

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

### HEALTHY BOROUGH WITH STRONG COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber, Council  
Offices, Spennymoor

Tuesday, 26 February  
2008

Time:  
10.00 a.m.

- Present:** Councillor J.E. Higgin (Chairman) and  
Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. P. Crathorne, K. Thompson,  
T. Ward and Mrs E. M. Wood
- In Attendance** Councillors A. Gray, D.M. Hancock, T. Hogan, Mrs. I. Jackson,  
B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, B.M. Ord and A. Smith
- Invited to Attend** Councillor Mrs. B. Graham
- Tenant Representative** Mrs. M. Thomson
- Apologies:** Councillors Mrs. D. Bowman, J. Burton, Mrs. S. Haigh,  
Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson and Mrs. E.M. Paylor

**H&S.31/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
No declarations of interest were received.

**H&S.32/07 MINUTES**  
The Minutes of the meetings the meetings held on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 and 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2008 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

**H&S.33/07 INSPECTION OF HIGH RISK FOOD PREMISES - PERFORMANCE UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2008**  
Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Environmental Services (for copy see file of Minutes) in relation to the above.

The Committee was reminded that at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 the Committee had expressed concern that Performance Indicator CPH04 – Percentage of High Risk Food Premises Inspections that should and were carried out – was performing below the target set for 2007/08. The purpose of the report was to provide an explanation for the current performance levels.

It was noted that high risk food premises were classified into three groups and dependent upon classification were visited on either a six monthly, twelve monthly or eighteen monthly basis. The largest group of high risk

premises within the Borough fell within the category which were to be visited on an eighteen monthly basis. This year the largest number within this group were due for inspection within the first three quarters of the programme.

It was explained that the reason for the performance at the end of Quarter 2 could be attributed to imbalance in the number of inspections required falling within the first half of the year together with additional demands such as the Health Act 2006 and the impact which this had had on the workload of the Food Safety Team and also staffing issues.

Although performance in the first two quarters was lower than usual the programme was now back on track and performing at 98%. With fewer numbers of premises to inspect in Quarter 4, it was anticipated that the 100% target would be achieved by the end of the financial year.

With regard to staffing issues, resources were being managed between the Health and Safety Team and the Food Safety Team to ensure that targets were met.

During discussion of this item a query was raised regarding legislation in respect of mobile food premises and whether new legislation was anticipated. It was explained that no new legislation was going through Parliament in relation to food safety for mobile food vans. However, the Food Standards Agency was changing its regulations/guidance in relation to such premises.

Members of the Committee expressed their appreciation to the Team for the work that had been undertaken.

*AGREED : That the Committee acknowledges the progress made towards Performance Indicator CPH04 and meeting the inspection target of 100%.*

#### **H&S.34/07      PROGRESS TOWARDS HOUSING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS BV212 AND CPS08**

Following discussions at the meeting of the Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 when concern was expressed regarding Performance Indicators relating to the average time taken to relet local authority housing and the satisfaction with the condition of new let properties a presentation was given in relation to progress towards Best Value Performance Indicators BV212 and CPS08 dealing with those issues.

Ian Brown, Head of Housing Management, Bob Scougall, Head of Housing Property Services and Janice Wayman, Service Improvement Manager, were present at the meeting to outline progress and respond to queries.

It was explained that as from 1<sup>st</sup> April, the number of Performance Indicators would be very much reduced. The Housing Department had, however, decided to continue to maintain a complete set of Indicators after that time.

With regard to BV212 – Average time taken to relet local authority housing – this Indicator was calculated by the time and calendar date from the date

when the tenancy was terminated up to and including the date when the new tenancy agreement started. CPS08 – Satisfaction with Condition of New Let Properties was Measured by a representative sample from responses to a questionnaire which centred around two themes, the offer process and condition of property both internally and externally.

It was noted that in 2006/7 the target in relation to letting of void properties had been met. The current performance was that the Indicator was performing 7.5 days below target.

Details were given of the void key figures and it was noted that the number of voids as at 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2007 was 110 (1.3% of the stock). Details were given in relation to properties with demand, properties with no demand and properties to be demolished and were broken down by each of the management areas and also by value.

In relation to properties with demand, they were hitting target. Properties with no demand, mainly in sheltered housing schemes were being pro-actively targeted, marketed in local newspapers, incentives given in terms of decoration and other such measures.

A pilot had been undertaken in Spennymoor in relation to supported housing and there were now no voids in supported schemes in Spennymoor and there was a small waiting list. Lessons learnt from that pilot scheme would be used in other areas of the Borough.

With regard to Indicator CPS08 – Satisfaction with Condition of New Let Property – it was explained that customer satisfaction was measured using a broad range of surveys across the Housing Department the purpose of which was to measure customer views with services provided and to use the feedback to improve services. The results were used to feedback to all members of staff involved in the service.

It was noted that the service did have some significant challenges to meet in relation to Supported Housing Schemes.

Through partnership working with Mears, to streamline the process, it was anticipated that there would be an improvement of void standards and trying to reduce the turnaround time.

During discussion of this item reference was made to the standards set for cleanliness and decoration in void properties in elderly accommodation. It was explained that those properties had to meet Decent Homes Standards. To meet a high standard of decoration, there was a budget for a responsive decoration scheme. The criteria for eligibility for work being undertaken by the sponsored decoration scheme was that the tenant must be unable to carry out the work themselves and have no relatives in the near vicinity. It was hoped to work with Mears to enhance that scheme. It was also noted that decoration vouchers were given when there were issues with the colours used by previous tenants or where the condition of the property was poor.

Discussion was also held regarding bedsits and the standard for such accommodation. It was explained that some Housing Associations were remodelling such accommodation. This was, however, not an option for

the Council. There was no budget in the Housing Revenue Account to remodel such accommodation. Conversion, as an option was also a non-starter because of technical issues.

Discussion was held regarding accommodation which had been adapted for disabled persons. Details were on a database and allocations were made relating to applicants needs.

Reference was also made to the shortage of two-bedroomed bungalows. It was explained that the Council was working with Housing Associations to provide specialist housing accommodation properties with degrees of accessibility.

A query was also raised regarding improvements to private housing and in particular bungalows. It was explained that disabled facilities grant was available. However, this was means tested and there was a limited funding. The funding available for adaptations to Council properties were not means tested.

*AGREED : That the Committee is satisfied with progress in relation to Performance Indicators BV212 and CPS08.*

**H&S.35/07**     **PROGRESS ON PERFORMANCE INDICATORS CPH16, 18, 20 AND 22**  
Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Leisure Services (for copy see file of Minutes) regarding progress towards Best Value Performance Indicators CPH16, 18, 20 and 22.

The Committee was reminded that at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 concerns had been expressed with regard to the performance in Quarter 2 of Performance Indicators CPH16, 18, 20 and 22 regarding the use of Leisure Centre facilities.

It was explained that with regard to CPH16 – Representative facility used by young people under 16 – some significant variation had been shown in reported quarterly values during 2007/8. This variation was primarily due to the way in which the figures were calculated. Turnstiles had been installed at Leisure Centres and there were still some teething issues which needed to be addressed particularly in relation to group activities. The swipe card system was not in full use to record visits from groups such as school activities as they did not enter through the turnstile. Such figures had to be manually adjusted and added to the calculation. The outturn for Quarter 3 was actually around 10% above last years figure.

The Committee was informed that in respect of Performance Indicator CPH18 – Representative facility used by People aged over 60 the performance figure continued to improve though it was still marginally below target. The improvement was mainly as a result of the additional Zest for Life for Over 50s instigated across the Borough and the sustained use of the Bowling Green facilities which had augmented the Quarter 3 performance. Further improvements were expected during Quarter 4 as new programmes were launched including Armchair Aerobics at selected care homes across the Borough and pilates classes as part of the Fit for Life programme.

The Committee was informed that CPH20 – Proportion of Facility Use by Disabled Persons aged under 60 years - was now performing .85% above target. As a result of consultation exercise which had been undertaken significant additions had been made to timetable programmes from September, 2007 onwards. Multi sport disability sessions at Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centres had been introduced. Additionally a promotional campaign had been executed aimed at increasing the numbers participating in the Gym Buddy Scheme across all four Leisure Centres. It was noted that Durham County Council continued to use the Acapulcco Suite at Spennymoor Leisure Centre with increasing numbers of disabled clients using the facility each day.

Dealing with Performance Indicator CPH22 – Percentage of Population Living within 20 Minutes Travel Time (urban areas by walk, rural areas by car) of a range of three different facility types of which one had achieved equality assured standard – it was noted that this was performing 7.3% below target. Performance was dependent on Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre which was scheduled to be assessed by QUEST in February 2007 and receiving approval by the end of the financial year. Should this approval be received by the end of the financial year performance would meet and exceed PI targets by the end of the year.

During discussion of this item a question was raised regarding whether the measures related to the number of people participating rather than as visitors to the facility. It was explained that all youth and sports activity at the Leisure Centre were recorded.

Reference was made to the problems which had been occurring in relation to Swipe cards and whether those problems had been resolved. It was explained that since the construction of the turnstiles approximately 95% of the issues had now been eradicated. Users of the Leisure Centre were becoming familiar with the new system.

*AGREED : That the Committee acknowledge progress made towards meeting targets in Performance Indicators CPH16, 18, 20 and 22.*

## **H&S.36/07 WORK PROGRAMME**

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

It was explained that following a workshop which had been held for Overview and Scrutiny Members on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2008 to discuss the role of the Committees within the period leading to establishment of a new unitary Council and the options for undertaking scrutiny reviews within this period. Members had supported undertaking a state of the Borough review which would look at achievements within each of the Council's Ambitions. The review would provide a benchmark for future assessment, highlight areas for improvement and make recommendations to the new Council where appropriate.

It was being proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees establish review groups to examine each of the Council's Ambitions with Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny

Committee establishing Healthy Borough Review Group and Strong Communities Review Group and Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee establishing a Prosperous Borough Review Group and an Attractive Borough Review Group.

The final reports from each of those reviews would be combined to form a single state of the Borough report.

It was noted that the Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee would not be required to establish a review group to undertake a state of the Borough review. However, in order to ensure that all scrutiny Members had the opportunity to contribute to these important reviews, the principal to co-opt to Review Groups would be extended to allow Members to contribute to the review of their choice. The criteria for membership which would apply to ensure a balance across the Review Groups was outlined.

The Committee proposed that, for the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Review Groups, the Chairmen be non Labour Members.

**AGREED :** 1. *That the following Review Groups be established to contribute to the State of the Borough report:-*

*Healthy Borough Overview and Scrutiny Review Group.*

*Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Review Group.*

2. *That the criteria and cooption of membership of those Review Groups as outlined in the report be approved.*
3. *That the Chairmen of those Review Groups be non-Labour Members.*
4. *That the Committee's Work Programme as amended be approved.*

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**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Liz North, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4237, [enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk)