



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

Tuesday,

9 December 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)**

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**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)**

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**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 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008. (Pages 1 - 4)

**4. "STATE OF THE BOROUGH" - PROSPEROUS BOROUGH REVIEW GROUP REPORT**

To consider the attached document. (Pages 5 - 40)

**5. "STATE OF THE BOROUGH" - ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH REVIEW GROUP REPORT**

To consider the attached document. (Pages 41 - 70)

**6. WORK PROGRAMME**

To consider the attached report of Chairman of the Committee. (Pages 71 - 74)

**7. 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**

**Council Offices  
SPENNYMOOR**

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. S. J. Iveson, Mrs. E. Maddison, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, A. Smith and B. Stephens.

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# Item 3

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

### PROSPEROUS AND ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices  
Spennymoor

Tuesday,  
4 November 2008

Time: 10.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillor G.C. Gray (Chairman) and  
Councillors Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, P. Gittins J.P., Mrs. I. Hewitson and Mrs. E. Maddison

**In Attendance:** Councillors V. Chapman, A. Gray and J.E. Higgin

**Apologies:** Councillors D.M. Hancock, G.M.R. Howe, Mrs. S. J. Iveson, B. Lamb, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, A. Smith and B. Stephens

#### **P&A.12/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

#### **P&A.13/08 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **P&A.14/08 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Consideration was given to a report measuring performance against the Prosperous Borough and Attractive Borough elements of the Corporate Plan covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report provided data on 34 Performance Indicators of which 6 were key to the Council's aims and objectives.

Of the 17 Prosperous Borough Indicators, 12 had demonstrated improved performance against 2007/2008 actual outturns, 5 were performing at a worse level whilst 10 indicators were on schedule to achieve the 2008/2009 target and 5 were off target. In respect of the Attractive Borough Performance Indicators it was noted that of the 17 indicators 13 had demonstrated improved performance against 2007/2008 actual outturn and 2 had performed at a worse level. 12 Indicators had performed above 2008/9 target and 5 were below target.

Specific reference was made to the following :-

#### **CPP04 Percentage of Unemployed Adults undertaking training with SBC who gain employment**

The Committee was informed that this Indicator was performing 7% below target. It was explained that over the past 2 months there had

been a significant decline in job opportunities in the local job market which was having an impact on job outcome rates.

**CPP10(i) Number of new start businesses registering with the Inland Revenue as a result of support received through Sedgefield Borough Council**

This Indicator was thought to be below target as a result of the effect of the recent down turn in the economic climate.

**CPP12 Number of new clients using revised Shildon Business Centre offer**

It was explained that this Indicator was performing 8 new clients below target. A marketing plan was being produced to tackle this situation and to advertise the service across Sedgefield Borough Council. It was anticipated that this would raise the performance for Quarter 3.

**CPP13 Number of Businesses attending Your Business Forum workshops**

It was noted that this Indicator was performing 53.5 businesses below target. The Committee was informed that plans were in progress to launch a newly branded South Durham Business Network during January 2009. It was forecast that attendance at this event would be around 150.

**XBV218(b) Percentage of Abandoned Vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the Authority is legally entitled to remove the vehicle**

Members were informed that there had been no abandoned vehicles removed in Quarter 1. A reason was assumed to be the price of scrap metal leading people to scrap cars rather than abandon them.

**XBV219(b) Percentage of Conservation Areas in the Local Authority area with an up-to-date Character Appraisal**

This Indicator was performing 13.3% below target. It was noted that one Conservation Area Appraisal was due to be submitted to Council for approval and two were currently being processed. It was anticipated that the end of year target would be met.

**CPA02 Number of Collections Missed per 100,000 Collections of Household Waste**

This Indicator was performing 68 missed collections per 100,000 off target. The high number of missed collections was due to a new kerbside recycling scheme which had been introduced in April 2008. For the first three months of the new contract the number of missed collections was extremely high. However, the number of missed collections was reducing month on month. The number had reduced from 93 in Quarter1 to 78 in Quarter 2.

**NI192 Percentage of Household Waste sent for re-use, recycling and composting**

It was noted that the target for this Indicator may not be achieved as the anaerobic digester was out of commission and no date had been given when it would be operational.

**XBV204 The percentage of appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse on planning applications**

The Committee was informed that this Indicator was performing 13.3% off target. The Quarter 2 figure reflected one appeal which had been upheld out of a total of 3 during the period.

*AGREED : That the report be accepted.*

**P&A.15/08 WORK PROGRAMME**

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

An update was given on the Committee's two review groups Attractive Borough Scrutiny Review Group and Prosperous Borough Scrutiny Review Group.

*AGREED : That the Committee's Work Programme be approved.*

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SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
REVIEW

STATE OF THE BOROUGH  
(PROSPEROUS BOROUGH)

Report of the Review Group

**Members of the Review Group**

Councillor V. Chapman (Chairman)

Councillor D. Farry

Councillor G.C. Gray

Councillor A. Smith

Councillor A. Warburton

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Rationale**

Following an extensive community appraisal and consultation a Community Strategy for Sedgefield Borough was published by the Local Strategic Partnership in 2004. The Strategy identifies the key economic, social and environmental issues facing the Borough and sets out a vision for the Borough in 2014 as a 'Healthy, Prosperous and Attractive Borough with Strong Communities'.

It is structured around these four aims, setting out a number of supporting priorities and targets to be addressed under which specific service improvements will be developed.

Four years after the first publication of the Community Strategy, Overview and Scrutiny Committees decided to undertake a review to look at quality of life issues within the Community Strategy. This is particularly useful in the final year of the Authority as these issues can be benchmarked for future reference. The review also provided Members with the opportunity to make recommendations, where appropriate, to the new Authority.

The review was broken down into sections covering the four key ambitions. Overview and Scrutiny Committees established review groups to look at key ambitions relevant to their responsibilities.

The reviews looked at achievements, gaps/deficiencies in provision and areas in need of improvement.

Each review group produced a report setting out its finding and recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.

The reports will be combined to form a 'State of the Borough' report which will be a useful source of reference for the new Council and will provide a benchmark for future assessment.

### **Membership of the Prosperous Borough Review Group**

Councillor V. Chapman (Chairman) and  
Councillors D. Farry, G.C. Gray, A. Smith and A. Warburton

### **Objectives**

- To look at both Council and 'other agency' services.
- To highlight areas working well and areas for improvement.
- To make recommendations via Cabinet to the new Council.

## **Contribution to Council's Ambitions and Community Outcomes**

'A borough where high quality businesses can prosper and where local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that the offer'.

### **Process/Methodology**

The Review Group gathered information and evidence as follows:

1. The Review Group has met on several occasions between June and November.
2. Attendance by the following to provide information, give presentations and respond to questions from the Review Group:
  - Andy Palmer, Assistant Chief Executive
  - Graham Wood, Corporate Policy and Regeneration Manager
  - Andrew Megginson, Capital Programme Manager – Strategy & Regeneration
  - Shaun Meek, Training Services Manger
  - Ginny Williams, Economic Inclusion Officer, Durham County Council
  - Nick Brewster, Director of Curriculum, Bishop Auckland College
3. Analysis of data, including:
  - Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy – Overarching Framework 2007 – 2010
  - Sedgefield Borough Transitional Plan June 2008 – April 2009
  - Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy 2004 – 2014
  - 'Enterprising People' Sedgefield Economic Development Strategy 2007 – 2011
  - Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee Performance Update Report 2007/08 Outturns
  - The consultation paper on the proposals to improve 'Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning for Town Centres'
  - Retail Centres Framework, Shildon
  - Retail Centres Framework, Ferryhill
  - Spennymoor Area Action Plan Public Participation (Issues and Options)

## **Conclusions & Recommendations**

### ***Employment and Economic Activity***

#### **Conclusion**

The Council has clear strategic direction and strong support from other partner agencies to maximise the potential for growth within the Sedgefield economy. Its Economic Development Section raises the awareness of the Borough's competitive advantages – high quality industrial sites, good transport links and proximity to Durham City, and provides support for people starting up in business through the LEGI Scheme. The Section also works closely with schools to promote school based enterprise and support business engagement through 'Your Business Forum' and has access to Working Neighbourhood Funding to implement initiatives to meet the worklessness targets contained within the County-wide Local Area Agreement.

#### **Recommendation**

That work continues with partners/stakeholders to:

- promote the Borough's industrial sites,
- improve the quality of business accommodation available,
- address employability issues, and
- promote entrepreneurship and school based enterprise

to ensure that local residents benefit from increased levels of prosperity.

### ***Regeneration of Town Centres***

#### **Conclusion**

The Council, through the various studies and plans that have been commissioned, is aware of the problems currently facing the town centres as a result of changing shopping patterns and other economic factors. The work already completed shows that the Council is actively engaging with stakeholders, including local residents, and is working to secure a prosperous future for the towns.

#### **Recommendations**

1. That engagement continues with key stakeholders to support the recommendations made within the studies.
2. That the work to improve the vitality and viability of the town centres be supported and continued by the unitary authority.

## ***Improvement of Community Assets - Local Improvement Programme***

### **Conclusion**

The Local Improvement Programme is unique to Sedgefield Borough Council, although other local authorities such as Durham City and Derwentside District Councils have variations of community grant programmes. The Programme has resulted in a significant investment in community facilities and open space/recreational provision in the Borough and has provided leverage £2.89 m additional match funding.

The Programme has also strengthened the role of the Council's Area Forums as the Forums provide a local sounding board for proposals, ensuring that local community groups/residents and stakeholders have a say on the priority of the project in their area.

The Programme's application process was considered simple and the Council's officers provide support to applicants at all stages of project development/delivery. The Programme may provide a model for the allocation of funding attached to the proposed Area Action Partnerships.

### **Recommendations**

1. That the new unitary authority considers the operation of the Local Improvement Programme as it may provide a model for the allocation of funding to the proposed Area Action Partnership.
2. That an independent evaluation of the Local Improvement Programme be undertaken to establish its impact against the original criteria set and produce a lessons learnt report.

## ***Learning and Skills***

### **Conclusion**

Educational attainment at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 across the Borough and the learning opportunities available from community venues have increased considerably over recent years following the commissioning of services/interventions with Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

With Neighbourhood Renewal Funding having come to an end in March 2008, a number of the initiatives in schools will continue through mainstream or Single Programme funding and work is taking place with partners to develop a commissioning process for Working Neighbourhoods Fund to address the needs of the most disadvantaged residents in relation to education/skills training.

The merger of the Council's Training and Employment Service with Bishop Auckland College will improve the choice, quality and access to training and learning opportunities. It will also offer potential for strategic contracts with major building programmes such as Building Schools for the Future to supply the skills needed.

### **Recommendation**

That the new authority takes on board the lessons learnt by Sedgefield Borough Council which are:

- Key Stage 2 and 4 results must continue to be analysed at a local rather than county level in order resources/initiatives can be targeted on low performing schools.
- Local/community interventions and the one to one person centred approaches to learning have been found to work well and should continue.
- Investment in apprenticeships must continue to ensure that local people have the skills that employers require and that links to public sector employment and major commissions for example Building Schools for the Future be fully exploited.

## **WHAT MAKES A PROSPEROUS BOROUGH?**

This section of the report sets out the progress made by the Council and its partners towards achieving the ambition of a Prosperous Borough.

The definition of a Prosperous Borough is 'a borough where high quality businesses can prosper and where local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer'.

The Corporate Plan 2007-2010 and the Transition Plan June 2008 – April 2009 set out the following key objectives in relation to the above ambition:

- Improve the employability of local people
- Enhance the vitality of town centres
- Work with partners to narrow the gap in quality of life experienced by the most disadvantaged

The Sedgefield Borough Local Strategic Partnership has also identified the following as its key priorities:

- improving employment and economic activity rates
- increasing average household income
- improving the educational attainment levels and reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

The following areas which influence the prosperity of the Borough's residents have been examined in detail by the Review Group:

- Employment and Economic Activity
- Social Regeneration (Town Centres and the Local Improvement Programme)
- Learning and Skills



## EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

### KEY STATISTICS

- **60.9% of the Borough's population of working age in 2006, compared to national average of 62.2% .**
- **Employment rate in 2006/07 was 69.5%, compared to 74.5% nationally.**
- **Unemployment rate in 2006/07 was 2.6%, compared to 3.1% for the North East.**
- **Job density (jobs per resident of working age males -16 – 64 years old and females 19 – 59 years old) for Sedgefield Borough 0.59 in 2005, compared to 0.84 nationally.**
- **26.9% of working age population economically inactive in 2006/07 compared to the national average of 21.4%.**
- **Self employment rate in 2006/07 was 4.5% significantly lower than the national average of 9.5%.**
- **19.5 VAT Registrations per 10,000 adult population in the Borough in 2006, compared to 32.4 nationally.**
- **Incapacity benefit claimants rate 11.01% in May 2007 compared with the national 6.19% average.**
- **Income support claimants rate 7.75% in 2007, compared to the national rate of 5.68% and county rate of 6.5%**
- **Free school meals rate in the Borough at January 2008 was 19.9% compared to County Durham average of 17.08%**

## **WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH**

Sedgefield Borough is not an independent economic unit; its performance is heavily influenced by regional prosperity. Trends affecting the national and regional economies have a significant determining effect at local level. How effectively the Council responds to these trends, can only influence the prosperity of the Borough.

One of the key industrial sectors within Sedgefield is manufacturing. However, traditional manufacturing as an industry is in decline nationally. Since 1995, 13,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in County Durham. Public Administration, Education and Health are now the most predominant employment sectors in the Borough. There has also been dramatic growth in 'services' and distribution, warehousing and hotels'.

The reliance upon a number of manufacturing employers in the Borough leaves many people vulnerable to decisions that could taken at head offices or by parent companies located outside the area. Although the average size of companies within the Borough is reducing, there are still around 9% of companies that employ over 20 people, compared to only 5% nationally. This reflects the branch plant nature of the Borough's economy.

Economic participation levels are also constrained by 'employability issues'- 'worklessness'. The rate of people claiming Incapacity Benefit is much higher than the national average and it is crucial to tackle this reliance on benefits to enable local people to benefit from the economic growth achieved over the past 10 years. This issue is compounded by the potentially difficult economic conditions caused through difficulties in the global finance industry.

The level of migration into the Borough from overseas is slowly rising, with 260 new National Insurance registrations in 2006/07, the majority of which have come from Poland. When local authorities bordering Sedgefield are taken into account, an additional 2,540 people have been added to the potential labour pool in the past year. However, there is some evidence that this trend is reversing.

### **CURRENT STRATEGY**

#### **SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

Sedgefield Borough Council's Economic Strategy 2007 – 2011' Enterprising People' sets out how the Council will work with partners to support economic activity in the Borough and ensure that local residents benefit from increased levels of prosperity. The focus of the strategy is encouraging and supporting the people of Sedgefield to be more enterprising.

The strategy is divided into three complementary themes – People, Place and Business. The people based element of the strategy aims to maximise the

participation of local people in the labour market and develop the skills of local residents and employees to meet future demand. The place element aims to maximise the Borough's contribution to the regional economy and improve the attractiveness of the Borough as a sustainable business location. The business element seeks to increase the levels of enterprise and improve the sustainability of the existing business base.

The strategy refers to the importance of making the most of the Borough's competitive advantages, which are good transport links – A1(M), A.167 and Bishop Auckland to Darlington rail line, proximity to Durham City and regionally important employment sites at Green Lane, Spennymoor and Aycliffe Business Park and the scientific facilities at NETPark, Sedgefield

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

It is acknowledged that the Council cannot achieve the ambition of a 'Prosperous Borough' by working in isolation. Partnership working is the key to improvement. Sedgefield Borough Local Strategic Partnership brings together the key stakeholders of the Borough and sets the strategic framework via the Community Strategy to co-ordinate activity.

The economic element of the Local Strategic Partnership is co-ordinated through the Prosperous Borough Themed Group, which comprises of over 40 local partners. The activity of the Group is co-ordinated through annual action plans, which focus collaborative resources on the key issues arising from the Sedgefield Economic Development Strategy.

## **CURRENT AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

The following services are provided by the Council and its partners to address the economic issues previously mentioned.

### **Promotion of the Borough as a business location**

The Council's Economic Development Team adds value to the efforts of One NorthEast and County Durham Development Company and raises the awareness of businesses, investors and potential residents of the opportunities afforded in the Borough. This ranges from promoting business sites such as Green Lane Industrial Estate, Spennymoor, Aycliffe Business Park and NETPark, highlighting the successes of local companies and encouraging the development of the tourism sector linked to Shildon's £11 million arm of the National Railway Museum – Locomotion.

Green Lane Industrial Estate, Spennymoor offers a high quality business environment close to Durham City.

Aycliffe Business Park is the second largest business park in the North East and has potential to accommodate a significant increase in employment numbers.

NETPARK is perhaps the most high profile asset within Sedgefield Borough. It is one of the fastest growing science, engineering and technology parks in the UK.

It consists of:

- Research Institute which houses research groups from Durham University.
- Incubator Phase 1 which provides space for growing and established small companies and project teams. The facility has attracted spin out businesses from many of the region's universities as well as inward investment from outside the North East and in some cases the UK.
- Incubator Phase 2 is currently being constructed and scheduled for completion at the end of 2008.
- A 3,000 sqm Plastic Electronic Technology Centre is currently under construction at NETPark . It will become a national centre of excellence for the development of plastic electronic technologies.
- An Innovation Village consisting of 5 bespoke R&D NETPods for companies is also being developed.

**Provision of business services from Shildon Business Centre.**

The Council provides a virtual office service from Shildon Business Centre to support local businesses. This includes:

- A registered business address at the Centre
- Telephone call handling to a unique telephone number, including call forwarding, message taking and appointment making.
- Mail handling
- Office hot desks – desk space is payable on an hourly basis, including telephone access and IT provision
- Incubation offices for a 12 month rental period



### **Promotion of enterprise and entrepreneurship through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) Be Enterprising Programme.**

The Council is currently part of a £10.2 million 3 year LEGI programme, along with Wear Valley, Derwentside and Easington District Councils to support business and entrepreneurship in deprived communities and reduce levels of worklessness. The main elements of the programme are:

- Enterprise Coaches who provide 'hands on' support to residents who either wish to go into self employment or who would benefit from becoming self employed. Three coaches are employed in Sedgefield Borough. In 2007/2008, 306 people benefited from enterprise coaching on a 1-1 basis, (target was 100), and 107 new start businesses registered in 2007/08 with Inland Revenue as a result of support received through the Enterprise in Deprived Communities Programme (target was 30).
- A Franchising Company to increase involvement in enterprise through franchising. This service is a new innovation which allows people to enter business through franchising, reducing the initial risk to individuals and supporting people into enterprise.
- Financial support in the form of grants up to £3,000 from LEGI and £1,000 from Sedgefield Borough Council to help overcome any financial barriers to enterprise. In 2007/08, 92 businesses benefited from grants awarded through the Enterprise in Deprived Communities programme, (target was 30).
- LEGI funding for capital works to create the space for businesses to develop. There are three areas of opportunity for projects in Sedgefield which are: the conversion of underutilised business accommodation, adaptations to community facilities to provide business space and finally the development of proposals for new build business space.

### **School based enterprise promotion**

The Council employs an Enterprise Facilitator to work with schools in the Borough to promote enterprise in education. The Facilitator has been involved in a number of intensive and innovative projects with pupils at all levels to raise awareness to the possibilities of enterprise as a life choice. This has been achieved by deploying new strategies to engage young entrepreneurs and develop their key skills. Media based projects have engaged disenfranchised young people and allowed them to experiment with new ways of learning, as well as developing a keen business sense in a competitive environment.

The Enterprise Facilitator also works with individuals and groups within the Borough to encourage enterprising behaviours, support business start ups and to provide an ongoing mentoring service. To date over 160 businesses and potential businesses have been supported through this initiative.

### **Improving the business accommodation available in the Borough and delivering infrastructure projects.**

This involves improving the quality, attractiveness and the suitability of existing business accommodation in the Borough and ensuring that the needs of future growth sectors are understood and built into future infrastructure provision.

For example, the Council has employed a consultant to produce an investment plan to establish an overall vision for the Aycliffe Business Park and provide an indication of the actions needed to realise that vision. It is anticipated that the investment part of the plan will identify up to 10 sites located on the Park for development and will support the recent Single Programme funding that has been used on environmental improvements to improve the Park's image.

The development of the potential sites will involve a number of public and private sector partners operating in a joint venture. The public sector organisations will purchase, demolish and remediate the sites marked for development to make them attractive to private sector investment.

The Investment Plan will also assess the broader issues of improving signage and public transport to and from the Park, as well as incorporate recommendations for an energy infrastructure to support both new developments and existing companies.

The improvements have commenced with planning approval being sought for 16m steel structure – 'In Our Image' to become a unique gateway to the southern entrance of Aycliffe Business Park, leading through to the newly developed Heighington Lane West area of the site.

'In Our Image' has received support from the Government's Single Programme, Sedgefield Borough Council's Regeneration Budget and Durham County Council's Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative. The 'In Our Image' project also provides an opportunity for young people from local schools and colleges to observe the construction process of the sculpture – giving them an insight into the world of engineering.



## IN OUR IMAGE

a proposed new sculpture for  
Newton Aycliff Business Park

by Joseph Hillier

*'My aim is to create a sensational installation of sculpture, which is a beautiful and poignant meditation on the relationship between humanity, technology and matter.'*

*'The idea of making a sculpture, which seems to be in the process of being built, is in honour of the often undervalued work of those who create the things we use every day'*

- Joseph Hillier

### **Encouraging businesses to engage beyond their immediate environment.**

The Council supports business engagement through 'Your Business Forum'. The Forum provides its members with opportunities to share and host joint networking and best practice events. It also supports business clustering through Sedgefield Engineering Forum.

In 2007/08 25 businesses actively participated in Your Business Forum Steering Group, exceeding the target of 20, in addition, 259 businesses attended 'Your Business Forum' workshops which exceeded the target of 75.

### **Working with companies to minimise the effects of closure**

Officers from the Council's Economic Development Section work with companies that have announced their intention to make staff redundant.

For example, following the decision of Electrolux to close its factory in Spennymoor in 2008/2009 and move production to Poland, a Support Group was set up consisting of representatives from the Borough and County Councils, ONE NorthEast, JobCentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, North East Chamber of Commerce, Engineering Employers Federation and Right Management.

### **Addressing employability issues**

The Council has access to a high level of resources to tackle worklessness and increase skills and enterprise levels. £7.87M of Working Neighbourhood Funding has been allocated for the three year period 2008/09 to 2010/11 by Department of Work and Pensions.

To ensure that this allocation is maximised, the four qualifying local authorities have engaged in discussions around working together to agree a common approach and programme management arrangements and a shared delivery plan to provide economies of scale and demonstrate the overall contribution to County-wide outcomes. This approach will also provide sufficient scope for addressing Sedgefield's specific needs through local project commissioning.

The key commissions of the Sedgefield Borough Working Neighbourhood Fund Programme include:

- Engagement & Support
- Personal Skills Training
- Reducing health barriers to employment
- Employer Engagement
- Implementation in South West Durham of the HANLON Skills Register to help organisations to match disadvantaged jobseekers and their skills to vacancies and training opportunities.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Council has clear strategic direction and strong support from other partner agencies to maximise the potential for growth within the Sedgefield economy. Its Economic Development Section raises the awareness of the Borough's competitive advantages – high quality industrial sites, good transport links and proximity to Durham City, and provides support for people starting up in business through the LEGI Scheme. The Section also works closely with schools to promote school based enterprise and support business engagement through 'Your Business Forum' and has access to Working Neighbourhood Funding to implement initiatives to meet the worklessness targets contained within the County-wide Local Area Agreement.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That work continues with partners/stakeholders to:

- promote the Borough's industrial sites,
- improve the quality of business accommodation available,
- address employability issues, and
- promote entrepreneurship and school based enterprise

to ensure that local residents benefit from increased levels of prosperity.



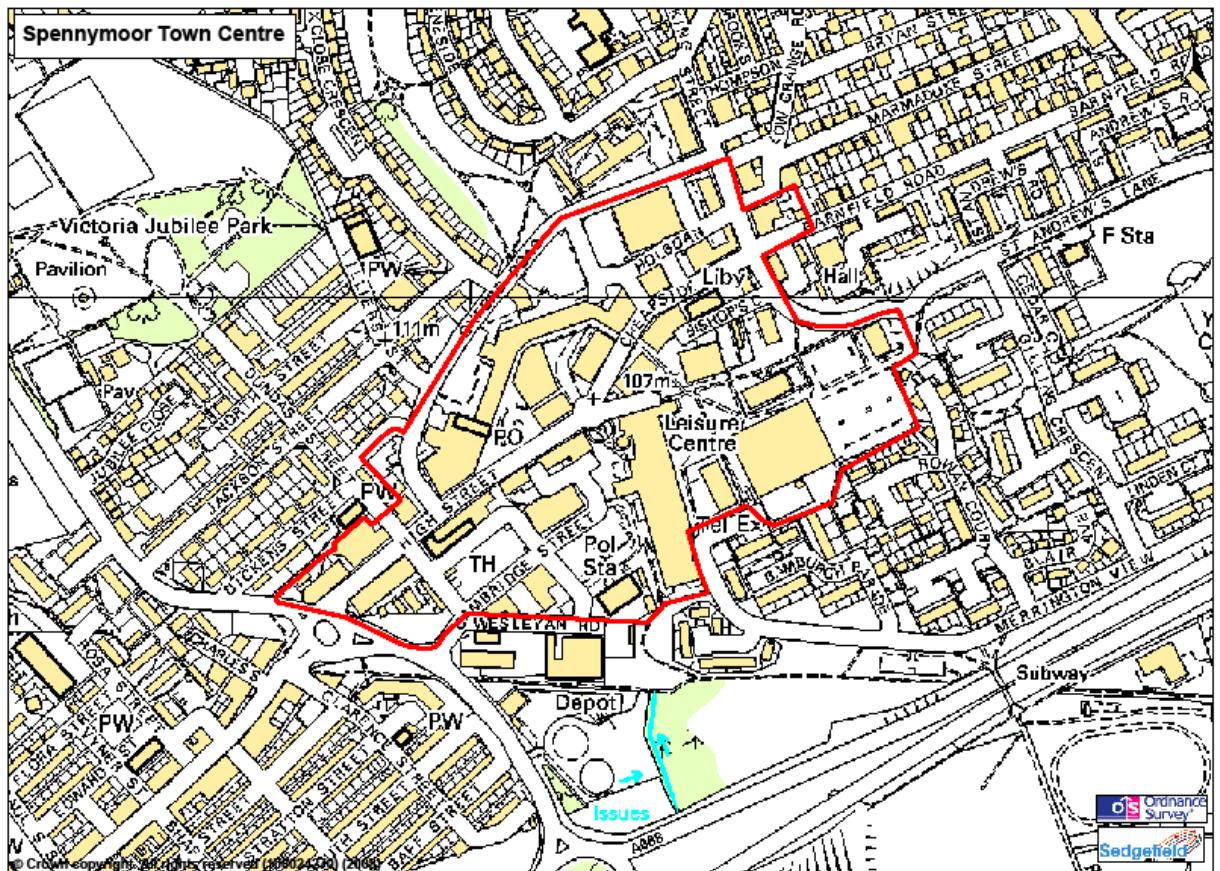
## REGENERATION OF TOWN CENTRES AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNITY ASSETS

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE TOWN CENTRES IN SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH

Local town and village centres are struggling to maintain their competitiveness. Business survival rates in Sedgefield Borough are significantly lower than the national average.

The town centres in Sedgefield Borough are in direct competition with larger established town centres that are located close by such as Darlington and Stockton. Changes in shopping habits, including the rise in popularity of out of town shopping complexes such as the Metro Centre and Teesside Park and internet shopping, together with the reduced purchasing power of local residents as a result of factory closures, have also adversely effected the vitality and viability of the Borough's Town Centres

#### Spennymoor



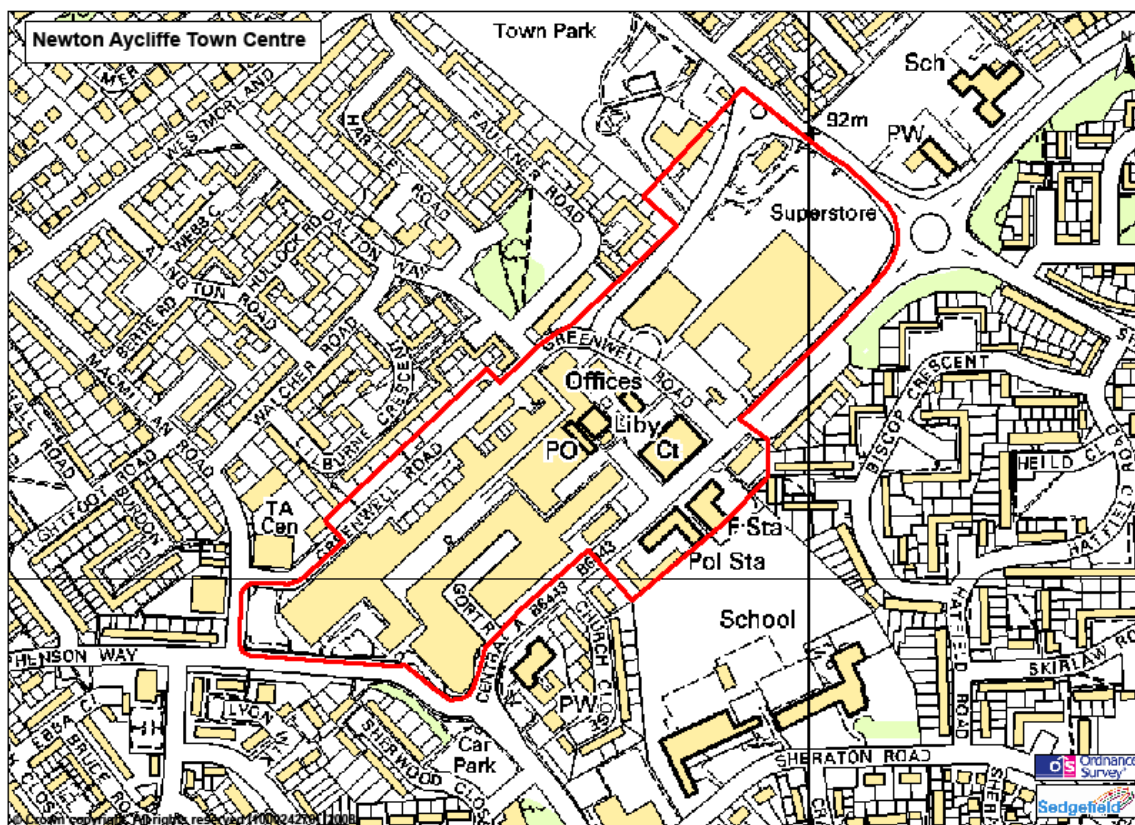
*Spennymoor Town Centre*

With a population of nearly 19,000, Spennymoor is the second largest town in the Borough. Its shopping precinct offers a mix of traditional brick buildings, predominantly along the High Street and a 1970's shopping precinct known as Festival Walk.

As one of the Borough's main towns, Spennymoor has and will benefit from further significant housing growth following planning approvals for sites at Whitworth Park, Watson Court, Thorn Lighting, Merrington Lane and the former Greyhound Stadium. However, the town centre is currently experiencing: falling footfall, reduced customer spend, poor diversity of shops, and low business confidence. There is no significant night time economy. The main complaint of both businesses and customers is the structural condition of Festival Walk and the number of empty units.

Spennymoor has already benefited from over £2 m of capital improvements to the public realm and introduction of art work to improve environmental quality, image and the economic competitiveness of the town centre. The improvement works, which were primarily funded by the Single Programme monies, included: improvements to the gateways and pedestrian links within the town centre, shop front improvement scheme to enhance the appearance of shop frontages and front elevations, traffic calming measures and new pedestrian crossings, together with public art works. The improvements have however not influenced the diversity and quality of the retail offer as this is subject to wider economic forces.

## Newton Aycliffe



**Newton Aycliffe Town Centre**

With a population of over 28,000, Newton Aycliffe is the main retail centre within the Borough and has the largest retail floorspace. The existing centre, which is a multi level arrangement of concrete buildings around a central shopping street, does not provide an environmentally welcoming atmosphere in which to shop or spend much time.

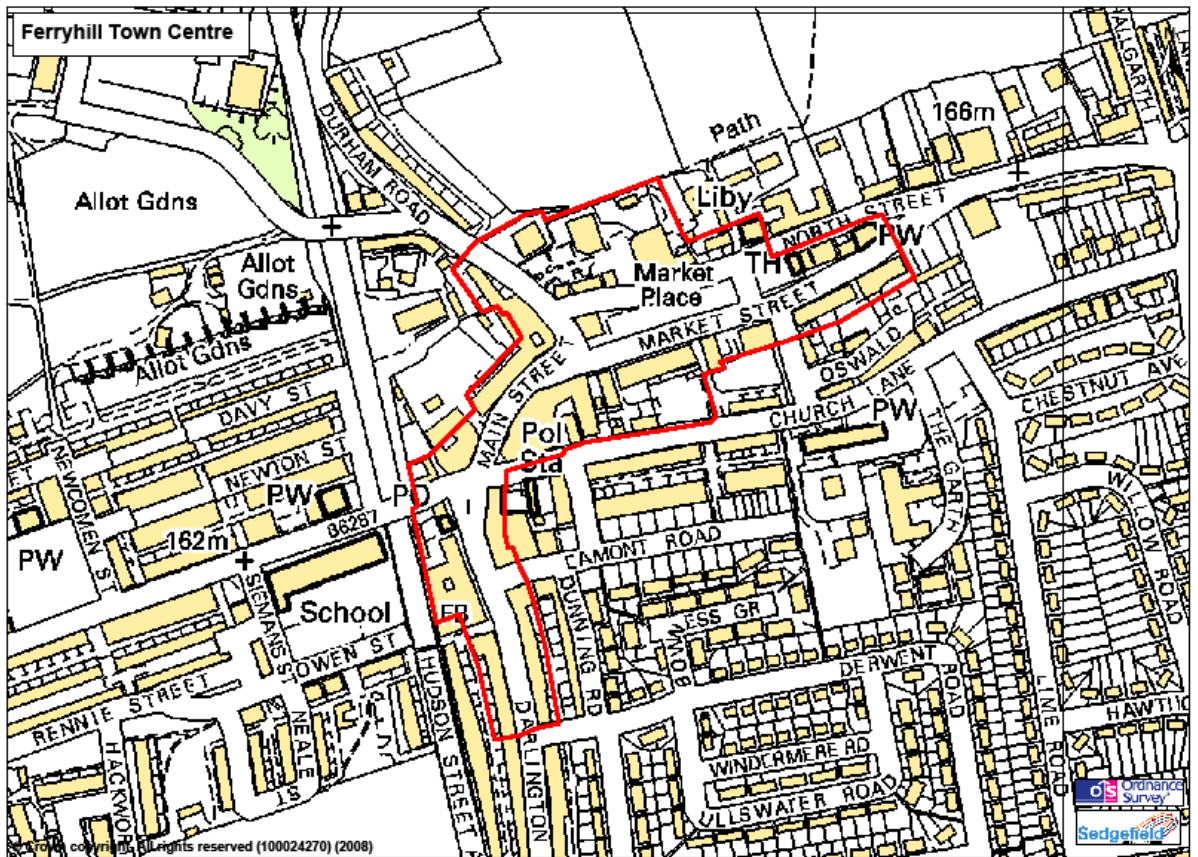
The centre lacks an identity and sense of arrival due to poor entrances and links to the new development. There are no good open spaces or public art. Retailers are discouraged by the lack of suitable space, size and configuration of units and there are concerns regarding the poor integration of public transport.



***Newton Aycliffe Town Centre***

## **Ferryhill**

Ferryhill has a limited range of shops and services that fall short of meeting the local community's needs. The Council's land use surveys indicate a decline in the quantity of retail floor space over a number of years. The majority of retail provision is located on two main shopping streets, Market Street and Main Street. The food retail offer is relatively limited, with only a small local supermarket (Co-op), which is undermining Ferryhill's position as a District Shopping Centre.

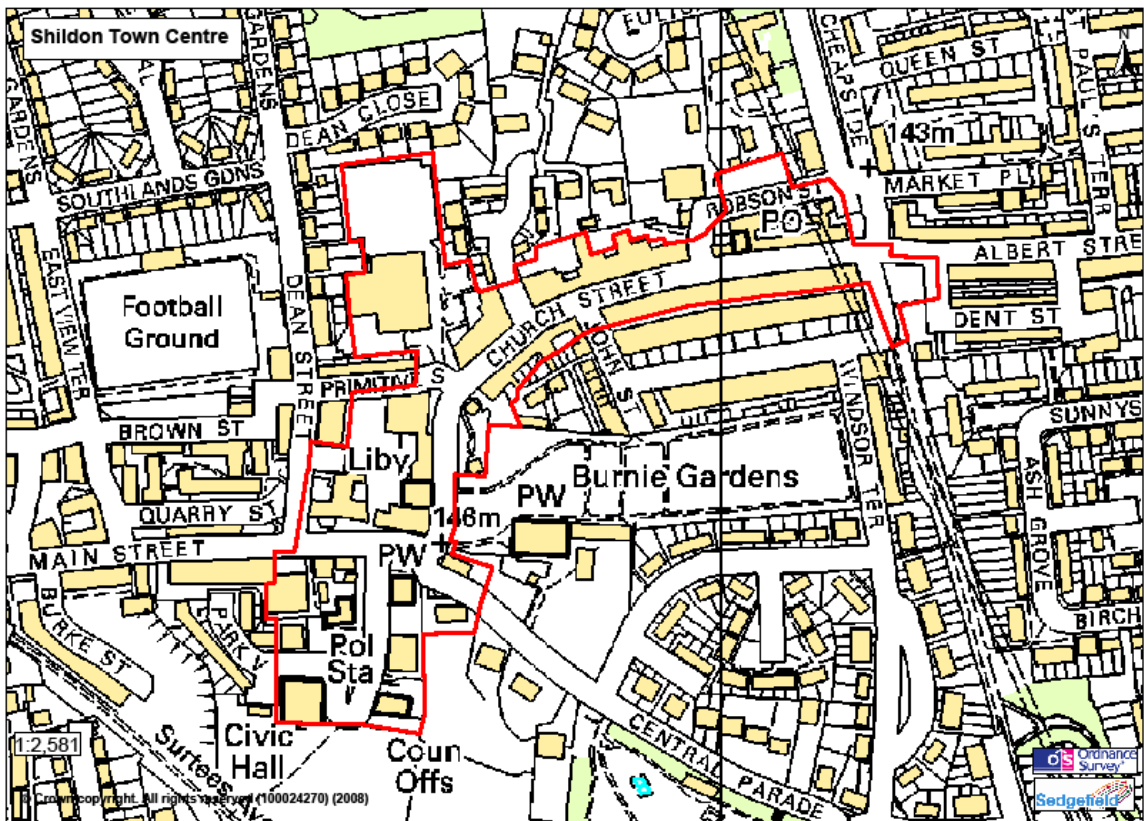


**Ferryhill Town Centre**

**Shildon**

Shildon, with a population of over 10,000, has a limited range of shops and services. It has benefited from SRB funding to improve the public realm and shop frontages within the town centre. The main shopping parade is located on Church Street and to a lesser extent on Main Street.





**Shildon Town Centre**

The County Durham Economic strategy recognises Shildon as one of 12 main towns within the County which should be given priority for the provision of new development, reflecting the opportunities linked Locomotion, the National Railway Museum.

**CURRENT STRATEGY**

Sedgfield Borough Community Strategy 2004 – 2014 sets out a long term vision for the area, based on the aspirations, needs and priorities of the local community. It identifies the need to address the changing roles of some settlements and main town centres with a comprehensive improvement programme if the Borough is to continue to be an attractive, vibrant and sustainable location for people to live, work and do business.

The Council’s Corporate Plan and Transition Plan also acknowledge that local town and village centres within the Borough have struggled to maintain their competitiveness in the light of changing shopping patterns. The Transition Plan refers to the masterplanning exercises for Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe town centres and opportunities to increase economic activity of other smaller towns.

The Durham New Growth Point Bid, recently approved by the Government, also sets out plans to focus development on six regeneration towns in the County – including Sedgfield Borough – Newton Aycliffe, Shildon and Spennymoor. The initiative would result in significant investment in new housing, employment sites, public transport and public realm improvements.

The benefits from implementing Growth Point status will make Sedgefield Borough a more attractive investment location.

The consultation paper on the proposals to improve 'Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning for Town Centres', published on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008, also reinforces the town centre-first approach to ensure that development continues to take place in town centres and promotes their vitality, viability and character.

## **TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION**

### **CURRENT AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

#### **Spennymoor**

The Council in recognition that the redevelopment of Spennymoor town centre is a high priority for its residents and businesses, has appointed consultants to produce an Area Action Plan, which would provide a comprehensive regeneration framework.

The objectives of the Plan are to identify:

- key sites with opportunities for development.
- areas that can be reconfigured to maximise investor appeal
- opportunities for increased employment within the town centre
- improvements to vehicle and pedestrian movement in and around the town centre
- improvements to linkages between the town centre and existing/emerging residential developments
- how to enhance and develop the Town's leisure and culture opportunities, including the creation of a stronger evening economy, whilst maximising those that currently exist.

The consultants have produced an Issues and Options report and a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report for the town centre. The documents were issued for initial public consultation in October. Further consultation on the preferred options document will take place in February 2009. It is hoped that the Plan will be adopted by the new unitary authority in 2010 and become part of the Local Development Framework

#### **Newton Aycliffe**

The Borough Council is currently working with Durham County Council, NHS County Durham, Great Aycliffe Town Council and Freshwater, the private owner of Newton Aycliffe Town Centre to try and regenerate Newton Aycliffe Town Centre. The aim is to ensure good access to high quality public service outlets and support investment in retail and commercial operations.

The owner, Freshwater has completed and consulted upon a Masterplan for the redevelopment of the town centre.



## The proposed layout of Newton Aycliffe town centre by the year 2014

The Town Centre Masterplan has seven phases over 6 years. Its aim is to provide a safer town centre environment and encourage evening activity. The plan sets out to create a 'sense of arrival' to the town centre by creating a main entrance from Stephenson Way.

Linking Beveridge Way to the Tesco development is key to the integration of the two sites. The central ramp within Beveridge Way is to be removed to create a more open environment and greener appearance. The demolition of redundant buildings forms part of the scheme and the library and health provision will be integrated with the Leisure Centre, utilising the arcade.

A new retail store with associated car parking will be erected on the Dalton Way block and there are plans to build a new anchor retail store adjacent to the main entrance. A number of existing shops will be converted to form larger units to meet the demands of modern retailers.

A large public piazza is to be provided adjacent to the public amenity buildings with public art and attractive landscaping throughout the town centre. Existing building facades and canopies will also be refurbished.

## Ferryhill

DTZ was commissioned by the Council to undertake a comprehensive study of the centre of Ferryhill to provide a framework for future action and investment.

The study found that the town centre of Ferryhill had, in keeping with other centres of a similar size, been squeezed in recent years as a result of changing shopping patterns and other economic factors.

The consultants' recommendations included:

- Consolidate the retail core – reduce the size of the existing town centre through a gradual consolidation exercise.
- Bring forward a development site for a new anchor food store.
- Implement a comprehensive environmental improvements programme, focusing on improving the functionality of the Market Place and the surrounding streets and pavements.
- Implement a programme of shop front improvement grants aimed at enhancing/revitalising the quality and appearance of the buildings fronting the town centre and providing an investment to boost the local trading environment.

Copies of the consultants' report have been forwarded to Durham County Council, Ferryhill Town Council and local Borough Councillors. It has also been published on the Council's website.

At the time of writing (November 2008) the possibility of funding being made available for improvements under the Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative was being discussed with officers of Durham County Council.

### **Shildon**

DTZ was commissioned by the Council to undertake a comprehensive study of the centre of Shildon to provide a framework for future action and investment.

The study found that the town centre of Shildon had, in keeping with other centres of a similar size, been squeezed in recent years as a result of changing shopping patterns and other economic factors.

The consultants' recommendations included:

- Redevelopment of opportunity sites to the east and south west of the main shopping high street.
- Parking improvements – parking arrangements are limited with very little on street parking provision, making it difficult to access goods and services quickly and frequently. Pedestrian accessibility within the centre is also hindered in places, through over provision of railings and an excess of street 'clutter' in the form of signage and street furniture.
- Improving the shopping environment – whilst the town centre shopping environment has benefited from some public and private investment in



recent years, in the form of shop frontage improvements and public realm improvements, the success of these schemes has been variable. There is scope to further improve the way the centre looks and functions.

Copies of the consultants' report have been forwarded to Durham County Council, Shildon Town Council and local Borough Councillors. The report has also been sent to businesses, developers and agents to inform them of the sites available for redevelopment and has been published on the Council's website.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Council, through the various studies and plans that have been commissioned, is aware of the problems currently facing the town centres as a result of changing shopping patterns and other economic factors. The work already completed shows that the Council is actively engaging with stakeholders, including local residents, and is working to secure a prosperous future for the towns.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That engagement continues with key stakeholders to support the recommendations made within the studies.
2. That the work to improve the vitality and viability of the town centres be supported and continued by the unitary authority.

## **IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNITY ASSETS**

In addition to the work being undertaken to regenerate the Borough's town centres, the Council is actively involved in improving community assets and supporting community engagement in the regeneration of local areas.

### **LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

The sale of land for housing has provided the Council with an opportunity to invest in regeneration across the Borough by creating a Local Improvement Programme. The aim of the Programme is to enhance the usability and access to community buildings and land within the Borough in order to improve activities and services which support the priorities set out in the Council's Community Strategy.

Local communities and partner Town and Parish Councils were able up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 to submit proposals for support for community led capital projects. Projects eligible for support through the Programme needed to demonstrate:

- Conformity with the Department for Communities and Local Government 'Regeneration' definition
- Clear linkages to the delivery of the Council's Community Strategy and its key aims and planned outcomes.
- A strong local need – backed through local consultation and appraisals
- Measurable benefits – what difference will the project make
- Added value/additional activity
- How any recurrent or revenue funding implications would be managed.
- Maximise additional 'match' funding.

The process for considering projects involves the following:

- Appraisal against the key LIP criteria by officers in the Council's Regeneration Section.
- Discussion at Area Forum meetings. The Area Forum's role being crucial in providing a view as to the priority of the project within the area.
- Consideration of technical issues by Management Team
- Consideration by Cabinet in order to make the final decision on whether to approve funding.

The sum of £3.8m grant funding has been made available, under the Local Improvement Programme, from April 2006 to March 2009. The funding is allocated to Area Forum areas, based on the number of households within the areas. 52 projects have been supported since April 2006 to a value of £3.64 million (October 2008). It is envisaged that £2.89 million of match funding will be obtained from sources such as Northern Rock, Football Foundation and Town/Parish Councils.

## **IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME**

The Programme has resulted in a significant investment in community facilities and open space/recreational provision in the Borough.

Projects funded include a youth drop in centre, a family centre, improvements to Borough's village halls and community centres and the creation of local sports facilities and Multi Use Games Areas.

The Programme has also increased learning/training/skills development as a number of the refurbished community facilities are or will be used as venues for courses. For example – the LIP funding towards the cost of modernising Woodham Village Community Centre will enable the centre to provide a range of new education and skills training courses and more varied casual physical activities. Many of the planned activities will target young and unemployed people. The Community Association has also been successful in obtaining a grant of £6,500 from Durham County Council's Education in the Community to expand the Adult Community Learning Programme for the purchase of ten laptops, a printer and internet connection.



Woodham Community Centre

The refurbished/extended community centres/halls have also provided more revenue for the organisations/community associations in the hire charges as an increased number of people can now use the facilities.

The Programme has also generated income and safeguarded jobs in the construction industry as local companies have been engaged to undertake the work for a number of projects.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Local Improvement Programme is unique to Sedgefield Borough Council, although other local authorities such as Durham City and Derwentside District Councils have variations of community grant programmes.

The Programme has resulted in a significant investment in community facilities and open space/recreational provision in the Borough and has provided leverage - £2.89 m additional match funding.

The Programme has also strengthened the role of the Council's Area Forums as the Forums provide a local sounding board for proposals, ensuring that local community groups/residents and stakeholders have a say on the priority of the project in their area.

The Programme's application process was considered simple and the Council's officers provide support to applicants at all stages of project development/delivery. The Programme may provide a model for the allocation of funding attached to the proposed Area Action Partnerships.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the new unitary authority considers the operation of the Local Improvement Programme as a model for the allocation of funding to the proposed Area Action Partnership.
2. That an independent evaluation of the Local Improvement Programme be undertaken to establish its impact against the original criteria set and produce a lessons learnt report.

## LEARNING AND SKILLS

### KEY STATISTICS

- **90.1% of Year 6 pupils in the Borough's primary schools in 2007 achieved level 4 or above in science at Key Stage 2, 78.9% in English and 80.5% in maths.**
- **72.3% of Year 9 pupils in the Borough's secondary schools in 2007 achieved level 5 or above in science at Key Stage 3, 72.8% in English and 77.7% in maths.**
- **63.4% of Year 11 pupils in the Borough's secondary schools in 2007 obtained at least 5 GCSES at grades A\* - C – 1.4% above the national average.**
- **11.6% of 16 – 18 year olds across the Borough in January 2008 were not in education, employment or training.**
- **16.1% of the Borough working age population in 2006 had no qualifications compared to 12.64% nationally.**
- **69.8% of residents in the Borough were qualified up to NVQ Level 1 in 2006 - 2.4% below the national average.**
- **54.3% of residents in the Borough were qualified up to NVQ Level 2 in 2006 – 4.65% below the national average.**

## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SKILLS IN SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH

### Educational Attainment

Educational attainment in the Borough's primary and secondary schools has increased over recent years. The Sedgefield Local Strategic Partnership has played a significant role in the improvement by identifying under performing schools and priority groups and commissioning services/interventions in partnership with Durham County Council's Children and Young People's Services to improve attainment levels in the Borough.

The following table shows the improvements.

Key Stage	2004			2007		
<b>Key Stage 2</b> % of 11 year olds achieving level 4 or above in:	<b>Sedgefield Borough Average</b>	<b>County Durham Average</b>	<b>National Average</b>	<b>Sedgefield Borough Average</b>	<b>County Durham Average</b>	<b>National Average</b>
<b>English</b>	73.7	76.5	78	78.9	80.3	80
<b>Maths</b>	74.6	75.6	74	80.5	78.8	77
<b>Science</b>	86.3	86.5	86	90.1	88.6	88

Key Stage	2004			2007		
<b>Key Stage 3</b> % of 14 year olds achieving level 5 or above in:	<b>Sedgefield Borough Average</b>	<b>County Durham Average</b>	<b>National Average</b>	<b>Sedgefield Borough Average</b>	<b>County Durham Average</b>	<b>National Average</b>
<b>English</b>	69.5	70.6	71	72.8	69.5	74
<b>Maths</b>	68.7	70.5	73	77.7	76.2	76
<b>Science</b>	63.3	64.6	66	72.3	72.4	73
<b>Key Stage 4</b> % of 16 year olds achieving the equivalent of 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C	46.7	46.7	53.7	63.4	60.2	62

*The Sedgefield Borough average figures for Key Stage 3 and 4, do not take account of those pupils who live in the Borough but attend a faith secondary school located outside the Borough.*

## **Adult skills**

With regard to the Borough's working age population, the 2006 Annual Population Survey reports that 16.1% have no qualifications compared to 12.64% nationally, 69.9% of residents were qualified up to NVQ Level 1 and above - 2.4% below the national average, 54.3% to NVQ Level 2+ - 4.65% below the national average, 37% to NVQ 3+, compared to 41.2% nationally and 15.4% to NVQ Level 4 - 9.8% below the national average.

In January 2008, 11.6% of 16 – 18 year olds across the Borough were not in education, employment and training (NEET), which is higher than the County Durham average of 10.2% and the national average of 6.8%.

## **CURRENT STRATEGY**

Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy 2004 – 2014 sets out a long term vision for the area, based on the aspirations, needs and priorities of the local community. With regard to skills and learning issues within the Borough, it identifies the need to build on the work that is already taking place in schools, colleges and training centres to raise the educational standards and skills of the Borough residents in line with regional and national averages, to support community learning and to widen participation in learning.

The Council's Transition Plan June 2008 - April 2009 sets out the Council's key priorities for service improvement and the key capital projects to be progressed. With regard to the Council's Training Service, it refers to the delivery of the Train to Gain programme to local businesses to boost the numbers of local people with NVQ Level 2 qualifications and to the development of a new training service in the Borough by merging with Bishop Auckland College, providing £8m capital investment in a learning and employment centre to be based in Spennymoor.

## **CURRENT AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

### **Interventions to improve results at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4**

As mentioned above, educational attainment in the Borough has increased over recent years supported by the decision of Sedgefield Local Strategic Partnership to commission additional services, using Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, in partnership with the Children and Young People's Services of Durham County Council to combat low achievement and aspiration in the Borough's lowest performing schools.

With regard to Key Stage 2 results in the Borough, Neighbourhood Renewal Funding has been used to part fund the employment of a specialist adviser/consultant to work in primary schools, especially those expected to miss the target of 65% or more of pupils achieving Key Stage 2 Level 4+. The initiative provided booster classes, specialist support to meet individual pupil's needs and the further development of teaching staff. Consequently, the level of performance of 11 year olds in the Borough's primary schools has steadily

improved since 2004 and in respect of science has exceeded the National Floor target of 85% (based on 2007 results).

With regard to Key Stage 3, Neighbourhood Renewal Funding was used to introduce new courses such as science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, install interactive whiteboards and projectors in science laboratories and provide out of hours booster classes and revision support. Consequently, there are no schools where fewer than 50% of pupils failed to achieve Key Stage 3 level 5+ in English, Maths and Science.

There has also been a very significant increase in 5 A\* - C GCSE attainment (Key Stage 4) in the Borough. The Borough average is 63.4%, which is 3.2% above the county average. The provisional GCSE results for 2008 show that all secondary schools in the borough have improved on their 2007 performance for the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A\* to C grades, including Maths and English. The improvement reflects the Neighbourhood Renewal investment and the considerable effort invested in collaborative working between schools and other learning providers to develop new and accessible curriculum courses and provide more choices that meet the needs of young people throughout the Borough.

Some of the above initiatives are continuing through mainstream funding such as the Key Stage 2 primary consultancy and the support for Shildon Sunnydale Community College for Maths and Computing.

It is important that Key Stage 2 and 4 results continue to be analysed at a local rather than county level to ensure that resources and initiatives are targeted on low performing schools/wards. With regard to Key Stage 3, the Government announced in October 2008 that it would be abolishing the tests in England.

With regard to the large number of 16 – 18 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working Group was established by Durham County Council to consider the actions that needed to ensure that young people in County Durham enjoyed better opportunities to participate in the labour market and ultimately contribute to their economic well being. The Group also investigated what actions needed to be taken to retain young people in education or training post 16 years.

The Working Group found that significant resources had been deployed to prevent young people becoming 'NEET' at 16, and a wide range of provision was available 16 -18 to attract young people into fulltime learning.

The Working Group's final report was considered by the County Council's Cabinet on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 and it was agreed that Director of Children and Young Peoples Services would prepare a response to the Group's recommendations on behalf of the County Council and the Children's Trust Executive Board, identifying early wins as appropriate, and include an Action Plan.



The County Council has recently been successful in securing £1.6 million of European Social Funding to address the issue of NEETs in County Durham.

### **Work Based and Adult Learning**

Sedgefield Borough Council operated a training service from 1978 to October 2008 and its training centre was awarded good and outstanding provision in the delivery of NVQs by the Government's Adult Learning Inspectorate.

The Service's aims were:

- To increase the number of people with NVQ Level 2 or above qualifications through schemes such as Train to Gain, Entry to Employment and Apprenticeships.
- To engage young people in education and training through Apprenticeships, Entry to Employment Scheme and the BTEC Certificate in Construction
- To raise basic skills levels through the Entry to Employment Programme, Apprenticeships and Adult Programmes
- To support people back to work through the Gateway Initiative and Basic Employability Training

The Training Service has made a difference to the quality of life for many residents in the Borough. As an approved training provider for the Train To Gain Programme, the Service engaged with local businesses to improve productivity and competitiveness, by making sure that employees improve their skills within the workplace. The Training Service offered qualifications in business administration, customer services, manufacturing, trowel occupations (bricklaying), wood occupations (site and bench joinery) general operative construction (site operative). For the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008, 103 participants (92.4%) achieved a NVQ Level 2 or 3 qualification. Accreditation was also achieved to deliver Level 4 qualifications in Management and Business and Administration to meet the demand of the local workforce.

The Council's Entry to Employment Programme has helped school leavers obtain basic qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy to assist them gain employment or undertake further training/education. 55% of the young people who undertook the Entry to Employment Programme with the Council from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 progressed to a positive outcome.

To support people back into work, the Training Service ran the Gateway Initiative, which was 2 week programme focusing on interview techniques and job search. Basic Employability Training was also provided - a 13 or 26 week programme which placed emphasis on work placement and basic skills. The Gateway initiative has for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 helped 30% of participants into employment and the Basic Employability Programme has achieved employment for 44% of participants.

The Service has also actively engaged with local employers to promote the employment of apprentices. For the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008, the overall success rate of young people who have completed an apprenticeship programme with the Council was 69.66%.

### **Merger of Council's Training and Employment Service with Bishop Auckland College**

Sedgefield Borough Council and Bishop Auckland College have recently merged their training services and a new Trades and Construction Training Centre will be built in Coulson Street, Spennymoor.

The main reasons for the merger were the changing nature of the contracting environment which favoured larger training organisations and the greater potential to improve choice, quality and access to training and learning opportunities for the people of the borough and South West Durham. In addition, a joint training service offers potential for strategic contracts with major building programmes such as the 'Building Schools For The Future Programme' to supply the skills needed and give opportunities for the Borough's residents that are currently not available.

The merged entity will have an annual turnover of £3.5m rising to over £4m over a three year period. It will also provide links to higher education establishments such as the University of Sunderland to provide franchise courses up to degree level.

The state-of-the-art centre will offer work-based training, such as brickwork, joinery, plumbing, electrical, tiling, kitchen fitting and painting and decorating as well as further education courses. It will also act as a centre of excellence for school-age pupils across South West Durham to explore vocational courses and to help unemployed people train for jobs.



*Sedgefield Borough Training Centre in Coulson Street, Spennymoor and the adjacent land on which the new construction training centre will be built*

### **The Work Place – Industrial Learning Centre**

Young people aged between 14 to 19 are now able to undertake simulated work experience in fields such as health and social health, construction, media and leisure with the opening of the Work Place in September 2008 -an industrial learning centre at Heighington Lane, Newton Aycliffe. The centre

was built and equipped with funding from the Vocational Learning Trust (VOLT) - £4.9m and One NorthEast - £660,000.

The aim of the Work Place is to enrich the vocational curriculum, particularly in skill shortage areas, functional numeracy and maths, the sciences and functional literacy. Sessions at the centre will form part of the Government's vocational diplomas.

### **Community Learning - Sedgefield Learning Co-ordinator and Local Learning Partnerships**

Sedgefield Borough Council and Sedgefield Local Strategic Partnership are committed to engaging the community in purposeful learning and have supported the employment of a Learning Borough Co-ordinator through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and will continue to fund the post using Working Neighbourhoods Funding.

The Co-ordinator is actively involved in the establishment of Local Learning Partnerships throughout the borough, which are made up of representatives from the various centres that offer/deliver adult learning and Bishop Auckland College and Education in the Community as delivery partners. The Sedgefield Borough Learning Co-ordinator chairs these partnership meetings and co-ordinates activity on behalf of the partners.

The aim of the partnerships is to provide learning opportunities to those clients who are the hardest to reach by offering a range of non-accredited and accredited courses. These range from health, leisure, employment related and arts courses in community venues, whilst avoiding duplication of provision. A key element of the work is engaging clients and being able help clients to progress onto further learning and education through an effective referral process. This approach has been found to be successful.

## **CONCLUSION**

Educational attainment at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 across the Borough and the learning opportunities available from community venues have increased considerably over recent years following the commissioning of services/interventions with Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

With Neighbourhood Renewal Funding having come to an end in March 2008, a number of the initiatives in schools will continue through mainstream or Single Programme funding and work is taking place with partners to develop a commissioning process for Working Neighbourhoods Fund to address the needs of the most disadvantaged residents in relation to education/skills training.

The merger of the Council's Training and Employment Service with Bishop Auckland College will improve the choice, quality and access to training and learning opportunities. It will also offer potential for strategic contracts with major building programmes such as Building Schools for the Future to supply the skills needed.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the new authority takes on board the lessons learnt by Sedgefield Borough Council which are:

- Key Stage 2 and 4 results must continue to be analysed at a local rather than county level in order resources/initiatives can be targeted on low performing schools.
- Local/community interventions and the one to one person centred approaches to learning have been found to work well and should continue.
- Investment in apprenticeships must continue to ensure that local people have the skills that employers require and that links to public sector employment and major commissions for example 'Building Schools for the Future' be fully exploited.

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

STATE OF THE BOROUGH  
ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH  
REVIEW GROUP REPORT  
NOVEMBER  
2008

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# Introduction

The Borough's Community Strategy identifies four key ambitions, Healthy, Strong, Prosperous and Attractive, which forms a statement of '*Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive borough with strong communities.*'

Contribution to these ambitions requires the Council and its Partners to work in partnership and deliver services, projects, initiatives to improve the Quality of Life within the Borough.

The aim of this report is to highlight achievements made by the Council and its partners towards delivering of Quality of Life topics that contribute to achieving the ambition of an Attractive Borough.

An Attractive Borough is defined, as 'The natural and built environment that is valued, conserved and enhanced'.

The following Quality of Life topics, which contribute to an Attractive Borough, have been examined within this report:-

- Street Cleanliness and Waste
- Open Spaces
- Transport

Each topic is reported by the following sections, key statistics, what we know with regard to each topic within the Borough, current and planned activity and conclusions and recommendations.

# Executive Summary

## **Review Group Membership**

Councillors Mrs E. Maddison (Chair), Mrs L.M.G. Cuthbertson, Mrs S. Haigh, A.Gray and B.Lamb

## ***Rationale***

Following an extensive community appraisal and consultation a Community Strategy for Sedgefield Borough was published by the Local Strategic Partnership in 2004. The Strategy identifies the key economic, social and environmental issues facing the Borough and sets out a vision for the Borough in 2014 as a 'Healthy, Prosperous and Attractive Borough with Strong Communities'.

It is structured around these four aims, setting out a number of supporting priorities and targets to be addressed under which specific service improvements will be developed.

Four years after the first publication of the Community Strategy, Overview and Scrutiny Committees decided to undertake a review to look at quality of life issues within the Community Strategy. This is particularly useful in the final year of the Authority as this will enable these issues to be benchmarked for future reference. It is also an opportunity for Members to make recommendations, where appropriate, to the new Authority.

Four Review Groups have been established look at quality of life topics relevant to their ambition. The reviews will look at achievements, gaps/deficiencies in provision and areas in need of improvement.

Each review group will produce a report setting out its finding and recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.

Following conclusion of the four reviews the reports will be combined to form a 'State of the Borough' report.

The final report from each review will be combined with the final reports from the other review groups to form a single State of the Borough report. This report will be a useful source of reference for the new Council and will provide a benchmark for future assessment.

## **Objectives of the Review**

The Objectives of the Review are:

- To look at services provided by the Council and other agencies
- To highlight the areas that are working well and areas for improvement.
- To make recommendations via Cabinet to the new Council



## **Contribution to the Council's Ambitions and Community Outcomes**

Outcomes of the Review will contribute to development of the ambition of an Attractive Borough and the Community outcomes of 'A cleaner, greener, sustainable Environment and Improving design and environmental quality of towns and villages'.

### **Process Methodology**

The Review Group gathered information and evidence as follows:

- a) Through Review Group meetings held between June 2008 – November 2008
- b) Through evidence gathering and topic based presentations on:-

#### ***Street Cleanliness & Waste***

Alan Suggett, Head of Environmental Services

#### ***Open Spaces***

Karin Johnson, Sustainable Communities Manager  
Tammy Hale-Morris, *Countryside Officer (Planning and Strategy)*

#### ***Transport***

Dawn Watson, Accessibility Planning Officer, Durham County Council  
Karen Lynn, Chair of the Sedgefield Borough Access to Services Group

- c) Through research and statistics from the Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy Local Area Framework
- d) Feedback from the LSP Annual Stakeholder meeting in June 2008

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Street Cleanliness and Waste**

#### ***Conclusions***

- The Council has provided high quality street cleaning, grounds maintenance and waste collection services that has levels of high satisfaction with residents.
- Street cleansing and Civic Pride teams have made a valuable contribution to Borough's Community Safety Partnership enforcement exercises.
- The Council's GIS system provides valuable intelligence to assist residents and offices to access information on when services are being carried out within a specific area.

- The introduction of a live information system to record the accuracy of refuse collection has led to service improvements and accurate information to support customer service enquiries
- The introduction of an enhanced kerbside recycling collection service has seen a significant rise in collection rates that will provide a contribution to increase the overall recycling rate for the borough.

## **Recommendations**

- 1) That the standard of street cleaning, grounds maintenance and waste collection services continues to meet high satisfaction levels from residents within the Borough.
- 2) Consideration be given to adopting initiatives to utilise Customer Relation Management and Geographical Information Systems to improve service delivery and customer service.

## **Open Spaces**

### ***Conclusions***

- Satisfaction levels with Parks and Open Spaces reflect investment in the Borough.
- The Borough Council has been effective in working with Parish and Town Councils and volunteers within the Community Volunteer Programme to achieve numerous awards and the continued development of Local Nature Reserves within the Borough.
- The Green Space Strategy for the Borough will create a vision for the long-term management of green spaces and highlight the potential benefits to wildlife, public health and education.
- The Council has taken effective steps to ensure that legislation regarding biodiversity has been widely communicated to raise awareness and importance of changes to legislation.
- The study being undertaken by Durham Biodiversity Partnership will provide data on protected and priority species within the Borough to enable legislative and planning policy requirements to be met.

## **Recommendations**

- 3) Green Spaces within the Borough continue to be actively managed in accordance with the Sedgefield Borough Green Space Strategy.
- 4) Local Nature Reserves within the Borough and the Community Volunteer programme continue to be developed and supported.

- 5) Findings from the study being undertaken by Durham Biodiversity Partnership be taken into account when considering the development of biodiversity projects and planning applications to ensure that all legislation and planning policy requirements are met.

## **Transport**

### ***Conclusions***

- Transport within the Borough is an issue and the JMP study has highlighted topics that are to be progressed through LTP2 and the Access to Services Group.
- Through funding to support Community Transport and undertaking specific projects the Local Transport Plan2 has contributed to enhancing transport provision across the Borough.
- Community Transport Schemes within the Borough provide transport solutions that enable local communities' to have access to work, training and social activities.
- The Access to Services Group plays a vital role to engage with representatives from key partner agencies to address barriers to accessing transport within the Borough.

### **Recommendations**

- 6) Solutions to address transport and enhance the provision of transport within the Borough continue to be provided through delivery of the Local Transport Plan 2.
- 7) That engagement continues through local Access to Services Groups to address barriers to accessing transport.

# Street Cleanliness & Waste

## Key Statistics

- The percentage of land and highways in Sedgefield Borough assessed as having unacceptable levels of litter and detritus was 15% in 2007/2008.
- The percentage of land within Sedgefield Borough with visible graffiti was 2% in 2007/08 and with visible fly posting being 0%
- During 2007/08, 100% of reported abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours
- The percentage of household waste recycled and composted in 2007/08 was 17.98%.

### A Best Value Survey undertaken in 2006 reported:

- 74.1% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the way the Borough Council had fulfilled its duty to keep land clear of litter and waste, and
- 89.4% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the waste collection service within the Borough

## What we know about Street Cleanliness and Waste in Sedgefield Borough

Clean streets and collection of household waste are topics that are of concern to residents within the Borough. The 2006 Best Value General Survey reported 74.1% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the way the Borough Council had fulfilled its duty to keep land clear of litter and waste, this was a significant improvement on the 2003 response of 64.6%.

In addition, respondents to the Survey in 2006 expressed satisfaction of 89.4% for waste collection services and 80.8% for the collection of recyclable materials. However, there was a 5.2% drop in satisfaction with 'local recycling facilities' from the 2003 survey with 'items you can deposit' being identified as a key issue.

Performance delivery of street cleansing and waste collection services is measured through outcomes of a number of performance indicators. The table on the following page identifies performance outturn for 2006/07, 2007/08 and targets that were set for 2007/08.

## Street Cleansing and Waste Collection Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Performance 2006/07	Performance 2007/08	Target 2007/08
Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings that have been recycled and/or composted	25.27%	18.57%	At least 26.00%
Kilograms of household waste collected per head	417	405	Less than 422
Percentage of relevant land and highways that are assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus that fall below an acceptable level	9%	15%	Below 8.50%
Percentage of relevant land and highways from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible	0%	2%	1%
Percentage of relevant land and highways from which unacceptable levels of fly-posting are visible	0%	0%	0%
Percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours of notification	100%	100%	At least 95%
Percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the Authority is legally entitled to remove the vehicle	96.70%	100%	At least 95%
Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections household waste	19	17	Less than 11

The above table identifies that performance targets and improvements were achieved for kilograms of household waste collected per head of population, unacceptable visible levels of fly posting and investigation and removal of abandoned vehicles.

In comparison, performance indicators relating to recycling or composting of household waste, street cleansing of highways and relevant land and the number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste did not perform higher than the previous year nor meet their target for 2007/08.

The percentage of relevant land and highways that are assessed as having unacceptable levels of litter and detritus was 15% in 2007/08. This was a significant increase from the previous year's performance of 9%. The target for 2007/2008 for this performance indicator was 8.5%. It is believed that the outturn figure was not an accurate reflection of the position due to issues with the final quarter inspection. It is expected that performance in 2008/09 will improve on performance of 2006/07.

## **Current and Planned Activity**

The Council's Street Cleanliness and Waste collection services have achieved the ISO 9001 quality standard and services are undertaken through the following key functions:

- Street Cleansing
- Grounds Maintenance
- Refuse Collection and Recycling

### ***Street Cleansing***

The Council's Street Cleansing services include:

- General Litter Picking
- Removal of fly tipping
- Removal of dog fouling, graffiti and fly posting
- Emptying of litter and dog waste bins
- Channel sweeping
- Pavement washing and the removal of chewing gum in town centre areas
- Collection of dead animals and hypodermic needles on public open space

The service is provided through three area teams, each equipped with two compact sweepers, two large sweepers, two green machine sweepers, pavement washer/gum removal machine and a dog-foul collection machine.

Cleansing schedules are carried out in accordance with the code of practice on Cleanliness Standards. These standards include, dog fouling cleansing of open spaces to be carried out on a monthly schedule and removal of graffiti and fly posting and tipping is undertaken within 24 hours of being reported.

There are no defined principal shopping areas within the Borough, but Town Centre areas are cleaned on a daily basis. Hotspot areas, for example school areas are cleaned before and after school and following lunchtime. High density housing areas are cleaned twice weekly and initiatives to identify problem areas include neighbourhood walkabouts involving local residents, councillors and wardens.

The Council's Environmental Services has also undertaken a number of education and awareness programmes in higher-litter areas, including working with Town and Parish Councils and with schools. The Council was only one of two local authorities to participate in the International "Clean up the World" and the "Clean up the Schools" campaign.

The Borough's neighbourhood warden programme has also had a significant impact on street cleanliness with responsibilities for fixed penalty notices and reporting abandoned vehicles.

There are over 1,100 dog and litterbins within the Borough and through partnership with Town and Parish Councils, the Council have issued over 1.5 million free 'dog poop' scoop bags from over 20 outlets.

### ***Civic Pride Teams***

Sedgefield Borough Council established Civic Pride Teams to contribute to raising the standard of street cleansing and the general environment within deprived areas of the Borough. The Civic Pride Service also includes a "Life Long Laundry" services that collects unwanted household furniture and electrical goods.

Due to its success, Civic Pride Services has been combined with street cleaning services and mainstreamed as a Borough Council service. Funding was approved for a second Civic Pride team. Throughout 2007/08, the Civic Pride teams have undertaken 624 jobs that have been an additional contribution to street scene services.

Street Cleansing Services also play a key role with supporting Sedgefield Community enforcement exercises through removal of rubbish from gardens and yards, and a general clean up of the streets and back alleys.

### **Grounds Maintenance**

The principal services for Grounds Maintenance are grass cutting, flower and shrub bed maintenance, verge and hedge cutting. In addition, the service also includes forestry and tree works. Partnership arrangements are in place with some Town Councils to improve service delivery that include storage and operating vehicles from local facilities locations within the Borough to gain efficiency savings in both undertaking work and fuel costs.

Grounds Maintenance services are undertaken by three area teams plus one specialist tree team. The three teams between the months of March to October each year carryout approximately 15 cuts of 325 hectares of open space, 10 sports fields and 2 closed churchyards within the Borough.

High profile areas such as gateways to town centres are cut more frequently and the service has made effective use of integrating services in their work planning for example, litter picking would be undertaken before grass cutting to prevent shredding of litter on open spaces.

There are over 90 miles of tended hedges within the Borough that are cut twice yearly in partnership with local farmers. There are over 14,000 urban trees, 388,000 sq metres of shrub beds and 7,000 sq metres of flowerbeds. There are 16,000 plants and 20,000 bulbs per year planted within these areas.

The Service has increased monitoring of its work to ensure service standards are met and improved. A tree inspection and maintenance programme has been undertaken by utilising the Council's GIS system to gather intelligence to identify and log the type, condition and location of trees within the Borough. Intelligence gathered from the maintenance programme has led to an

evidence based prioritised work programme. In addition, street cleaning and grass cutting schedules are included within the GIS System to enable both officers and residents to access information on when services are being carried out within a specific area.

There are no performance targets for Grounds Maintenance but outcomes of their service delivery contribute to targets and actions contained within the Sedgefield Borough Open Space Needs Strategy, Play Strategy and Green Space Strategy.

### ***Refuse Collection & Recycling***

#### *Refuse Collection*

The Borough Council as a waste collection authority has a duty to provide a service for the collection of municipal waste, including household waste and litter. Household waste includes material collected from domestic refuse bins, plus items such as white goods, bulky waste, e.g. furniture and carpets, garden waste, clinical waste, litter, fly-tipping and parks waste. Municipal waste comprises household waste plus commercial trade waste.

As identified, responses from the 2006 Best Value Survey reported 89.4% satisfaction with the waste collection service. The Council's refuse collection service is a 'wheelie bin' system that collects from approximately 40,000 domestic properties and 750 trade premises on a weekly basis. During 2007/08, there was 403kg of household waste collected per head of population, which is a reduction from 454 kg in 2005/06.

The Service has a number of performance indicators which are monitored regularly to ensure service standards are met. An important performance indicator is the number of missed collections per 100,000. The target for 2007/08 was to miss no more than 11 per 100,000 collections. During 2007/08, performance was 17 collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste. Resolving missed collections of waste can be a burden on resources and can cause disputes between residents and the Council as to who is at fault for not collecting their waste.

In 2008, the Council introduced a new system to record the accuracy of collecting refuse from properties within the Borough. At the point of collection, information is recorded that can identify the time and date of the collection and an explanation if a bin is not collected. The system provides live information to the Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and provides accurate information that will support queries regarding missed collections.

#### *Recycling*

Recycling within the Borough is carried out by a curtilage kerbside collection scheme, six strategically placed recycling sites within the Borough, and



through waste that is processed to create a type of compost at a waste Digester.

April 2004 saw the introduction of a 'kerb-it' recycling scheme introduced in partnership with Durham City, Chester le Street and Easington District Councils to collect recyclable goods including paper, cans, steel tins and glass from all households within the Borough. The Kerb-it scheme contract was for four years and ceased in April 2008.

As identified, responses from the 2006 Best Value Survey reported 80.8% satisfaction with the collection of items for recycling but feedback reported that residents wish for more items to be included within the collection of recyclable materials.

During 2007/08, the future of recycling options was the topic of an in-depth Overview and Scrutiny review. Following its conclusions, the Review Group made a number of recommendations that included the continuation of a kerbside collection service in partnership with existing District Councils and the service be enhanced to include additional materials. An enhanced kerbside collection service was launched in April 2008 and included the collection of glass, newspapers, magazines, cans, cardboard and plastics using a 55 litre capacity green box and bag.

In comparison to the previous year, implementation of the new scheme has seen in the first five months of operating the tonnage of recyclable materials collected from the Kerbside increase by over 55%.

The percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings that had been recycled had increased from 12% in 2003/04 to 25.27% in 2006/07. The target for this indicator for 2007/8 was 26%. Performance for 2007/08 was 18.57%, well below target performance of 26%. This was due to operational difficulties with the Digester at Thornley, which resulted in none of the digested waste being able to be classified as recycled waste.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

Taking into account all the information provided the Review group conclude that:-

- The Council has provided high quality street cleaning, grounds maintenance and waste collection services that has levels of high satisfaction with residents.
- Street cleansing and Civic Pride teams have made a valuable contribution to Borough's Community Safety Partnership enforcement exercises.
- The Council's GIS system provides valuable intelligence to assist residents and offices to access information on when services are being carried out within a specific area.
- The introduction of a live information system to record the accuracy of refuse collection has led to service improvements and accurate information to support customer service enquiries
- The introduction of an enhanced kerbside recycling collection service has seen a significant rise in collection rates that will provide a contribution to increase the overall recycling rate for the borough.

### **Recommendations**

- 1) That the standard of street cleaning, grounds maintenance and waste collection services continues to meet high satisfaction levels from residents within the Borough.
- 2) Consideration be given to adopting initiatives to utilise Customer Relation Management and Geographical Information Systems to improve service delivery and customer service.

# Open Spaces

## Key Statistics

- **A Best Value Survey undertaken in 2006 reported**  
*that 74% of respondents within Sedgefield Borough were satisfied with Parks and Open Spaces,*  
*89.3% of respondents within the Borough considered that Parks and Open Spaces had improved since the last survey in 2003/04, and*  
*79.6% of respondents had used parks and open spaces within the last 12 months.*
- **The number of Local Nature Reserves within the Borough has increased from 1 to 6 since 2003.**
- **National Accredited Green Flag Status was achieved for Bishop Middleham Wildlife Garden**

## What we know about Open Spaces within Sedgefield Borough

### ***Background***

The Borough enjoys a semi-rural location and extensive areas of green space. There are well-maintained parks within each major centre and strong investment amongst local Town and Parish Councils in Britain in Bloom awards and enhanced horticulture services.

The 2006 Best Value General Survey identified that the proportion of residents who were satisfied with parks and open spaces in the Borough was 74%, a significant increase from a baseline performance of 49% in 2000/01. 89.3% considered them to have improved since 2003/2004. 79.6% of all respondents reported having used 'parks and open spaces' in the last 12 months. This is a similar level of usage as reported in the 2003 General Survey when 76.4% of respondents had used these services in the last year.

## Current and Planned Activity

### ***Open Spaces and biodiversity***

Open spaces have an important role to play in meeting a range of objectives that include providing a resource of biodiversity, promoting health and well-being, attracting visitors to an area and achieving sustainable development.

Local Authorities have a statutory role in managing green space i.e. to sustain biodiversity so that it can support a wide variety of plants and animal species in their natural habitats.

A number of policies and legislation exist at a national, regional and county level to encourage a holistic approach to green space management. This includes improving access to the countryside and setting targets for wildlife and the number of local nature reserves that are managed for improved biodiversity. Significant improvements have been made with regard to developing natural green space and biodiversity within the Borough and are aimed to comply with the following policies and strategies.

### ***Green Flag Awards***

The 'Our Town and Cities: the Future' (known as the Urban White Paper) places managing parks and open spaces at the heart of the 'urban renaissance' and recommended that local authorities achieve the national



*Green Flag Award Presentation*

accredited Green Flag award for management of parks and open spaces. The Council has demonstrated partnership working in assisting and advising Town and Parish councils within the borough to apply for Green Flag status.

Through active community involvement and partnership working

with Bishop Middleham Parish Council a converted allotment site in Bishop

Middleham was developed into a Wildlife Garden. The development of the Wildlife Garden provides valuable greenspace for a variety of habitats and species including great crested newts and in 2007, the Wildlife Garden successfully achieved the Green Flag award.

Following the achievement of Green Flag Status for Bishop Middleham Wildlife Garden the Borough Council has assisted a number of the Town Council's in applying for Green Flag Status for their parks and open spaces.

### ***Open Space Needs Assessment***

The *Rural White Paper* focused attention on improving public access to the countryside and set targets for wildlife and improved biodiversity. This Paper was followed by the Government's '*Biodiversity Strategy for England: working with the grain of nature*' of which the key aim is to halt or reverse decline in

biodiversity. This was mandated by Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Notes 3 (Housing), PPG 17 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation) and Planning Policy Statement 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation).

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 is the key driver to local authorities publishing Green Space Strategies. It states that local authorities must undertake assessments of the extent to which open spaces meet the needs of and benefit people, wildlife, biodiversity and the wider environment.

Sedgefield Borough Council commissioned a comprehensive Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA) to establish the demand for, supply of open space within the Borough, and assess its quality and accessibility. The findings from the survey were published in January 2007. The OSNA survey identified supply of open space in the Borough across the following five types:- parks and gardens, natural green space, outdoor sports space, children and young people's space and informal green space. The table below outlines supply for each settlement area.

Settlement	Typology	Supply
<b>Ferryhill</b>	Parks and Gardens	Significant under supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Under supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Under supply
	Natural Green Space	Sufficient Supply
	Informal Green Space	Under supply
<b>Chilton</b>	Parks & Gardens	Significant under supply
	Natural Green Space	Sufficient provision
	Outdoor Sports Space	Sufficient provision
	Children & Young People's Space	Sufficient provision
	Informal Green Space	Sufficient provision
<b>Bishop Middleham</b>	Parks & Gardens	Significant under supply
	Natural Green Space	Sufficient supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Sufficient supply
	Children & Young People's Space	Under supply
	Informal Green Space	Insignificant under supply
<b>West Cornforth</b>	Parks and Gardens	Under supply
	Natural Green Space	Under supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Under supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Under supply
	Informal Green Space	Sufficient supply
<b>Fishburn</b>	Parks and Gardens	Under supply
	Natural Green Space	Under supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Under supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Sufficient supply
	Informal Green Space	Sufficient supply
<b>Trimdons</b>	Parks and Gardens	Under supply
	Natural Green Space	Sufficient supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Significant supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Under supply
	Informal Green Space	Sufficient supply
<b>Shildon</b>	Parks and Gardens	Under supply
	Natural Green Space	Under supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Sufficient supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Under supply
	Informal Green Space	Significant supply

<b>Newton Aycliffe</b>	Parks and Gardens	Significant under supply
	Natural Green Space	Significant supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Significant supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Under supply
	Informal Green Space	Sufficient supply
<b>Sedgefield</b>	Parks and Gardens	Sufficient supply
	Natural Green Space	Sufficient supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Sufficient supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Sufficient supply
	Informal Green Space	Sufficient supply
<b>Spennymoor</b>	Parks and Gardens	Sufficient supply
	Natural Green Space	Sufficient supply
	Outdoor Sports Space	Sufficient supply
	Children and Young People's Space	Sufficient supply
	Informal Green Space	Sufficient supply

The OSNA recommended the development of a Green Space Strategy to identify a vision for the Borough containing an analysis of the strategic context and current situation regarding the Borough's Green Spaces.

### ***Green Space Strategy***

Green space strategies establish a vision for the use of green spaces within a given area. They establish the goals that a local authority or partnership would like to achieve through the management of green space, and identify the resources and protocols necessary to achieve these goals (*CABE Space, undated*).

Sedgefield Borough Council's Green Space Strategy is currently being prepared and is scheduled to be completed by March 2009. It will not only identify how green spaces can be improved but will create a vision for the long term management of our greenspaces, whilst harnessing the potential for green space to play a role in providing benefits to wildlife, public health and education.

### **Data Intelligence**

Durham Biodiversity Partnership has been commissioned to carry out a study to collate data on protected, as well as priority species and habitats within the Borough. The study is due to be completed by January 2009 and its findings will be vitally important to aid the Council and new Unitary Council in meeting legislative requirements and planning policy (PPS9- Biodiversity and Geological Conservation).

In addition, mapping of the ecological corridors and natural greenspace distribution has been uploaded onto the Council's GIS system 'Sustainable Communities' theme.

### ***Legislation***

A number of changes have been made to the Habitats Regulations 1994, which increase the legal protection given to European Protected Species (EPS) in England. Under the former Habitats Regulations it is an offence to deliberately kill or cause significant disturbance to these protected species, to deliberately destroy their eggs, or to destroy or damage a breeding site or

resting place used by them. The amendment now means that it is also an offence if you accidentally damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 has also been amended to reflect the changes to the Habitats Regulations, and a number of species now receive increased protection, including the water vole (April 2008).

The implications of these amendments have led to consideration to be given to the presence of protected species and follow good practice guidance to avoid committing an offence. In some cases, development/management practices may need to be modified or rescheduled to a less sensitive time of year and where this is not possible or adequate, operators may need to apply for a license to remain within the law.

The European Protected Species (EPS) found within the Borough are

- Bats (all species)
- Great Crested Newts
- Otters

The *Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006* placed a duty on Local Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity as part of their activities under section 40 of the Act. The new duty makes biodiversity a natural consideration in policy forming and the decision making process in public bodies. It stresses the need to put biodiversity as a core component of sustainable development, where it underpins economic development and prosperity and offers a range of quality of life benefits.

To raise awareness, the Council has published a document entitled 'Biodiversity and the law how it affects you' to inform staff and elected Members and is available in hard copy and from the Council's website.

### ***Local Nature Reserves (LNR)***

A *National Indicator 197- Improved Local Biodiversity* was introduced in April 2008. It requires Local Authorities to report annually on the number of Local Wildlife Sites, also known as County Wildlife Sites, they actively manage to improve biodiversity.

Local Nature Reserves within the Borough and have increased from one in 2003 to six in 2008. These are located at Ferryhill Carrs, Byerley Park (Newton Aycliffe), The Moor (Newton Aycliffe), Castle Eden Walkway, Bishop Middleham Wildlife Garden and Cow Plantation. In addition, a partnership has been created to provide advice to Great Aycliffe Town Council in the management of two of their Local Wildlife Sites at Aycliffe Nature Park and School Aycliffe Wetland

In managing these spaces the service has two overall aims, to improve biodiversity and to ensure good public access and involvement.

A vital contributing factor to the development of Local Nature Reserves has been partnership working and the creation of a number of community groups (known as friends groups) that were set up for each of the reserves. Friends Groups are very active with members volunteering to carry out practical improvements on their respective reserves. In total



*LNR Volunteers*

approximately 90 members of the community are involved in the management of Nature Reserves. It is essential that communities are involved in the development and management of their countryside to help to increase local pride 'ownership' and thereby reduce anti-social activity through informal policing and applying for recognition through various award schemes.

A volunteer programme established by the Council's Countryside Team ensures that members of the public can be involved in their local countryside. The volunteer programme includes

- Countryside Volunteers
- A Volunteer Warden Programme with approximately 20 volunteers to which the majority are also Friends Group members.
- Volunteer Tree Wardens that is operated with the Council's Tree Preservation Officer.
- Volunteer walk leaders, which is operated with the Council's 'Walking the Way to Health' Officer.

### ***Awards***

The following awards have been achieved for Local Nature Reserves within the Borough.

#### ***Bishop Middleham Wildlife Garden –***

- Conservation Award (Durham Wildlife Trust) 2004;
- Environment Award (Durham County Council) 2005;
- Green Flag Award 2007

#### ***Byerley Park***

- Environment Award (Durham County Council) 2008

#### ***Ferryhill Carrs***

- Northumbria in Bloom (Durham Villages Trophy – Best Conservation Project 2008) – Gold Award
- Northumbria in Bloom award (Best Conservation Project) 2005.



## **Further development of Local Nature Reserves**

A significant number of improvements have been made to developing the Borough's Local Nature Reserves. However, there is potential to improve access and biodiversity through further development of existing reserves and to create new Local nature reserves within the Borough. The following have been identified as potential areas of development. It is intended that detailed information will be included within the Borough's Green Space Strategy.

### ***Ferryhill Carrs***

Following a consultation exercise and in partnership with Network Rail and Durham County Council a formal Planning Application is to be submitted to develop a pedestrian bridge over the East Coast Mainline to improve access to The Carrs Local Nature Reserve in Ferryhill.



*An access point to the The Carrs LNR at Ferryhill*

### ***The Moor LNR***

There is potential to develop the Moor LNR will enable the reserve to include a sustainable urban drainage system for the new housing development. The sustainable drainage system

will aim to mimic the natural drainage of a site to minimise the impact of urban development on the flooding and pollution of waterways and provide an attractive feature, which can also have a number of biodiversity benefits.

### ***Newton Aycliffe***

A new LNR could be created for Newton Aycliffe. The proposed site is located between Aycliffe Village and Newton Aycliffe Industrial Park (behind Bickford Terrace). The site is currently owned by Sedgefield Borough Council and provides an important buffer, as well as informal recreation resource for local residents. A culverted stretch of Demon's Beck currently runs through the site, and has resident population of water vole. The site has huge potential to be enhanced in terms of access and provision of site furniture, as well as potential for biodiversity improvements.

### ***Fishburn Natural Reserve & Trimdon Natural Reserve***

The sites are located on former colliery land owned by Durham County Council. This land provides the potential to establish two nature reserves that are managed by natural processes rather than traditional means, with near wild breeds of livestock allowed to roam un-impeded throughout the sites. In addition, the sites will also provide good public access, interpretation and educational resources.

### ***Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve Habitat Improvements***

There is potential to undertake various habitat improvements within Byerley Park that could include a wetland creation and woodland restoration.

### **Country Park Ferryhill/West Cornforth**

There is potential to develop a large scale project to create a country park/national nature reserve by joining up land currently owned by the Borough Council and Durham County Council. The site would incorporate the restored Thrislington quarry and Thrislington National Nature Reserve (Special Area of Conservation), Ferryhill Carrs and the woodland across the mainline.

The aim of the project would be to increase and improve public areas, reduce anti-social activity, and create a site, which would have the potential to attract tourism into the County.

### **Trimdon Three Villages – Promoted Green Route**

Through enhancing existing public rights of way there is potential to create a circular route between the villages of the three Trimdons. The proposed route would incorporate a number of important habitats (woodland and wetland) and the establishment of a new wildlife garden/play area.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

Taking into account all the information provided the Review Group conclude that:-

- Satisfaction levels with Parks and Open Spaces reflect investment in the Borough.
- The Borough Council has been effective in working with Parish and Town Councils and volunteers within the Community Volunteer Programme to achieve numerous awards and the continued development of Local Nature Reserves within the Borough.
- The Green Space Strategy for the Borough will create a vision for the long-term management of green spaces and highlight the potential benefits to wildlife, public health and education.
- The Council has taken effective steps to ensure that legislation regarding biodiversity has been widely communicated to raise awareness and importance of changes to legislation.
- The study being undertaken by Durham Biodiversity Partnership will provide data on protected and priority species within the Borough to enable legislative and planning policy requirements to be met.

### **Recommendations**

- 3) Green Spaces within the Borough continue to be actively managed in accordance with the Sedgefield Borough Green Space Strategy.
- 4) Local Nature Reserves within the Borough and the Community Volunteer programme continue to be developed and supported.
- 5) Findings from the study being undertaken by Durham Biodiversity Partnership be taken into account when considering the development of biodiversity projects and planning applications to ensure that all legislation and planning policy requirements are met.

# Transport

## Key Statistics

### The 2001 Census reported

- 73.1% of residents with Sedgefield Borough travelled to work by private motor vehicle (car, taxi or motorbike), *compared to a national average of 65.27%* and
- Usage of public transport for travel to work was 7.2%, compared to national average of 11%.

### The 2006 Best Value General Survey reported

- 70.92% of respondents considered that public transport in the Borough has got better or stayed the same in the previous three years, *mirroring the national average of 70.49%, and*
- The proportion who thought that the level of traffic congestion within the Borough had got better or stayed the same is 51.57%.
- Over £1 million of investment for a range of improvements to be made within the Borough over a five year period including accessibility and road safety schemes through the Durham County Council Local Transport Plan

## What we know about transport within Sedgefield Borough

The Borough's road infrastructure provides access to the Region, the A1M Motorway travels through the Borough with access junctions located at Bradbury and Newton Aycliffe. In addition, the A167 provides a link through the Borough to travel to the town of Darlington in the South and Durham in the North. The A689 provides a link to the A19 and the A177 provides a linkage to Stockton and Durham.

There are two Railway Stations located within the Borough these are at Shildon and Newton Aycliffe and provide rail travel from within the Borough to the Region.

Residents' methods of travelling to work were identified in the 2001 Census. The proportion of the population who travelled over 20 km to work was 12.4%, compared to 14.16% nationally. Travelling to work by private motor vehicle (car, taxi or motorbike) was 73.1% compared to a national average of 65.27%. The Borough's wards with the highest percentage of people using a private car to get to work are Woodham (46.26%), Greenfield Middridge (44.19%) and Sedgefield (43.99%).

Travelling to work by public transport was 7.2%, below the national average of 11%, and walking/cycling was 11.9% compared to the national average of 13.3%.

In 2005, Sedgefield Local Strategic Partnership commissioned JMP consultants to undertake a survey with stakeholders and partners on transport and highlighted the following issues within the Borough.

**Access to health**

- *Hospitals are outside the Borough and can mean difficult journeys for patients and visitors*

**Access to education**

- *Reduced access to educational courses on an evening due to limited bus services*
- *Same day travel from one educational establishment to another costly for young people*

**Access to employment**

- *Public transport to industrial estates is not adequate*

**Crosscutting issues**

- *Community transport, particularly for older people and people with disabilities is limited*
- *Expense of transport for the young, elderly, disabled and people from deprived areas*

Findings from the 2006 Best Value General Survey reported 70.92% of respondents considered that public transport in the Borough has got better or stayed the same in the previous three years, mirroring the national average of 70.49%. The proportion of respondents within the Borough who thought that the level of traffic congestion within the Borough had got better or stayed the same is 51.57%.

## **Current and Planned Activity**

### ***Local Transport Plan***

The strategy and associated policies to improve transport within the Borough are identified within Durham County Council's second 5 year Local Transport Plan (LTP2) that covers the period 2006 -2011. The plan was prepared in partnership with all District Councils within the County, Local Strategic Partnerships, main operators and providers of transport and the public.

The main aims of LTP2 is to address national priorities between central and local government, better accessibility and public transport, improve road safety, contribute to the quality of life and health and reduce problems of congestion and air quality within County Durham.

In comparison to the previous Local Transport Plan, LTP 2 places greater emphasis on accessibility together with a new bus strategy. In addition, it has been integrated with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and engagement with Local Strategic Partnerships through Area Programmes and less reliance on major schemes as solutions.

However, two major LTP 1 projects did contribute to improving the quality of strategic routeways and corridors within the Borough with the completion of the A689 Sedgfield to Wynyard Dual Carriageway and A167 Chilton Bypass.

Sedgfield Borough has strong links with Durham County Council to deliver the second Local Transport Plan. Through the Sedgfield Programme, a range of improvements will be made over a five year period including accessibility and road safety schemes with all schemes totalling over £1 million. This work was carried out in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector organisations in the locality and through consultation with members of the public.

To date LTP2 projects carried out within the Borough include:

*Road Safety Schemes* with chevron advanced direction signs at Woodham Roundabout and a pedestrian refuge island in Sedgfield Village. In addition an electronic sign will be fitted near to East Howell in order to reduce accidents on the bridge near to the site.

*Access improvements including* disabled access improvements at Lilburn Close, Shildon and Footpath links Broom Road, Ferryhill and Filmco Corner, Sedgfield

*Public Transport improvements at* Newton Aycliffe & Heighington Rail Stations, a new shelter and construction of a level boarding area in Sedgfield and various Bus Stop Improvements Ferryhill, Shildon and West Cornforth.

### **Community Transport Operators**

Community Transport Operators are independent of private or public organisations and are non-profit organisations. They have the ability to plug

many gaps to provide a valuable service by providing safe, accessible transport solutions to their local communities that enables them access work, training and social activities that may have otherwise been prevented by cost or lack of public transport.

There are a number of Community Transport Operators within the Borough including Cornforth Partnership, Social Resource Centre and Shildon Community Bus Group. Communicare, a provider based in Easington, are also now working with other community transport operators within Sedgefield Borough.

The Cornforth Partnership located in West Cornforth currently manages a Community Transport Scheme to give residents across Sedgefield Borough access to a variety of services, by offering safe and cost effective community transport. The scheme has two 17-seater minibuses that are driven by Midas trained volunteer drivers and is currently used by 49 member organisations to provide transport for local and regional journeys.



Shildon Community Bus has operated in Shildon and the surrounding areas for over 20 years. The scheme operates under a Section 19 Bus Permit for the use of voluntary and community organisations. It has recently received £20,000 of investment through the

LTP in addition to funding they are putting in themselves to purchase an additional Community minibus.

The Social Resource Centre, based in Ferryhill, also offer CT for local residents specifically around health related trips. They have a contract with NHS County Durham for this work and are now linking up with Communicare to meet additional need. This partnership has also secured £22,000 of capital funding from LTP2 funding in addition to capital funding raised by the partnership to purchase a fully accessible vehicle. It is to be noted that whilst capital funding is available it can be difficult for Community Transport Operators to obtain funding for revenue support.

### ***Access to Services Group***

Sedgefield Borough LSP has established an Access to Services Group which aims to address key issues facing residents of the Borough in relation to transport and accessibility issues. In addition, the Group works towards the sustainability of community transport and seeks to influence LTP2 funding within the Borough. The Group is comprised of representatives of Sedgefield Borough Council, Durham County Council, County Durham Primary Care Trust, Community and Voluntary Sector, Community Transport Operators and Bus Operators.

With regard to addressing transport issues, the Access to Services Group has liaised with relevant partners to create an action plan to address issues identified by the JMP Study. Actions to date have included working with NHS

organisations to make public transport timetables available to patients and visitors and promote the awareness of Community Transport Schemes within the Borough.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

- Transport within the Borough is an issue and the JMP study has highlighted topics that are to be progressed through LTP2 and the Access to Services Group.
- Through funding to support Community Transport and undertaking specific projects the Local Transport Plan2 has contributed to enhancing transport provision across the Borough.
- Community Transport Schemes within the Borough provide transport solutions that enable local communities' to have access to work, training and social activities.
- The Access to Services Group plays a vital role to engage with representatives from key partner agencies to address barriers to accessing transport within the Borough.

### **Recommendations**

- 6) Solutions to address transport and enhance the provision of transport within the Borough continue to be provided through delivery of the Local Transport Plan 2.
- 7) That engagement continues through local Access to Services Groups to address barriers to accessing transport.





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# Item 6

## PROSPEROUS AND ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9<sup>th</sup> December 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 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 period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.
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. Overview & Scrutiny Committees should normally 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.

A workshop was held for Overview & Scrutiny Members on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008 to discuss the role of the Committees within the period leading to the establishment of a new Unitary Council in April 2009. One element of the workshop was to consider a number of options for undertaking scrutiny reviews

within this period. Members 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 proposed that Overview & Scrutiny Committees establish Review Groups to examine each of the Council's ambitions as follows:-

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Review Groups</b>
Healthy Borough with Strong Communities O&S Cttee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Healthy Borough Review Group</li><li>• Strong Communities Review Group</li></ul>
Prosperous and Attractive Borough O&S Cttee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prosperous Borough Review Group</li><li>• Attractive Borough Review Group</li></ul>

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

#### **5. Business for Future Meetings**

The Committees Work Programme for the period leading to the establishment of a new Unitary Council in April 2009 is attached for consideration.

Members are requested to review the Committee's Work Programme and identify, where necessary, issues that they feel should be investigated by the Committee. The Work Programme will need to be carefully managed to ensure that the most important issues are considered in the limited time available.

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.

#### **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None associated with this report.

#### **7 CONSULTATION**

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**Ward(s):** Not ward specific  
**Background Papers** None

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

**WORK PROGRAMME**

**Ongoing Reviews**

*State of the Borough Review*

**Future Reviews**

As one review has been completed Members will decide which review should be undertaken next.

- No reviews identified

**ANTICIPATED ITEMS**

**2008/09 Municipal Year**

**27 January 2009**

- *Sedgefield Borough Council's Climate Change Strategy – Progress Update*
- *Green Space Strategy*

**10 March 2009**

- *No items identified*

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