



**STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Tuesday,
28 August 2007
10.00 a.m.

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

AGENDA
and
REPORTS



**This document is also available in other languages,
large print and audio format upon request**

العربية (Arabic)

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

বাংলা (Bengali)

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

(中文 (繁體字)) (Cantonese)

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

हिन्दी (Hindi)

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

polski (Polish)

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

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)

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

Español (Spanish)

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

اردو (Urdu)

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

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2007. (Pages 1 - 6)

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT: REVIEW OF THE COUNCILS COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER INFORM - ACTION PLAN UPDATE

To receive an update on Cabinet's response and action plan. (Pages 7 - 10)

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT: REVIEW OF SICKNESS MANAGEMENT - ACTION PLAN UPDATE

To receive an update on Cabinet's response and action plan. (Pages 11 - 14)

6. WORK PROGRAMME

Report of Chairman of the Committee. (Pages 15 - 18)

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
17th August 2007**

Councillor A. Gray (Chairman)
Councillor B.F. Avery J.P (Vice Chairman)

Councillors D.R. Brown, V. Chapman, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh, T. Hogan, Ms. I. Jackson and B.M. Ord.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection etc. in relation to this agenda and associated papers should contact Mrs. L. Walker Tel 01388 816166 ext 4237 email lwalker@sedgefield.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
12 June 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m.

- Present:** Councillor A. Gray (Chairman) and
Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, B. Haigh, T. Hogan,
Ms. I. Jackson and B.M. Ord
- In Attendance:** Councillors Mrs. S. Haigh, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. C. Potts, A. Smith,
B. Stephens, A. Warburton and J. Wayman J.P
- Apologies:** Councillors D.R. Brown, V. Chapman and Mrs. J. Gray

SLOSC.1/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no declarations of interest to submit.

SLOSC.2/07 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 held on 27th March 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

SLOSC.3/07 ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY CORPORATE COMPLAINTS STAFF
Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive outlining the number of complaints/issues received by the Corporate Complaints staff in the period 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007. Figures were also provided for the period 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006 to enable comparisons to be made. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that the total number of complaints/issues dealt with by the Corporate Complaints staff had decreased from 1,053 in 2005/06 to 679 in 2006/07. This was a decrease of 35%.

It was pointed out that the work carried out by staff within the Customer Service Centre had contributed to the reduction in the number of complaints dealt with by the Corporate Complaints staff.

Members expressed their appreciation of the work carried out by Customer Services staff and praised their ability to effectively deal with comprehensive complaints.

The report identified the number of complaints received within each service area and the nature of the complaints.

The main area of complaint (40% of the total) related to housing maintenance, management and capital improvement. It was pointed out, however, that the total number of complaints about these services had fallen from 545 to 269 with justified complaints reducing by 77%.

The main reason for complaint in connection with housing maintenance related to repairs not being carried out within specified timescales. It was explained that on occasions the resources were not available to complete every job within the timescale.

In order to address this problem the budget for 2006/07 financial year had been increased with £240,000 additional revenue funding being allocated. This had helped clear the backlog and generally had enabled new jobs to be completed within the target.

Members were informed that although 104 complaints were made in relation to the Housing Management Service, only 3 complaints were found to be justified.

With regard to complaints made about capital improvements, it was noted that none of the 18 complaints were found to be justified.

It was explained that the Corporate Complaints staff aimed to respond to 100% of complaints and enquiries within ten working days. It was reported that 98.5% had been achieved in 2006/07 compared with 98.8% in 2005/06. The average time to respond to an enquiry in 2006/07 was 1.5 days compared with 1.95 days in 2005/06.

The Committee was also advised of the complaints procedure whereby complainants had the right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman if they had exhausted the Borough's complaints procedure.

In 2006/07 21 cases were investigated and decided by the Ombudsman. The Borough had not been found guilty of maladministration in any of these cases. In 3 cases the Council was able to reach a local settlement to the Ombudsman's satisfaction.

It was pointed out that there were no complaints made relating to any of the six strands of the Equity and Diversity standard for local government.

Specific reference was made to adaptations for the benefit of people with disabilities.

It was queried whether funding was available for all residents of the Borough. In response it was explained that all residents could apply for funding for disabled adaptations through the Sedgfield Home Improvement Agency. Durham County Council would also provide relevant support and advice.

Members queried how a member of the public should make a complaint. It was explained that although the majority of complaints were received by telephone a variety of communication mechanisms were in place. These

included letters, e-mails, on-line feedback forms and home visits where appropriate

In response to Member's questions regarding procedures for dealing with complaints, it was explained that the Council aimed to resolve complaints at an early stage at the first point of contact. It was hoped that by learning from previous complaints, managers would be able to effectively deal with complaints/issues.

It was recognised that not all customers would accept the response given to them by the department. In these circumstances the Corporate Complaints staff would investigate the complaint/issue on behalf of the complainant.

Reference was made to a complaint made by a Parish Council regarding the non operation of CCTV cameras. It was explained that in many cases complaints received by the Council were actually service requests.

Detailed discussion took place in relation to local authorities providing funding for CCTV cameras. It was agreed that this matter be referred to the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

The Committee was informed that Member training based on the Complaints Procedure and the role of the Local Government Ombudsman was being arranged. All Councillors would be invited to attend.

- RECOMMENDED:*
- 1. That the Annual Report be received and published on the Borough's website.*
 - 2. That the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider funding of CCTV camera contributions as a future item on their work programme.*

**SLOSC.4/07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT:
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION - ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman of the Committee detailing progress to date on the Cabinet's Response and Action Plan following its consideration of the recommendations arising from the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Recruitment and Retention. (For copy see file of Minutes).

With regard to Recommendation 1 – **Turnover broken down by department be adopted as a Performance Indicator to be monitored by Human Resources and reported periodically to Members** - it was reported that corporate turnover 2006/07 was 11%. Turnover by department was set out in the report.

Specific reference was made to turnover in the Chief Executives Section. It was explained that although turnover in this Section was relatively high

further monitoring of the Performance Indicator was required before it could possibly be identified as an area of concern.

It was noted that corporate turnover would be included in the Corporate Plan.

Members queried whether the proposed Local Government Review had an effect on turnover within the Council. It was explained that the issue of Local Government Review was referred to at exit interviews in order to measure the effect on turnover.

Reference was made to Recommendation 2 – **Vacant posts which had not been filled within six months of the first advertisement to be reported to Members.** It was noted that as at 31st March nine posts had remained vacant for six months.

It was noted that eight posts within the Housing Property Services division had not been filled due to the uncertainty surrounding housing partnering. The vacant posts had been filled by agency workers.

Although one post in the Valuation and Corporate Property Services Section was occupied by an agency worker, the cost was no greater than that of employing a permanent member of staff.

- RECOMMENDED :*
1. *That progress on the Action Plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Recruitment and Retention be noted.*
 2. *That progress on the Action Plan be reviewed in 12 months.*

SLOSC.5/07 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL: RECRUITMENT OF TWO SENIOR OFFICERS

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services regarding the recruitment of two senior officers to the Development Control Team. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were reminded that following a request from Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3, the Director of Neighbourhood Services attended the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 on 9th January 2007 to discuss the pay structure within the Development Control Division and the plan to recruit two Senior Development Control Officers.

It was reported that the following three vacant posts had now been filled:-

- Principal Development Control Officer
- Development Control Officer
- Planning Enforcement Officer

It was noted that the successful recruitment to these posts addressed the staffing issues within the Development Control Team and would contribute

to the improved performance and the quality of service the team aimed to deliver.

AGREED: That the report be noted and no further action be taken.

SLOSC.6/07 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Chairman of the Committee setting out the Committee's current Work Programme for consideration and review. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The Committee reviewed the current Work Programme.

It was pointed out that topics for future reviews needed to be identified. It was felt that the Corporate Plan would assist Members when identifying topics for future review.

AGREED: That the Committee's Work Programme as outlined in the report be agreed.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. L. Walker Tel 01388 816166 ext 4237 email lwalker@sedgefield.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT - REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER INFORM
CABINET RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN – UPDATE AUGUST 2007**

Review Recommendations	Cabinet Response		Implementation	
	Agreed?	Comments	Responsibility	Timescale
1. The current methods of publishing, printing and distributing Inform continue.	Agree		Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing
2. Inform continues to be published on a monthly basis.	Agree		Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing
3. The Press & Public Relations Officer liaises with the Council's Strategy and Regeneration Section in an effort to include articles that would appeal to young people.	Agree	As youth engagement is a crosscutting issue all Departments should be consulted on a regular basis about the inclusion of relevant articles for young people.	Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing
4. Following the 2007 Local Election, a 'Guide to Councillors' that includes a pen-portrait profile of each member be published on a six monthly basis to provide information to assist residents to contact their Ward Councillor.	Agree	Following the district elections, pen-portraits were published in May 2007 edition of Inform. This will be repeated in December with more of a festive flavour.	Press & Public Relations Officer	To be published June and December annually.
5. The format of Inform to be retained in full colour tabloid style.	Agree		Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing

6. Inform to remain as a 16-page publication.	Agree	Inform has remained at 16-pages. Such has been its demand that three editions to date during 2007 have increased to 20-pages.	Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing
7. Appropriate budget provision be made to support publication of Inform on this basis	Agree	This was considered within the budget review 2007/08 and the appropriate budget provision was increased to reflect a 16-page publication.	Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing
8. Internal advertising to remain free of charge to provide the opportunity for Departments to promote their services and any forthcoming events to all residents within the Borough.	Agree		Press & Public Relations Officer	Will continue without charge
9. External advertising coverage within Inform remain at approximately 5% of the publication to ensure that the focus is to provide information on Council news stories and events.	Agree		Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing
10. The rate for external advertising be raised to £9 per centimetre column for new adverts and be reviewed periodically.	Agree	Advertising rates were last reviewed some years ago. The recommended rate would appear appropriate taking into account rates of comparative publications. Advertising rates will in future be reviewed on an annual basis. Revised advertising rates were implemented from 1 April 2007	Press & Public Relations Officer	With effect from April 2007
11. Procedures for identifying articles for Inform be reviewed to ensure that appropriate news is included.	Agree	Arrangements to be put in place to improve communication of news, both externally (Inform and Press Releases) and internally (Update and Grapevine).	Press & Public Relations Officer	Ongoing

12. The redesigned masthead at Appendix 3 be adopted to provide a clear identity.	Agree	As agreed, the new masthead was put into place from January 2007	Press & Public Relations Officer	January 2007
13. Arrangements be made to enable Inform to be downloaded from the Homepage of the Council's Website.	Agree	From January 2007, Inform has been available to download and access from the homepage of the Borough Council's Website. From January 2007 to early August 2007, Inform received 523 hits	Press & Public Relations Officer	January 2007
14. An appropriate article be published in Inform to indicate to readers that the newspaper can be downloaded from the Council's website.	Agree	To highlight the Borough Council's website, its address is displayed at the top of each Inform page	Press & Public Relations Officer	January 2007

This page is intentionally left blank

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT – REVIEW OF SICKNESS MANAGEMENT
CABINET RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN**

Review Recommendation	Cabinet Response		Implementation	
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
1. The proposed procedures for the Management of Sickness Absence, Occupational Health Referrals and Occupational Sick Pay be supported.	Yes	All three procedures have now been incorporated into the terms and conditions of employment for all SBC employees. A new Code of Practice has been issued to employees detailing their new obligations under the procedures	Head of OD	01/07/07
2. Specific elements of Sickness Management administration be transferred to Human Resources in order to better enable Occupational Health referrals and performance monitoring.	Yes	Sickness Absence Management and Administration have been consolidated as key roles within the OD section with partial administrative support from Payments. Systems now in place for ensuring compliance with procedures and effective sickness absence management interventions.	Head of OD	01/07/07

Review Recommendation	Cabinet Response		Implementation	
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p>3. Sickness Absence statistics, by department and overall, be reported to ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leader's Meetings – Quarterly Basis • Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) – every meeting • Management Team - monthly basis • Heads of Service – monthly basis 	Partially	Resourcelink and Cognos reports have been prepared to provide accurate, timely and consistent statistical information to Head of Service, Management team and the Strategic Leadership Group in line with recommendations.	Head of OD	01/07/07
<p>4. Detailed information relating to sickness absence be made available to managers as necessary to assist them to effectively manage sickness.</p>	Yes	Monthly reports are prepared detailing employees on LT sickness absence and employees with ST persistent absence as identified by the reference points for formal action in the procedures. These reports are sent to Heads of Service and section managers on a monthly basis and a sickness review group has been established to monitor action taken.	Head of OD	01/07/07

Review Recommendation	Cabinet Response		Implementation	
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
5. Section-based sickness absence statistics be incorporated into service plans.	Yes	Guidance on setting, monitoring and reviewing sickness absence targets has been built into the Service Planning Guidance for 2007/08 and all sections have been tasked with responsibility for analysing current levels and setting ambitious targets for improvement in line with the Corporate Best Value Performance Indicator.	Head of S&R	01/07/07
6. The Organisational Development Plan specifically includes training for appropriate managers relating to 'Absence Management'.	Yes	Approximately 180 Council managers have been on a one day training course to develop their knowledge on the application of the new procedures and to develop their confidence and skill in managing contentious and sensitive absence review meetings. Feedback from this training has been positive.	Head of OD	April-August 2007
7. Quarterly progress meetings be held between Human Resources, Payments and Occupational Health to monitor Sickness Management.	Yes	Monthly meetings have been established with set agenda items involving Human Resources, Payments, Health and Safety and Occupational Health.	Head of OD	01/07/07

Review Recommendation	Cabinet Response		Implementation	
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
8. Information on services provided by Occupational Health be publicised and communicated to employees and managers.	Yes	A Health Promotion brochure is being prepared that details the range of innovative projects within Leisure Services, Sustainable Communities and via our links with the Primary Care Trust that can support the goal of reducing sickness absence and promoting a healthy workplace.	Head of OD	01/09/07

Item 6

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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 next 6 meetings.
4. **Scrutiny Review**

The Committee should aim to undertake a small number of high quality reviews that will make a real difference to the work of the Authority, rather than high numbers of reviews on more minor issues. Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee should therefore aim to undertake two reviews concurrently. Any additional review topics that have been agreed by Members will be placed on a reserve list and as one Review is completed the Committee will decide on which review should be undertaken next.

Scrutiny reviews will be conducted by a Review Group established by the Committee comprising of 5-6 Members. In most cases the Review Group will

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

5. **Business for Future Meetings**

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

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

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

4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None associated with this report.

5. **CONSULTATION**

Contact Officers: David Anderson
Telephone No: (01388) 816166 ext 4109/4362
Email Address: danderson@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s): Not ward specific

Background Papers None

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME

Ongoing Reviews <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>No reviews currently ongoing</i>
Future Reviews <p>The following review topics have been identified by the Committee for future review. As one review is completed Members will decide which review should be undertaken next.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>No reviews identified</i>
ANTICIPATED ITEMS
28th August 2007 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Overview and Scrutiny Review Group Reports: Review of the Council's Community Newspaper Inform – Action Plan Update</i>• <i>Overview and Scrutiny Review Group Report: Review of Sickness Management – Action Plan Update</i>
9th October 2007 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>No items currently identified</i>
20th November 2008 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Performance Indicators</i>
8th January 2008 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Review of Customer Complaints</i>• <i>Equality and Diversity Corporate Equality Plan – Progress Update</i>
22nd January 2008 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Budgets</i>
12th February 2007 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>No items currently identified</i>
25th March 2007 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Update on BVPI 11a</i>

This page is intentionally left blank