

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

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
13 January 2009

Time: 10.00 a.m.

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

Mrs. M.Thomson (Tenant Representative)

In

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

**Observer
with
Chairman's
Consent**

Councillors V. Crosby and W. Waters

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AGREED : That the Minutes be received.

H&S.29/08 WORK PROGRAMME

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

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

AGREED : That the Work Programme be agreed.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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