



PROSPEROUS AND ATTRACTIVE
BOROUGH
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

Tuesday,
29 January 2008
10.00 a.m.

Council Chamber,
Council Offices
Spennymoor

AGENDA
and
REPORTS



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العربية (Arabic)

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

বাংলা (Bengali)

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

(中文 (繁體字)) (Cantonese)

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

हिन्दी (Hindi)

यदि आपको सूचना किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये तो कृपया हमसे कहे

polski (Polish)

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

Español (Spanish)

Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea recibir información en otro idioma o formato.

اردو (Urdu)

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To notify the Chairman of any items that appear later in the agenda in which you may have an interest.

3. MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2007 (Pages 1 - 8)

4. LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - IMPACT AND PROGRESS TO DATE

To consider the attached presentation in relation to the Local Improvement Programme and progress to date. A briefing note prepared by the Capital Programme manager is also attached for Member's information. (Pages 9 - 12)

5. BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE PERFORMANCE

To consider a report of Head of Planning Services (Pages 13 - 16)

**6. PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF CONSERVATION
AREA APPRAISALS**

To consider a report of Head of Planning Services. (Pages 17 - 20)

**7. CORPORATE PLAN INDICATOR, CPA02 NUMBER OF PEOPLE
SPECTATING IN A CULTURAL ACTIVITY**

Katy Banner, Arts Development Officer, will give a presentation detailing progress towards Corporate Plan Indicator CPA02 (Pages 21 - 24)

8. WORK PROGRAMME

Report of Chairman of the Committee (Pages 25 - 28)

9. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

Members are respectfully requested to give the Chief Executive notice of items they would wish to raise under the heading not later than 12 noon on the day preceding the meeting, in order that consultation may take place with the Chairman who will determine whether the item will be accepted.

**B. Allen
Chief Executive**

Councillor G.C. Gray (Chairman)
Councillor B. Lamb (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, P. Gittins J.P., D.M. Hancock, Mrs. I. Hewitson,
G.M.R. Howe, Mrs. E. Maddison, J. Robinson J.P, A. Smith, B. Stephens and A. Warburton.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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Liz North 01388 816166 ext 4237 email: enorth@sedgefield.gov.uk

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

PROSPEROUS AND ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
11 December 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor G.C. Gray (Chairman) and
Councillors Mrs. I. Hewitson, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, A. Smith and
A. Warburton

In Attendance: Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, A. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh,
Mrs. S. Haigh, J.G. Huntington and Mrs. E.M. Paylor

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, P. Gittins J.P., D.M. Hancock,
G.M.R. Howe, J. Robinson J.P and B. Stephens

P&A.15/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

P&A.16/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th November, 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

P&A.17/07 PROGRESS TOWARDS HOUSING BENEFITS BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS RELATING TO THE PROSPEROUS BOROUGH COMMUNITY VALUE 'REDUCED SOCIAL INCLUSION'

Following discussions at the meeting of the Committee held on 6th November, 2007 and concerns expressed regarding Performance Indicators relating to Housing Benefits, a presentation was given in relation to progress towards Best Value Performance Indicators BV76d, BV78a, BV78b, BV79b(ii) dealing with Housing Benefits.

Colin Jennings, Revenue Services Manager, and Harold Moses, Head of Financial Services, were present at the meeting to outline progress and respond to queries.

It was explained that the Benefits Service had 11,500 claimants representing approximately 2/3rd of the Council tenants. It was anticipated that around £32.4m in payments would be made in 2007/8 and was the largest budget of Sedgefield Borough Council's services. The Service was undertaking at no cost to Sedgefield Borough Council taxpayer.

In 2001 it was taking 105 days to process new claims because of the difficulty in obtaining various evidence from claimants. This was clearly not acceptable and a Best Value Service Review was undertaken in

2001 following which a Service Improvement Plan with over 100 actions had been drawn up. Regular reports were submitted to Scrutiny Committee on progress particularly in relation to Performance Indicators.

The Committee was informed that in relation to the Benefits Service there were three Performance Indicators regarding fraud, three Performance Indicators on processing of claims and three Performance Indicators dealing with overpayment of benefits.

In respect of the Performance Indicators relating to fraud, it was noted that the number of investigators per 1,000 caseload (BV076b) was 0.18. The number of investigations per 1,000 caseload (BV076(c)) was as at end of October 2007, 26.9 and the number of prosecutions and sanctions per 1,000 caseload (BV076d) was currently 4.46.

Reference was made to the transfer of data and issues relating to the recent loss of data records at the Department of Works and Pensions. This would impact on the Council's performance.

Dealing with Best Value Performance Indicators relating to the processing of benefit payments, it was explained that as at the end of November, the speed of processing new claims (BV078a) was 20.6 days. It was noted that this was well within the top performance nationally. The speed of processing change of circumstances (BV078b) was running at 10.1 days and it was anticipated that the target of under 10 days would be achieved. The target relating to accuracy of processing (BV079a) was running at 100% - the top performance was expected to be achieved.

The Best Value Performance Indicators relating to overpayments were performing well with the total recovered during the year (BV079b(i)) and total written off (BV079b(iii)) performing better than 2006/7 and well within target. With regard to the total recovered during the year including the amount brought forward (BV079b(ii)), although this target was not being achieved currently, there was an upward trend and there was no reason to believe that the target would not be achieved by the end of the financial year.

The Committee was informed that the Performance Indicators were expected to meet targets subject to staffing difficulties and problems of data transfer in relation to the fraud Performance Indicators.

Achievements which had been made by the Benefits Service were also highlighted. These included securing of £302,000 additional funding from the Department of Works and Pensions. This had allowed for the installation of an electronic document management system which had had a major impact on the service.

Other achievements included the introduction of a pilot homeworking scheme, the introduction of an electronic claims system and the chartermark award which had been given to the service and would be allowed to be retained for the next two years. It was also noted that there had been a reduction from 105 days processing to 20.7 days

processing. A considerable achievement which had been highlighted as Best Practice by the Department of Works and Pensions.

Current issues relating to the service were also identified. These included:-

- Voice risk analysis
- Integration with back office system
- Taking service to the customer

The following were identified as issues which the service would have to face in the future :-

- Local Housing Allowance which would come into effect April, 2008 changing the way in which benefits were calculated
- Changing Performance Indicators
- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer
- Local Government Re-organisation

During discussion of this item a query was raised regarding the differentiation between BVPI78a and 78b and the time taken to process change of circumstances compared with the time to process new claims. It was explained that in relation to change of circumstances although most of the information was available there was still other information which had to be gathered which could take time.

Reference was also made to the security of data in respect of homeworking. In response it was explained that secure laptops were provided for homeworking and the network had to be accessed to obtain information.

AGREED : That the Committee is satisfied with progress in relation to the Best Value Performance Indicators on Housing Benefits.

P&A.18/07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW: THE COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION TO REDUCING ECONOMIC INACTIVITY (INCREASING EMPLOYABILITY) - 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 the recommendations arising from the Council's contribution to Reducing Economic Inactivity (Increasing Employability) Review. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that Graham Wood, Corporate Policy and Regeneration Manager, was present at the meeting to outline progress and respond to queries.

Members were reminded of the background to the Review and recommendations produced by the Review Group, the Action Plan which had been drawn up and suggested timescale.

In respect of the official unemployment rate and the true picture of

economic conditions, it was explained that the Council now used a range of information to determine the true rate of employment for strategic and priority setting purposes. The information included: Jobseekers allowance, the Labour market, incapacity benefit figures and the number of people economically inactive.

It was noted that the Economic Development Service had been refocused to provide more support for enterprise in disadvantaged communities. Support focused now on smaller/medium sized businesses.

With regard to the recommendation that the Borough Council cease grants of up to £10,000 for companies and refocus on smaller grants for individuals starting up business, it was explained that the Council now offered small grants to those starting in business to supplement the grants available through Local Enterprise Group Initiative.

It was also being recommended that systems needed to be in place to link training services to information on company expansions and relocations. Members were informed that Economic Development officers had attended one-stop-shop meetings with the Council's Planning officers to gain an insight into developments which may be coming on stream. This information was shared with training services through the divisional management team of strategy and regeneration.

The Committee was informed that the area where most progress had been made was in lobbying Government to provide further funds for Neighbourhood focused regeneration activity. The Government had announced that there would be a new fund to replace Neighbourhood Renewal fund - Working Neighbourhoods Fund which would be available for three years allocation and would focus on economy. The allocation to Sedgefield Borough was £7.8m over three years. Discussions were now being held on how the funding was to be accessed and issues in relation to the Programme for funding to be in place. A lobby for further funding had been made and the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review was awaited.

In relation to the value of the LSP in tackling employability, it was explained that the Leader of the Council now chaired the Local Strategic Partnership Board.

The important role of the voluntary and community sector in delivering services locally had been recognised. The Local Enterprise Group Initiatives funded coaches were located in voluntary community sector premises throughout the Borough promoting self-employment and social enterprise development. The voluntary/ community sector organisation provided much of the information, advice and guidance element of the Worklessness Commission as well as some health conditions programmes. CAVOS, the Bishop Auckland College and the PCP were instrumental in exploring how the community and voluntary sector could be commissioned to carry out in this area.

During discussion of this item reference was made to monitoring training programmes and progress of trainees. It was explained that it had been

recognised there was not a comprehensive tracking process to identify the effectiveness of the training programme. However, single programme funding had been obtained to procure a tracking system which was to roll out across the Borough. Job Centre Plus would have a comprehensive tracking programme to seek how effective interventions had been.

A query was also raised regarding Construction Training and Cerification of Training Officers. It was explained that the Training Officers in the Construction environment did have approved certification. Trainees were fully trained to industry standard. There was potential to do more in terms of Construction training and the Council was working with Bishop Auckland College regarding apprenticeships.

During discussion Members queried the accessibility to training programmes, for disadvantaged/disabled. Reference was made to the continued impact of Finchale Training College in that respect.

- AGREED :**
- 1. That the Committee is satisfied with the progress on the Action Plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Review – Reducing Economic Inactivity (Increasing Employability).*
 - 2. That the Committee review the progress of the Action Plan and that the item be included in the Work Programme.*

P&A.19/07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW: FUTURE RECYCLING SERVICES OPTIONS - PROGRESS ON ACTION PLAN

Consideration was given to a report detailing progress to date on Cabinet response and Action Plan following consideration of its recommendations arising from the Council's future Recycling Services Options Review. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that Gordon Lennon, Technical Services Manager, was present at the meeting to outline progress and, together with the Lead Member for Environment, Councillor Alan Hodgson, to respond to queries.

Members were reminded of the background to the Review and recommendations produced by the Review Group, the Action Plan which had been drawn up and suggested timescales.

It was noted that in respect of the County Council's Waste Management Strategy a Working Group of senior waste management officers representing all the Durham Districts/Borough Council in the County Council were currently working on the development of the County Durham Waste Management Strategy. The challenge would be for the Strategy to be flexible enough to allow for future recycling options.

With regard to the Kerb-it scheme , the existing scheme would continue in place until March, 2008 following which legally the contract could not be extended and would terminate on 31st March, 2008. Agreement had been reached between the four current recipient authorities of Kerb it,

Derwentside, Easington, Sedgefield Borough and Durham City to jointly procure a new kerb to recycling collection service to be effective from 1st April, 2008. Tenders had been received from five companies to carry out the service and all those companies and their tenders had been rigorously evaluated.

Cabinet had considered the options and had agreed to offer the service to Greencycle Plc. It was noted that two additional materials would be collected under the new scheme – plastics and cardboard. The segregated collection of glass was included in the new service proposals. Each household would receive a hessian sack in which to place cardboards and plastics. There would be an education process and the new scheme would commence on 2nd April, 2008. It was noted that a new local recycling centre would be developed.

In relation to the rationalisation of bring sites, it was anticipated that all 23 of the identified redundant bring sites would be removed by the end of this financial year.

It was explained that regarding the free green waste collection service, funding provision for the continuation of the existing service was currently being investigated. However, as a consequence of Local Government Review, long term arrangements for the collection of green waste would need to be addressed in the Waste Management Strategy of the new unitary authority.

A comprehensive educational and awareness raising campaign to support recycling arrangements was ongoing.

During discussion of this item reference was made to the Green Waste Collection and the benefits which would be gained from the scheme being rolled out across the Borough. It was explained that, this would be addressed as part of the County Waste Management Strategy.

A query was raised regarding whether the new company would have skips available at recycling centres to leave cardboard, plastics, and other materials for use particularly at holiday times. It was explained that the centres run by Premier Waste provided skips for various materials, and there was no reason to assume that they would not continue as a contract was in force. The new company would not be placing skips on Premier Waste sites.

In response to a query regarding the adequacy of the size of hessian sacks, it was explained that if the sack was found to be not sufficient an additional sack would be provided on request.

- AGREED :*
- 1. That the Committee is satisfied with the Action Plan for the Recycling Services Option Review*
 - 2. That the Committee review the progress of the Action Plan and that the item be included in the Work Programme.*

P&A.20/07 WORK PROGRAMME

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

- AGREED :*
- 1. That the report be noted.*
 - 2. That the following be placed on the Committee Work Programme :-*
 - Overview and Scrutiny Review : The Council's Contribution to Reducing Economic Inactivity (Increasing Employability) - Progress on Action plan*
 - Overview and Scrutiny Review : Future Recycling Services Options – Progress on Action Plan*

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Item 4

PROSPEROUS & ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2008

Briefing Note - Local Improvement Programme (LIP) for Prosperous & Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Presentation

The following briefing note provides Overview and Scrutiny members with a summary of the Local Improvement Programme (LIP) to help inform the discussion / presentation on the Programme that will take place at the meeting to be held on 29th January 2008.

1. Overview of the programme

The purpose of this programme is to tackle the issues facing the Borough linked to aspects of the Community Strategy and intelligence from Community / Area Appraisals

As part of this process, resources could be released to improve individual sites, buildings and community facilities throughout Sedgefield Borough.

Local community / voluntary organisations and partner Town and Parish Councils can submit project proposals at any time. These are appraised and then discussed at the Area Forum meeting. The Area Forum role is key in providing a view as to the priority of the project within that area. The project is then tabled at the Council's Cabinet, who will assess the project and decide which projects are supported.

2. Criteria

Projects eligible for support through the Local Improvement Programme would need to demonstrate that the project meets the following key criteria:

- Conformity to the Department for Communities and Local Government 'regeneration criteria' which states:

***“The carrying out of works or activities on any land where the land, or a building on the land, is vacant, unused, under-used, ineffectively used, contaminated or derelict;
and
....the works or activities are carried out in order to secure that the land or the building will be brought into effective use.”***

- Clear linkages to the delivery of the Council's **Community Strategy** and its key aims and planned outcomes.

Community Strategy issues include;

- Improve the physical and environmental conditions to help create more sustainable communities.
- Achieve wider regeneration benefits than physical renewal by linking this investment to schemes able to generate other regeneration benefits in areas of skills training, improved health, community safety and greater social and community cohesion.

Projects are also expected to meet the following secondary criteria:

- The project should have carried out **appropriate levels of community consultation** and reference to any local community appraisal. A **clear need for the project must have been identified**.
- The project should have specific **measurable benefits** as to justify any support. These benefits should relate to specific timescales.
- The project should have considered how any recurrent or **revenue funding implications will be managed**.
- Value for money should be clearly demonstrated, to include any match funding from other grant sources as well as accessing a minimum of **3 quotes** regarding the proposals for work.
- Where the applicant is a Town or Parish Council, there should **normally** be the commitment of a financial contribution of approximately one third of the total cost of the project, to ensure the resources being made available are addressing local priorities as well as those of the Council. This contribution could include other external funding that the Town or Parish Council has secured from sources such as the National Lottery, or other funders where opportunities exist. The funding of future revenue implications will also be considered. All applications will be considered on their individual merits.
- Applicants must be set up for **charitable purposes**. We are unable to support commercial organisations through the Local Improvement Programme.
- If the project has a sports focus, applicants must discuss and prepare a **Sports Development Plan** with the Leisure Services section of Sedgefield Borough Council.

Andrew Megginson
Capital Programme Manager
Strategy & Regeneration

Local Improvement Programme

*Prosperous & Attractive
Borough Overview and
Scrutiny Presentation –*

*Update on the Programme
and Discussion on the Key
Issues'*



Background to the Programme

- Sale of land for housing has created an opportunity to further invest in Regeneration across the Borough
- Creation of the Local Improvement Programme (LIP)
- £3.8m has been earmarked to LIP across the Borough over a 3 year period to March 2009 * *subject to resources being available*
- Allocation tied to Area Forum Areas and based on number of households within that area



Financial Allocation per Area Forum

Breakdown of Local Improvement Programme funding by Area Forum

Area Forum locality	No of Households	%	TOTAL LIP Funding *
Area 1 - Spennymoor	8,300	22	£836,000
Area 2 - Ferryhill & Chilton	8,130	22	£836,000
Area 3 - Rural East	5,250	14	£532,000
Area 4 - Shildon	4,700	12	£456,000
Area 5 - Newton Aycliffe	11,140	30	£1,140,000
Total	37,790		£3,800,000

* 2008/09 Financial Year LIP Budget Allocation to be confirmed



Main Grant Criteria

- Compatibility with Government Regeneration Defn
 - Focus activity on underused land and or buildings
- Programme designed to tackle the key issues facing the Borough linked to:
 - Community Strategy Objectives,
 - A Strong Local Need – backed through appraisals
 - Measurable benefits – *what difference will the project make?*
 - Added Value / additional activity
 - Appropriate Local Consultation
 - Given Regeneration Definition, activity will be focused towards land and buildings



Current Picture across the Borough

- 51 Applications Received to date
 - 11 of which have been Technical Studies
- 26 Projects Approved to date
Total Value - £1,103,977
- 12 Applications currently being appraised
 - 7 of which have been through the Area Forum process
- 13 Projects withdrawn or rejected
- 22 projects in the pipeline across the Borough



Timescale for Project Delivery

Can take a number of months to develop a project proposal due to;

- Area Forum timetable
- Match Funding timescale implications
- Planning permission process
- Tender process timescales / quotes
- Dealing with community / voluntary groups
- All projects start from a different point



Impact of LIP

- Starting to see projects completed
- Many more projects underway
- Match Funding
- Projects are monitored to ensure outputs are achieved
- Need to see additional activities and evidence of local improvement



Impact - Match Funding

- £703,000 of external match funding has been secured for approved projects
- Ratio of £1 SBC = £0.70 external match funding
- Aiming for a £1 for £1 ratio if possible
- Try to maximise external funding where appropriate and where opportunities exist
- LIP Officers will work with applicants to complete applications and identify possible match funding
- Linked to Timescales issues



Issues

- Differing Levels of activity across the Borough
- Consideration of 'fair-share' principles
- Area Forum role
- Timescales linked to Local Govm't Review
- Consideration of a cut-off for new applications
- Match Funding – harder to come by
- Difficulty obtaining quotes for capital work
- Linkages to the NEP – Members funding



Contact details

- Applications packs in paper and/or electronic versions are available.

- Contact Details -

Linda Goundry or Nicola Woodgate LIP Officers
(01388) 816166 Ext. 7775 / Ext. 7774
lgoundry@sedgefield.gov.uk
nwoodgate@sedgefield.gov.uk



Questions

- Happy to take any questions
- We are also happy to discuss individual project ideas / comments outside this meeting with Councillor and or Community Groups.



Item 5

REPORT TO PROSPEROUS & ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2008

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE PERFORMANCE

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 6 November 2007, the Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered Performance Indicators relating to its ambitions for the period 1 April to 30 September 2007. As a result of its deliberations, the committee raised concern and requested that further information be presented to a future meeting of the committee with regard to improving performance of the following indicators:-
 - 1.2 LPI 32 Percentage of applications considering the building control service good or better, and
LPI 34 Percentage of building control plans approved/responded to within three weeks.
 - 1.3 The purpose of this report therefore is to provide an explanation of the current performance levels and to identify actions to improve the performance of these indicators.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Prosperous and Attractive Overview and Scrutiny Committee accept the explanations provided in the report to justify the current performance of the Building Control Service and the actions proposed to improve performance.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 **Reasons for the Building Control Service Performance Deteriorating in the Period 1 April To 30 September 2007**
- 3.2 It is important to understand the background against which the Building Control Service has to operate. It is widely recognised that local authority building control services nationally, regionally and locally have been experiencing difficulties in recent years. Members will be aware that Building Control Officers top the national local authority league tables as the most difficult to recruit and retain, together with Planners and Environmental Health Officers. This is partly attributable to the low

numbers of people entering the profession, many of the more senior officers retiring and others leaving council work in favour of the private sector. As a consequence, the pool of available suitably qualified and experienced officers in the Durham County area has diminished of late and for some time the service has been understaffed. Against this backdrop it is difficult to provide an effective and efficient Building Control Service.

- 3.3 The service is also unique within the Planning and Technical Services Section in that it has to compete with the private sector that has made significant gains in recent years at the expense of traditional local authority building control services. The Council is aware of these challenges and it is for these reasons that it endorsed changes to the staffing structure of the Building Control Team and the principle of pursuing inter authority working with adjoining councils in order to safeguard the future of local authority led building control services.
- 3.4 Turning to the specific period in question, it is important to acknowledge that the long serving manager of the team left this Council's employ in August. As a result of the problems experienced in attempting to run the service with inadequate staff resources, the previous manager had on occasions to both manage the Team as well as contribute to the day-to-day operation of the service. It was also somewhat inevitable that with his imminent departure some momentum was lost as a result of him concluding his work commitments with this Council. Moreover, the ongoing staffing problems were made worse by his departure. His departure therefore had a profound effect on the service during the period in question.
- 3.5 To compound the difficulties the Team were facing, one of the remaining officers had to attend a training course for the whole of July with the consequent adverse affect on maintaining office cover over the traditional summer holiday period when staff resources are usually depleted in any event.

4. **ACTIONS TO REDRESS THE PROBLEMS**

- 4.1 It is encouraging to note that a new Building control Manager is in post and that the post he vacated to take up his new role has also been filled relatively quickly. (The new Building Control Surveyor starts work on 28 January 2008.) The new manager is crucially aware of the difficulties facing the service, having himself worked in the Team for many years before his recent promotion. He is eager to provide a new impetus to service delivery. Whilst comparatively new to the job, he has already demonstrated a willingness to introduce different methods of working with a renewed emphasis on performance management.
- 4.2 For instance, new monitoring measures have been implemented within the Team to enable the manager to apportion the workload more fairly in an attempt to improve motivation amongst the officers. Staff have

been made aware of the deterioration in service delivery identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and have been encouraged and reminded to hit targets to the best of their ability. Additionally, the outsourcing of plan vetting to an external consultancy has been reviewed and steps taken to carefully assess the type of work to be kept in house in order to improve performance. Whilst the outsourcing of plan vetting is a necessary measure because of staff shortages, it is important to be more selective. Clearly, dealing with applications in house has benefits in terms of familiarity with the scheme and consistency of approach, thereby reducing the time taken to undertake inspections on site for example. Furthermore, the new manager identified a drop in the standard of service provided by the outside consultancy which appeared to coincide with the former manager's departure. The new manager has been in discussion with the consultants about this issue and a marked improvement is expected.

5. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Human Resources

The improvements to the Building Control Service outlined in this report can be met from existing staff resources.

Financial Resources

The improvements to the Building Control Service outlined in this report can be met from the existing budget.

Sustainability

One of the original motivations for producing a Masterplan for the three priority neighbourhoods was to ensure that they could be seen as sustainable communities in their own right.

Consultation

The members of staff in the Building Control Team are aware of the current performance issues.

Links to Corporate Ambitions/Values

Corporate Ambition: A Healthy Borough.

Community Outcome: Safeguarding Public Health

Planning and Technical Services Key Action: To provide an efficient and effective Building Control Service.

Risk Management

None required.

Health and Safety

No additional implications have been identified.

Equality and Diversity

No additional implications have been identified.

Legal and Constitutional

No additional implications have been identified.

6. **LIST OF APPENDICES**

No appendices

Contact Officer
Telephone Number
E-mail address

Graham Clark
01388 816166 Ext. 4299
gclark@sedgefield.gov.uk

Wards:

All Wards

Examination by Statutory Officers

Yes **Not
Applicable**

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | The report has been approved by Management Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Item 6

REPORT TO PROSPEROUS & ATTRACTIVE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2008

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO THE PRODUCTION OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 6 November 2007, the Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered Performance Indicators relating to its ambitions for the period 1 April to 30 September 2007. As a result of its deliberations, the committee raised concern and requested that further information be presented to a future meeting of the committee with regard to improving performance of the following indicators:-
- 1.2 BV 219 (b) Percentage of conservation areas in the local authority area with an up to date character appraisal.
- 1.3 Concern was raised by Members that a target has been set to appraise 20% of the Borough's conservation areas and last year's performance was 6.7% and current performance is 6.6%.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report therefore is to provide an explanation of the current performance levels and to identify actions to improve the performance of these indicators.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Prosperous and Attractive Overview and Scrutiny Committee accept the explanations provided in the report to justify current performance levels and the actions proposed to improve performance.

3. **REASONS FOR THE DELAY IN PREPARING CONSERVATION AREA PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are required for the 15 conservation areas across the Borough, the majority of which were designated in 1993. The only conservation area with a complete appraisal is Cornforth that was completed in 2002. This year (2007/08) has seen work continue on conservation area appraisals for Shildon and Bishop Middleham. It is likely that the next conservation area to be

examined in this way will be Whitworth Park, Spennymoor due to anticipated development pressures in and around the area.

- 3.2 Draft Conservation Area Appraisals were prepared by the Forward Plans Team in 2003/04. English Heritage subsequently issued best practice guidance on how to prepare appraisals which the government asked Local Planning Authorities to embrace. This entailed re-visiting all the draft appraisals with a view to having them substantially revised to make them, amongst other things, more user friendly. This is a time consuming and challenging exercise that falls primarily to the Design, conservation, Tree Management and Landscape Team Manager to oversee.
- 3.3 Whilst it would be advantageous to have the Team Manager undertaking conservation area appraisals to the exclusion of the management of all other work carried out by the Team and other work he is responsible for, this is of course not possible.
- 3.4 The work associated with the Cornforth Conservation Area for example did not end with the appraisal. Financial support from English Heritage and three local authorities ensured that a Grant Scheme towards building repairs and restoration could be initiated. The Grant Scheme is to secure good quality repairs and restoration of lost architectural features in many of the buildings surrounding the Green over a three year period as well as compliment the recently completed enhancement works. A great deal of time had to be spent at the beginning of this financial year to prepare the Grant Application and Delivery Plan for English Heritage in order to pursue this initiative.
- 3.5 Similarly, the Team Manager has been overseeing work on railings and the eastern gateway in Bishop Middleham, and project managing high profile works in the grounds of St. Edmund's Church a Grade 1 Listed Building at the heart of the Sedgfield Village Conservation Area.
- 3.6 Additionally, the Team Manager has had to oversee works allocated in this year's capital programme such as at Half Moon Lane, Spennymoor.
- 3.7 Another quite unexpected substantial area of work which had to be done at short notice was the preparation of the Windlestone Hall Planning Statement and Development Brief as a result of the listed hall being placed on the market for sale by Durham County Council. Arguably, the best listed building in the Borough, it was critical to produce a guide for prospective developers in the preparation of adaptation, restoration and development proposals for the hall and the grounds. The statement and brief is currently being converted into a Supplementary Planning Document by the Forward Planning Team working with the Team Manager to be incorporated into the forthcoming Local Development Framework.

- 3.8 Another area of work which has also been seen as a priority in order to enhance the physical environment of Spennymoor Town Centre is the shop front improvement grant scheme. Again, the Team Manager has a pivotal role in ensuring that the details of the shop fronts that require planning permission are up to the requisite standard. This too is a time consuming exercise.
- 3.9 More generally, the team as a whole is responsible for providing specialist advice on planning applications. This internal consultation process is also a very necessary and time consuming activity more particularly with the recent changes to the planning system and the government's emphasis on securing good design in all new developments. It is also widely acknowledged that some of the newer, less experienced staff in the Development Control Team requires more advice and guidance on conservation, design, tree protection and landscaping matters than perhaps would have been the case in the past when the staffing situation was more stable with more knowledgeable officers in the team.

4. **ACTIONS TO REDRESS DETERIORATING PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1 It is clear that the Team has been subjected to changing priorities and differing workloads in recent years to the detriment of preparing conservation area appraisals. It is also clear that the nature and scope of the appraisals has changed involving more work than was originally anticipated. In that sense, perhaps the targets have been too ambitious and over optimistic.
- 4.2 It is proposed therefore that the Team Manager produces a Conservation Area Appraisal Action Plan setting out realistic timescales for the production of the remaining appraisals and that the Action Plan is given priority status in the Team's Work Plan for 2008/9. Reports will be prepared to update Members of the progress attained and presented to Development Control Committee.

5. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Human Resources

There are no staffing issues.

Financial Resources

There are no budget issues.

Consultation

None required.

Links to Corporate Ambitions/Values

Corporate Ambition: An Attractive Borough

Community Outcome: Improving Towns, Villages and the Countryside

Corporate Plan Aim: To Provide a High Quality, Efficient and Customer Focused Planning Service that Supports Sustainable Improvement of the Built and Natural Environment.
 Planning and Technical Services Key Action: To provide an Efficient and Effective Development Control Service.

Risk Management
 None required

Health and Safety
 No issues identified

Equality and Diversity
 No issues identified

Legal and Constitutional
 No issues identified

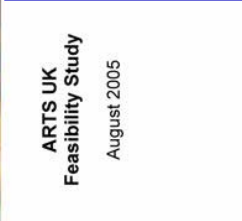
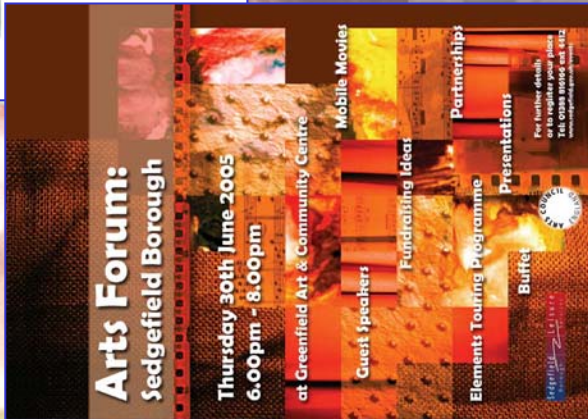
6. **LIST OF APPENDICES**
 No appendices

Contact Officer	Bill Katakay
Telephone Number	01388 816166 Ext. 4522
E-mail address	bkatakay@sedgefield.gov.uk
Wards:	All Wards

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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ARTS at the Strategic Centre



Sedgfield Borough Arts Development



ARTS Development



Education



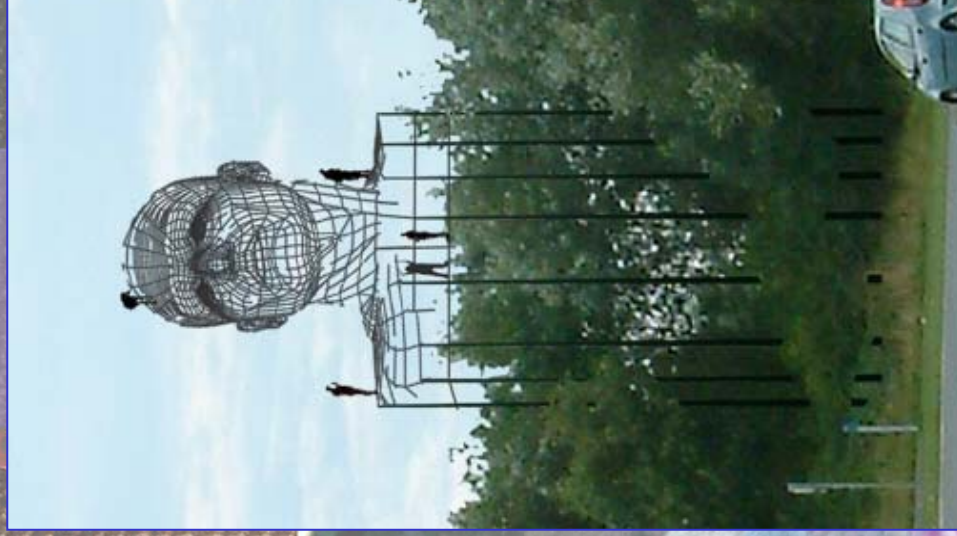
Community Arts

Cross Agency & Departmental



Project Development

Public Art



ARTS Focus

Arts + Health

Young People

Dance Initiative

Cultural Programme

Arts Grants

**Commissioning Designs
and Projects**

Festival Support

Performance

Fundraising for Projects

Music Initiative



Measure Cultural Arts Activities (participants + audience)

SBC Arts Development Priorities	Number of participants so far	
	participants	audience
Education	1822	1130
Community Arts	3834	266
Cross Agency & Departmental Work	1124	1000
Projects	809	940
Sub totals	7589	3336
	10925	

Other Measures

The Arts Council also require a further breakdown of information such as; number of under 11's, 12 to 18 and adult sessions' along with the overall number of arts session and professional artists employed.

Financial Measures

We measure the return on every £1 we invest in Arts Development, on average we fundraise over £250,000 (including capital) per year with a budget of £14,000

Item 8

PROSPEROUS & ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2008

REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

This report sets out the Committee's current Work Programme for consideration and review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Chairmen of the current Review Groups give a brief update as to progress.
2. That the Committee's Work Programme be reviewed.

DETAIL

1. In accordance with Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8 of the Council's Constitution, Overview & Scrutiny Committees are responsible for setting their own work programme.
2. Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee should agree a realistic, achievable and considered work programme on the understanding that, from time to time, more urgent or immediate issues may require scrutiny. Issues may, for example, be raised by Cabinet reports, Members' constituency business or be referred to Scrutiny by Cabinet in advance of a Cabinet decision.
3. The current Work Programme for this Committee is appended to the report which details:-
 - Scrutiny Reviews currently being undertaken.
 - Scrutiny review topics held in reserve for future investigation.
 - A schedule of items to be considered by the Committee for the next 6 meetings.
4. **Scrutiny Review**
The Committee should aim to undertake a small number of high quality reviews that will make a real difference to the work of the Authority, rather than high numbers of reviews on more minor issues. Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee should therefore aim to undertake two reviews concurrently. Any additional review topics that have been agreed by Members will be placed on a reserve list and as one Review is completed the Committee will decide on which review should be undertaken next.

Scrutiny reviews will be conducted by a Review Group established by the Committee comprising of 5-6 Members. In most cases the Review Group will be made up of Members from the establishing Committee. However, Members may decide to conduct a review that cuts across the responsibilities of another Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In these cases Members should consider whether it would be appropriate to co-opt Members from the other relative Overview & Scrutiny Committee(s). If it is decided that the review is crosscutting the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Overview & Scrutiny Committees concerned should decide which Committee should take the lead on the review and how many Members should be co-opted from other Overview & Scrutiny Committee(s). The number of Members to be co-opted will depend on the extent to which the responsibility of the topic is shared, however the Review Group should have no more than 6 members.

5. Business for Future Meetings

The Work Programme sets out a plan of when it is anticipated that certain items will be considered by the Committee. These items may include:-

- Best Value Service Improvement Plan updates
- Items which are submitted at regular intervals
- Issues identified by Members for consideration
- Any updates requested by Members

Members are requested to review the Committee's Work Programme and identify, where necessary, issues which they feel should be investigated by the Committee. It will not always be possible to anticipate all reports which will need to be considered by an Overview & Scrutiny Committee and therefore a flexible approach will need to be taken to work programming.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None associated with this report.

5. CONSULTATION

Contact Officers: Jonathan Slee
Telephone No: (01388) 816166 ext 4362
Email Address: jslee@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s): Not ward specific

Background Papers None

**PROSPEROUS & ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

WORK PROGRAMME

Ongoing Reviews

No reviews currently ongoing

Future Reviews

There are currently no review topics identified by the Committee for future review. As one review is completed Members will decide which review should be undertaken next.

ANTICIPATED ITEMS

11th March 2008

- *Progress towards Corporate Plan performance indicator CPP29, Number of People achieving NVQ Level 2 through Train 2 Gain*
- *Progress towards Local Plan Indicator LPI 01, Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections household waste.*

29th April 2008

- *Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review: Future Recycling Services Options – Progress on Action Plan*

1st Meeting 2008/09 Municipal Year

- *Performance Indicators 2007/08 Year End Performance*

2nd Meeting 2008/09 Municipal Year

- *Overview and Scrutiny Review: The Council's Contribution to Reducing Economic Inactivity(Increasing Employability) - Progress on Action plan*

3rd Meeting 2008/09 Municipal Year

- *No Items currently identified*

4th Meeting 2008/09 Municipal Year

- *No Items currently identified*

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