

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

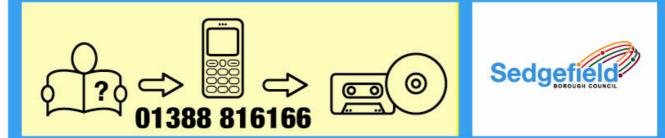
Tuesday,

12 February 2008

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

(Arabic) العربية

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.

اردد (Urdu) اگرآپ کومعلومات کسی دیگرزبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکارہوں تو ہرائے مہر بانی ہم سے پوچھتے۔

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 correct records the Minutes of the meetings held on:

- (a) 8th January 2008 (Pages 1 4)
- (b) 22nd January 2008 (Pages 5 8)

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP REPORT: SICKNESS MANAGEMENT - PROGRESS ON ACTION PLAN

To consider the attached Action Plan and Presentation detailing progress against recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Sickness Management. (Pages 9 - 14)

5. WORK PROGRAMME

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

6. 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 4th February 2008

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

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Item 3a

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Cham Council Office: Spennymoor	-	•	Time: 10.00 a.m.
Present:	Councillor A. Gray (Chairman) a	and	
	Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, D.R T.F. Forrest, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Ha B.M. Ord		
In Attendance:	Councillors Mrs. D. Bowman, G J.G. Huntington	.C. Gray, Mrs. S.	Haigh, J.E. Higgin and

SL.21/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

SL.22/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SL.23/07 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY - CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN -PROGRESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Organisational Development setting out progress made to date on equality issues within the Council against the Corporate Equality Plan. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report set out progress to date on the following:

- Equality Standard for Local Government
- Corporate Equality Plan (CEP) Action Plan
 - Leadership and Corporate Commitment
 - Community Engagement and Accountability
 - Service Delivery and Customer Care
 - Employment and Training
- Future issues

It was pointed out that the Council's Corporate Equality Plan had been updated to reflect recent legislation and had been republished on the Council's web site. Specific reference was made to the Council's challenging target of achieving Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by March 2008. It was pointed out that whereas Levels 1 and 2 were self-declared, Level 3 needed to be externally assessed and the Council could not undergo the I&DeA quality mark accreditation until April/May 2008. The achievement date for Level 3 had consequently been revised to May 2008. It was noted that Durham County Council had just achieved Level 3, however, Sedgefield Borough Council was still ahead of most districts within the County, having achieved Level 2.

It was questioned what percentage of the Council's employees were disabled and how many migrant workers there were in the area. It was reported that in the Council's annual survey of employees last year, 2.54% of employees had declared themselves as having a disability.

With regard to migrant workers, it was noted that the number of migrants to the north east had increased in 2006/07 to 1.86%, however, the region still had relatively few migrants per head of population compared with the rest of the United Kingdom. Durham had seen the largest rate of increase across the sub regions, with the increase mainly occurring in Derwentside and Sedgefield. 73% of all national insurance registrations by migrants within the Borough were from Poland.

A query was raised regarding gender equality in relation to employment of women in top paid posts. It was reported that with regard to Best Performance Indicator 11a – 'Percentage of Top Paid 5% of Local Authority Staff who are Women', the Council had for quarter ended December 2007 had moved up a performance quartile. A detailed report would be presented to the March meeting of the Committee.

Specific reference was made to Local Government re-organisation and the fact that a number of Councils within County Durham had not yet achieved Level 2. It was pointed out that as Durham County Council had recently achieved Level 3, it had been assumed that this would be the required standard.

Members asked for details of any changes made to services as a result of the Council's Corporate Equality policies. It was explained that Leisure Services had provided more activities for older people within the Borough exercise classes especially designed for older people.

- AGREED : 1. That the progress made to date be noted.
 - 2. That progress against the Corporate Equality Plan be reported to Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

SL.24/07 COUNCIL TAX SERVICE - PERFORMANCE

Further to Minute No. SL19/07 of the meeting held on 20th November 2007, the Committee considered a report outlining the main issues

regarding the collection of council tax and how performance could be improved. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that despite the Council having an excellent record of collecting tax over time, with low collection costs, its in-year collection rate had however not kept pace with improvements made by other authorities.

Specific reference was made to the collection rates for the District Councils in County Durham. It was noted that Wear Valley District Council was the top performer in 2006/07 collecting 99.5% in year: Teesdale – 98.8%, Derwentside – 98.5%. Sedgefield Borough had collected in-year 95%.

It was, however, noted that in 2005/06 the costs by other Districts within County Durham were between 23% to 49% higher than Sedgefield Borough. In the 15 years since council tax had been introduced, the total amount due to be collected from taxpayers was in excess of £316m of which the total amount written off during that time amounted to £614,000 – less than 20p for every £100 collected.

It was pointed out that the Council had a duty to maximise its in year collection to achieve the Government's Best Performance Indicator of 98.3% and thereby minimise the arrears to be transferred to the new unitary authority. Consequently, officers had reviewed the council tax recovery procedures and Management Team had given approval to increase the level of staffing. A Visiting Officer was to be appointed to ensure that vulnerable taxpayers receive all the reductions to which they are entitled to and an Administration Officer to assist the Council Tax Service to speed up recovery by issuing Recovery Notices earlier and promoting payment by direct debit more actively.

With regard to the methods of paying council tax, Members suggested that the amount collected could improve if swipe cards for payment at the post office were introduced. Officers reported that the Council already had an extensive range of methods of payment currently available, with direct debit being the most cost-effective means of collection.

It was pointed out that the introduction of income payment cards was currently being considered for housing rent collection, however, the use of cards for council tax would increase the unit cost of collection.

A query was also raised on whether the Council received a fee from the precepting authorities for collecting council tax on their behalf. It was noted that although the Borough Council only kept 12 pence in every \pounds it collected, it could not charge a fee.

It was also questioned whether any incentive was offered to encourage payment by direct debit. It was explained that an incentive had been offered a number of years ago through the Co-operative Bank however, there was no current incentive. Currently, two thirds of owner occupiers in the Borough pay by direct debit. It was reported that as a result of increasing the staffing capacity and revising procedures, the Council's in year collection rate would improve in the next 12 months, however probably not to the extent of the Government Best Performance Indicator target of 98.3%. It was pointed out that this Performance Indicator was to be abolished from April 2008 so national comparisons with other local authorities would not be available for the 2008/09 financial year.

AGREED : That the progress made by officers in improving the collection rate for Council Tax be noted.

SL.25/07 WORK PROGRAMME

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

AGREED : That the Work Programme be noted.

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Item 3b

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Cham Council Office Spennymoor		
Present:	Councillor A. Gray (Chairman) and	
	Councillors D.R. Brown, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh, T. Hogan, Ms. I. Jackson and B.M. Ord	
Invited to attend:	Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong	
In Attendance:	Councillors Mrs. S. Haigh, D.M. Hancock, J.E. Higgin, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, Mrs. E.M. Paylor and A. Smith	
Observer with Chairman's Consent	Councillor Mrs. B. Graham	
Apologies:	Councillors B.F. Avery J.P and V. Chapman	
SL.26/07	COUNCILLOR J. WAYMAN J.P. Members observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect to Councillor J. Wayman J.P. who sadly died on Saturday 19 th January 2008.	
SL.27/07	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Members had no interests to declare.	
SL.28/07	BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2008/2009 Consideration was given to Cabinet's initial budget proposals in respect of the Strategic Leadership portfolio. Members gave detailed consideration to a report setting out the basis of the proposals and in particular the proposed changes in service provision for the Strategic Leadership portfolio. (For copy see file of Minutes).	
	The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Strategic Leadership portfolio was in attendance to respond to questions from the Committee.	
	Members were reminded that as part of the budget setting procedure	

Members were reminded that as part of the budget setting procedure Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been asked to consider the proposals with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet before it made its final budget proposals to Council. It was reported that the budget would be the last one to be determined by the Council before local government in County Durham was re-organised. It had been prepared on the basis of business as usual, with growth in service provision restricted to essential areas only and where they would not be to the detriment of the new council's arrangements.

It was explained that the Council had been provisionally notified that it would receive £9,791,348 of external Government support for 2008/09. The grant settlement, which was broadly in line with expectations, showed a year on year cash increase of 1.98% or £190,065, including the base adjustments in accordance with the distribution framework.

The budget framework for 2008/09 reflected the Council's key priorities set out in the Corporate and Transition Plans and took account of financial issues and pressures facing the Council, including pay related costs, fuel price inflation and the drawing to an end of some external funding streams.

The budget had been prepared on an outturn basis, which meant that the contingency sum had been eliminated. Any unforeseen issues during the year would be met from efficiency savings within the relevant Portfolio area to avoid the use of balances.

It was reported that careful planning of the budget meant that the commitment made in the Medium Term Financial Plan to restrict council tax increases to 3.0% could be delivered in 2008/09. The investment in Council services would only add £5.58p per year or 11p per week to the Band D Council Tax. The cost to the Band A taxpayer would be £3.72 per year or 7p per week.

Details of the Council's overall General Fund Revenue Budget and a full analysis of the Strategic Leadership Portfolio Budgets were attached to the report.

It was pointed out that the Medium Term Financial Plan had allowed for a Capital Programme of £20m in 2008/09, subject to resources being available. The larger elements of the programme were outlined in the Council's Transition Plan and were detailed in the table set out in paragraph 4.3

Members' attention was drawn to the contingency sum of £2.5m which had been provisionally identified to meet other corporate projects such as the funding of planned maintenance of public buildings in accordance with the Asset Management Plan, Local Improvement Programme funding and the replacement of obsolete ICT equipment. The schemes would be assessed and prioritised when funding became available and Cabinet approval would be sought at a future meeting, subject to the availability of resources.

Concern was expressed regarding the significant increase in the budget for Inform when compared with the budget allocation for 2006/07.

Officers reported that Inform had been originally been an eight page publication and was now 16 pages. It was also pointed out that Inform had been the subject of a comprehensive scrutiny review, which concluded that Inform provided value for money and should continue to be 16 pages long. The recommendations of the Review Group had been agreed by both Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

A question was raised regarding the creation of the new unitary authority and the amount of funding/debt that would be transferred from Sedgefield Borough Council.

It was pointed out that all remaining balances and debt at end of March 2009 would transfer to the new authority. Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the Council's ability to make financial commitments had been limited by the Local Government (Public Involvement in Health) Act 2007. Certain projects would require consent from the Department of Communities and Local Government and Durham County Council in its role as transition authority. It was reported that the Council would continue to run its services with integrity for the last 15 months of its existence and try to deliver the projects set out in the Transition Plan that were important to the residents of Sedgefield Borough.

Officers were asked if the Council's reserves could be used to substantially reduce Sedgefield Borough Council's element of council tax. It was reported that the Council's proposed 3% increase in council tax had been achieved despite a poor Government grant settlement, by continuing the Council's policy of supporting the budget from earlier years efficiency savings. Any remaining reserves at the end of March 2009 would be passed to the new unitary council to meet future spending commitments, policies and priorities in 2009/10 and beyond. It was pointed out that the bid did propose the equalisation of District Council Tax levels during 2009/10 and the residents of Sedgefield should benefit as a result of the exercise.

Specific reference was made to pay related costs and the revaluation of the Pension Fund referred to in paragraph 3.6 of the report.

A question was asked about the 2.5% increase included for pay increases. It was pointed out that whilst the settlement had not been agreed, recent years increases were on a similar level. It was also pointed out that whilst the Government had set a 2% cap on public sector pay increases, recent awards to teachers and the police had been higher.

It was pointed out that a comprehensive review of the Local Government Pension Scheme had been undertaken resulting in changes to the rates of employees' contributions from 1st April 2008. It was noted that the results of an Actuarial revaluation of the Pension Fund which had recently completed, were still awaited, however, the Council, based on advice from the County Treasurer, had allowed for a 1% increase in the cost of employer's contributions in its budget. A question was raised regarding additional council tax to be generated from the new homes that had been built in the Borough during the past year. It was reported that the Council would be receiving additional council tax, which was equivalent to about 250 Band D houses.

The Cabinet Member left the meeting to allow the Committee to deliberate and consider its recommendations.

RECOMMENDED:

That the budget proposals in relation to the Strategic Leadership portfolio for 2008/09 be supported.

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Review Recommendation	Cabinet Response	esponse	Implementation	tion
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
 The proposed procedures for the Management of Sickness Absence, Occupational Health Referrals and Occupational Sick Pay be supported. 	уеу	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	Implemented 01/07/07
 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. From November 2007 dedicated resources and systems now in place for ensuring compliance with procedures and effective sickness absence management interventions.	Head of OD	Implemented 01/11/07

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

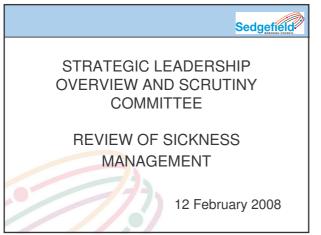
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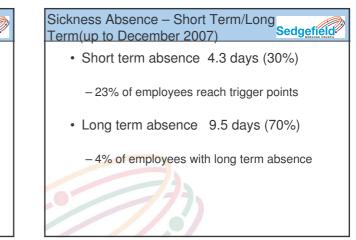
Review Recommendation	Cabinet Response	esponse	Implementation	tion
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
 3. Sickness Absence statistics, by department and overall, be reported to The Leader's Meetings – Quarterly Basis Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) – every meeting Management Team - monthly basis Heads of Service – monthly basis 	Yes	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	Implemented from 01/07/07
 Detailed information relating to sickness absence be made available to managers as necessary to assist them to effectively manage sickness. 	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. A sickness review group has been established to monitor action taken and is meeting on a bi-monthly basis. Managers are being contacted by HR to discuss ALL employees that have hit a trigger point.	Head of OD	Implemented 01/11/07

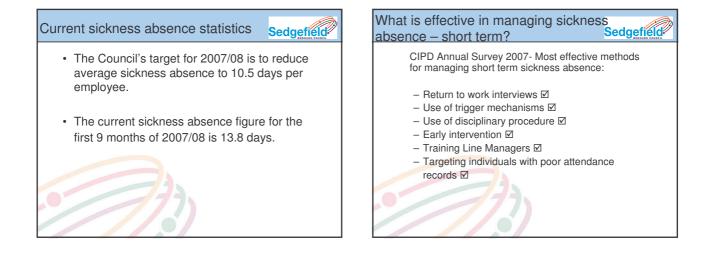
Review Recommendation	Cabinet Response	esponse	Implementation	tion
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
 Section-based sickness absence statistics be incorporated into service plans. 	Superseded	Guidance on setting, monitoring and reviewing sickness absence targets has been built into the Service Planning Guidance for 2007/08, however, the recently agreed transition plan for LGR has superseded this action.	Head of S&R	01/07/07
 The Organisational Development Plan specifically includes training for appropriate managers relating to 'Absence Management'. 	Yes	Total of 229 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	Completed by August 2007
 Quarterly progress meetings be held between Human Resources, Payments and Occupational Health to monitor Sickness Management. 	Yes	Bi-monthly meetings have been established with set agenda items involving Human Resources, Payments, and Occupational Health.	Head of OD	Implemented 01/01/08

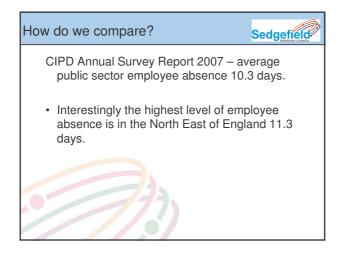
Roview Recommendation	Cabinet Response	esponse	Implementation	tion
	Agreed?	Actions	Resib'ty	Timescale
 Information on services provided by Occupational Health be publicised and communicated to employees and managers. 	Yes	A draft Health Promotion brochure was produced in preparation for an application for the Working for Health Award. However this has been postponed due to LGR as Durham County Council already has this award. Occupational Health have continued to work on initiatives such as smoking cessation, cycling to work, sexual health concerns and offering the flu injection through the use of the intranet and poster campaigns. They will continue this work through 2008	Head of DS	Ongoing

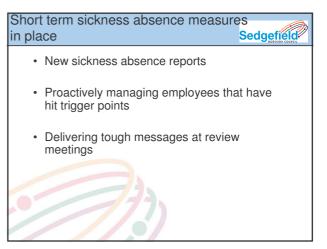
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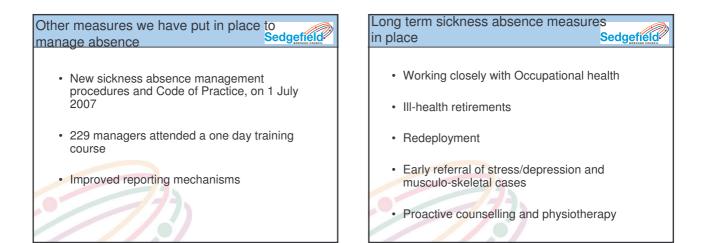


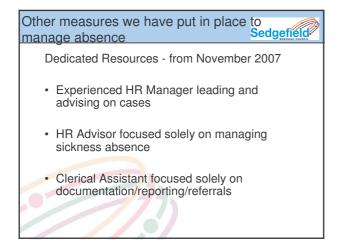




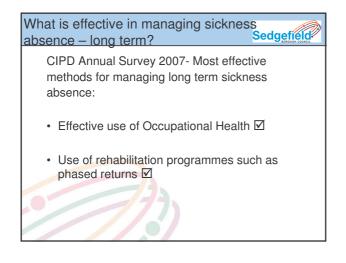








Conclusion	Sedgefield	
Attendance culture – early days		
 Continued focus on 27% of emplo significantly contributing to absen 		
Sickness PI following the transfer forecast at 10.79 days (April 2008		
LGR has the potential to adversely affect sickness absence levels – transition period/management priorities		



Item 5

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

12th February 2008

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:Jonathan SleeTelephone No:(01388) 816166 ext 4109/4362Email Address:islee@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s): Not ward specific

Background Papers None

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME

Ongoing Reviews

• No reviews currently ongoing

Future Reviews

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.

• No reviews identified

ANTICIPATED ITEMS

25th March 2008 Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) Update Update on Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI 11a 1st Meeting in the 2008/09 Municipal Year Annual Report on Complaints Received by Corporate Complaints Staff Performance Indicators – 2007/08 Year End Performance • *Recruitment & Retention (Update)* 2nd Meeting in the 2008/09 Municipal Year No items identified 3rd Meeting in the 2008/09 Municipal Year • No items identified 4th Meeting in the 2008/09 Municipal Year Half Yearly Report on Complaints Received by Corporate Complaints • Staff Half Yearly Performance Report 5th Meeting in the 2008/09 Municipal Year • Equality and Diversity Corporate Equality Plan – Progress Update

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