moor. Smaller pockets of land have also identified in Edmondsley, High Hold, Pelton, Sacriston, Waldrige and West Pelton.

6/ People's perception of prices for different tenures varied accordingly highlighting that as prices rise many people perceive the increases as acceptable and in accordance with the property on offer. It is therefore acceptable that a large detached house will be over £100,000 but a semi-detached should be sold lower at £60,000 to £80,000 (this may be the current market price for a Council property), Terrace Houses will also sell for a similar sum. The price for a bungalow varies between £60,000 to £100,000 but it is expected that properties are more expensive as they cover more land surface.

7/ There are no real issues with second home owners in Chester-le-Street.

8/ Transport links, health facilities, employment prospects and retail outlets were all indicated as needing improvements. Again this is no surprise to the outlying towns and villages who have evolved from the self-sustaining days when mining was the main employer and brought the community together. Many of these villages now rely on transport links to work, shop and access community services. Whilst the question on leisure and recreation was not asked it highlighted that open spaces and places for youngsters to play such as ice rinks and youth clubs were also important issues to consider. Whilst question 11 is a more generalised question relating to the regeneration of the District it is one of the major determining factors when people look to buy or rent a home and in many cases the services are as important as the house itself.

9/ There was an excellent response to question 12 which asked the respondent if they had any other comments to make and whilst this stretched to two pages various themes emerged to include ASB, repairs and maintenance, parking, house affordability, traffic congestion and calming measures, leisure, recreation and road investment.

Housing Associations with properties Chester-le-Street District

LOGO	Housing Association	Property Type	Number	Area
	Accent North East is a subsidiary of Accent Group, managing some 3,000 properties across the region in 15 local authority areas. They have a healthy development programme of affordable rented, shared ownership and direct-for-sale housing.	3 bed house 2 bed house	3 1	Fencehouses (1) Grange Villa (1) High Handenhold (1) Fencehouses
	Two Castles Housing Association have been providing good quality affordable housing in communities across the North for 40 years. They own and manage more than 3,300 properties for rent and low cost sale to single people, families and retired people. Their aim is to enhance the quality of residents' lives and support the regeneration of communities through their work.	2 bed bungalow	17	Perkinsville
	Durham Aged Miners Associations mission is to be the best social housing provider of retirement housing in the North East. They currently have over 130 sites in the North East the core being in the former coalfield areas. Waiting lists are open to the general public and points are awarded for the ability to cope in current housing, colliery service, years on list and age.	One and two bedroom bungalows	21 20 12 6 6 6 6 6 6 10	Nettlesworth Sacriston Lumley Chester Moor South Pelaw New Lambton West Pelton Chester-le-Street Pelton Lane ends Pelton Fell

LOGO	Housing Association	Property Type	Number	Area
	<p>Johnnie Johnson Housing believe in developing homes and communities that people are happy to live in. They are proud of their track record of successfully delivering high quality, affordable homes.</p> <p>The development team at Johnnie Johnson Housing works closely with local authority partners, builders and landowners to provide good quality, affordable housing across the country, in conjunction with local needs and strategies.</p>	<p>One Bed Flats</p> <p>One Bed Bungalows One & two Bed Bungalows</p>	<p>24 16 12 36</p> <p>9 6 5 6</p>	<p>Great Lumley Dunmoor Court CLS Chester-le-Street Boulmer Court CLS</p> <p>Boulmer Court CLSt Dunmoor Court CLS Great Lumley Edmondsley</p>
	<p>Places for People focuses on creating places where people choose to live – whether that means providing brand new communities or transforming existing neighbourhoods into vibrant, popular area to live and work.</p> <p>They can provide a range of housing solutions, specialist care and support services, employment and training opportunities, financial services and other community services.</p>	<p>1 bed flat 2 Bed Bungalows</p>	<p>18 18</p>	<p>Sacriston Daleside, Sacriston</p>
	<p>Nomad Homes, based in Newcastle was established in 1974. They are now one of the leading providers of affordable housing in the North of England, operating across nineteen different local authorities. They manage over 3,000 properties for single people, couples, families and older persons</p>	<p>1 bed flat 2 bed bungalow 3 bed houses (shared ownership)</p>	<p>12 8 5 10 15 18</p>	<p>Pelton Chester-le-Street Pelton Chester-le-Street Pelton Chester-le-Street</p>

LOGO	Housing Association	Property Type	Number	Area
	Home is one of the leading providers of affordable housing, care and support, and is committed to creating thriving communities where people want to live and support those who need it.	2 bed flat 3 bed house	16 9	Chester-le-Street Chester-le-Street
	Three Rivers has become a leading housing provider in the North East of England over the years. Their aim is to become the best housing association in the North East providing good quality, affordable housing and housing support with customer-centred services in attractive neighbourhoods where people want to live.	1 bed flat 2 Bed Bungalows 2 bed houses 3 Bed Bungalows 4 Bed houses	23 6 17 14 1 5	Morningside court Sacriston Chester-le-Street Pelton Pelton Pelton Pelton
	Cestria Community Housing Association was set up as part of the stock transfer process. They are the main providers of affordable rented housing within the Chester-le-Street district and work closely with the Council and other partners to meet housing and regeneration needs across the district. They currently own around 4,300 homes.			Various areas through out the district



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Report to:	Executive
Date of Meeting:	7 April 2008
Report from:	Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Title of Report:	Review into Community Partnerships
Agenda Item Number:	9 (i)

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel following the review into Community Partnerships as set out in appendix 1.
- 1.2 To seek the support of the Executive to the final review report and the recommendations contained therein.

Recommendation 1

That the Executive is recommended to retain and enhance the current Community Partnerships and that they continue to be supported and developed.

Recommendation 2

That the Executive requests that the LSP develops a communication strategy for the LSP and Community Partnerships to demystify and develop a wider contact and engagement with local people.

Recommendation 3

Ensure that wherever possible meeting dates, agendas and reports are promoted within the public domain prior to partnership meetings.

Recommendation 4

That the Executive requests the LSP develops a 'jargon buster' to ensure that meetings, agendas and invitations remain accessible to communities.

Recommendation 5

That a future mapping exercise of the district be conducted to establish the extent and coverage of parish councils, residents associations,

Community Partnerships and other community groups as an information base for future engagement as part of the People and Place delivery plan.

Recommendation 6

That as part of the People and Place delivery plan a survey be conducted into the variety of Community Partnership membership including the experiences and opinions of current members to further reduce barriers to participation, promote membership and aid greater ownership of any new model of community engagement within the new authority.

Recommendation 7

That the Executive requests consideration is given by the LSP to further investment in the membership of Community Partnerships including training and further support to help local people engage.

Recommendation 8

That the Executive is recommended to lobby the implementation executive cabinet through appropriate representation in relation to issues of decision making powers and financial influence of any future engagement structures in order to encourage community support and remove perceptions of powerlessness.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 In the investigations and preparation of the review report a wide variety of officers, members, partner organisations and voluntary and public sector bodies were consulted.

3. CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The review into Community Partnerships will help contribute towards the authorities' new single priority of People and Place.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

Financial implications are considered where possible in Appendix 1.

4.2 Legal

Legal implications are considered where possible in Appendix 1.

4.3 Personnel

There are no personnel implications to this report at this current time.

4.4 Diversity

Diversity implications are considered where possible in Appendix 1.

4.5 Risk

Risk implications are considered where possible in Appendix 1.

4.6 Crime and Disorder

Crime and Disorder implications are considered where possible in Appendix 1.

4.7 Data Quality

Every care has been taken in the development of this report to ensure that the information and data used in its preparation and the appendices attached are accurate, timely, consistent and comprehensive. The council's Data Quality Policy has been complied with in producing this report.

4.8 LGR Implications

LGR Implications are considered in the review report at Appendix 1.

5. BACKGROUND, POSITION STATEMENT & OPTION APPRAISAL

5.1 The Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel conducted a major review into Community Partnerships. The review began in June 2007 and was concluded in March 2008.

5.2 The purpose of the review undertaken was to investigate the value of Community Partnerships and future challenges to community engagement as well as looking at models of practice in other local authorities.

5.3 The review team undertook extensive consultation involving a wide variety of stakeholders and used various techniques to gain information and evidence to support the recommendations contained in the report. Focus Groups, questionnaires, site visits and discussion groups are examples of the methods used during the review process.

5.4 The review panel visited Gateshead Council who provided their own experiences and outlined their approach to community engagement. The Members in attendance found this visit informative providing a useful

comparison with a neighbouring authority albeit that they differ greatly from Chester-le-Street DC.

- 5.6 The review team gathered a lot of information and evidence throughout the review process and this has been collated and presented in the report attached at appendix 1 of this report.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That Members note the review.

6.2 That the Executive consider and support the recommendations contained within the final review report at section 10 and summarised at the beginning of this report.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS / DOCUMENTS REFERED TO:

- As set out in Appendix 1.

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VERSION NUMBER 1.1

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Chester-le-Street

District Council

Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review to assess the effectiveness of Community Partnerships to the council, its partners and the community



March 2008

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**REPORT OF PARTNERSHIP & EFFICIENCY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL
REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

Foreword of the Chair

The Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel investigated the effectiveness of community partnerships as part of its 2007/08 work programme.

The review conducted by the panel was a piece of work that looked into the effectiveness of community partnerships and the value of these to the council, partners and the community as a whole. As a panel we visited a neighbouring local authority, held focus groups with stakeholders and developed a questionnaire for use as part of the review process. Council officers were also interviewed as part of this process.

On behalf of the scrutiny panel I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the officers, organisations and individuals involved in this review for their contributions. The panel found, in particular, the visit to Gateshead Council most helpful during the review process. It is hoped that the recommendations contained within this report will help towards highlighting the worth of community engagement within the District and help towards shaping community engagement within the new authority.

It is further hoped that the review report and evidence gathered contributes to Chester-le-Street District Council's new single priority of 'People and Place'.

The review was carried out between June 2007 and March 2008.

Cllr David Holding

Chair of Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**REPORT OF PARTNERSHIP & EFFICIENCY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL
REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

Councillor David Holding	Chairman of Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny panel
Councillor Martin Gollan	Vice-Chairman of Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Lawson Armstrong	Panel Member
Councillor Richard Court	Panel Member
Councillor Syd Greatwich	Panel Member
Councillor Philip Nathan	Panel Member
Councillor Mike Sekowski	Panel Member
Councillor John Shiell	Panel Member
Councillor Tracie Smith	Panel Member

**REPORT OF PARTNERSHIP & EFFICIENCY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL
REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 With more emphasis being placed on empowering communities and individuals with local decision making through government policy, the importance of community partnerships and their effectiveness is increasingly paramount. Community Partnerships have created links between service providers and communities, provide a channel for information flow between the two and have the ability to increase community influence and develop the social capital.
- 1.2 Issues that have a real impact on local communities at a ground level are of more concern to Community Partnership Representatives than greater larger scale strategic changes that sometimes are difficult to assess or convert into tangible outcomes. Community Partnerships have also helped to narrow the gap between local politicians and community leaders.
- 1.3 The Police as a service provider have been highlighted in a number of areas of this research for their commitment to communities. The engagement undertaken by the police has improved their own legitimacy as well as providing a boost to public confidence. The police have understood the benefits of community engagement and realise that some of their best intelligence gathering can only be provided by developing and improving such engagement and Community Partnerships are seen as an appropriate vehicle. Also in terms of community safety the police have relied significantly on Community Partnerships and their relationship with community organisations for intelligence gathering.
- 1.4 Local people tend to dip in and out of Community Partnerships dependent on subject matter and it is important to note that this involvement is voluntary. Many people want to help or rally to a particular cause and become involved in a local issue. However it is more difficult and ultimately time consuming for people to develop knowledge and skills to engage on a more strategic level with service providers. This time and commitment is something that many people cannot or do not wish to invest in a voluntary capacity. Compounding this is Chester-le-Street's geographical position making it the highest commuter area in the North East with 70% of people working outside the district. This has potential implications in terms of community loyalty and the ability of individuals to invest their spare capacity into community activities.
- 1.5 Without the appropriate feedback on their contribution many local people become discouraged from future engagement especially when weighed against personal and social costs. There is an improved likelihood of developing further engagement if actions and results are seen to result

through adequate feedback mechanisms with feelings of empowerment increased.

- 1.6 There is a suggestion that Community Partnerships operate in a top-down approach with a one-way communication model. The evidence of Community Partnership Representatives does not support this, as those interviewed were satisfied with their involvement and felt supported and valued. This top down perception is perhaps a view taken by those not actively engaged with Community Partnerships and is something that needs to be addressed.
- 1.7 Community Partnerships as a process engage certain kinds of people from within communities and are often criticised for only attracting the 'usual suspects', despite efforts by the LSP to engage wider representation. However, it is important that these 'willing participants' are not discredited or castigated but supported and highly valued. What does need to be looked at is a variety of engagement methods to maximise engagement within communities. While local communities have many similarities they also offer a diversity that ensures the use of the same model of engagement may not always bring success. This is not to say that the model used is wrong simply that it is the wrong 'fit' for that community or that a portfolio of different approaches to community engagement is used, with Community Partnerships just one part of this. To an extent this is true of other parts of the LSP and Council which use different approaches e.g. in relation to children and young people.
- 1.8 Community Partnerships need to be seen as closely related to the Council's activity to support a network of residents and tenants associations across the District, many of which have matured into very effective mechanisms for local action e.g. the Lumley Residents Association and the Lilac House Tenants and Residents Association. Also from the perspective of LSP partners, there are other consultative mechanisms to be borne in mind. Community Partnerships are not a mechanism for engaging young people, and indeed may be an inappropriate vehicle for doing so. However the Local Children's Board (one of the LSPs seven thematic groups) does have a responsibility and mechanisms for engaging with children and young people to inform its work and the work of the LSP.
- 1.9 The structures and support need to be adequately resourced to ensure that expectation, reward and the full potential of community partnerships and engagement generally can be experienced by as many stakeholders as possible. Trust and confidence need to be built and this takes time, resources and commitment; but without investing in local people effective engagement within communities is potentially very difficult. There is a need to look at the community development training needs of local people so they can acquire the knowledge, confidence and skills to think more strategically. If community groups and individuals are given the right tools they are able to organise themselves more effectively becoming empowered to take action and become self sufficient.

- 1.10 The Community Partnerships that operate within Chester-le-Street have developed in different ways and not without casualties along the way; Sacriston and Lumley Community Partnerships have ceased while Chester-le-Street Central and Pelton have developed. It is important, particularly in the light of LGR that any future development or investment looks at the lessons learned.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to prepare a Community Strategy for improving and promoting the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area. Government guidance on Community Strategies makes it clear that Local Authorities are expected to prepare Community Strategies in partnership with other local organisations and agencies and recommended doing this with the establishment of a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).
- 2.2 LSPs were introduced as a way of improving community inclusion in the development of priorities for service provision on a local level and community participation was viewed as one of the measures of a successful LSP.
- 2.3 A Local Strategic Partnership is a non-statutory, multi-agency body that matches local authority boundaries and aims to bring together, at local level, the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. The membership of any LSP should include the private, public, voluntary and the community sectors and representatives on the LSP should have the necessary leadership and leverage in their own organisations. The Government states that 'LSP's are key to tackling deep-seated, multi-faceted problems, requiring a range of responses from different bodies. Local partners working through a LSP will be expected to take many of the major decisions about priorities for their local area.'

3 Purpose of the Review

- 3.1 The purpose of the review was to assess the value of Community Partnerships; investigate future challenges to community engagement as well as looking at models of practice in other local authorities; and to ensure that the council, the community and its partners secure improvement and better value for money from Community Partnerships.
- 3.2 The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel following their investigations. The review considered Community Partnerships as a mechanism for community involvement and its benefits to the council, community and partners who are involved.

4 Scrutiny Review Process

- 4.1 Scrutiny reviews are in-depth studies into an issue which has been identified by scrutiny members as important to the community and Council of Chester-le-Street.
- 4.2 Scrutiny reviews investigate issues by a process of gathering evidence through speaking to individuals and groups that are involved or affected. The review panel then formulates realistic evidence based recommendations which are presented to the Council's Executive.
- 4.3 Scrutiny reviews will carry out a number of stages in undertaking and completing a review. The stages broadly are:

Stage 1 Scope The initial stage of the review identifies the background, issues, potential outcomes and timetable for the review.

Stage 2 Investigate The panel gathers evidence using a variety of tools and techniques and arranges site visits where appropriate.

Stage 3 Analyse The key trends and issues are highlighted from the evidence gathered by the panel.

Stage 4 Clarify The panel discusses and identifies the principal messages of the review from the work undertaken.

Stage 5 Recommend The panel formulates and agrees realistic recommendations.

Stage 6 Report Draft and final reports are prepared based on the evidence, findings and recommendations.

Stage 7 Monitor The panel undertakes to monitor agreed recommendations on a regularly agreed basis.

5 Background

- 5.1 In Chester-le-Street the District Partnership is the LSP with the first Community Strategy launched in 2004 and a further updated Sustainable Community Strategy launched in November 2006.
- 5.2 Within the Local Strategic Partnership framework, area based Community Partnerships were established for the purpose of providing a vehicle for dialogue between residents and agencies providing services for communities within the Chester-le-Street district. There are also elected/nominated

Community Partnership Representatives with a specific role in relation to the Community Partnerships and the LSP.

- 5.3 In Chester-le-Street the District Council has supported the LSP by building community engagement pathways through Community Partnerships. The Council supports Community Partnerships in a similar way to resident and tenant associations through staff, advice and grant support to facilitate capacity building within these groups. It should be noted that the review is looking at the Council's work on community engagement and involvement, and the bigger picture is one of a variety of services using an array of approaches to deliver community engagement and engage users in service design.
- 5.4 The Government's aspirations are to empower communities through councils, communities and citizens. There has already been an announced reduction of central performance indicators from 1200 to fewer than 200 for local councils. An agenda of participatory budgeting, citizens' juries and transfer of assets to local groups is moving forward.
- 5.5 The Communities and Local Government Secretary has also announced a new 'empowerment' White Paper to be published in summer 2008. The paper will be based on four themes, regenerating deprived areas, encouraging active citizenship, improving local public services and strengthening local accountability.

6 Terms of Reference

- 6.1 To assess the value of Community Partnerships to the council, partners and the community and to learn from the current arrangements.
- 6.2 To understand the compositions, procedures and functions of Community Partnerships to assess any successes or failings.
- 6.3 To review the concept or nature of Community Partnerships and to develop and consider options for change.
- 6.4 To investigate proposals for the future engagement of the community in relation to the LSP and the Council.
- 6.5 To compare models of practice from other local authorities in relation to the Community Partnership approach.
- 6.6 To review how effective the voluntary sector is represented at Community Partnerships.

7 Methodology

- 7.1 The review panel was working to a clearly agreed timetable. The timetable was a useful tool by which progress could be monitored and also provided a basis for progress reports to the main panel meetings.
- 7.2 A list of publications, papers and documents was assembled by the Scrutiny Officer and a bibliography can be found in Section 12 of this report.
- 7.3 Interviews were conducted with:
- Jeremy Brock (Community Strategy Manager)
 - Jorge Lulic (Community Development Manager)
 - Allyson Rose (Community Engagement Officer)
 - Cllr Linda Ebbatson (Leader Chester-le-Street District Council)
 - Cllr Stephen Barr (Portfolio Holder – Community Engagement & Partnership Working)
 - Belinda Lewis (Chester-le-Street & District CVS)
 - Staff from Gateshead Council
 - Colin Reynolds (Pelton Area Community Partnership Representative)
 - Edna Stokoe (Chester-le-Street Area Community Partnership Representative)
 - Elaine Stockton (Chester-le-Street Area Community Partnership Representative)
 - Ian Miller (Durham County PCT)
 - Nick Springham (Durham County PCT)
 - Trevor Watson (Chief Superintendent – Durham Police Authority)
 - Cllr Brian Ebbatson (Durham County Council)
 - Jayne Mills (Community Engagement – Durham County Council)
- 7.4 A visit was arranged to Gateshead Council as part of the scrutiny panel's evidence gathering process. The purpose was to look at differing models of practice in relation to Community Partnerships. It should be noted that whilst Gateshead is a neighbouring authority it is wholly different to Chester-le-Street DC being a metropolitan unitary authority.
- 7.5 Members of the panel also attended a number of Community Partnership meetings throughout the review period to gain an understanding of the performance and operation of these meetings.
- 7.6 A variety of desktop research was conducted to gain an insight into current developments in community engagement, neighbouring authorities' approaches and highlighted case studies of innovative and successful initiatives in this area.

8 Findings of the Review

8.1 The Council's Community Strategy Manager provided Members of the panel with a detailed overview on Community Partnerships within the Chester-le-Street district.

8.2 Originally Community Partnerships were held four times per year with all district and county councillors invited, covering the following areas:

Chester-le-Street Central	83 members (Regular attendees' c20)
Sacrison	41 members (Regular attendees' c10)
Pelton	54 members (Regular attendees' c12)
Lumley	80 members (Regular attendees' c40).

8.3 In 2006 the Communities and Partnerships Team took the decision to move to meetings three times per year. This was in response to concerns over meeting fatigue by participants and Community Partnership Representatives (many of whom attend a range of other resident and community group meetings – with Community Partnerships sometimes seen as an additional layer) and to better reflect the capacity within the team to manage this frequency of meetings.

8.4 In Lumley the Community Partnership had, since its inception, failed to generate a significant level of participants. This was due to several important reasons:

- Community Partnerships had in other areas been set up to link with the established PCT Local Advisory Group structures – in Lumley no such structure existed.
- In Lumley a very active Resident and Tenant Association was in existence and in effect provided competition for resident's time and interest, and that of agencies who might also be invited to attend.
- The reluctance of LSP partner organisations to attend what were seen as smaller/marginal groups/areas.

8.5 In 2006 discussions took place with representatives of the Resident Association to join with them and for it to provide a link to the LSP. This has worked reasonably well with LSP partners discussing issues with the association members, however more thought needs to be given to how best make this work. Seeking a representative from this group to participate in LSP activity is one such issue.

8.6 In Sacrison, the Community Partnership initially worked effectively but due to the activity of the Sacrison Development Group leading on action such as the 'Urban Renaissance' regeneration scheme, numbers quickly dwindled. The

reluctance of LSP partner organisations to attend what were seen as smaller/marginal groups/areas was also a significant factor.

- 8.7 In 2007 the decision was made to suspend Community Partnership in Sacriston and invite members on our contact list to the other meetings in the Pelton Area and Chester-le-Street Area.
- 8.8 Whilst there may be a perception that Community Partnership agendas are determined in a 'top-down' fashion the evidence of this research would suggest this is not shared amongst Community Partnership Representatives. Agendas are determined via a process of regular pre-meetings with Community Partnership Representatives, the LSP manager and the Community Development Team.
- 8.9 A variety of topics have been discussed at Community Partnership meetings including:
- Regeneration Strategy and Town Centre Regeneration
 - Neighbourhood Management
 - Local Government Reorganisation
 - Transfer of Council Housing Stock
 - Provision of local bus services.

The list is not exhaustive but does provide examples of the themes and issues that have been discussed at partnership meetings.

- 8.10 It can be difficult to measure and even demonstrate effectiveness when much of the achievements of community partnerships revolve around information sharing, creating dialogue and developing discussion rather than measurable projects. To date there have been no surveys conducted into this area with Community Partnerships.
- 8.11 Key events have demonstrated the value and interest amongst residents and communities in LSP activities including:
- Launch of Sustainable Community Strategy in November 2006 attended by approx. 160 people with the majority being local residents and community group representatives.
 - LSP consultation event on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation held on 22 May 2007 attended by 75 local residents and community group representatives.
- 8.12 Community Partnerships provide a forum for dialogue and information sharing. They have no funds to deliver interventions, unlike many neighbouring authorities, and are not currently a mechanism for delivering neighbourhood services, or for developing neighbourhood regeneration schemes. Whilst there is no funding there is commitment from the local

authority in officer time and support. However developments in this area are being considered including:

- **Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy:** Adopted by the Council and the District Partnership in 2006. Implementation of this strategy may lead to changes in the way partners work together to share resources and simplify engagement mechanisms. One of the issues is to ensure that LSP community engagement is more inclusive.
- **Multi-agency Locality Arrangements:** A number of partner organisations including LSP policy groups are keen to base delivery arrangements around this approach.

8.13 The Leader of the Council and Executive Member with Portfolio responsibilities for Community Engagement and Partnership Working were invited to a focus group as part of the review process. The complete notes from this meeting are attached at Appendix 1 of this report. The main points however, were as follows;

- Community needs are not just about providing services but also developing communities to make them stronger
- The Council can only deliver on its aims and objectives in partnership with other organisations and by empowering citizens.
- LSP organisations are made up of bodies from the public, community and voluntary sectors. Community Partnerships within Chester-le-Street and have had to develop their strength from necessity due to lack of external funding.
- Strong partnership working is evident across the district.
- Representatives from Community Partnerships on the LSP Steering Group bring the voice of communities to the table.
- Issues of capacity and understanding for community representatives.
- There will always be issues of disengagement but the role of the local authority is that of enabler not controller.
- People and communities must have the desire to engage and develop the social capital or it will not work.
- Issues of Local Government Review will ultimately have a major impact on the future of LSPs; however, local communities and neighbourhoods will remain.

8.14 The Community Development Manager and Community Engagement Officer were invited to a focus group as part of the review process. The complete

notes from this meeting are attached at Appendix 2 of this report. The main points however, were as follows;

- Chester-le-Street had not qualified for any Neighbourhood Renewal or Community Empowerment Funding which was available to help establish Community Partnerships in other locations.
- Since inception the Lumley Partnership had disbanded and there continued to be problems with attendance within the Pelton and Sacriston areas.
- New initiatives and engagement techniques were being explored with public events always increasing the overall turnout of people.
- People tended to become engaged over a particular issue and then there was a tendency to dwindle with the difficulty being how to keep these people engaged.
- Links had been developed with the Learning District Partnership that provided skills for the life learning agenda.

8.15 Community Partnership Representatives on the LSP were invited to attend a focus group as part of the review process. The complete notes from this meeting are attached at Appendix 3 of this report. The main points were as follows:

- The LSP deals with issues at a strategic level and this can give impression that little is happening or being achieved and this can be hard for local communities to relate to.
- The fact that Community Partnerships operate in a strategic context can create a natural disconnection from residents' issues.
- The Police do recognise the merits of Community Partnerships and attend meetings on a regular basis.
- The lack of proper documentation to help support meetings and the propensity to provide verbal reports inhibits the consultation process.
- The use of technical jargon often turns people away. Difficult for people to be fully engaged if they do not completely understand what is being discussed.
- Some partner organisations have not engaged with Community Partnerships as they should have and perceive meetings as a 'tick box' exercise. The Police and local authority representatives do realise the benefits of Community Partnerships as an engagement mechanism.

- The commitment and development factors to the role of a community representative often act as a dissuader for people getting involved.
 - There was a tension between strategic and locally based issues.
- 8.16 The Community Partnership Representatives in attendance were also provided with a questionnaire on community engagement and their experiences with the LSP. Appendix 4 of this report provides a full breakdown of the questions and the responses received from community representatives.
- 8.17 Members of the panel visited Gateshead Council as part of the review process to research practices in a neighbouring authority looking at different initiatives as well as exploring successes and failures of community engagement. The complete notes of this visit are contained at appendix 5 of this report. The main points were as follows:
- The Gateshead Strategic Partnership (GSP) was launched in 1999 and the council's third Sustainable Community Strategy, Vision 2030 was launched in June 2007.
 - A peer review of the GSP was undertaken by Warwick University in March 2007 which identified key strengths and challenges for the GSP.
 - Vision 2030 involved consultation with over 5,300 people from the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as local residents.
 - Gateshead Council introduced area forums in May 2007 to discuss service delivery, develop neighbourhood plans, promote consultation and community engagement as well as feedback to cabinet on the implications of policies.
 - Examples of recent successes included the Gateshead Anti-social Motorcycling Strategy 2007-2009 and the Neighbourhood Management initiative.
 - Area forums were subject led and dealt with strategic matters rather than local issues. Gateshead Council was also looking at different mechanisms to tackle these issues including road shows, consultations and holding surgeries after area forum meetings.
 - Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council (GVOC) predates Local Strategic Partnerships but has been developed to ensure volunteer organisations did not remain isolated.
 - CVS has a role to develop and support the voluntary sector to ensure they have an effective influence and voice in the Borough.

- If community groups are to be involved and engaged it is important that representatives from all groups have the opportunity. Also the development of a community champion to provide an impartial perspective should be considered.
 - Important that time is invested into the development of community partnerships as they take time to develop.
 - Important that there is a two-way development of dialogue between the council and partners.
 - Important that community partnerships are re-visited and developed through new ways of information access, communication, decision making and capacity of partners.
 - Within Gateshead the Police took community partnerships very seriously and were committed to partnership neighbourhood problem solving.
- 8.18 As a further aspect of the review process Members of the panel attended central community partnership meetings to experience the functionality and procedures directly.
- 8.19 Both meetings were attended by approximately 24 people; of this 14 were members of the public and the remaining 10 were officers from the Police, County and District Councils as well as elected representatives.
- 8.20 A number of issues were discussed at these meetings, including Bonfire Night advice from the Fire Brigade, Regeneration Strategy and Community Development from the District Council, Local Children's Board from the County Council and Police Reports.
- 8.21 At the meetings service providers sought the opinion of stakeholders through a variety of mediums including questionnaires, presentations and open discussion.
- 8.22 The Chief Officer, Belinda Lewis, of Chester-le-Street CVS (Council of Voluntary Services) was interviewed as part of the evidence gathering process and the main points raised were as follows:
- The CVS was involved from the very beginning of the LSP and through Single Regeneration Board (SRB) funding provided a forum for volunteer and community organisations to share experiences. This acted as an effective communication vehicle between the LSP and CVS organisations. Once the SRB funding ended the forum became unsustainable.

- Chester-le-Street District was highlighted as one of the highest commuter areas within the North East due to its proximity to major cities including Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland. This also has implications for the development and engagement of communities within the area.
- The jargon and technical terms used at Community Partnership meetings can leave people confused and unable to provide a real input into discussions and the meeting.
- The subject matter can spark public interest and engage people for a time but it can be difficult to sustain this level of involvement. People become engaged for various reasons and often 'dip' in and out of community engagement.
- There is little linkage between community groups and Community Partnerships due partially to resource and capacity issues and this could be strengthened.
- LSP Steering Group agendas are not always a reflection of Community Partnership agendas but tend to be based around strategic themes and targets set by local authorities, PCT and regional agendas. The data provided by partner agencies is always very good.

8.23 An invitation was provided to 18 Members of the LSP Steering Group to attend a discussion group on the effectiveness of Community Partnerships. Members of the scrutiny review panel acknowledged that many of the members on this board may have prior commitments that would make it difficult to attend such a meeting, so a questionnaire was also developed by Members to gain the views of LSP Steering Group Members unable to attend the discussion group. A copy of the questionnaire, responses (3) and notes from the meeting, attended by 6 Steering Group Members, are all attached at Appendix 6 of this report.

8.24 The main points from the discussion group and arising from the questionnaire responses were as follows:

- It is important that partnership meetings do not get complicated by the use of technical jargon and acronyms. Wherever possible important to use plain English. Nothing turns people away faster than not understanding what is going on.
- Given the limited resources available to the LSP it has done a good job, but tensions are always present between ensuring that there is adequate engagement and getting on with the business required.

- It is sometimes difficult for members of the public to speak with an authentic voice in a formal setting. It is important that all provision is made to allow the community voice to be authentic.
- There are two types of involvement:
 - i. issue based
 - ii. people based.
- In engaging with communities it is important to build trust and confidence which takes time, resources and commitment. Effective engagement will not occur if the time has not been taken to invest in the people first.
- Community apathy may occur as a result of perceived community powerlessness.
- If communities see actions and results, people are more likely to engage and it is important that Community Partnerships receive feedback. Seeing changes happen creates feelings of empowerment.
- Focusing on fewer priorities could potentially lead to less people engaging in the agenda. A wide focus of interest allows for more people to be involved. LSP is in a difficult situation in that its sets priorities based on evidence of need but this is not always what the community sees as the priorities and leads to lack of engagement.
- Current arrangements are adequate but need to be mindful of LGR. The future of LSPs and Area Action Partnerships are uncertain but it is important not to build up expectations that may not be deliverable.
- Area Action Partnerships are a cause for concern for they will not include the PCT and Police Authority who are currently engaged with the LSP and Community Partnerships.

9 Implications of LGR

- 9.1 Local Government Review (LGR) will provide a fundamental change to local government across County Durham and represents a significant opportunity for community engagement both in the way it is delivered and the mechanisms employed to enable it. This ultimately will have implications for Chester-le-Street's Community Partnerships and LSPs as a whole.
- 9.2 The County Durham Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Interim Board have merged to form the County Durham Partnership which effectively will be the county-wide LSP for County Durham which also has 7 district LSP's.
- 9.3 The LGR timetable for reorganisation is relatively short. It will be important that community representation and the local voice in the absence of a district

- authority are considered. Also issues of duplication, capacity and the ability to influence the strategic agenda are considerations. Clarity of opportunity for stakeholder involvement will be important to ensure that people can concentrate their attention at areas of specific interest to them.
- 9.4 District wide engagement varies due to a range of factors and circumstances and there is an LGR work stream 'Areas and Participation' which is looking at community engagement and partnership structures. It is responsible for formulating options which the new council can look at for new engagement/partnership structures.
 - 9.5 The Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act 2007 (LGPIH) also makes provision to ensure that LSPs are accountable to local people by strengthening the involvement of elected members in both Executive and Scrutiny roles.
 - 9.6 The district LSPs could well provide the link between local communities, the LAA and ultimately the new local authority. The LAA thematic groups of Children and Young People, Environment, Safer/Stronger Communities and Health & Well Being could provide alignment for scrutiny across the county. Within in this there could be a role for LSPs in providing one of the mechanisms for strong community links into the scrutiny process both at a county and local level allowing for a flow of dialogue with local people up and down the unitary structure.
 - 9.7 It certainly seems that LSPs will be retained for the transitional period and it will only emerge as the new authority develops if there remains a role for LSPs and their Community Partnerships as a vehicle for community engagement. Currently the designated LGR work stream is looking into county wide practices, of which there are many and varied arrangements, to develop the future model.
 - 9.8 A key feature of the unitary proposal was the formation of Area Action Partnerships to serve the main natural communities of the County. The Area Action Partnerships would aim to provide more 'local choice and local voice' in the County and would comprise key local representatives such as voluntary and community organisations, unitary and town and parish councillors, faith representatives, business representatives and local people. Concerns have already been voiced within the report over the formation of these partnerships and their potential lack of key partner involvement.
 - 9.9 The recommendations in this report are aimed at enhancing Community Partnerships and achieving a wider community engagement. Mechanisms for community engagement are important no matter what structure of local government exists and it is important to retain and develop locally based structures for engagement. The panel hopes that the recommendations can help to enhance participation within Chester-le-Street and ultimately the new authority.

10 Summary of Recommendations

- 10.1 The panel recommends the retention and enhancement of the current Community Partnerships and that they continue to be supported and developed.
- 10.2 That the Executive requests that the LSP develops a communication strategy for the LSP and Community Partnerships to demystify and develop a wider contact and engagement with local people.
- 10.3 Ensure that wherever possible meeting dates, agendas and reports are promoted within the public domain prior to partnership meetings.
- 10.4 That the Executive requests the LSP develops a 'jargon buster' to ensure that meetings, agendas and invitations remain accessible to communities.
- 10.5 That a future mapping exercise of the district be conducted to establish the extent and coverage of parish councils, residents associations, Community Partnerships and other community groups as an information base for future engagement as part of the People and Place delivery plan.
- 10.6 That as part of the People and Place delivery plan a survey be conducted into the variety of Community Partnership membership including the experiences and opinions of current members to further reduce barriers to participation, promote membership and aid greater ownership of any new model of community engagement within the new authority.
- 10.7 That the Executive requests consideration is given by the LSP to further investment in the membership of Community Partnerships including training and further support to help local people engage.
- 10.8 That the Executive is recommended to lobby the Implementation Executive through appropriate representation in relation to issues of decision making powers and financial influence of any future community engagement structures in order to encourage community support and remove the perception of powerlessness.

12 Background Papers

- LAA's and LSPs: Update on proposed statutory guidance on 'place-shaping' – IDeA website, July 2007
- Active Governance – Kath Maguire and Frances Truscott, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006
- Integration of the Local Area Agreement and County Durham Strategic Partnership, Report of the CDSP Officer Support Group and LAA Project Team, April 2007

- Local Development Framework, Core Strategy Issues and Options - Chester-le-Street District Council, March 2007
- Centre for Public Scrutiny – website
- Working of the LSP – London borough of Hillingdon, 2005/06
- A wider conversation: Effective scrutiny of LSPs, IDeA, February 2007
- Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy - Chester-le-Street DC, May 2006
- Municipal Journal, March 2008



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review to assess the effectiveness of community partnerships to the council, its partners and the community

APPENDICES

Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review to assess the effectiveness of community partnerships to the council, its partners and the community.

Meeting: Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnership Working

Date: 4 October 2007

Venue: Conference Room 3, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street

Present: Cllrs D Holding (Chair), M Gollan, T J Smith and J Shiell

Apologies: Councillors R Court, S Greatwich, M Sekowski and P B Nathan

In attendance: L Ebbatson (Leader of the Council), S Barr (Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnership Working), I Forster (Assistant Chief Executive), N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer) and D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant)

Notes of meeting with Councillors

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The main points raised from the meeting were as follows:

- The Council can only deliver on all of its aims in partnership with other organisations and groups it cannot do this alone. We are a good council because we have initiatives in place within the community and are looking to empower citizens.
- Even in a small district like Chester-le-Street each community has its own needs and aspirations and these may vary from community to community. It is important that these are identified. In Chester-le-Street we have a fairly good perspective of what these priorities are.
- The council is always looking for new models of Community Engagement in an endeavour to engage with communities more effectively.
- Already looking at community assets following the government report 'Making assets work: The Quirk Review.' Pelton Fell is already facing

massive change and community consultation and engagement are very clear in this area.

- It is important that Members realise that community needs are not just about providing services also need to look to build up communities to make them stronger.
- Formal structures for engagement and consultation need to be looked at to ensure they are the right vehicles for the future. Developing community power and engagement has 3 levels that need to connect and work together. Need to develop the right structures so that local voice can be heard also develop communications between communities so they learn from each other.
- LSP organisations are made up of bodies from the public, community and voluntary sectors. District partnerships within Chester-le-Street are very special and have had to develop their strength from necessity due to lack of external funding, focus on being *real* partnerships.
- Examples of strong partnership working are evident across the district including the new market place development, mechanics institute, healthy lifestyles initiative and Smoke-Free North East being based in Civic Centre.
- Representatives from the community partnerships on the LSP steering group bring the voice of communities to the table. It is important, as part of the review process, to understand how community partnerships work, how effective they are and the positive experiences from different systems used elsewhere.
- Issues of capacity and understanding for community representatives. Community partnerships do have difficulty raising and developing to the next level. The way to move this forward is to use the voluntary and community sectors to develop these skills.
- There are always issues of disengagement and this happens even in affluent areas. The role of local authorities is to understand the concept of the social capital and enable its development and growth but not control it. Unless people and communities want to engage and develop the social capital it will not work.
- If LGR goes ahead the LSP will ultimately come to an end but communities and neighbourhoods will remain.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance as the session had been very useful and these views and comments would be fed into the review process.

Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review to assess the effectiveness of community partnerships to the council, its partners and the community.

Meeting: Community Development Team

Date: 1 November 2007

Venue: Conference Room 3, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street

Present: Cllrs D Holding (Chair), L Armstrong, S Greatwich, M Sekowski, J Shiell and T Smith

Apologies: Councillor P Nathan

In attendance: J Lulic (Community Development Manager), A Rose (Community Engagement Officer), N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer), Councillor G Armstrong (Ward Councillor – Bournmoor), and D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The main points raised from the meeting were as follows:

- In the initial establishment of community partnerships 88 areas received Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) to assist in the setting up of partnerships. Chester-le-Street did not qualify for this NRF funding and therefore received none.
- Four community partnerships were established through a geographical focus in Chester-le-Street and these were Chester-le-Street Central, Pelton, Sacriston and Lumley.
- Since then Lumley community partnership has been disbanded with partnership working continuing through the Residents' Association.
- Problems of varied attendance and engaging communities continued to persist in the Pelton and Sacriston areas.
- New initiatives and alternative engagement techniques needed to be explored to encourage the public to participate and engage more within the community.

- Public events seemed to attract the public more effectively than meetings and resulted in increased turnouts.
- Residents Associations were represented on community partnerships but only by a small number of residents.
- People tend to become involved over a particular issue and once this has reached a conclusion there is a tendency for people to dwindle. The difficulty is trying to keep these people engaged.
- Look at best practice in other local authorities and the impact of the extended schools agenda.
- Links had been developed with the Learning District Partnership that provides skills for the life learning agenda that aim to improve skills in the community. Also looking at 'centres of excellence' as way forward in improving on existing arrangements.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance as the session had been very useful and these views and comments would be fed into the review process.

Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review to assess the effectiveness of community partnerships to the council, its partners and the community.

Meeting: Community Representatives - LSP

Date: 8 November 2007

Venue: Gloucester Suite, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street

Present: Cllrs D Holding (Chair), M Gollan, J Shiell, S Greatwich and L Armstrong,

Apologies: Councillors R Court, M Sekowski and T Smith

In attendance: L Loughlin (Community Partnership Representative), C Reynolds (Community Partnership Representative), E Stokoe (Community Partnership Representative), N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer), Councillor R Harrison (Ward Councillor – Sacriston), J Brock (Community Strategy Advisor) and A Rose (Community Engagement Officer)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The main points raised from the meeting were as follows:

- Community Partnership Representatives (CPRs) provide a link between community partnerships and the LSP. CPRs find that as part of this role, and because of their extensive contact with local residents, issues are raised with them that might not be raised with local councillors.
- LSP deals with issues at a strategic level. Policy and strategy work taking place in thematic groups can sometimes give the impression that little is happening and can be hard for local communities to relate to.
- As part of this discussion it was recognised that because CPs operate in a strategic context, there can be a natural disconnection from resident's issues. Concerns which by their very nature are more locally focused.
- The Chester Central Community Partnership (CP) is healthy and well attended having good representation from partner organisations. Pelton CP differs in that it has a lower attendance rate and many of the partner organisations do not attend the meetings.

- The Police do recognise the merits of CPs and attend on a regular basis the majority of meetings within the Chester-le-Street area.
- Issue of getting local people involved in community groups/activities. There is a perceived general apathy in this area.
- Policy and strategic matters turn some people away from community partnership meetings. However, others are interested in engaging in debate on strategic matters. There needs to be a clarification in every ones expectations about what different community engagement routes can achieve/are for.
- A key issue is that some LSP partner organisations do not engage with CPs effectively and by failing to bring topics for discussion that are pertinent to the local areas; this has adversely affected CPs and peoples interest in attending them.
- Issues with lack of proper documentation to help support meetings. All too often only receive verbal reports and then expected to provide comments, this can be very difficult. Would like to have advanced notice and written reports to allow for a more meaningful consultation process.
- The use of jargon often turns people away. How can people be expected to engage if they do not fully understand what is being discussed?
- The danger is that partner organisations come along to CP meetings merely as a tick box exercise and do not take the views presented seriously. Police and Local Authority representatives do attend and realise the benefits of these partnerships and the engagement mechanism that they represent.
- Difficulty with LSP is that principally dealing with strategic issues and expectations can be raised that issues will be dealt with quickly and this is often not the case. Processes can be very slow which can lead to frustration and a lack of interest from members of the public.
- Issues of commitment and development in role of community representatives are another factor that often discourages people from becoming involved. Also difficult to recruit new members or keep their level of enthusiasm and commitment to the role.
- Future engagement under LGR can only be developed if learn from the past. Worrying issue of lack of detail on engagement with communities within the county bid. Have to be able to influence spending and funding

or have the ability to influence the spending of money through local representation.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance as the session had been very useful and these views and comments would be fed into the review process.

Questionnaire Comments on LSP process

KEY:

PCR C. Reynolds - Pelton Area Partnership representative

CCR E Stokoe - Chester-le-Street Area Partnership representative.

Q1 Please tell the panel about your involvement with the LSP?

PCR I am a local representative on the Pelton Area Partnership of the LSP. In addition I am the Federation of Environment Group's representative on the Environment, Housing and Planning Policy group; and, Voluntary sector alternative representative on the Economic and Regeneration Policy Group.

CCR Have been involved with the LSP from its start in 2000 through the very active residents association in this part of town.

Q2 How can the Council best work together with its partners?

PCR To make this process work, all partners need to be convinced that they have a part to play within it and that it will not be a waste of their resources. Based on current experience, it appears that many partners are not fully involved as indicated by the poor attendance of their representatives at meetings of the Area LSP or policy groups. In the light of current changes in Government policies, the position is unlikely to be improved. {See Comments on Q9 below}

CCR The LSP consists of 'the representatives' who can channel information and get feedback from groups they are involved with in the community. This fails at times through lack of knowledge with the council.

Q3 Have you any views on how the LSP could ensure that the full benefits are obtained from sharing data and information between partners on community needs?

PCR This requires extensive communications with partners. It involves communicating information etc to partners who may not realise they need such information and make no response on receiving it. The task is very difficult and frustrating yet needs to be continued with so that the "democratic deficit" referred to in Q7 below is reduced as far as possible.

CCR More data from the council would be helpful wherever possible.

Q4 Do you think the LSP has a role in raising the aspirations of young people or the community as a whole, or to identify and reflect them?

PCR Yes, through:communication; consideration of proposals suggested; appropriate action; and, reporting on the whole process particularly the reasoning behind the relevant action/inaction on proposals put forward.

CCR Yes, there is a vital need here. More schemes to educate those who for one reason or another have failed at school. More workshops would be helpful to educate them in the practicalities of life. No more YTS.

Q5 What steps could the LSP take to ensure wider community involvement in its work?

PCR As in the response to Q4 above.

CCR The LSP needs to explain what it is all about. No one knows because it's a rather vague title. Less titles of 'LSP' and more 'Local Strategic Partnership' or change the title to something they can understand.

Q6 Some people say there is a “democratic deficit” in the way the LSP operates currently? Have you any views on this? For example is it reasonable that the LSP audits itself in relation to its own targets?

PCR There is a “democratic deficit” in the way the LSP operates currently. It has to be pointed out that this is true of most of the current government processes. This allegation has been made the process of central and local government as well.

In terms of the involvement of the general public, most are not interested in the detail process of government unless they are affected personally and then only in relation to that affect. This particular question affects my own local Community Group and is often asked of itself {Group's Management committee} in regard to its actions on behalf of the Community. The general consensus is that as long as the members are acting in what they believe to be the best interests of the community this is acceptable. I believe this is also true for members of the general public representing their organisations on the LSP. It is often made difficult for such representatives at meetings when they are asked to comment on verbal reports at meetings. I.e. they have been given no advance notice of the detail of the report and so in effect cannot consult their organisations.

I believe that if organisations are using the LSP process for consultation as part of the statutory requirements then the relevant documentation should be made available in advance of the meeting so that the

representatives can consult their organisations and provide a more considered opinion at the LSP meeting.

In terms of auditing its own performance, I do not believe it matters as many of the outcomes involve parameters which are subject to external verification, e.g. the Audit Office; Government Ministries; Inland Revenue. In any case, the general public and or the newspapers can check the published information and if it is incorrect will make the necessary objections.

CCR The LSP should not audit itself. It would be fitting that the ‘representatives’ should carry out the audit as we know their successes and indeed failures.

Q7 Does the LSP need to focus on fewer priorities – is its current approach making it difficult for people to relate to it?

PCR As noted above, most residents are not interested in the detailed process of government. Those that are and wish to be involved in the process have to make significant efforts to understand the process(es). Often people are only interested in specific topics and may not feel qualified or wish to be involved in other topics.

In my experience however, this does not appear to be problematical at Local area partnership meetings such as the Pelton area. There the matters dealt with are more likely to be of interest to those attending and do not generally involve highly technical matters. Whereas, the policy groups can and generally do involve matters that are more technical and do possibly require persons to have knowledge about/experience in the matters under discussion.

Initially the outcomes proposed were so general as to be useless as no one could be seen as accountable. Recently, the outcomes have been made more specific and accountability is easier to establish. The general public is interested in specific outcomes and who has to deliver them. If these are provided in the LSP documents people will be interested and as a result may wish to become involved. The process is then seen as delivering change and not as a so called “talking shop” that achieves nothing.

CCR The LSP needs more priorities. If they have less it would lead to disintegration of its status within the community, though a greater understanding is important. More full titles and less jargon please.

Q8 In your opinion, what major changes coming up in the District are likely to have an impact on future LSP priorities and/or the way the partnership works?

PCR I see the main future changes that will affect the working of the current LSP process as:
The implementation of Local Area Agreements which is based on the County of Durham; and,
The change in Local Government from the two tier system to a single tier.

In both cases it appears that decisions are/or will be made at the County level with limited provision for change at the more local level.

I was not convinced by the outline arrangements given earlier this year in the current County Council's proposals for Local Government reorganisation that there would be the local representation that there is now. The time table for this reorganisation is so short that it seems unlikely that appropriate arrangements for local representation in these processes can be agreed.

CCR The forthcoming changes could mean larger and more effective LSPs as the number of councillors will be cut drastically and services will likely be cut. Therefore we will need more contact with the public, and the councillors too will need to have greater skill in making it work with their constituents.

Q9 **How useful are the Community Partnerships to the LSP? Do the 2 interact?**

PCR The Partnerships are useful in allowing more local comment on policies that can be affected by the LSP process and in my opinion there is such interaction. It is desirable that such interaction increases but as noted in the response to Q8 above it seems highly unlikely. If so, this would be a shame.

Now, is an appropriate time to examine this process and its likely successor. To obtain the involvement of more representatives of the general public, community groups etc. requires that they be convinced that their involvement matters and that such involvement will produce changes for the better for the representatives' areas.

This is the real challenge for the future.

CCR No response.

**PARTNERSHIP AND EFFICIENCY OSP
VISIT TO GATESHEAD COUNCIL**

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP REVIEW

Notes of a visit to Gateshead Council held on Monday 14 January 2008 at Gateshead Civic Centre at 3pm.

Attendees

Gateshead MBC

Councillor J McElroy (Cabinet Member, Gateshead Council), L Kirkley (Director of Policy and Service), A Rigg (Senior Partnership Officer), C Gibson (Community Safety Unit Performance Co-ordinator), I Stevenson (Neighbourhood Management Team Leader), G Pringle (Director of Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council), J Moon (Gateshead Community Network)

Chester-le-Street DC

Councillor D M Holding, Councillor J Shiell, N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer), D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant)

Welcome and Introductions were given by everyone present. Copies of agenda and papers were circulated.

1. Overview of LSP and Neighbourhood Working in Gateshead

A presentation was given by the Director of Policy and Service on Gateshead Strategic Partnership (GSP).

The slides covered the following subjects:-

GSP Achievements, Challenges for the future, GSP Peer Review – March 2007, Outcome, Partnership review and restructure, Role and Remit, Vision 2030, Big Ideas, Gateshead's Neighbourhood Management Areas, The Council's vision, Role of Area Forums, Membership of Area Forums, Key Messages/Conclusions.

Points of interest raised in addition to the slides:-

Warwick University was used for a Peer Review.

GSP awarded Green Award for one of the highest achievements.

Pilot LAA Authority one of the first in England.

Priorities, resources, capacity were agreed by key people and clear on who would deliver them.

There were 36 key improvement targets as part of the Vision 2030.

Identified 5 key areas with approx. 40,000 population tailored to area of need. Key partnerships community network meet 6 weekly and monitor and ensure complex issues are resolved.

Questions –

Q - Structure and membership?

A - 66 members 22 wards. Forums open to the public. 3 elected Members on Area Forums 2 from each party.

Q – To what degree have high mobility rates influenced buy to rent?

A – Neighbourhoods and Wards vary considerably very rural and deprived inner city. Active plans in place. Vision 2030 consultation found strong concept community spirit. Need to look at how manage and plan neighbourhoods and get balance – building on diversity.

Q – Resident Groups – Chester-le-Street Resident’s groups function well but exist in isolation. How do you compare?

A - Developed GVOC GC Network working partnership works in conjunction with paid officers indirectly through the Council. Important to have representatives at all levels and engage with those in isolation.

Private Landlords take part in the scheme. Try to increase capacity and have a team of Officers to link them into work going on. The representatives on the network have themed or area forum reps which interlink.

The community reps nominate a representative for each street to provide information to Councillors on what is happening on estates, which works well.

Q – Attendance at area forums?

A – Normally subject led. Surgeries are held after the event for anyone with issues to raise which are tried to be resolved strategically.

Suggest using different mechanisms in addition to area forums such as road shows, operation goldfinch.

2. Examples of partnership working

(a) Reducing anti-social motorcycle behaviour

The Community Safety Unit Performance Co-ordinator spoke in relation to examples of partnership working and referred to the Gateshead Anti-social motorcycling strategy 2007-2009 to use as an example.

She proceeded to outline the following issues of the strategy as follows:
Combating ASB in relation to motorcycling, improving partnership approach, increasing public reassurance and feedback on how this worked.

Questions -

Q – This may not be a local issue how far do you relate to local community?

A – Publicity through TV, Chronicle, develop links with neighbouring authorities and public rights of way officers.

(b) Working with community partnerships

The Neighbourhood Management Team Leader spoke on partnership working in relation to Neighbourhood Management.

He advised that Neighbourhood Management was a medium term objective the purpose of which to build strong communities and develop appropriate services to meet local needs. The role was to consult and work in partnership to set up a problem-solving group. This group took forward ideas to area forums to look at. He outlined the work undertaken on operation goldfinch from which a mini action plan was developed. He referred to the partnership working with PCT.

He spoke in relation to the work of the tenants and resident associations. He advised that they engaged with residents on choices of environmental schemes and let them have input on which priorities should receive funding through an opti-voting system, which are then implemented in action plans. The forums oversee and monitor these plans. He also spoke in relation to neighbourhood engagement and the community empowerment network. He circulated examples of case studies of community engagement.

3 Partnership Perspective

The Vice Chairman of Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council gave an account of partnership perspective.

He advised of a new independent and residential project where residents and tenants groups have a strategic influence, however there was a need for investment in time, money and effort. He advised that GVOC houses the empower project which supports the community empowerment network. Support Officers had set up another organisation, which linked to the voluntary sector.

He felt that CVS has a role to develop and support the voluntary section to ensure they have an effective influence and voice in the Borough. He spoke in relation to working in the community and supporting people who are connected.

J Moon from the Gateshead Community Network advised that she was Vice-Chair of one of the themed partnerships and outlined what she thought worked, lessons she had learned and the challenges ahead.

She explained that she was a representative of the community network. Area forums were a new body, which were still being developed and reviewed. She felt that if you want community groups to become involved you need to have

representatives from every single group. She recommended having a champion to give an impartial community perspective.

Lessons learnt – She felt it took time to develop a structure. Strengths are having a two-way development between council and partners and developing a common core interest of the people living in the Borough. Involvement at all levels in the long-term views for V2030.

Challenges ahead – to have equally valid memberships and strong desire to build on that. Continue to re-visit partnership and look ways of information sharing. Needs to be involvement at decision-making levels not just ‘rubber stamp’ exercise. Needs to be community understanding and be aware of capacity of partners.

Questions -

Q – Community partnerships working in a new Authority. Devolution spending power, support external partners.

A - It was noted that within Gateshead the police took partnership working seriously and were committed to partnership neighbourhood problem solving. They pooled their budget with the police to use within problem solving groups. Allocation of resources should be looked at across Borough and neighbourhoods and be brought together. The LAA identify priorities and make sure resources are allocated to them.

ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE LSP
QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESPONSES FROM LSP STEERING GROUP
MEMBERS

Q1 *What is your involvement with the LSP?*

R1 Chair of the Health Improvement Group (HIG).

R2 Chair of CDRP for Durham/Chester-le-Street since October 2007.

R3 Board Member

Q2 *To what extent are the wider community involved in the work of the LSP?*

R1 Processes are in place for certain people within the wider community to be involved in the work of the LSP. The voluntary and community sectors are represented but the LSP still fails to engage wider representation regardless of efforts.

R2 Evidenced input from community network representatives brings views relating to CDRP issues to meetings via strategic assessment reports.

R3 Representation on the main board and on sub-themed LSP groups.

Q3 *What steps could the LSP take to ensure wider community involvement in its work?*

R1 Greater Empowerment, Capacity Building, Effective Feedback, Training, Resources, Language (jargon –free). All important but would need adequate resources and people to take this work forward.

R2 No response

R3 Effective Feedback (via regular updates in district newsletter) and Language (jargon-free).

Q4 *Does the LSP need to focus on fewer priorities – is its current approach making it difficult for people to relate to?*

R1 Not really. If the LSP were to focus on fewer priorities it is possible that less people would engage in the agenda. At least with a wide focus of interest more people are likely to be involved. The LSP is in a difficult situation in that it sets priorities based on evidence of need but this is not always what the community might see as priorities, hence lack of engagement.

R2 The current position needs to take account of the LGR and not build up expectations it may not be able to fulfill. The future of LSPs – Area Action Partnerships is somewhat uncertain. Current arrangements are adequate and should remain.

R3 Yes; fewer priorities identified from policy groups and taking cognisance from LAA Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Q5 *How can communities be involved most effectively with the LSP?*

R1 Need to identify interest groups that they can relate to and become involved in and then look at how this group can feed into the LSP processes. To be effective they have to become involved and heard/seen. This can be done either through advocacy of a group representative or communication to the LSP sub group/theme groups.

R2 Anticipate a ‘commissioning’ exercise to identify appropriate community group to take forward community representation with LSP/AAP.

R3 Consultation and feedback potential for LSP audit and scrutiny panel from CVS and stakeholders.

Q6 *Do parish councils have a role to play and what would enable them to play an effective role?*

R1 Unfamiliar with the role of the parish council other than through a colleague who represents the parish he lives in. This could be a good way into the LSP. Parish Councils could find out the views of residents and feed this back to the relevant theme group for discussion. Also will help with targeting interventions based on local evidence.

R2 See comments at Q4 & Q5.

R3 Representation on panel may be broadened when Area Action Partnerships are formalised.

Q7 *What are the future challenges that are likely to have an impact on the way the partnership engages with local communities?*

R1 Changing Demography, Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion, Sustaining Engagement, LAAs, Attracting new partners and LGR.

R2 LAAs and LGR.

R3 Changing Demography, Community Cohesion, Sustaining Engagement, LAAs, Comprehensive Area Assessments, Area Action Partnerships.

Q8 *How effectively does the LSP use community views/opinions together with evidence and data from partner agencies?*

R1 The LSP uses both fairly well. A recent example is the priority setting exercise for the Local Area Agreements. The group looked at the results of the 'places' local survey along with key data relating to data from regional and national sources and used this as the basis for decision making.

R2 From limited contact/experience the LSP is genuine in regard to ensuring effective community consultation.

R3 Does this well.

Q9 *Do you have any other comments/views?*

R1 More could be done to further engage with the public but there are challenges in relation to resources to this and apathy when it comes to getting involved. With all the interventions it is those most passionate about an issue who will engage, still fail to generate full engagement. Community advocates would help if they were representing the communities' views and not the views of a few.

R2 LGR is a significant issue – any recommendation must take cognisance of this issue.

R3 No comment.

Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review to assess the effectiveness of community partnerships to the council, its partners and the community.

Meeting: LSP Steering Group Members – Discussion Group

Date: 20 February 2008

Venue: Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street

Present: Cllrs D Holding (Chair), M Sekowski and J Shiell.

Apologies: Councillors S Greatwich, P B Nathan.

In attendance: Cllr L Ebbatson (Leader of the Council), Cllr B Ebbatson (Durham County Councillor), Elaine Stockton (Community Partnership Representative), Ian Miller (PCT), Nick Springham (PCT), T Watson (Police – CDRP), J Mills (Durham County Council) and N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer).

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The main points raised from the meeting were as follows:

- Important that plain English is used wherever possible rather than jargon and acronyms.
- Must ensure that the community has a voice and that this is not lost no matter what the future brings. LGR provides an opportunity for rationalisation.
- Acknowledged that the Police Authority have a consistent record of attendance at Community Partnership meetings.
- Given the limited resources of the LSP it seems to have done very best job possible. It shares the tensions of many LSPs in providing adequate engagement and getting on with business and meeting targets.
- It is often difficult for members of the public to speak in an authentic voice in the formal setting of a meeting and to ensure community engagement and development need to make people feel comfortable to ensure that authenticity is not lost.

- In the context of the new unitary authority more important that there is a joined up approach with all groups and service providers. Need to ensure that between partners provision is the best it can be and there is an avoidance of duplication and resources.
- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ensure that local authorities will have a legal duty to consult organisations in LAA which indicates ever closer working relations with partners.
- Ensuring that a wide audience is reached through Community Partnerships requires resources and workers at a local level.
- Issues drive Community Partnerships it depends on the topic/issue as to level and volume of engagement from communities.
- Important to build on what we have, one size does not fit all. There are lots of different methods of engagement and need to explore what works best in each situation.
- National trends seem to want to discredit the 'usual suspects' when these people should be highly valued and supported. Also need to provide assistance so that people can dip in and out when they want. Need to tap into any interest even if only short term.
- There are two types of involvement issue based and people based. In engaging with communities it is important to build trust and confidence which takes time, resources and commitment. Effective engagement will not occur if the time has not been taken to invest in the people first.
- Live in complex society where there is a demand for more resources at the local level. Every small community should have dedicated teams to deliver the holistic approach e.g. youth workers, but with limited and diminishing funding questions of achievability and sustainability are raised.
- Community powerlessness is often perceived as community apathy.
- If communities see actions and results people are more likely to engage and it is important that Community Partnerships receive feedback. If changes happen creates feelings of empowerment.
- Area Action Partnerships are a cause for concern for they will not include the PCT and Police Authority who are currently engaged with the LSP and Community Partnerships.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance as the session had been very useful and these views and comments would be fed into the review process.

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