

# PLEASE NOTE VENUE

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA



Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008

at 1.30 p.m.

in the Council Chamber,  
Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE:

Councillors Akers-Belcher, Brash, R W Cook, S Cook, Fleet, Flintoff, James, Laffey, A E Lilley, G Lilley, A Marshall, Plant, Preece, Shaw, Simmons and Wright.

Resident Representatives: Jean Kennedy, Iris Ryder and Linda Shields

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

**3. MINUTES**

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2008 (*to follow*)

**4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

4.1 Portfolio Holder's Response to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's Final Report – Review of the Authority's Postal Services - *Joint Report of the Chief Personnel Officer and the Deputy Mayor / Portfolio Holder for Performance*

**5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

5.1 Scrutiny Topic Referral from Cabinet - 'Draft CCTV Strategy' – *Scrutiny Manager*

# PLEASE NOTE VENUE

## 6. FORWARD PLAN

No Items

## 7. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

No items

## 8. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS

No items

## 9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

9.1 Final Report – Availability of Good Quality Affordable Social Rented Accommodation in Hartlepool – *Chair of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum*

9.2 Scrutiny Forums – Progress Reports:-

- (a) Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee – *Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee;*
- (b) Children's Services Scrutiny Forum – *Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Forum;*
- (c) Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum - *Chair of Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum;*
- (d) Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum – *Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum;* and
- (e) Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum – *Chair of Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum.*

9.3 Current Status of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2007/08 – *Scrutiny Manager*

## 10. CALL-IN REQUESTS

## 11. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

### FOR INFORMATION

**Date of Next Meeting Friday 14 March 2008, commencing at 1.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre.**

# **SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES**

18 January 2008

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors Stephen Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Shaun Cook, Mary Fleet, Bob Flintoff, Pauline Laffey, Ann Marshall, Michelle Plant, Arthur Preece, Jane Shaw, Chris Simmons and Edna Wright.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 (ii), Councillor Sheila Griffin attended as substitute for Councillor Jonathan Brash.

Resident Representatives: Linda Shields

Also Present: Campbell Drearden, Audit Commission

Officers: Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive  
Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer  
Mike Ward, Chief Financial Officer  
Vijaya Kotur, Diversity Officer  
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager  
James Walsh, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **100. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jonathan Brash, Alison Lilley and Geoff Lilley and Resident Representative Iris Ryder.

### **101. Declarations of interest by Members**

None.

### **102. Minutes of the meetings held on 4 January 2008**

Confirmed.

**103. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Reports of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee**

None.

**104. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews from Council, Executive Members and Non Executive Members**

None.

**105. Forward Plan**

None.

**106. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents – 2008/09 Budget and Policy Framework Proposals: Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The Scrutiny Manager sought approval of a report containing the draft responses from the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and the four standing Scrutiny Forums to the Budget Consultation: Draft Budget and Policy Framework Proposals 2008/09, prior to its submission to Cabinet on the 4 February 2008. Members were largely supportive of the identified departmental pressures, contingencies, terminating grants, priorities and efficiencies, however, there were a number of concerns/comments outlined within section 3 of the report.

In addition to the collective response outlined in Section 3 of the report, a discussion ensued in which the following issues were raised:

- (i) Members were disappointed with the Cabinet's decision not to support hanging baskets, which, it was felt gave a positive image of Hartlepool to both residents and visitors across the whole town.
- (ii) It was suggested by Members that the actual set-up costs of the Financial Inclusion Development Scheme with the National Credit Union were far greater than the costs and contributions proposed. The Chief Financial Officer responded that this was an open ended commitment and would be funded from balances.
- (iii) Members were disappointed to note that when referring to the setting of council tax, percentages were used. It was suggested that referring to the amount of money this relates to per year might help with clarity.

- (iv) Cabinet were asked to reconsider and reinstate previous budget savings from the Adult and Community Services in relation to support and encouragement for prospective adopters and foster carers in Hartlepool and Children's Services Department in relation to support for young people. Members felt very strongly about this issue and added that the reinstatement of this budget would be a courageous move in making a difference to the people of Hartlepool.
- (v) Clarification was sought on the inclusion of £1.2m from the nuclear power station? The Chief Financial Officer indicated that there were a number of one-off items that Cabinet were recommending be used to meet the costs of 2008/09. It was noted that even with a 4.9% increase, there was still a small deficit of around £200k in the Council's overall budget.
- (vi) Members requested that where surplus resources were identified during the year, they were lodged in the general fund balances until such time as Full Council decides how these resources should be reallocated.
- (vii) It was noted that the costs associated with the provision of Basic Bank Accounts via the Hartlepool Credit Union provided previously, indicated that the set up costs were in the region of £120K and that a budget pressure was indicated of £45K in 2008/09 being a contribution from Council towards these costs. An additional £15K had also been projected towards the revenue running costs of the scheme during 2009/10 and clarification on this issue was requested as these figures did not reflect the costings shown in this report.

The report requested that delegated authority be given to the Chair of this Committee to approve the content of the formal response prior to submission to Cabinet.

### **Recommended**

- (i) That the Chief Financial Officer clarify the set-up costs of the Financial Inclusion Development Scheme with the National Credit Union in writing to Members prior to submission to Council.
- (ii) Cabinet be requested to reconsider and reinstate the budget savings for 2007/08 of £400k in Adult and Community Services in relation to support and encouragement for prospective adopters and foster carers and provide for a budget pressure of £500k in Children's Services Departments in relation to support for young people.
- (iii) Cabinet note Members disappointment with the decision not to support hanging baskets, which, it was felt gave a positive image of Hartlepool to both residents and visitors across the whole town.
- (iv) That consideration be given to identifying the amount of money involved in any council tax setting exercise as opposed to percentages.

- (v) That where surplus resources were identified, they be lodged in the general fund balances to enable consideration of their reallocation by Full Council.
- (vi) The Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee be given delegated authority to approve the formal response to the Executive's Budget and Policy Framework proposals for 2008/09 for submission to Cabinet on 4 February 2008.

#### **107. Audit Commission Report – Data Quality** *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

The Assistant Chief Executive presented a report which provided Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with the results of the Audit Commission's work on data quality. Attached by way of Appendix was the Audit Commission report on data quality.

In summary, the findings were that the Council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality were demonstrating adequate performance and analytical review work identified that PI values reviewed fell within expected ranges and were substantiated by evidence.

Clarification was sought on the scale used for measuring performance. The representative from the Audit Commission indicated that the overall scale fed into the Corporate Performance Assessment. The Assistant Chief Executive added that the framework used by the Audit Commission did include some areas that the Council did not measure, however, it was noted that this did not affect the quality of data reported. If it was felt that any of these areas added value to the data quality of the Council, they would be included.

Members noted the assessment in relation to private sector homes vacant over 6 months and were surprised that lack of communication was stated as a reason for the unfairly statement assessment. The Assistant Chief Executive commented that a slight misunderstanding with the technical information used had arisen between the two departments involved and that mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that this minor communication issue did not reoccur.

##### **Recommended**

That the Audit Commission report be noted.

#### **108. New Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008/11 Proposed Outcome and Targets Framework** *(Head of Community Strategy)*

The Head of Community Strategy presented a report which updated Members on the progress made in developing the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) and set out the proposed outcome and target framework as the basis for negotiations with Government Office North East (GONE). The report also contained the detail of the proposed framework endorsed by

the Hartlepool Partnership on 7 December 2007 and Cabinet on 10 December 2007.

A discussion ensued in which the following issues were raised.

- Members were surprised to note that there were no outcomes within the LAA relating specifically to alcohol related issues. The Head of Community Strategy indicated that this issue was included as a local priority target but that further baseline information was required to form robust targets to enable inclusion within the LAA outcomes and targets. The introduction of the Alcohol Strategy last year would provide this information. A request was made for further information on the implementation and enforcement of the Alcohol Strategy. The Head of Community Strategy indicated that this information would be sent to Members direct.
- It was acknowledged that whilst it was difficult to identify strategies to strengthen communities, Members were of the opinion that community representatives within the LSP framework should have the power of veto where it could be clearly demonstrated that the strategic/policy direction within other themes would have a detrimental effect on community cohesion and therefore “weaken” communities.
- A request was made for further information on the implementation and enforcement of the Alcohol Strategy. The Head of Community Strategy indicated that this information would be sent to Members direct.

### **Recommended**

- (i) The proposed Outcomes and Improvement Targets for the new LAA were agreed.
- (ii) That delegated responsibility be given to the Assistant Chief Executive and the Head of Community Strategy to negotiate with relevant lead officers and Government Office on the improvement targets for the new LAA.

## **109. Corporate Access Strategy and Publicity for Translation and Interpretation Services** *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

The Chief Personnel Officer presented a report which provided Members with an opportunity to consider and comment on the draft Access Strategy and proposals regarding the way the translation and interpretation services provided by the Council were publicised for the Performance Portfolio Holder's consideration. Members were informed that a wide range of translation and interpretation services were available and details of these were attached at Appendix A. The draft Access Strategy had been developed and included a suite of connected strategies and was attached at Appendix B.

Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee had previously suggested that a brand be developed specifically to highlight to stakeholders which services available in different formats. However, it was proposed that the Council logo be used to identify where translation and interpretation services were available as this was already widely recognised as identifying the Council. It was envisaged that ultimately the translation and interpretation services would be available wherever this logo appeared. The publicity arrangements being considered were posters, specific leaflets, prompt board for employees and targeted distribution of leaflets to specific areas of town. Examples of the posters and leaflets were distributed at the meeting for Members comments. As the posters and leaflets were in draft format, the Chief Personnel Officer confirmed to Members that they would indicate, in various languages, what support was available. Members were also asked to note that the Council's website was being developed to incorporate this information also.

A discussion ensued in which the following issues were raised:

- It was recognised that a lot of young people from non-English speaking parents translated information for their parents. In light of this, it was felt that these young people would easily be able to identify what type of information would get their parents' attention. The Diversity Officer indicated that she was currently working with ethnic minority groups and had identified some barriers.
- Members felt strongly that the use of the English language should be encouraged within the communities, possibly through the introduction of classes teaching the English language? The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that English language course had been provided by Adult Education but was subject to the availability of funding.
- The need for the local authority to be pro-active and work alongside groups such as the Salaam Centre was recognised to ensure that support was given to residents to enable them to access the information they require.
- Clarification was sought on the funding of the production and distribution of the posters and leaflets. The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that funding was available from within the Human Resources budget for the initial production and distribution with more being produced depending on the take up of the services. It was recognised that the training of front-line staff would be an investment in the Council's employees and would also be funded from the HR budget.
- It was noted that the translation and interpretation services could provide an opportunity to encourage wider engagement with minority groups and communities and that the possibility of having a link worker to work with these organisations and community groups to facilitate this should be explored.
- A Member suggested that a laminated card could be produced in various languages for people entering the Council's receptions to direct them to the appropriate service. The Diversity Officer reassured Members that cards were available and that all front-line



staff were fully trained and aware of the different translation and interpretation services available. During the consultation with the Talking with Communities group, they had indicated that they were confident they could visit the Civic Centre and ask for help. Although it was acknowledged that most visits to the Civic Centre were routine in nature, language line was available should an emergency situation arise.

- Clarification was sought on how telephone calls from non-English speaking residents would be dealt with. The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that the caller would be put through to language line who would arrange an interpreter immediately.
- A Member questioned the use of signage which would be identifiable to all languages. The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that the onus was on individual departments to consider the impact on the wider community and that the Highways Department had been asked to consider the broader community, possibly through the use of international symbols.
- Clarification was sought on the suggested use of the Council's logo as opposed to a specific brand? The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that attempts had been made to find a brand but it had been discovered that most people link the logo to Council services. Consultation had been undertaken with the Talking with Communities group and they had been very supportive of the use of the Council's logo to identify that services were available in other formats.

Members did not support the view that the Council's logo was sufficient to identify the provision of translation and interpretation services and were disappointed that a specific brand had not been developed. The request for a specific brand was therefore reiterated and a suggestion was made to involve local schools by way of a competition for the design of such a brand.

### **Recommended**

Members endorsed the draft Access Strategy and proposed publicity arrangements of the Interpretation and Translation Services subject to a specific brand being developed to identify where these services were available, and that the possibility of involving local primary schools in the design of this brand be explored.

## **110. Corporate Plan 2008/09 – Proposed Outcomes** *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

The Assistant Chief Executive presented a report which enabled Members of the Committee to consider and comment on the proposed Corporate Plan outcomes for 2008/09. The Portfolio Holder for Performance was hoping to be in attendance at today's meeting, but unfortunately had to submit her apologies.

Members were asked to note that as the process of the production of the

Corporate Plan evolved, the information provided would be progressively more detailed with key performance measures and targets added at various stages. In addition to this, the Assistant Chief Executive indicated that there had been 198 indicators introduced, although details or definitions would not be available until the end of February. It was noted that all Scrutiny Forums would be given the opportunity to comment on the more detailed action plan in February and March with their findings being reported back to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 15 March 2008.

Clarification was sought on the differing number of targets contained within the Corporate Plan as opposed to the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Assistant Chief Executive clarified that not all LAA targets were linked to Corporate Plan targets with the LAA containing some targets for outside agencies, for example the Primary Care Trust. There were also some targets within the Corporate Plan that were not included within the LAA, for example, Building Schools for the Future.

### **Recommended**

The Corporate Plan outcomes for 2008/09 were noted and referred to the Scrutiny Forums for their detailed consideration.

## **111. Call In Requests**

None.

## **112. Any Other Business**

Members were asked to note that at the meeting of the General Purposes Committee earlier today, discussions ensued with regard to the production of the minutes of Council meetings. It was suggested that if Members wished for a specific point to be noted in the minutes of the meeting, they needed to stress that point. Members were also requested to empower the Democratic Services Officer present at the meeting to seek clarification where necessary.

For clarity, Members were also asked to bear in mind the need to sum up recommendations/decisions to ensure that they were noted as the Committee wished.

MARJORIE JAMES

CHAIR

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Joint Report of Chief Personnel Officer and the Deputy Mayor / Portfolio Holder for Performance

**Subject:** PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S RESPONSE TO THE FINAL REPORT – REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S POSTAL SERVICE

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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with feedback on the recommendations from the investigation into the review of the Authority's Postal Service which was reported to Cabinet on 7 January 2008.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The investigation into the Review of the Authority's Postal Service conducted by this Committee falls under the remit of the Chief Executive's Department and is, under the Executive Delegation Scheme, within the service area covered by the Deputy Mayor / Performance Portfolio Holder.
- 2.2 On 7 January 2008, Cabinet considered the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's Final Report into the Review of the Authority's Postal Service. This report provides feedback from the Portfolio Holder following the Cabinet's consideration of, and decisions in relation to this Committee's recommendations.
- 2.3 In addition to this report a further progress report will be produced for Member's consideration six months after the Final Report was considered by Council to enable Members to monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

### 3. SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE DECISION

- 3.1 Following consideration of the Final Report, Cabinet approved the recommendations in their entirety. Details of each recommendation and proposed actions to be taken following approval by Cabinet are provided in the Action Plan attached at **Appendix A**.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 That Members note the proposed actions detailed within the Action Plan, appended to this report (**Appendix A**) and seek clarification on its content where felt appropriate.

**Contact Officer:-** Joanne Machers –Chief Personnel Officer  
Chief Executive's Department  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Telephone Number: 01429 523003  
E-mail – joanne.machers@hartlepool.gov.uk

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's Final Report – Review of the Authority's Postal Service considered by Cabinet on 7 January 2008.
- (ii) Decision Record of Cabinet held on 7 January 2008.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN****NAME OF FORUM :**

Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

**NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY:**

Review of the Authority's Postal Service

**DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT:**

Cabinet on 7 January 2008

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>		<b>EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>DELIVERY TIMESCALE</b>
(a)	That a standard approach be adopted throughout the Authority with regard to postal procedures.	A review of the current postal procedures will be undertaken within each department to identify the most efficient method of delivery to be used across the Council.	Christine Armstrong	March 2008
(b)	That the Authority explores the feasibility of implementing where appropriate, the potential efficiencies and service improvements as outlined in paragraph 7.16 of the report within the timetable of the current business process review.	Produce a planned programme of efficiencies and service improvements to be implemented throughout 2008 / 09 in consultation with all departments.	Graham Frankland / Christine Armstrong	Complete plan by February 2008. Institute "quick wins" by March 2008. Implement efficiency programme through 2008 / 09

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>		<b>EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>DELIVERY TIMESCALE</b>
(c)	That during the course of the business process review, consideration also be given to the benefits of utilising an alternative business mail provider together with the procurement of a shared service with neighbouring local authorities.	Undertake an option appraisal and procurement exercise for the provision of mail services, with potential for extending delivery timescale, if required, for a Tees Valley Shared Service.	Graham Frankland	April 2008
(d)	That consideration is given to packaging the contracts for the delivery of the Authority's postal services in such a way as to provide for in-town and out-of-town services.	Consider options for the delivery of in and out-of-town services as part of the procurement and efficiency programme work in (b) and (c).	Graham Frankland / Christine Armstrong	July 2008

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Scrutiny Manager

**Subject:** SCRUTINY TOPIC REFERRAL FROM CABINET –  
'DRAFT CCTV STRATEGY'

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of the recent scrutiny topic referral from the Authority's Cabinet to the Overview and Scrutiny Function.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 As outlined within the Authority's Constitution, the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee has a mandatory obligation to consider referrals from Council, Cabinet and individual Cabinet Members within the timescale prescribed.
- 2.2 As such at a meeting of the Cabinet on 22 January 2008, consideration was given to a report of the Head of Community Safety and Prevention that outlined the progress made in the development of a CCTV Strategy for the town.
- 2.3 At this meeting, it was subsequently agreed that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee be asked to undertake a scrutiny investigation into the appropriate CCTV camera system for Hartlepool with recommendations to be reported to Cabinet in three months time. Attached as **Appendix A** is the detailed Minute Extract for Members information.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee considers the appropriateness of undertaking a scrutiny enquiry into this matter and re-directs this issue to the relevant Scrutiny Forum if appropriate.

**Contact Officer:-** Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager  
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Tel: 01429 523 087  
Email: [charlotte.burnham@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:charlotte.burnham@hartlepool.gov.uk)

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Decision Record of the Cabinet Meeting held on 22 January 2008.



## APPENDIX A

## MINUTE EXTRACT FROM CABINET MEETING OF 22 JANUARY 2008

**190. Draft CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) Strategy** *(Head of Community Safety and Prevention)***Type of decision**

Non key

**Purpose of report**

To update Cabinet on progress made in developing a CCTV Strategy for the town.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Mayor presented the report which gave brief details of the CCTV camera system in Hartlepool and revenue funding sources. The draft strategy, attached at Appendix A, identified several issues which required further consideration before the strategy was finalised:-

- 1) The ageing cameras required increasing maintenance and repairs. This was an increasing cost on the annual revenue budget. A request for additional budget allocation had been made for 2008/09.
- 2) The monitoring arrangements were subject to a Service Level Agreement with Housing Hartlepool, which ended in March 2009.
- 3) The current staffing capacity in the monitoring centre would be less effective if further cameras were added to the system.
- 4) Rather than continuing to add more cameras to the system, cameras could be decommissioned on a one for one basis. Alternatively the strategic significance of each camera site could be considered, and decommissioning of less important cameras undertaken.
- 5) Technology continued to develop and therefore opportunities for different solutions to signal transmission, for example, become available. This could be more efficient than the current provision.
- 6) Current Council policy was to maintain the camera system for the benefit of the community and not to seek to generate income from monitoring other organisation's camera systems. However this could reduce Council costs.

Members suggested that a detailed scrutiny investigation be undertaken on the provision of a suitable CCTV system for Hartlepool to include examination of other organisations camera systems and explore the camera system currently operated in Middlesbrough.

**Decision**

- (i) That the information given, be noted.
- (ii) That a scrutiny investigation be undertaken on an appropriate CCTV camera system for Hartlepool with recommendations to be reported to Cabinet in three months time.

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum

**Subject:** FINAL REPORT – THE AVAILABILITY OF GOOD  
QUALITY AFFORDABLE RENTED SOCIAL  
ACCOMMODATION IN HARTLEPOOL

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's findings following completion of its investigation into 'The Availability of Good Quality Affordable Rented Social Accommodation in Hartlepool'.

### 2 SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum, at its meeting on the 14 June 2007, established its annual work programme for the 2007/08 municipal year. During the course of this meeting, concerns were raised regarding the effect of increasing pressure on the current housing market in Hartlepool and the problems which this had created in terms of:-
- (i) Demand exceeding supply in most areas;
  - (ii) A considerable uplift in house prices in the last 5 years;
  - (iii) Strong demand for private rented accommodation, and
  - (iv) Limited capacity in the social rented sector with long waiting lists, low vacancy rates and reducing stock.
- 2.2 Issues of particular concern for the Forum were the availability of good quality affordable accommodation in Hartlepool and, in relation to the provision of 'social' accommodation, the increasing length of housing waiting lists held by the town's Registered Social Landlords. With this in mind, the Forum was of the view that Scrutiny has a key role to play in the identification of a way forward to address the issues and selected 'The Availability of Good Quality Affordable Rented Social Accommodation in Hartlepool' as its first investigation for 2007/08.
- 2.3 The selection of the investigation reflected the strength of public feeling regarding this issue. It was also seen by the Forum to be a logical follow-on from the work already undertaken by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny

Forum during its 2006/07 investigation into 'The Performance and Operation of Private Rented Accommodation and Landlords'.

### **3 OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION**

- 3.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to establish the extent of demand for and availability of, good quality affordable rented social accommodation in Hartlepool and recommend options for increasing availability.



### **4 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION**

- 4.1 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny investigation were to:-

- (a) To consider and agree a definition of good quality affordable rented social accommodation for the purpose of the investigation;
- (b) To gain an understanding of national and local policy / guidance, and best practice elsewhere, in relation to the provision of good quality affordable social accommodation, with particular reference to the social rented sector;
- (c) To gain an understanding of how affordable social rented housing is currently provided in Hartlepool and the issues affecting its provision;
- (d) To explore the extent of demand for, and availability of, good quality affordable social rented accommodation in Hartlepool;
- (e) To consider the work already being undertaken by the Council and other agencies to increase the supply of good quality affordable social rented accommodation in Hartlepool, having regard for the differing sectors of need, including the elderly, young people and those with disabilities;
- (f) To explore viable ways of increasing, and maintaining, the availability of good quality affordable social rented accommodation in Hartlepool to go some way to meeting unmet demand, having regard for the differing sectors of need, including the elderly, young people and those with disabilities; and
- (g) To seek the views of residents, including people from minority communities of interest, regarding the availability of good quality affordable social rented accommodation in Hartlepool.

### **5 MEMBERSHIP OF THE REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

5.1 The membership of the Scrutiny Forum was as detailed below:-

Councillors Alison, R W Cook, S Cook, Cranney, Gibbon, Johnson, Laffey, London, A Marshall, Worthy and Wright.

Resident Representatives Ted Jackson, Robert Steele and Iris Ryder.

## 6 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

6.1 Members of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum met formally from July 2007 to January 2008 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.

6.2 A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:-

- (a) Evidence from the town's Member of Parliament;
- (b) Evidence from the Authority's Cabinet Member with Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities;
- (c) Evidence from the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services and other relevant Hartlepool Borough Council Officers;
- (d) Evidence on the role / activities of the Housing Corporation;
- (e) The views of local residents and tenants, including representatives of minority groups/communities of interest to supplement existing research;
- (f) The views of the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums;
- (g) Evidence from Registered Social Landlords with properties in Hartlepool;
- (h) Evidence of best practice in other local authorities; and
- (i) The views of Ward Councillors.

## FINDINGS

### 7 DEFINITIONS OF 'AFFORDABLE' AND 'SOCIAL RENTED' ACCOMMODATION

7.1 As a starting point for the Scrutiny process, the Forum found it beneficial to establish clear definitions of the terms 'affordable' housing and 'social rented' housing for the purpose of the investigation. Members noted the difference between the terms 'affordability' (as a measure of housing affordable to certain groups of households) and 'affordable housing' (particular products outside the housing market) and agreed the following definitions:-

7.2 **‘Affordable Housing’** is social rented and intermediate housing provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market, with the purpose of:

- Meeting the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices; and
- Including the provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.<sup>(x)</sup>

7.3 **‘Social Rented Accommodation’** is rented housing owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSL’s), for whom guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.<sup>(x)</sup>

7.4 The Forum noted with interest that the general definition of ‘affordable housing’ includes both ‘social rented’ and ‘intermediate’ housing. Intermediate housing being housing at prices and rents above those of social rent but below market price and rents (including shared equity products, other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent). The Forum also learned that homes provided by private sector bodies, or without grant funding, can also be classified as ‘affordable housing’ for planning (providing they meet the above definition).

7.5 Taking into consideration the general definition provided in Section 7.4, the Forum chose to continue to focus its investigation on the provision of ‘social rented’ housing. Members, however, acknowledged the importance of private sector bodies and the provision of intermediate housing schemes as an integral part of the wider housing market in Hartlepool.

## 8 GOVERNMENT POLICY RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION

8.1 Members considered evidence in relation to national / regional policy and best practice in terms of the provision on affordable accommodation. It was apparent to Members from the information provided below, that the wider issue of provision of affordable accommodation, and Councils’ strategic housing role in providing it, are key elements of Central Government’s agenda for achieving ‘Sustainable Communities’, with emphasis on the provision of successful, safe, and thriving neighbourhoods where people want to live. The Forum was also pleased to learn that the ‘Barker Review of Housing Supply’<sup>(ii)</sup> had recommended that there should be an increase in the provision of social rented housing to deal primarily with increasing house prices, resulting in a growth in need for social housing, and the consequences of the loss of stock through Right to Buy.

## National Policy

8.2 **‘Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable’ Housing Green Paper (July 2007)** set out plans to work with partners for the provision of more homes to meet growing demand; well-designed greener homes, linked to good schools, transport and healthcare and more affordable homes to buy or rent. These plans required:-

- (i) A collaborative effort involving local communities, local authorities and their delivery partners; the home building industry, regional bodies, and Government and its agencies;
- (ii) A new target of delivering 2 million homes by 2016 including 20,000 on surplus public sector land;
- (iii) More affordable homes to be supplied to help young people and families - a target of 70,000 more affordable homes a year by 2010-11;
- (iv) Local authorities to identify enough land to deliver the homes needed in their area over the next 15 years by rapidly implementing new planning policy for housing;
- (v) Intensive assessment of housing land availability; and
- (vi) The exploration of new methods of funding/providing social housing.

8.3 The Forum welcomed the proposals contained within the Green Paper and the views expressed by Members during the investigation contributed to the formulation of a consultation response to the document.

8.4 **North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Consultation Draft May 2007** set out proposals that:-

- (i) Affordable housing should meet local aspirations and be situated in locations where it is needed;
- (ii) Local Planning Authorities will need to demonstrate that housing need exists and that mechanisms to retain the affordability of the housing in perpetuity are clearly established; and
- (iii) Encourages the use of planning obligations to achieve affordable housing.

8.5 **“Housing” Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) DCLG (November 2006)** highlighted the need to provide a variety of housing in terms of tenure, price and a mix of different households such as families with children, single person households and older people. The PPS3 required the local authority to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (details of which are outlined in Sections 11.4 and 11.5 of this report) and required that the local planning authority:-

- (i) Set separate targets for social-rented and intermediate housing;
- (ii) Specify the size and type of affordable housing likely to be needed in particular locations;

- (iii) Set out a range of circumstances in which affordable housing would be required; and
- (iv) Set out the approach to seeking developer contributions to facilitate the provision of affordable houses.

8.6 **‘Delivering Affordable Housing’ (November 2006)** set out guidelines for:-

- (i) More high quality affordable housing within mixed sustainable communities to widen the opportunities for home ownership and offer greater quality, flexibility and choice to those who rent;
- (ii) An increase in the provision of social rented housing;
- (iii) Encouraged the best possible use of planning obligations and other tools to improve delivery and to set ambitious but realistic affordable housing targets and thresholds that do not jeopardise the viability of sites; and
- (iv) Creative use of their own resources for example by giving planning permission or other support including land or money to new providers.

## Local Policy

8.7 **Hartlepool’s Housing Strategy (2006)** complements the key themes within the overall Community Strategy for the town, focusing on:-

- (i) Addressing the housing regeneration challenge and dealing with issues of housing market imbalance and problems caused by low and changing demand for housing;
- (ii) Meeting and surpassing the national targets for Decent Homes standards; and
- (iii) Ensuring the housing and support needs of the most vulnerable in our town are met.

8.8 Members noted that the Housing Strategy (2006) had been developed to complement the key themes contained within the towns overall Community Strategy, whilst also making the necessary links to a range of other regional, sub regional and other local policies and plans.

8.9 From the information provided, the Forum learned that Hartlepool’s policy, including the towns Local Plan, did not include specific provision for the provision of affordable housing. During exploration of the reason for this the Forum noted that the statutory plans process extended over a number of years and that until very recently housing affordability had not been a major issue sub-regionally. However, changes to the wider housing market, as outlined in Section 11.11 onwards of the report, now meant that increasing the supply of new and high quality affordable homes was a strategic priority, not just for Hartlepool but, for the Tees Valley as a whole. In light of this, Members welcomed indications that work to include affordable housing within local planning policy was now underway through the Local Development Framework (LDF) to reflect the rapid changes being experienced in town’s housing market.

## Best Practice in another Local Authority

- 8.10 In terms of 'best practice' the Forum noted the activities of Harrogate District Council and Darlington Borough Council. Particular attention was drawn to the Harrogate's success in terms of the good number of planning developments which include requirements for the provision of affordable housing. It was, however, noted that sites in Harrogate are expensive and that the knock on effect of this had been to deter developers.
- 8.11 In terms of Darlington Borough Council, attention was drawn to the inclusion of a specific 'Affordable Housing Plan' within the Councils overall 'Housing Plan'. Members noted that work was also underway for the inclusion in planning developments of a requirement for the provision of social housing and the authorities support for shared equity schemes as a way of improving levels of affordable social housing across all tenures of property.

## 9 THE HOUSING MARKET IN HARTLEPOOL

- 9.1 Prior to focusing its investigation on the provision of affordable social rented accommodation, the Forum found it useful to gain an understanding of the composition of the wider housing market in Hartlepool and explored perceptions of its affordability.

### Composition of Hartlepool's Overall Housing Market

- 9.2 Members learned that the housing market in Hartlepool had historically been self-contained in terms of tenant numbers. However, this situation had changed over the last five years with an in-migration of residents from elsewhere in the North East increasing the number of households in Hartlepool from 34,300 in 1981 to 40,000 in 2006, with a projected figure for 2021 of 44,200. This increase alongside demographic changes, including an increasing elderly population, had been a significant factor in increasing demand over supply in most areas across Hartlepool. In turn, escalating house prices and intensifying demand for private and social rented accommodation from those unable to afford to buy their own homes, further details of which were outlined in Section 12 of this report.
- 9.3 Whilst in positive terms the Members acknowledged that the in-migration of residents reflected the increasing quality of housing on offer in the town, particularly the peripheral new build estates in western areas of the town, continuing concern was expressed regarding the type of homes being provided. The Forum highlighted the need for more realistically affordable family homes as part of new developments and, given the upward trend in the elderly population (expected to continue until 2029), suitable accommodation for elderly and disabled residents.
- 9.4 In terms of the composition of the market in Hartlepool, the Forum was aware of the towns' affluent / buoyant western and suburban areas, its relatively deprived town centre core and thriving new market areas.



Members noted the existence of a longstanding imbalance within Hartlepool in terms of the types of property available, with a much higher proportion of older / smaller 2 and 3 bedroom terraced properties than detached and semi-detached (family) homes. Evidence showed that in 2001, 41% of Hartlepool's market consisted of such terraced property (compared to 32% in the Tees Valley and 26% for England and Wales as a whole) and Members were concerned regarding the significant affect this had on availability and demand across all sectors of the market (Social rented, private rented and owner occupiers) and many areas of the community.

### Affordability of the Housing Market in Hartlepool

- 9.5 Members were surprised to learn that on a comparative basis average wages in Hartlepool were in fact relatively high and dwelling prices cheaper than in any of the other Tees Valley districts (82% of the Tees Valley average and 52% of the national average).<sup>(xi)</sup> A combination of these factors had in turn created a housing market in Hartlepool which was perceived by regional and national bodies as being in reality relatively affordable. A comparison of house prices to earnings is shown in **Table 1** to help illustrate this.

**Table 1 - House Prices to Earnings (4th Quarter 2006)**

	Mean House Prices All property types (2006) - £	Average Earnings of Full Time Employees (2005) - £ (per annum)
Darlington	137,000	22,400
Hartlepool	108,500	24,400
Middlesbrough	120,700	21,500
Redcar & C'land	132,800	22,400
Stockton-on-Tees	149,700	25,100
<b>Tees Valley</b>	<b>132,800</b>	<b>23,400</b>
North East	139,600	23,900
England & Wales	207,600	29,900

*Source: Land Registry/ASHE*

- 9.6 Whilst Members acknowledged the basis for the national and regional perception of Hartlepool's housing market, they strongly supported the reality for many of their residents that good quality housing, whether it be rented or bought, was either beyond their means or simply in too short a supply.

## 10 HOW AFFORDABLE RENTED SOCIAL HOUSING MARKET IN HARTLEPOOL

- 10.1 As part of its investigation the Forum gained an understanding of how Rented Social Housing was provided in Hartlepool. Members learned that Hartlepool's housing market had always, and continued to consist of a relatively high percentage of social housing. This was illustrated by current figures which showed that 25% of the town's stock (a total of 10,000 properties) was currently provided through social housing. Whilst this was higher than the national average of 20%, the Forum learned that this figure had decreased from over 28% in 2001, a primary factor in which had been

the effects of the Right to Buy (RTB) scheme. Further details of RTB issues were discussed in Section 11.7 of this report.

- 10.2 The Forum noted with interest that the 10,000 social rented properties available in Hartlepool were currently provided, and managed, by a total of 15 RSL's, all of which had been invited to participate in this investigation. The majority of these properties (70%) were, however, provided by one organisation, Housing Hartlepool, whose stock consists predominantly of former "Council houses" transferred to them by the local authority in 2004.
- 10.3 Members expressed support for the work being undertaken by the town's RSL's and welcomed assurances, from the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool, that all RSL's let their properties for 'affordable' rents with no benefit gap. Members also welcomed confirmation that the Social Rented Housing Sector was tightly regulated by the Housing Corporation, Audit Commission and Charity Commission, with emphasis on the provision of good standards of management. Whilst this was in contrast with the relatively poor management controls for the private rented sector, it was recognised by the Forum that the private rented sector also had a significant role to play in Hartlepool's housing market, with the desirability (or otherwise) of accommodation in this sector impacting on the demand for affordable social housing.

## **11 ISSUES AFFECTING THE PROVISION OF GOOD QUALITY AFFORDABLE RENTED SOCIAL ACCOMMODATION IN HARTLEPOOL**

- 11.1 Based upon the evidence provided, the Forum established that several key issues had, and continued to, impact upon the provision of good quality affordable rented social accommodation in Hartlepool. These included:-
- (i) Housing Needs / Demand;
  - (ii) Levels of Existing Stock (Availability);
  - (iii) Housing Market Changes;
  - (iv) Housing Market Renewal;
  - (v) Land Supply;
  - (vi) New Build; and
  - (vii) Planning Policy.

### **Housing Need / Demand**

- 11.2 In relation to housing need, the Forum noted that whilst the social housing sector in Hartlepool had experienced some issues with difficult to let dwellings, there had been no widespread issue with under use / abandonment of social housing or poor design. Problems in Hartlepool had tended to relate to an inability to invest in stock, some obsolete housing stock and past estate design issues.
- 11.3 The Forum learned that today's social housing market was far removed from that of 2002, where demand was static or falling and waiting lists were short or non existent. In today's market, demand for affordable social housing has

been driven up in the main by sharp increases in house prices, with other contributory factors being:-

- (i) Reducing social rented housing stock over time through Right to Buy;
- (ii) Increased household formation;
- (iii) Increasing in-migration into Hartlepool; and
- (iv) Localised pressures associated with the ongoing housing regeneration programme.

11.4 Whilst the Forum noted that the availability of 'affordable' housing was recognised as a national problem, Members were concerned that the results of the recently completed 'Housing Needs Assessment' had shown that the problem in Hartlepool equated to an annual affordable housing shortfall of 393 properties. Although there were similar high levels of need across the sub-region, and the region, Members were alarmed to learn that Hartlepool's shortfall equated to the average annual number of all housing completions in the town over last decade. On this basis, Members acknowledged the needed to be realistic regarding the Councils ability to address this shortfall in that it may well be possible to reduce a proportion of the figure through the actions outlined later in report (Section 12 of the report refers).

11.5 Members welcomed indications that increasing the supply of new and high quality affordable housing was now a key strategic priority, both in Hartlepool and across the wider Tees Valley. The Forum was encouraged to learn that a Strategic Housing Market Assessment had already been undertaken within Hartlepool, the results of which confirmed:-

- (i) A significant level of unmet housing need in Hartlepool today, with 3,700 residents on housing register, 3,000, of which were not currently social renters; and
- (ii) The limited level of capacity remaining within the social rented sector, its low vacancy rates and long waiting lists with unmet need highest for larger (3+ bedrooms) family housing (75%), followed by bungalows and supported accommodation (19%).

11.6 In considering these results, the Forum noted the statistical evidence in relation to relatively low level of demand for the provision of bungalows and supported accommodation in comparison to other types of property in Hartlepool. There was, however, evidence that Hartlepool's population is ageing, as outlined in Section 9.3 of the report, a view which was supported by the number of concerns raised with Members. In view of this, Members felt strongly that the provision of accommodation for elderly and disabled residents should be accommodated within new developments where possible and suggested that a minimum of two bedrooms should be provided to enable support providers to stay over. It was, however, also recognised that ways in which this accommodation was provided needed to be viewed more innovatively. This could include the use of other one level accommodation e.g. ground floor flats.

## Levels of Existing Stock

- 11.7 Evidence provided by the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services, showed that the number of authority social properties had reduced significantly over recent years, from approximately 12,000 to 7,000. Members noted with concern the significant role which Right to Buy (RTB) had played in this, with 1425 properties bought over the last 10 years, most notably in 'traditional' type property i.e. 2 and 3 bedrooms family houses. This situation had been further compounded by housing policy changes in the 1980s which had prevented local authorities in England from building new social stock in any significant numbers (for example the last new build Council homes in Hartlepool were completed in the mid 1980s).
- 11.8 Although RTB demand had been strong across the town, the Forum noted peaks in areas including Clavering, Throston Grange, large parts of Owton Manor and Rossmere, where 90% of housing stock had been lost via RTB over the last 20 years. On a more positive note, although 40% of the original housing stock had been lost, 12% of which had been over the last 10 years, the Forum welcomed indications that the trend for RTB's was now decreasing towards much lower numbers of approximately 50 per year. Details of this are illustrated in **Table 2** below.

**Table 2 - Hartlepool Right to Buy Sales 1998-2007**

Time Period		Number of Dwellings Sold
April 1998	March 1999	57
April 1999	March 2000	75
April 2000	March 2001	105
April 2001	March 2002	171
April 2002	March 2003	257
April 2003	March 2004	273
April 2004	March 2005	259
April 2005	March 2006	113
April 2006	March 2007	95
April 2007	To date	20 (full year equivalent 53)
<b>Total</b>		<b>1425</b>

Source: Scoping Report – 6 September 2007

- 11.9 The Forum was reminded that the RTB scheme was only accessible for former Council tenants, with 5 years occupancy and the level of any investment for refurbishment taken into account when calculating the RTB price. For those who were not former Council tenants 'Right to Acquire' rules provided a similar scheme, however, Members were reassured to learn that this was not expected to have the same impact on stock levels as RTB.

Assurances were also welcomed that RSL's in Hartlepool were endeavouring to increase supply to meet increasing demand through the process identified later in the report.

- 11.10 The Forum noted that the standard of social housing stock in Hartlepool was high and that historically there had been significant investment in the sector by the Council through housing or regeneration programmes. The Forum also recognised the impact on stock turnover of Hartlepool Housings' success in terms stock management, and delivery of its Decent Homes Modernisation scheme, with the Strategic Housing Market Assessment showing that 80% of the 393 property annual shortfall relate to social rented accommodation.

### **Housing Market Changes**

- 11.11 In exploring issues around the effect of housing market changes on the provision of affordable social accommodation, Members noted the implications of rapid house price inflation on resident's ability to buy homes and in turn demand for affordable social housing. The Forum learned that dwelling prices of all properties types across Hartlepool had risen by 43%, between 2004 / 06, a figure which added further to Members scepticism regarding the affordability of housing in Hartlepool.
- 11.12 The Forum also learned that house price inflation had created a knock on effect for land prices, resulting in instances where RSL's had made the maximum allowance for land likely to be acceptable to the Housing Corporation's, only to be 'gazumped' by a private developer. This was recognised by the Forum as being a little known, but significant, factor in preventing the delivery of new social housing stock.

### **Housing Market Renewal**

- 11.13 Confirmation of housing market changes in Hartlepool came as no surprise to Members who were receiving housing availability complaints from their Constituents on a regular basis. Members noted with interest, the implications of housing market renewal and the changing nature of housing demand on the provision of affordable social rented accommodation, particularly in some older private terraced housing areas to the west and north of the town centre. Whilst the Forum recognised that this situation had worsened in Hartlepool over recent years, for example in terms of high levels of dwelling vacancy and associated issues related to market failure in several areas of older housing, Members were encouraged to learn that the Council had given priority within its Housing Strategies, and the Local Development Plan / Planning Policy Framework, to deal effectively with these issues. A key factor in this being the identification of ways to deal with the situation in a sensitive, coherent and managed fashion, through a combination of selective demolition, clearance and redevelopment, and housing improvement.

- 11.14 Members recognised that a significant programme of redevelopment within older housing areas had already begun. However, some concern was expressed that the demolition of older properties may not always be the best course of action given the shortage of good quality affordable housing in the town. On the other hand the need to meet modern housing aspirations and improve housing quality was acknowledged. Whilst it was acknowledged that some residents could be reluctant to move away from homes within communities they were familiar, it was recognised that the programme was developed and delivered in a sensitive fashion and in consultation with communities. Members recognised that the refurbishment of older properties to the required standards and modern aspirations was not always economically viable.
- 11.15 With this in mind, the Forum supported the suggestion that the most appropriate way forward was to replace older housing areas through a process of gradual renewal, working with the communities affected. The Forum also recognised the importance of :-
- (i) Increasing availability of modern new dwellings meeting modern aspirations across the housing market as a means of opening up alternative housing options for existing social rented tenants, thus freeing up social rented accommodation for other tenants; and
  - (ii) Improved performance and operation within the private rented sector (management through regulation) to make it more attractive to tenants, reducing pressure on social rented accommodation. This view had also been expressed by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum during its investigation into 'The Performance and Operation of Private Sector Landlords in Hartlepool'.

## Land Supply

- 11.16 Members noted with interest the requirement for local authorities to demonstrate at least a 5 year land supply for housing. The Forum was concerned to learn that this was viewed as somewhat problematic for Hartlepool, in that the Council had insufficient large scale landholdings of publicly owned land within the Hartlepool boundary appropriate for housing development. In looking at ways of dealing with this, Members were encouraged to learn that considerable work was being undertaken through the Council's '3-5 Year Land Disposal Strategy' to identify a way forward. This included exploration of the feasibility of the use of smaller plots and the possible need to consider the release of greenfield land and review business allocations within the local plan.
- 11.17 The Forum was pleased to learn that work so far had resulted in the identification of 25 possible sites, but noted that many of these presented policy difficulties. These sites are:-

- (i) 20 small sites - all under 1 hectare which generally accommodates 40-50 dwellings;

*(3 in the East Central Area, including the Reed Street site and the very small site at Crown House, 10 involving both the total or partial loss of green space and 6 previously developed land now possibly classed as amenity open space)*

- (ii) 2 large sites under consideration within the Building Schools for the Future Review; and

- (iii) 3 remaining larger sites.

*(1 greenfield site, requiring the loss of employment land, 1 site already allocated in the draft Local Plan and 1 backland site)*

11.18 Members acknowledged that a contributory factor to the viability of sites for social housing was the price at which land was disposed of, details of which are discussed further in Section 11.22 of the report. Members noted that success in the bidding process to the Housing Corporation was effectively dependent on the provision of subsidised land. The Forum learned that Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 currently required the Council to sell all land for the best possible consideration, i.e. achieving the highest possible value from any sale. However, the Forum learned that there were routes through which sites could be disposed of below market value. These included:-

- (i) The submission of an application for the use of General Disposal Consent (GDC) should they wish to dispose of land at less than market value; and
- (ii) In instances where it was considered disposal of land would improve social and economic well-being of an area or residents land could be sold at less than market value without GDC. It was considered that sale of land for social housing could be covered within this consent.

11.19 In considering the feasibility for disposal of land in this way to make it more economically viable for the provision of social housing, the Forum recognised that there are competing priorities with the Council's need to achieve capital receipts to fund capital projects. The Forum acknowledged that this was a very difficult subject, but recognised that the provision of land at less than market value could well be the only way to make the building of new affordable homes financially viable for registered social landlords, enabling them to succeed in securing funding from the Housing Corporation.

11.20 As such, in order to demonstrate the local authority's commitment to providing good quality affordable social rented housing, Members expressed support for the implementation of a criterion based policy indicating in principle that the local authority was prepared to sell its land to RSL's at

below market value, subject to certain criteria with each case being considered on its merits.

### **New Build**

- 11.21 It was evident to Members that whilst development rates for housing in Hartlepool had been relatively high, with about 300 dwellings per year for the last 15 years, new build of social housing purposes had been relatively low since 1998. A contributor factor to this had, and continued to be, the availability of building plots with no large bank of Council owned land suitable for this purpose.
- 11.22 Members found that in addition to conventional rented social properties, a smaller number of shared ownership properties were also being provided, with more in the pipeline through new development schemes in the town centre housing regeneration areas. Concentrating on the provision of rented accommodation, Members learned that RSL's submit bids to the Housing Corporation for funding to build new properties every 2 years, although this years bid was for a three year period.
- 11.23 The Forum learned that each bid was required to meet regional priorities, as set by the local authority as the Strategic Housing Authority, and be deliverable in terms of site assembly and planning. It was noted that grants paid had on average last year been at around £61,000 per unit, however, indications were that the subsidy regime was being tightened with levels per unit this year expected to be in the region of £50,000 per dwelling. This reduced subsidy, combined with the factor that the Housing Corporation would not accept paying market value for local authority land, placed pressure of the economic viability of new housing sites for RSL's. With Unit costs consisting of construction costs, land cost and fees, RSL's in assessing the viability of sites go consider if the rents that could be charged would cover the gap between the overall cost of the unit and the subsidy provided.
- 11.24 Whilst Members acknowledged that the Housing Corporations main driver was the provision of as many new dwellings as possible for each pound of subsidy, concern was expressed that decreasing level of subsidy were placing pressure upon RSL's to borrow against their assets to fund developments and secure land at below market value. Members also recognised the importance of the Council's 'enabling' role in working with RSL's to develop schemes and support bids for funding from the Housing Corporation. The Forum was encouraged to lean that the provision of new supported housing for vulnerable groups was to continue to be a high priority, with the need for more 'general needs' affordable housing identified in the Housing Needs Assessment 2007.
- 11.25 In terms of the Housing Market Assessment, the Forum supported the sentiment expressed within it that 'given the high level of housing need identified across the Borough it was essential that the Council explore all



opportunities to increase the supply of affordable homes'. Members noted that this could include:-

- (i) Considering disposing of local authority owned land for affordable housing (Section 11.18 to 11.20 refers);
- (ii) Setting affordable housing targets of (at a percentage to be defined), for which x% should be for social rented housing and y% for intermediate tenure (splits to be defined); and
- (iii) Setting site thresholds for affordable housing (in line with PPS3) recognising the capacity of the market.

11.26 In identifying possible sites, the Forum noted that whilst there was some flexibility in the interpretation of the requirements of the Spatial Strategy, there continued to be strong emphasis on the use of brownfield land, especially given that in preparation for the Local Plan a number of housing sites had been deleted by the inspector. Members, however, found that where brownfield sites were marginally viable in financial terms, additional cost to support site remediation and infrastructure often made new social housing schemes either unviable or requiring levels of public subsidy. In these instances affordable housing provision would probably need to be on commercial land terms. In addition to this, the Forum noted that whilst there had been a number of windfall and conversion schemes with regeneration benefits, there would continue to be increasing pressure to make efficient use of land, increase densities and look at modern methods of construction.

## Planning Policy

11.27 Members were frustrated to find that there was currently no requirement within planning policy for the provision of affordable rented housing, neither was there any capacity for the Council to influence the 6000 existing planning permissions in Hartlepool to include affordable rented accommodation. The Forum was, however, pleased to find that in terms of the Victoria Harbour development, whilst there was no requirement in the planning approval for affordable housing negotiations were being undertaken with the Regeneration Company and owner of this site in relation to the mix of housing. Although, Members noted that should the Victoria Harbour not come on stream as soon as expected the Council could be forced to look at other areas, including greenfield sites and the possible re-designation of some unused business sites.

11.28 In terms of the Local Plan, Members noted that it did not currently contain sites identified for the provision of affordable rented housing. In terms of the use of greenfield sites, Members noted that central Government had indicated that greenfield sites should not be identified where practicable and that emphasis should be given to brownfield sites. This did not, however, help in addressing the Council's shortage of land for affordable housing and the Forum acknowledged that with a review of the Local Plan currently taking place it might be necessary to examine the use of greenfield sites in the

future. Members also noted that allocations of business land would also be looked at, the other opportunities may arise from the Building Schools for the Future programme, and that there could be a need to look at other vacant private sites.

11.29 The Forum was encouraged to find that a review of planning policy was now underway, although timescales for the implementation of a new Planning Policy Framework were expected to be approximately 4 years. Members learned that planning policy to assist in the delivery of affordable housing was to take the form of:-

- (i) **Core Strategy Planning Development Document.** A policy for the delivery of a long term spatial vision for the Borough and general locations for spatial development, including potentially requirements for affordable housing in new housing developments.
- (ii) **Housing Allocation Planning Development Document.** Relates to the strategic vision and is scheduled for adoption in March 2010.
- (iii) **Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.** Primarily related to the formalisation of general developer contributions, but could include the use of Section 106 Agreements and the setting of specific criteria on housing sites coming forward, e.g. specifying levels of affordable housing within new developments, including potentially affordable rented housing. Not part of statutory development plans, with possible formal adoption in spring / summer 2008.
- (iv) **Affordable Housing Development Plan.** Could take the form of a single issue development plan document looking solely at affordable housing. Timescale for implementation being 18 months to 2 years, with formal adoption possible in 2009 onwards.

11.30 Taking this into consideration, Members welcomed indications that in order to provide a route for action, sooner rather than later, work was underway to implement the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document to enable the inclusion of a requirement for developers to include provision of affordable housing within new developments.

11.31 Members emphasised the need to influence Government Policy and the effects this has on planning policy. Attention was also drawn to the need to reconcile aspirations with planning permissions, in that whilst there is a strong preference for housing in terms of social accommodation, 36% of planning permissions relate to flat / apartment developments.

## 12 **ACTIVITIES BEING UNDERTAKEN TO INCREASE AND MAINTAIN THE SUPPLY OF GOOD QUALITY AFFORDABLE RENTED SOCIAL ACCOMMODATION IN HARTLEPOOL**

12.1 In exploring work already being undertaken, the Forum noted that various developments were already being undertaken to deal with this issue of availability of affordable social rented housing. These included:-

- (i) Strategic discussions with the Housing Corporation and several RSL's with local connections regarding potential bids to the 2008-11 'Affordable Homes Programme';
- (ii) The establishment of a partnering protocol with the Housing Corporation and RSL's in order to support a more efficient, sub-regional approach toward to increasing the supply of affordable housing in the future;
- (iii) Consideration to whether the Council should get more involved directly in funding or developing new social housing, through prudential borrowing and joint ventures;
- (v) Reporting the findings of the Hartlepool Local Housing Assessment to Cabinet and using them to inform policy including the new statutory Local Development Framework which is currently under preparation;
- (vi) Preparation of the Sub-regional Housing Strategy, with consideration to be given to the need to revise elements of the Hartlepool Housing Strategy;
- (vii) Contributing to the development of the sub-regional HMR Strategy and supporting work, as one of the core local authority partners within the Tees Valley Living Initiative and the sub-regional housing market restructuring partnership for Tees Valley;
- (viii) The preparation of a list of potential development sites (both Council and privately owned) that may be suitable for new affordable housing;
- (ix) The preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document on Developer Contributions expanding on policy GEP9 of the Local Plan, including proposals for a requirement for developers to provide a certain level of affordable housing on new housing sites using legal agreements.
- (x) Developing a strategic view in partnership with RSLs who want to develop and deliver good quality affordable rented social accommodation in Hartlepool. Discussions were ongoing with the Housing Corporation through the Northern Housing Challenge to facilitate this; and
- (xi) Undertaking of its enabling role, mainly with the Registered Social Landlords, on the development of schemes for affordable housing and in the preparation of bids for capital to the Housing Corporation.
- (xii) The Hartfields development at Middle Warren aimed at providing accommodation for the older population in the town. Members were

aware of his development and the collaboration between the Council, the Health Service and Joseph Rowntree for its provision. However, whilst Members supported the creation of accommodation for the elderly as one of the key areas for increased provision in the town, concern was expressed as to the accessibility of the development in terms of cost. The Forum emphasised the need to provide 'affordable rented' accommodation for the elderly across Hartlepool.

### **13 METHODS OF INCREASING AND MAINTAINING, THE AVAILABILITY OF GOOD QUALITY AFFORDABLE SOCIAL RENTED ACCOMMODATION IN HARTLEPOOL**

13.1 Following receipt of the evidence provided, and taking into consideration the work being undertaken, as outlined in Section 12 of the report, the Forum summarised the primary difficulties being experienced in terms of the provision of affordable rented social housing as being:-

- (j) The availability of suitable land;
- (ii) Planning Policy; and
- (iii) Funding in terms of the level of subsidies available and price of land.

13.2 In term of the way forward in increasing and maintaining the provision of good quality affordable social rented accommodation, the Forum drew attention to:

- (i) The importance of continuing to develop a strategic view of housing provision in Hartlepool, with the Housing Corporation and RSL's in the town;
- (ii) The need to explore and identify potentially suitable sites for the provision of this accommodation; and
- (iii) The importance of engaging with the RSL sector and supporting them in the submission of this years bids to the Housing Corporation for grant funding.

### **14 EVIDENCE FROM THE TOWN'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**

14.1 The Member of Parliament (MP) for Hartlepool welcomed the opportunity to comment on this matter and, at the meeting of the Forum on the 6 September 2007, commended the Forum on the selection of this issue as its first topic for 2007/08.

14.2 It came as no surprise to the Forum that housing, and in particular the lack of good quality affordable accommodation, in Hartlepool constituted 50% to 60% of the issues raised with the MP during his Ward Surgeries. Members

were themselves receiving large numbers of resident representations regarding the issue during their Ward Surgeries.

- 14.3 The Forum supported the MP's observation that housing in Hartlepool need to be developed to accommodate demographic changes within the market, with increased provision for the elderly, families and young / single residents. The Forum also shared the MP's view that the major challenges facing the Council in terms of the provision of good quality affordable accommodation are:-

- (i) Achieving the target of Zero Carbon by 2016;
- (ii) Ensuring residents were able to stay in or close to the community they were familiar with;
- (iii) Partnership arrangements were already strong in terms of potential joint ventures and this should be further explored; and
- (iv) The availability of land and the problem of developers retaining land.

- 14.4 The MP welcomed the report produced to initiate the Scrutiny process and praised the quality of analysis. The MP also advised the Forum of his particular concern regarding the detrimental effect of poor quality housing and overcrowding on the long term life chances of Hartlepool's residents, and in particular the town's children. The MP further indicated that Housing Hartlepool should be commended on the services they provide for residents of Hartlepool, the success of which had contributed to increased demand and a low turnover of tenants.

- 14.5 With the need for the provision of increased social housing foremost in their minds, Members supported the MP's view that ways of removing or reducing barriers to new build, in terms of the availability of land and the inclusion of affordable accommodation within the planning process, needed to be a priority for the Council. Members also shared the MP's frustration regarding the practice of 'Land Banking' and the fact that existing planning permissions could not be changed to require the inclusion of affordable housing within new developments.

- 14.6 Members noted with interest the MP's support for the implementation of a dual approach to dealing with the housing shortfall through investment in new housing and housing market renewal, as the appropriate way to meet future aspirations and create a stock of quality housing to meet needs and aspirations. The MP felt strongly that whilst in doing this Hartlepool needed to be viewed as a series of communities and that emphasis must be placed upon the provision of the types of homes people want in the areas they want to live. Whilst it was recognised by the MP that in some homes are not economically viable to refurbish to the required Decent Homes standards, i.e. some older housing particularly around the town centre, emphasis was placed upon the importance of making provision as far as is practicable for residents to stay in or close to the communities that they are familiar with.

- 14.7 In terms of the provision of new developments, whilst it was suggested that the development at Victoria Harbour would be a key opportunity to address the lack of affordable, and social, housing in Hartlepool, the Forum acknowledged that emphasis needed to be placed on the provision on the right types of properties to meet the housing shortfall. With this in mind, Members supported the MP's suggestion that in terms of future provision the results of the 'Housing Needs Assessment' needed to be rigorously analysed and refined to determine future developments and requirements of the town, including the level and need for flats.

## **15 EVIDENCE FROM THE AUTHORITY'S CABINET MEMBER WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES AND THE TOWN'S MP**

- 15.1 The Forum welcomed the views of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities at its meeting on the 6 September 2007. During the course of discussions, Members received confirmation of the Portfolio Holder's support for the provision of improved levels of affordable rented social accommodation in Hartlepool and the for the use of a dual approach through investment in new housing and housing market renewal to achieve it.
- 15.2 Members learned that the Portfolio Holder viewed the primary challenges to the Council in terms of this issue as being:
- (i) The identification of suitable sites for affordable social housing;
  - (ii) The need to look at how Hartlepool could be developed in partnership with the RSL sector;
  - (iii) Proposals for the development of Victoria Harbour; and
  - (iv) The development of a framework in relation to Choice Based Lettings and the involvement of private landlords.
- 15.3 The Forums noted the Portfolio Holder's recognition of the pressure being placed upon the social rented sector by the Council's current regeneration programme and his acceptance that in some instances the improvement of properties, e.g. terraced properties in the town centre was not economically viable.
- 15.4 In terms of new build, and a way forward for the future, the Portfolio Holder advised the Forum that it was unlikely that any changes in legislation would result in the Council initiating its own building programme as the authority no longer has the necessary infrastructure to effectively build and manage such properties. As such, the Portfolio Holder emphasised the importance of the Council's role in identifying suitable land and developing partnership

arrangements with Housing Hartlepool, and other RSL's, for their management as a way forward for the future.

- 15.5 In relation to Council policy in terms of the use / disposal of Council land below market value to encourage new social housing developments the Portfolio Holder assured the Forum that any recommendations made in relation to this issue, and the need for changes to the Local Plan, would be welcomed by Cabinet.

## **16 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – THE VIEWS OF RESIDENTS, INCLUDING PEOPLE FROM MINORITY COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST**

- 16.1 Members of the Forum were keen to engage with residents, including people from minority communities of interest as part of the investigation. In order for this to occur, a formal invitation through the local press and radio for residents to attend the meeting of the residents to attend the meeting of the Forum on the 27 September 2007 to put their views on the availability of affordable social rented accommodation in Hartlepool. Formal invitations were also extended to the Hartlepool 50+ Forum, Hartlepool Carers and the Hartlepool Access Group to attend this meeting.
- 16.2 In addition to this, input was sought directly from the following sources and the issues / concerns raised fed back to the Forum at its meeting on the 27 September 2007.

### **The North, South and Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forums**

- 16.3 The Chair of the Forum attended each of the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums in August and relayed back to the Forum residents concerns / views in relation to:-
- (i) The demolition and improvement of street houses;
  - (ii) Concerns regarding the shortage of bungalows and the surplus of flats in the town;
  - (iii) The need for affordable housing, especially for first time buyers who are being priced out of the rented and owner occupier housing market;
  - (iv) The levels of empty properties in the North area of the town,
  - (v) Concerns that the 'tin houses' in the central area of the town would not be replaced by sufficient new housing;
  - (vi) Concerns that new houses were not being built quick enough to meet demand; and
  - (vii) Concerns that tenants were being moved out of street houses when they didn't want to be and that the views of tenants and not landlords needed to be taken into account.

### **Minority / Diversity Groups in Hartlepool**

- 16.4 In an effort to incorporate more fully diversity into the investigation the Scrutiny Support Officer, in September 2007, attended meetings of the

following groups to seek their views on the availability of affordable rented social accommodation in Hartlepool:-

- (i) Talking with Communities;
- (ii) The All Ability Forum; and
- (iii) The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) group;

16.5 The Forum noted that the issues / concerns raised at by each of these groups mirrored those expressed by the wider community, with emphasis on:-

- (i) Real shortage of affordable housing for all sections of the community, in particular single people, elderly / disabled residents and larger families; and
- (ii) The need for the provision of suitable “affordable housing” to be viewed by the local authority as a high priority.

## 17 CONCLUSIONS

17.1 The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum concluded:-

- (a) That in addition to the provision of ‘social rented’ housing, the importance of joint working with private sector bodies and provision of intermediate housing schemes should be recognised as an integral part of the provision of affordable housing in Hartlepool;
- (b) That it is important that in the rented sector has an element of choice for all elements of the community in terms of tenure, price range and location;
- (c) That the need for the Council to consider the sale of land at below market value is a crucial issue for RSL’s, with a knock on effect in terms of the viability of their bids to the Housing Corporation for grant funding and future new social rented housing provision;
- (d) That in recognition of the local authority’s commitment to providing good quality affordable social rented housing, a criterion based policy supporting in principle the disposal of land to RSL’s at below market value should be implemented, with each case considered against a set criteria on its own merits;
- (e) That the main challenges for the provision of good quality affordable rented accommodation are:-
  - (i) Achieving the target of Zero Carbon by 2016;
  - (ii) Ensuring residents were able to stay in the community they were familiar with;
  - (iii) Partnership arrangements were already strong in terms of potential joint ventures and this should be further explored; and



- (iv) The availability of land and the problem of developers retaining land.
- (f) That emphasis needs to be placed on the provision of the right types of properties to meet the housing shortfall and in order to do this the results of the 'Housing Needs Assessment' needs to be rigorously analysed, tested and refined to determine future developments and requirements of the town, including the provision of flats;
- (g) That ways of working more closely in partnership with Housing Hartlepool and other RSL's for the provision of affordable rented social accommodation in the town, and the development of opportunities contained within the Green Paper, need to be fully explored;
- (h) That with limited Council owned land suitable for the provision of new housing, every effort needs to be made to make best use of available sites available, and work undertaken to identify additional sites wherever possible;
- (i) That all new housing developments should be required to include the provision of good quality affordable housing, including rented social housing and provision for elderly / disabled and younger residents of Hartlepool, whilst recognising the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment;
- (j) That the provision of housing for elderly / disabled residents in Hartlepool needs to be explored in innovative way, to make the provision of accommodation on one level viable on sites where conventionally large building plots required for bungalows are not available;
- (k) That the Councils Local Plan needs to be amended / updated to include provision for affordable accommodation, and in particular social rented accommodation;
- (l) That the revision of local planning policy through the Local Development Framework, to respond to recent rapid changes within the housing market and in particular the need for affordable rented social accommodation, should be supported and progressed as swiftly as practicable;
- (m) That in view of the timescale involved in the revision local planning policy, progress should continue with the preparation of the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, to enable the inclusion of a requirement for developers to include provision of affordable housing within new developments;
- (n) That as a means of provisionally identifying additional land for the provision of affordable social rented accommodation, a review of some

unused business allocations and greenfield sites should be undertaken in addition to brownfield sites;

- (o) That it should be recognised that the local authority may only be able to address a part of the overall shortfall in provision of affordable housing in Hartlepool with the tools available to it; and
- (p) That Housing Hartlepool should be commended on the way in which they provide and manage their services for residents of Hartlepool.

## 18 RECOMMENDATIONS

18.1 The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below:-

- (a) That a review of land availability, including brownfield and greenfield sites, be undertaken with the aim of identifying possible additional sites for affordable rented social housing;
- (b) That as part of the review of the local planning policy provision be made for the identification of suitable sites for the provision of affordable housing;
- (c) That a criterion based policy supporting in principle the disposal of Council land to RSL's at below market value be created, with the requirement that each case be considered, against a set criteria, on its own merits whilst taking into consideration the possible impact on capital receipts;
- (d) That a rigorous analysis be undertaken of the results of the 'Housing Needs Assessment' together with testing and refinement to determine future developments and requirements of the town, including the provision of flats;
- (e) That ways of working more closely in partnership with RSL's for the provision of affordable rented social accommodation in the town, and the development of opportunities contained within the Green Paper, be explored;
- (f) That the provision of housing for elderly / disabled residents in Hartlepool needs to be explored in innovative ways to, for example explore possible provision of accommodation on one level on sites where conventionally large building plots required for bungalows are not available;
- (g) That local planning policy be revised, through the Local Development Framework, to require the provision within all new housing

developments of good quality affordable housing, including rented social housing and accommodation for elderly / disabled and young / single residents; and

- (h) That the Councils local planning policy be amended / updated to include provision for affordable accommodation, and in particular social rented accommodation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Forum is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

### Hartlepool Borough Council:

The MP, Iain Wright;

The Mayor Stuart Drummond – Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability;

Councillor Peter Jackson – The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities;

Peter Scott, Director of Regeneration and Planning;

Stuart Green, Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development);

Mark Dutton, Housing and Regeneration Co-ordinator; and

Derek Gouldbum, Urban Policy Manager.

### External Representatives:

Cath Purdy, Housing Hartlepool;

Representatives from the All Ability Forum, Talking to Communities and the LGBT; and

Mr Carruthers-Watt, the 50+ Forum.

## **COUNCILLOR S COOK CHAIR OF THEREGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

**January 2008**

**Contact Officer:** Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer

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Hartlepool Borough Council  
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## BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Scoping Report – The Availability of Affordable Good Quality Rented Accommodation in Hartlepool (Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum – 12 July 2007);
- (ii) Delivering Affordable Housing (Communities and Local Government – November 2006);
- (iii) Review of Housing Supply (Kate Barker – [www.barkerreview.org.uk](http://www.barkerreview.org.uk));
- (iv) Hartlepool Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2006-11;
- (v) <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/>;
- (vi) <http://www.core.ac.uk/core/> (Core - Continuous recording System) monitors social landlord's lettings and sales in England.);
- (vii) <http://www.hqnetwork.org.uk/> (The Housing Quality Network is a network of local authorities, registered social landlords and housing associations which seeks to promote good practice and quality in the provision of rented accommodation in the UK.);
- (viii) Hansard Speech by Iain Wright on the 18 June 2007 (and Ministerial response);
- (ix) Hartlepool Housing Needs Assessment (2007);
- (x) Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing 2006; and
- (xi) 'Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable' Housing Green Paper (July 2007).

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

**Subject:** SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE –  
PROGRESS REPORT

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of the progress made to date of this Committee, since my last progress report to this Committee on 9 November 2007.

### 2. PROGRESS ON THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

- 2.1 I am pleased to inform Members that following recent discussions with the Scrutiny Chairs and the Scrutiny Support Team, substantial efforts are being made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to ensure the work programme for 2007/08 is delivered to the prescribed timescales as the municipal year draws to a close.
- 2.2 Over the past 4 months this Committee along with the four standing Scrutiny Forums have been heavily involved in the budget consultation process and over the coming months ahead will be involved in the compilation of the Corporate Plan for 2008/9. Such arrangements have been finalised and accommodated in all Work Programmes.

### 3. GENERAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ISSUES

- 3.1 Scrutiny Support Budget Pressure for 2008/09 / Proposed Creation of a Health Scrutiny Forum – I am pleased to report that as part of this Committee's formal response to the Cabinet's finalised budget proposals for 2008/09, justification was provided in the proposed separation of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum into two separate Scrutiny Forums for 2008/09. In doing so, it was also recommended that due to the impact this would have, particularly on the Scrutiny Support Team, that an additional full-time Scrutiny Support Officer post is created by way of a budget pressure through the budget setting process for 2008/09.

3.2 As this Committee's formal response was only recently presented to the Cabinet on 4 February 2008, I will verbally update Members of the outcome(s) during the presentation of this report.

3.3 Informal Meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs – I am pleased to report that we held our fifth informal meeting of the 2007/08 Municipal Year with the Scrutiny Chairs on 15 January 2008. To ensure openness and transparency is maintained, I am pleased to inform Members that the following issues were discussed during the meeting:-

- (a) Progress to date on the delivery of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007/08;
- (b) Attendance at Future Meetings of the NEREO Joint Members/Officers Scrutiny Network by Scrutiny Chairs;
- (c) Budget Consultation / Draft Corporate Plan Timetables.;
- (d) Councillor Call for Action Update;
- (e) Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee – Momentum: Pathways to Healthcare;
- (f) Scrutiny Support Budget Pressure for 2008/09 / Proposed Creation of a Health Scrutiny Forum Update; and
- (g) Production of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2007/08.

3.4 Final Reports Recently Considered / Awaiting Consideration – At the time of writing this report I can confirm that the following Reports/Formal Responses were either awaiting consideration / or had been considered by the Authority's Cabinet or other Committees:

- (a) Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's Final Report – Review of the Authority's Postal Services considered and approved by the Cabinet on 7 January 2008.
- (b) Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's Final Report – School Meals to be considered by the Cabinet on 4 February 2008.
- (c) Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee' Formal Response to the Executive's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2008/09 to be considered by the Cabinet on 4 February 2008.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee notes the content of this report.

**COUNCILLOR MARJORIE JAMES  
CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

**Subject:** CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM –  
PROGRESS REPORT

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of the progress made to date by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum.

### 2. PROGRESS OF THE SCRUTINY FORUM

- 2.1 Since the Forum's last progress report to this Committee on 9 November 2007, the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum has undertaken the following work:-
- 2.2 The Executive's Budget and Policy Framework Consultation Proposals for 2008/09: The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 19 November 2007 considered initial budget proposals for the Children's Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 21 November 2007. These views were subsequently noted by Cabinet on the 21 December 2007.
- 2.3 On the 7 January 2008 the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum considered the finalised budget proposals for the Children's Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 18 January 2008.
- 2.4 Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool - Following confirmation of each of the Forums Work Programmes by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 29 June 2007, the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 16 July 2007 approved the Aim, Terms of Reference and Timetable for its 'Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool' investigation.
- 2.5 The Forum began its investigation on the 20 August 2007 and has to date considered evidence from a wide variety of sources, including:-



- (i) The Town's MP, Iain Wright, and Children's Services Portfolio Holder;
  - (ii) Existing research / consultations;
  - (iii) The views of the young people's representatives co-opted on to the Forum;
  - (iv) Representatives from outside organisations / providers (including Hartlepool Constellation, the West View Project, Scouts, Boys Brigade, Sea Cadets, etc.); and
  - (v) Site visits to observe 'pods' and 'youth shelters' in Middlesbrough.
- 2.6 The Forum is on track to complete its work programme for this year and will be undertaking its final evidence gathering session of this investigation on the 25 February 2008.
- 2.7 Joint Area Review (JAR) – Progress Report – The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, at its meeting on the 16 April 2007 considered the results of the Joint Area Review of Services for Children and Young People. The Forum, at its meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008, considered progress against the action plan compiled on the basis of the issues identified by the review in the immediate, short and longer term.
- 2.8 Following consideration of the information provided, Members commended officers on progress made against the action plan and requested that congratulations be passed on to the staff within the department, and the schools who had been involved in delivering such excellent progress.
- 2.9 South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum Scrutiny Referral – Scrutiny Investigation into 'The Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools' – The Aim, Terms of Reference and Timetable for this investigation were approved by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 5 November 2007. In accordance with the approved timetable, the Forum will on the 4 February 2008 be investigating this issue in one condensed session, with evidence from an Independent Sports Consultant and the Children's Services Portfolio Holder. In addition to this, invitations have also been extended to representatives from the following schools where external funding has been utilised for the provision of community initiatives:-
- (i) Brougham Primary School;
  - (ii) West View Primary School;
  - (iii) Stranton Primary School;
  - (iv) Owton Manor Primary School; and
  - (v) High Tunstall College of Science.
- 2.10 As papers for today's meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee were circulated prior to the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum meeting on the 4 February 2008, a verbal update on the outcome of the Forum's investigation will be provided by the Chair of the Forum.

- 2.11 Forward Plan – The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, at each of its meetings, continues to consider possible issues from the Council's Forward Plan for inclusion within its Work Programme. Since the Forum's last progress report, in November, no specific items have been identified.

### **3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee notes the progress of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum.

**COUNCILLOR JANE SHAW  
CHAIR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Chair of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum

**Subject:** ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH SCRUTINY FORUM – PROGRESS REPORT

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of the progress made to date by the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum.

### 2. PROGRESS OF THE SCRUTINY FORUM

- 2.1 Since the last progress report to this Committee on 9 November 2007, the Forum has been involved in the following issues :-
- 2.2 Response to the Executive's Budget and Policy Framework Consultation Proposals for 2008/09: The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum on the 13 November 2007 considered initial consultation proposals for the Adult and Community Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 23 November 2007. These views were subsequently noted by Cabinet on the 21 December 2007.
- 2.3 On the 10 January 2008 the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum considered the finalised budget proposals for the Adult and Community Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 18 January 2008.
- 2.4 Withdrawal of Emergency Practitioner Services at the Wynyard Road Primary Care Centre in Hartlepool Scrutiny Investigation: The Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health provided evidence to the Forum's investigation into the withdrawal of emergency practitioner services at Wynyard Road Primary Care Centre at its meeting on the 13 November 2007.
- 2.5 An Owton Ward Councillor and members of Hartlepool Primary Care PPI Forum were present at the meeting of the Forum on the 18 December 2007, to provide verbal evidence relating to the Wynyard Road Scrutiny Enquiry. Unfortunately no members of the public were in attendance, but I reported

that I had gathered their views during a visit to the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum on the 12 October 2007.

- 2.6 The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on the 21 November 2007 granted approval to this Forum to seek independent specialist advice, in order to enhance its investigation into the withdrawal of emergency practitioner services at Wynyard Road Primary Care Centre. Dr Jonathan Shapiro from the University of Birmingham was commissioned to provide this independent specialist advice and was present at the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of the 18 December 2007 to be introduced to Members.
- 2.7 North East Ambulance Service Proposals for Ambulance Contact Centres: During the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum's meeting of the 13 November 2007, the North East Ambulance Service discussed proposals for the relocation of one of their contact centres from Middlesbrough to Newcastle. During this presentation it was noted that the meeting was inquorate and it was agreed that authority was granted to me to formulate a response from the Forum to the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee (TVHSJC), in relation to these proposals at the meeting of the TVHSJC on the 10 December 2007.
- 2.8 Funding of a Contract Monitoring System: On 25 October 2007 the Full Council had agreed that the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health should attend the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum to provide a detailed explanation relating to the funding of a contract monitoring system. The Portfolio Holder was present at the meeting of the Forum on the 13 November and their evidence was presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 4 January 2008.
- 2.9 Momentum: Pathways to Health Care: The Director of Strategic Service Development at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust delivered a presentation to the Adult Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum at its meeting of the 19 November 2007. This detailed presentation related to two projects that were individually concerned with planned care and unplanned care.
- 2.10 Members of the Adult Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum were welcomed to the University Hospital of Hartlepool on 11 December 2007 by the Chief Executive of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. The Chief Executive provided a presentation about how the Trust was planning to achieve world class performance through both the Momentum: Pathways to Health Care programme and the planned changes to hospital services.
- 2.11 Changes to the Provision of Hospital Services: The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum held an additional meeting on the 12 December 2007, where the Chief Executive from the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust provided information about the planned changes to services at the University Hospital of Hartlepool. These changes

mainly related to maternity and children's services and were to take effect on the 17 December 2007; however, these changes were put back until 28 January 2008.

- 2.12 Individualised Budgets and Personalisation: At the Scrutiny Forum's meeting of the 18 December 2007, the Adult and Community Services Department gave a presentation relating to In Control, which was a national pilot relating to people having their own individual budgets enabling them to have self-directed support.
- 2.13 Referral from Hartlepool Primary Care PPI Forum: On the 18 December 2007 the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum accepted a referral from Hartlepool Primary Care PPI Forum, relating to concerns raised over the cleanliness of a private care home in Hartlepool, which had been of concern to the PPI Forum for quite some time. I agreed to write a letter from the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum to the Care Home requesting immediate attention be taken in relation to the concerns raised by the PPI Forum. The letter requested the Care Home's attendance at our meeting on the 29 January 2008 complete with action plan.
- 2.14 Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee: At the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum of the 18 December 2007 I requested approval for Members serving on the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee to be substituted where they were unable to attend. This proposal, along with the agreement to feedback information from the meetings of the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Committee, was approved by the Forum.
- 2.15 Scrutiny Chair's Proposal for Splitting the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum: Members were informed during the meeting of the 18 December 2007 that the Scrutiny Chairs had proposed splitting the Adult and Community Services Health Scrutiny Forum into one serving Adult and Community Scrutiny and a second serving Health Scrutiny. The proposal had been approved by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 21 November 2007 and submitted to Cabinet on the 21 December 2007.
- 2.16 Forward Plan – The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum, at each of its meetings, continues to consider possible issues from the Council's Forward Plan for inclusion within its Work Programme. Since the Forum's last progress report, in November 2007, no specific items have been identified.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee notes the progress of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum.

**COUNCILLOR JONATHAN BRASH  
CHAIR OF ADULT & COMMUNITY SERVICES & HEALTH SCRUTINY FORUM**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

**Subject:** NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM  
– PROGRESS REPORT

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of the progress made to date by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum.

### 2. PROGRESS OF THE SCRUTINY FORUM

- 2.1 Since the last progress report from this Forum was presented to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 9 November 2007, the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum has undertaken the following work:-
- 2.2 The Executive's Budget and Policy Framework Consultation Proposals for 2008/09: The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on the 12 November 2007 considered initial budget proposals for the Neighbourhood Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 23 November 2007. These views were subsequently noted by Cabinet on the 21 December 2007.
- 2.3 On the 9 January 2008 the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum considered the finalised budget proposals for the Neighbourhood Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 18 January 2008.
- 2.4 Transportation Links to Hospital Services and Neighbourhood Services Department Transport Provision: At the meeting of the Forum on the 28 November Members received evidence in relation to its investigation into transportation links to hospital services. Evidence was provided by the Director of Estates and Facilities for North Tees and Hartlepool NHS

Foundation Trust, in addition to a joint presentation between the Director of Estates and Facilities for North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and the Deputy of Health Systems and Estates Development for Hartlepool PCT. Evidence was also gathered by Members at the 28 September meeting, through verbal evidence delivered by representatives from the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forum and Hartlepool Primary Care PPI Forum.

- 2.5 The Senior Assistant Director from the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit was present at the Forum's meeting on the 9 January 2008, to give Members an insight into the possibilities that a co-ordinated transportation network, across the Tees Valley, might achieve in trying to address issues raised by this Forum's investigation. In addition at the same meeting, Members received evidence from the Chair of the Tees Valley Health and Transportation Partnership, as well as information provided by the Assistant Director of Operations (Teesside) from the North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust. Members themselves provided both written and verbal evidence of their experience carrying out visits, to either the University Hospital of North Tees or James Cook University Hospital, using public transport.
- 2.6 Forward Plan – The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum, at each of its meetings, continues to consider possible issues from the Council's Forward Plan for inclusion within its Work Programme. Since the Forum's last progress report, in November 2007, no specific items have been identified.

### **3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee notes the progress of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum.

**COUNCILLOR STEPHEN AKERS-BELCHER  
CHAIR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.



## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Chair of the Regeneration and Planning Services  
Scrutiny Forum

**Subject:** REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES  
SCRUTINY FORUM - PROGRESS REPORT

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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of the progress made to date by the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum.

### 2. PROGRESS OF THE FORUM

- 1.1 Since the Forum's last progress report to this Committee on 9 November 2007, the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum has undertaken the following work:-
- 1.2 The Executive's Budget and Policy Framework Consultation Proposals for 2008/09: The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on the 14 November 2007 considered initial budget proposals for the Regeneration and Planning Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 21 November 2007. These views were subsequently noted by Cabinet on the 21 December 2007.
- 1.3 On the 17 January 2008 the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum considered the finalised budget proposals for the Regeneration and Planning Services Department and reported its views back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 18 January 2008.
- 1.4 'Closing the Loop' – Youth Unemployment – The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on the 22 March 2007 completed its investigation into the 'Youth Unemployment' and presented its Final Report to Cabinet on the 11 June 2007. Cabinet endorsed the Forum's recommendations and requested that an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations be prepared and reported back prior to its presentation to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum. The completed action plan was considered, and approved, by Cabinet on the 12 November 2007.

- 1.5 Following Cabinet consideration of the action plan, in conjunction with the Forum's Final Report, the Regeneration and Liveability Portfolio Holder attended the meeting of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on the 6 December 2007 to convey Cabinet's response and confirm approval of all of the recommendations contained within the report. Details were also provided of progress to date on the implementation of each of the recommendations.
- 1.6 Six Month Progress Report – Scrutiny Investigation into Railway Approaches - Following consideration of the Final Report by Cabinet, the Regeneration and Liveability Portfolio Holder attended the meeting of the Forum on the 12 July 2007 to convey Cabinet's response and confirm approval of all of the recommendations contained within the report.
- 1.7 A further report was received by the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum, on the 17 January 2008 updating the Forum on progress in relation to the recommendations made as part of its investigation. The Forum noted progress against its findings / conclusions.
- 1.8 Safer Hartlepool Partnership's Draft Strategy 2008-2011 - The Safer Hartlepool Partnership's Strategy is a key strategic document, which forms part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, responsibility for which falls within the remit of this Forum.
- 1.9 The Forum at its meeting on 17 January 2008 was consulted in relation to its views on the Draft Safer Hartlepool Partnership's Strategy 2008-2011. Members made a number of suggestions for inclusion within the draft strategy and during the course of discussions drew particular attention to the judicial system and the lack of impact its sentences have on deterring offenders. The Forum endorsed the draft strategy and requested that a letter be sent to the Town's MP, Iain Wright, from Scrutiny expressing concern and disappointment regarding the effectiveness of the judicial system and the impact of the sentences imposed.
- 1.10 Final Report - Availability of Good Quality Affordable Rented Social Accommodation in Hartlepool – The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum, on the 17 January 2008, completed its investigation of 'Availability of Good Quality Affordable Rented Social Accommodation in Hartlepool'. Subject to approval of the Forum's Final Report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee later on today's agenda, the Forum will in due course be presenting its Final Report to Cabinet, in conjunction with an Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations.
- 1.11 Seaton Carew Regeneration Needs and Opportunities - Following confirmation of each of the Forums Work Programmes by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 29 June 2007, the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on the 6 December 2007 approved the Aim, Terms of Reference and Timetable for its investigation of 'Seaton Carew Regeneration Needs and Opportunities'.

- 1.12 The Forum, on the 17 January 2008, began its evidence gathering process and will over the next three months be working steadily towards the production of its Final Report. The Forum will during the course of its meetings be receiving evidence from a variety of sources, including:-
- (i) The Regeneration and Liveability Portfolio Holder;
  - (ii) The Neighbourhoods and Communities Portfolio Holder;
  - (iii) The Culture Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder;
  - (iv) The Town's MP, Iain Wright;
  - (v) Residents and local businesses;
  - (vi) The Neighbourhood Consultative Forums; and
  - (vii) Best practice in other Local Authorities.
- 1.13 The Forum is on track to complete its work programme for this year and will be submitting its Final Report on this issue by the 3 April 2008, as planned.
- 1.14 Forward Plan – The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum at each of its meetings, continues to consider possible issues from the Council's Forward Plan for inclusion within its Work Programme. Since the Forum's last progress report, in November 2007, no specific items have been identified.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee notes the progress of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum and supports the submission of a letter the Town's MP, as outlined in Section 1.9 above.

**COUNCILLOR SHAUN COOK  
CHAIR OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

## **SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

8 February 2008



**Report of:** Scrutiny Manager

**Subject:** CURRENT STATUS OF THE OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of the current status of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2007/08 as the current Municipal Year draws to a close.

### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 As Members will recall, the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and the four standing Scrutiny Forums set their individual annual work programmes back in June 2007. As per good practice, the Scrutiny Forums selected a maximum of two investigations to form the basis of their work programmes, resulting in the flexibility to accommodate scrutiny referrals and budget and policy framework documents throughout the year, if required.
- 2.2 Whilst it has been extremely challenging to accommodate the additional scrutiny referrals along with the undertaking of the agreed work programmes, significant progress has been made in the overall delivery/completion of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007/08.
- 2.3 As the end of the 2007/08 Municipal Year is nearing, the remainder of this report solely deals with the work currently being undertaken to deliver the overall Work Programme together with the consideration of the recent referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Function, pending the outcome of the discussions under item agenda item 5.1 of this meeting.

### **3. STATUS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08**

- 3.1 Attached as **Appendix A** is a colour coded chart that outlines the current status of the Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.
- 3.2 Whilst the current capacity of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and the four standing Scrutiny Forums is extremely tight in light of their current workload commitments, it is likely that the delivery of the four standing Scrutiny Forums' work programmes is achievable. With the exception to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, which currently has two scrutiny investigations/referrals outstanding as outlined below, as a result of the challenging work programme agreed earlier this year:-
- (a) The Authority's Use of Agency staff - To review the Authority's approach to the long-term use of agency workers (Work Programme Item); and
  - (b) National Post Office Closure Programme Consultation (commences 12 February 2008 for six weeks only) (Referred by the Elected Mayor)).
- 3.3 Members are also aware, that a recent Referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Function was made by Cabinet at its meeting on 22 January 2008 entitled 'Draft CCTV Strategy' with a prescribed completion timescale of three months, as reported earlier during this meeting (Agenda item 5.1 refers).

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Having outlined the current status of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007/08 together with the recent referral made to the Overview and Scrutiny Function (under agenda item no. 5.1 earlier), it is recommended that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee:-
- (a) Considers the practicalities of undertaking the CCTV and Post Office Closures Programme Scrutiny Referrals during the 2007/08 Municipal Year; and
  - (b) Determines whether the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's outstanding work programme item entitled 'Use of Agency Staff' is still a priority for future consideration either during the 2007/08 or 2008/09 Municipal Year.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

