

**PROSPEROUS AND ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Council Chamber,
Council Offices
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
11 March 2008

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor G.C. Gray (Chairman) and

Councillors P. Gittins J.P., D.M. Hancock, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison,
A. Smith, B. Stephens and A. Warburton

In Attendance: Councillors T. Brimm, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh, J.E. Higgin, J.G. Huntington,
Ms. I. Jackson, Mrs. E.M. Paylor and T. Ward

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, Mrs. I. Hewitson, G.M.R. Howe and
J. Robinson J.P

P&A.33/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

P&A.34/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 24th January, 2008, 29th January, 2008 and 18th February, 2008 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

**P&A.35/07 PROGRESS TOWARDS CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE
INDICATOR CPP29**

Shaun Meek, Training Services Manager, was present at the meeting to outline progress towards Corporate Plan Indicator CPP29 – Number of People Achieving NVQ Level 2 through Train 2 Gain.

It was explained that, at the meeting of the Committee held in November 2007, concern had been expressed that Performance Indicator CPP29 relating to number of people achieving NVQ Level 2 through Train 2 Gain was not meeting its target. The Train 2 Gain Programme was a Government initiative aimed to help young people and unemployed back into work and to engage employers in skill activity and enabling their employees to receive a range of training and support. It was aimed at employees where their skill level was lower than NVQ Level 2.

The Government and Learning Skills Council provided free training to help employees gain their first full Level 2 qualification and/or Skills for Life first numeracy and literary qualification. This was provided by a network of training providers of which Sedgefield Borough Council was one.

It was anticipated that the Train 2 Gain budget would grow by almost 50% in 2008/9 and by a further third in 2009/10.

The success of the scheme was measured against the following criteria:-

- Number of employers engaged.
- Number of Level 2 and Basic Skills starts and achievements

The presentation outlined the performance of the scheme at Sedgefield Borough from August, 2007 to July, 2008. It was explained that in that time there had been 38 leavers, 37 of which had achieved qualifications making the success rate 97.4%. This was above the national average of 80%. There were 29 still in training and projected starts of 30 in March/ April.

Members were informed that it had taken longer than anticipated to engage employers in the process. However, there were 19 employers now engaged.

The types of skills in which qualifications were on offer included, Business Administration, Customer Services, Manufacturing, Site Carpentry, General Operative Construction and Bricklaying.

In respect of future developments in the scheme it was explained that the Council was working with three companies, Mears, Service Direct - Durham County and Wright Construction.

During discussion of this item a query was raised regarding the number of apprentices which were retained following their apprenticeship and what steps were taken to ensure that the apprenticeship actually covered the career aspirations of the apprentices.

In response it was explained that, when companies employed apprentices, they were given a fixed period apprenticeship. The companies were making a major investment in the apprentices and therefore the majority were retained having completed their apprenticeship. Of those that were not retained this was often associated with the apprentices performance or with the state of the economy and the company having insufficient work to warrant retention. Two exit interviews were undertaken. Approximately 85% were retained. Those that were not retained the Council sought to find alternative employers for the apprentices.

In response to a query which was raised regarding incentives given to employers to employ apprentices, it was explained that the funding was not designed to offer incentives. The employer would be expected to pay the apprentices wages. The Council, however, would pay for the training.

A query was also raised regarding the standard of training given. It was explained that qualifications were now assessed in the work place and not as previously in a simulated environment.

Discussion was held regarding the quality of instructors and machinery used by the companies employing apprentices. It was explained that it was difficult to recruit quality trainers and there was a high level of staff turnover. With regard to machinery, a business approach had to be taken and an assessment made of the cost benefits.

In response to a question raised regarding the criteria for qualifications, it was explained that there were standard criteria set for qualifications, which were quite rigorous.

During discussions it was suggested that a site visit be held to the Council's Training Centre at Coulson Street, Spennymoor to allow Members to see the Centre in operation.

- AGREED :**
1. *That the Committee is satisfied with progress in relation to Corporate Plan Performance Indicator CPP29 – Number of People Achieving NVQ Level 2 through Train 2 Gain.*
 2. *That a visit to the training centre be included in the Committee's Work Programme.*

P&A.36/07 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that a State of the Borough Review was to be undertaken which would examine achievements within each of the Council's four corporate 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 proposed that Overview and Scrutiny Committee's establish Review groups to examine each of the Council's ambitions. Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee would set up reviews relating to Prosperous Borough and Attractive Borough ambitions.

It was noted that Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee had responsibility for issues such as corporate governance and resource management and did not have direct responsibility for scrutiny of the Council's ambitions. However, to allow all Scrutiny Members the opportunity to contribute to the Reviews, all Members would be invited to participate in a Review Group of their choice with the criteria that there were nine Members maximum for each Review Group and that the Chairman of the Review Group be a Member of the Parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- AGREED :*
1. *That the Work Programme as outlined be approved.*
 2. *That two Review Groups be established as follows:-*
 - *Prosperous Borough Review Group*
 - *Attractive Borough Review Group*
 3. *That a site visit be arranged to Coulson Centre Training Centre.*

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