

CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIVE FORUM AGENDA



Thursday, 17th December 2009

at 10.00 am

**in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIVE FORUM:

Councillors Aiken, S Akers-Belcher, Brash, Coward, Cranney, Hall, Hargreaves, Laffey, Lauderdale, London, Morris, Payne, Richardson, Shaw, Simmons, Sutheran, Thompson, Tumilty and Worthy

Resident Representatives: Ronald Breward, Liz Carroll, Bob Farrow, Ted Jackson, Jean Kennedy, Evelyn Leck, Alan Lloyd, Brenda Loynes, Brian McBean and Julie Rudge

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 3. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 4. MINUTES**
 - 4.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forum held on 15th October 2009
 - 4.2 Matters arising (maximum of 10 minutes) – Feedback sheet from last meeting attached
 - 4.3 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Central Area Police and Community Safety Consultative Forum held on 12th November 2009

5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME and WARD ISSUES (maximum of 30 minutes)**

Grange
Park
Rift House
Stranton
Burn Valley
Foggy Furze

6. **ITEMS FOR CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Draft Public Convenience Strategy – *Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)*
- 6.2 Draft Empty Homes Strategy – *Principal Environmental Health Officer*

7. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Building Schools for the Future Update - Presentation – *Project Technical Manager, Schools Transformation Team*

8. **ITEMS FOR DECISION**

- 8.1 Minor Works Proposals December 2009 – *Central Neighbourhood Manager*

9. **DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Central Area Police and Community Safety Consultative Forum will take place on 28th January 2010 at 10.00am at Belle Vue Community Sports and Youth Centre, Kendal Road, Hartlepool.

The next meeting of the Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forum will take place on Thursday 18th February 2010 at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre.

WARDS

Burn Valley
Elwick
Foggy Furze
Grange
Park
Rift House
Stranton

CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIVE FORUM

15 October 2009

MINUTES OF THE MEETING



The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

PRESENT:

Chair: Councillor Kevin Cranney - Foggy Furze Ward

Vice-Chair: Evelyn Leck (Resident Representative)

Councillor Stephen Akers-Belcher	- Rift House Ward
Councillor Gerald Hall	- Burn Valley Ward
Councillor John Lauderdale	- Burn Valley Ward
Councillor Frances London	- Foggy Furze Ward
Councillor Carl Richardson	- Grange Ward
Councillor Jane Shaw	- Stranton Ward
Councillor Christopher Simmons	- Grange Ward
Councillor Hilary Thompson	- Elwick Ward
Councillor Victor Tumilty	- Grange Ward

Resident Representatives:

Bob Farrow, Ted Jackson, Brenda Loynes Brian McBean and Julie Rudge.

Public: Clive Hall, G Johnson, S Johnson, Margaret Lumley, Ray MaAndrew, Norma Morrish, William Morrish and Ray Waller

Council Officers: Denise Ogden, Head of Neighbourhood Management
Paul Mitchinson, Highway Services Manager
Colin Ogden, Waste Management Manager
Clare Clark, Neighbourhood Manager (Central)
Jon Wright, Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager
Irene Cross, Neighbourhood Development Officer (Central)
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

Police Representatives: Chief Inspector Tony Green, Sergeant Glen Westmoreland, PC Dave Carter

Fire Brigade Representative: Peter Bradley

Housing Hartlepool Representative: Lynn McPartlin

New Deal for Communities Representative: Paul Christie

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aiken, Brash, Coward, Hargreaves, Dr Morris, Payne, Sutheran, Worthy and Resident Representatives Liz Carroll, Alan Lloyd, Jean Kennedy.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2009

These were accepted as an accurate account.

21. MATTERS ARISING

Dropped Kerbs – Resident Representative Ray McAndrew reported that there was a problem with cars parking on the pavements causing the dropped kerbs to become smashed. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to see if enforcement action was appropriate.

Parking on Pavements in Park Road – Resident Ray Waller said that there were problems with this in Park Road. He was informed that if there were yellow lines in place, then this was the responsibility of the Local Authority but if no restrictions were in place it was the responsibility of the Police. If a vehicle was parked on private property but had crossed the pavement to get there, enforcement could only be taken if it was actually seen crossing the pavement.

Parking on Pavements in Hart Lane – Councillor Tumilty highlighted the area between 85 and 103 Hart Lane and produced photographs of the offending

vehicles. It was agreed that parking problems would be discussed at the next meeting of the forum as a specific agenda item.

Flooding on Saddleston Close – Resident Representative Brenda Loynes said that this was still causing problems. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager said that remedial work had been done but would re-investigate the issue.

Ward Jackson Car Park – Resident Representative Ted Jackson stated that the meeting with the landscape architect had not yet taken place. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to follow this up.

22. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND WARD ISSUES

Foggy Furze

Library – Councillor London asked that a waste bin be placed outside the library. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to look at the provision of this.

Niromax – Resident Representative Bob Farrow expressed concern at the proposed extension to the works and felt that this would have a detrimental effect on local residents. The Head of Neighbourhood Management said that concerns would be noted.

Grange

Parking – Councillor Tumilty highlighted issues where carers of residents were abusing parking permits in Collingwood Road and Sandringham Road. The Neighbourhood Manager (Central) explained the usage of the permits and what was allowed.

Caravan Parking – Councillor Richardson highlighted a loophole in the law regarding a caravan parking in Tankerville Street. The Chair said that he would get a response from the Chief Solicitor.

Drain in Weldeck Road – Councillor Hall asked whether it was the responsibility of the Local Authority or the Water Board if there were issues. The Highway Services Manager stated that there were quarterly meetings between the two to resolve outstanding issues.

Flooding – Resident Representative Brian McBean said that works had not been finished off and flooding occurred adjacent to houses in Trinity Square and the Supporters Club. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to follow this up.

Hanging Baskets – Resident Representative Brian McBean thanked the Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager for his support with the hanging baskets in Stephen Street and Suggitt Street.

Park

Dunston Road – Resident Representative Ted Jackson asked that the road be marked around the bus stop so that police were able to control the problems with parking.

Street Cleaning – Resident Representative Brenda Loynes asked that street cleaning take place after the lunchbreak period as there were litter problems in Tarnston Road and Dunston Road after schoolchildren had been out of school. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager said that it may warrant enforcement action as well as being a street cleaning issue.

Rift House

Dropped Kerbs – Councillor S Akers Belcher said that costs of providing these had increased and the forum should look at the provision and contributions made towards them. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager said that these were now focussed on individual's needs.

Dog Control Orders – Councillor S Akers Belcher expressed concern that these were in place on the recreation ground in Westbrook Avenue as this was detrimental to responsible dog owners. He asked that these be reconsidered through referral to Scrutiny.

Catcote Road Parking – Councillor S Akers Belcher said that residents did not want short term parking restrictions. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager said that he would feed this into discussions with officers.

Stranton

Bus Stops in York Road – Resident Representative Julie Rudge highlighted issues with graffiti on bus stops and that some did not have shelters whilst others did. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting with the Head of Technical Services.

Civic Centre – Councillor Shaw stated that the area in front of the Civic Centre needed tidying up. The Head of Neighbourhood Management said that currently work was being done with the floral displays so this should be a short term problem. She thanked Officers for ensuring that the Underground walkway had been cleared. She also queried whether the disabled ramp was wide enough to accommodate a large buggy.

Burbank Street – Resident Clive Hall said that although he was pleased that there were alleygates to the rear of the

street, this meant that the rear alleys did not get cleaned. He said that there was still a lot of parking in the area by students from the College of Further Education. The Neighbourhood Manager (Central) agreed to look into this.

Burn Road – Resident Noma Morrish stated that illegal rubbish was still being tipped on a site in this area despite the business owner being fined for doing so. She said that there was also a foul smell in the area. The Head of Neighbourhood Management agreed to look into this.

Buses in Elwick Road – Resident Ray Waller highlighted issues with traffic being unable to get past when buses were stopped.

Arncliffe Gardens – Resident Ray Waller asked whether residents would be fined if they parked on a redundant bus stop. The Head of Neighbourhood Management said that she would get a response from the Head of Technical Services.

Recycling Centre in Westgate Car Park – Resident Ray Waller said that there were difficulties in gaining access to the recycling bins because of rubbish dumped in the area. The Waste Management Manager stated that the contract for the bring centres was to be looked at in the near future.

Burn Valley

Elwick Road – Resident Representative Ray McAndrew highlighted problems on the bus route on Elwick Road caused when parents were dropping children off at school.

Grange Conservation Area – Resident Representative Ray McAndrew asked whether residents could be involved in the review of this area. The Chair said

that he would ask the Development Control Manager to take on board views.

Anti-Social Behaviour – Resident Representative Ray McAndrew questioned a view by a Police Officer that low level Anti-Social Behaviour was the responsibility of the Local Authority. Chief Inspector Green stated that Police and the Local Authority worked in partnership along with local residents.

York Road – Resident Representative Evelyn Leck asked about plans to lessen the width of pavements. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager said that consultations with businesses and residents would take place before any reconstruction took place.

Ward Surgeries – Councillor Hall said that since rebranding, there had been more interest in ward surgeries.

Elwick

Butts Lane and Nine Acres, Hart Village – Councillor Thompson asked that the gullies be cleaned. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to look at this.

Safety Rails on Front Street, Hart – Councillor Thompson said that these were mismatched and asked that these could be replaced. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to look into this.

Children's Playing Field, Elwick – Councillor Thompson suggested that waste bin and dog fouling bin be provided in this area. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to look into this.

Newton Bewley – Councillor Thompson asked that litter bins be emptied more regularly in the area of the Blue Bells public house and suggested a general

sprucing up of the village. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to follow this up.

Kingfisher Close, Bishop Cuthbert – Councillor Thompson highlighted the need for grit boxes here. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to see if these could be provided.

23. HIGHWAY SERVICES STRATEGY FOR HARTLEPOOL

The Highway Services Manager gave a presentation in relation to the need to provide a long term Highway Services Strategy by the Local Authority. He stated that the current strategy seemed to be working in relation to main roads but there appeared to be a shortfall in relation to local roads. According to a 2008 survey, Local Authorities only received 51% of the budget necessary to maintain their highways and it is scheduled maintenance on local roads that has been suffering from underfunding. The Strategy was to be based upon levels of service, life cycle planning and whole life costing. There was a need to develop a business case for additional funding for scheduled maintenance. The public could submit their view of the strategy to Paul Mitchinson on 01429 523706 or paul.mitchinson@hartlepool.gov.uk

Pavements in York Road – Resident Representative Evelyn Leck highlighted the poor state of pavements in that area and said that she did not feel that a 28 day response was rapid enough.

24. MIDDLETON GRANGE SHOPPING CENTRE – VERBAL UPDATE

As there was no representative from the Middleton Grange Shopping Centre present at the meeting, this item was not discussed.

25. HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING

The Head of Neighbourhood Management informed the Forum of the new developments with regard to the kerbside recycling provision in Hartlepool necessary in order to increase recycling performance. The Authority needed to achieve Government targets of 40% recycling. She stated that had all household recyclable materials been sorted for collection, then £120,000 could have been saved by the Authority the previous year.

She outlined current performance across the town and participation rates in the Central area as detailed below:-

Participation Rates – Central area breakdown for all materials

Area	Glass	Cans	Paper	Plastic	Cardboard
Park Road/Elwick Road	75.05%	75.90%	77.60%	96.71%	96.62%
Burbank Marina	81.44%	82.50%	83.07%	55.83%	56.31%
West Park – Dalton/Elwick	75.05%	75.90%	77.60%	89.17%	89.17%
Back Streets	63.25%	67.92%	64.91%	94.18%	95.17%
Masefield Road	47.54%	50.19%	50.04%	69.96%	85.57%
Deerpark	91.44%	85.73%	92.76%	89.55%	93.33%
Marlow / Masefield / Browning	46.28%	71.42%	70.86%	79.75%	85.12%

It was noted that the Local Authority intended to take enforcement action against those households who did not recycle.

Green Waste – The Chair suggested that many people composted their garden waste at home rather than putting it out in their brown bin.

Bring Centres – Resident Representative Ray McAndrew asked whether he would be fined if he did not

use the recycling facilities provided at home and instead used bring centres. He was informed that enforcement would only be taken on people who regularly refused to recycle.

Hart Village – Resident Representative Ray McAndrew asked that cardboard and plastic recycling facility be provided at Hart. He was informed that the residents of Hart did not want these.

Low Participation – Resident Representative Julie Rudge stated that a number of areas had initially responded enthusiastically to recycling but this had dwindled off especially in privately rented accommodation. The Head of Neighbourhood Management agreed that it was a matter of educating people to recycle and work would be done with the private sector housing time and private landlords to pass this message on.

Advertising – Councillor Shaw suggested that the Council should advertise its recycling policy on the walls of council buildings. The Waste Management Manager agreed to look into this and said that thought would be given into advertising on refuse vehicles and buses.

Replacement bins – Councillor Shaw expressed disquiet at residents having to pay for items which had been stolen. It was clarified that payment was only necessary for bins and the other recycling containers were free.

Shopping Centre – Councillor Shaw pointed out that the public needed to be educated into not dropping litter in the shopping centre.

Recycling in Local Authority Buildings – Resident Noma Morrish said that there were currently no recycling facilities at the community centre, but was informed that currently Local Authority buildings

recycled everything apart from glass and this policy would be rolled out to all community buildings.

The Chair thanked the Head of Neighbourhood Management for her presentation and suggested that recycling advertisements be placed in community/voluntary newsletters.

246 MINOR WORKS PROPOSALS

A number of schemes were put forward for approval by the Forum. These were:-

Ellison Street shrub bed removal - £3,200
 Colwyn Road shrub bed removal - £3,600
 Westbrooke Grove resurfacing - £3,877.80
 Topcliffe Street electric sub-station improvements - £435
 Staindrop Street alleyway closure - £3,500
 Mill House Leisure Centre removal of shrubbery - £1,410.15
 Galsworthy Road removal of grass verge - £1,450
 Masefield Road grassed verge removal - £5,000
 Macaulay Road grassed verge removal (nos 129 – 137) - £1,250
 Shelley Grove grassed verge removal - £3,500
 Macauley Road grassed verge removal (nos 169 – 179) - £2,500
 Arnold Grove/Walpole Road bollards - £600
 Keilder Road grassed verge removal - £1,000
 Springston Road landscaping - £2,030
 Hart Chare Wall make safe - £1,210

The total cost of the schemes was £34,562.95 and all were approved by the Forum.

The Forum was informed that a scheme in Eltringham Road approved earlier in the year, was not in position to proceed. There was also an additional contribution

of £5,000 from Rift House Neighbourhood Action Plan Forum. Therefore the money unallocated for this year was £17,413.05.

Eltringham Road – Resident Representation Ray MacAndrew asked that if the scheme was not going ahead some work should be done to protect a tree which was being vandalised. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager agreed to have this assessed.

Dunston Road – Resident Representative Ted Jackson asked that consideration be given to the provision of a bus lay-by and that remaining unallocated minor works budget could be used for the bus lay by. He was informed that this could be raised at the next meeting with the Technical Services Manager.

Hutton Avenue – Councillor Simmons asked whether anything could be done to alleviate this road being used as a 'rat run' and was advised to raise this with the Technical Services Manager at the next meeting.

Blakelock Road – Resident Representative Evelyn Leck suggested a need for a crossing near to the bungalows and was advised to raise this at the next meeting with the Technical Services Manager.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.

CHAIR

ACTION SHEET FOR CENTRAL FORUM

15 October 2009

Matters Arising - Public Question Time and Ward Issues

Osbourne Road (Ray MacAndrew) – vehicles parking on the pavement causing smashed paving stones – (Jon Wright)

The area has been inspected for defects and both the police and the councils parking enforcement teams have been informed about the vehicle overridding. Work to rectify the identified defects are now complete.

Saddleston Close (Brenda Lloynes) – flooding – remedial works done to rectify this but flooding still occurring (Jon Wright)

This area has been revisited and works to rectify the problem are now complete.

Ward Jackson Car Park (Ted Jackson) – meeting with designer not yet taken place. (Jon Wright to find out when the meeting is)

Jon Wright has spoken with Ted Jackson and passed all the comments and concerns regarding signage etc onto Richard Harlanderson for action.

Matters Arising - Minor Works

Etringham Road (Ray MacAndrew) youths stripping bark on the tree can anything be done to protect this (Jon Wright)

The tree has been inspected and treatment applied to the damaged area. The Central Area Environmental Supervisor will continue to monitor the situation.

Schemes to consider at future meeting – bus layby Dunston Road, traffic calming Hutton Avenue, pedestrian crossing Blakelock Road

All schemes identified have been acknowledged and feasibility and costings are currently being investigated for consideration as part of Forum priorities in the new financial year.

Public Question Time

FOGGY FURZE WARD

Foggy Furze Library (Frances London) – provision of a waste bin outside (Jon Wright)

This is the responsibility of the Library and the request for a litter bin has been passed onto the Manager who has agreed to investigate the need for a bin at this location.

GRANGE WARD

Tankerville Street (Carl Richardson) loophole in law regarding caravan parking on the street (Clare Clark speak to Peter Devlin)

Section 235 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables LA's to make byelaws for the prevention and suppression of nuisances, but not where provision exists in other aspects of legislation. Unfortunately, the presence of caravans on the highway is not a good enough reason to create a byelaw, and accordingly we can only consider them an 'obstruction' for which legislation already exists and for which the Police remain responsible. Byelaws can be made for vehicles/caravans parked on road margins or verges, but this doesn't address the nuisance of caravans parked on the highway itself.

Trinity Square (Brian McBean) flooding of dropped kerb area (Jon Wright)

These works have now been completed by the developer.

PARK WARD

Dunston Road (Ted Jackson) bus markings on road so that police can enforce restrictions (Jon Wright)

This issue has been passed to Peter Frost the Traffic Team Leader. It is anticipated that the road markings will be completed within the next few weeks.

Tarnston/Dunston (Brenda Loynes) litter in area after school dinnertime, street cleaning or enforcement (Jon Wright)

The Environmental Enforcement team has been targeting this area on lunchtimes, and extra cleansing has also taken place. In addition Alison Carberry, HBC Environmental Enforcement Officer, has been working with resident representatives to develop and implement a scheme with the school and the shops at the Wiltshire way shopping parade. In brief the scheme involves the

individual pupil having an ID number unique to them. At the point of purchase the ID must be shown and this is then written onto the packaging of the goods bought. Consequently when litter is dropped it can then be traced back to the perpetrator. Once established who the perpetrator is, a process has been agreed for first, second, and third offences. This involves the issue being raised with the school and a verbal warning and a letter to parents, followed by a referral into the PAC for a second offence – a six week course run by the Youth Offending Team dealing with issues around behaviour, and finally the issuing of a fixed penalty fine for a third offence.

RIFT HOUSE WARD

Recreation Ground/Westbrooke and Kingsley Avenues (Stephen Akers Belcher) dog control orders in place here, can these be changed or refer to scrutiny as a call in? (Clare Clark)

The Forum is requested to support the Member's wish that this item be referred to Scrutiny for consideration.

Catcote Road (Stephen Akers Belcher) parking restrictions around Eng Martyrs School may just displace problem around the corner. Can comments be fed to officers considering parking restrictions (Clare Clark).

This concern has been discussed with the appropriate officers who inform that there are currently no plans to impose any parking restrictions on the new parking lay-bys in Catcote Road. However it is recognized that parking and the impact on road safety issues at this location is something that needs to be closely monitored and reviewed.

STRANTON WARD

York Road Bus Stops (Julie Rudge) thinks that there should be some outside Bingo and Sicilianos. Bus stop opposite Mill House is full of graffiti (Clare Clark)

Feasibility has been investigated and in principle has been established since there is sufficient space for an enclosed shelter to be sited at these locations. However there is a legal issue over land ownership that would involve some footway needing to be dedicated as highway if a sheltered bus stop was to be located outside of Sicilianos. Consultation would also be required with the shop keepers and residents who would be directly affected. Geoff Knowlson (the council's transport coordinator) is investigating these issues and a further update will be provided in due course.

Front of Civic Centre (Jane Shaw) untidy/messy with leaves and dead plants (Denise Ogden)

All the weeds have been removed and the full area has been swept and weed killer applied.

Front of Civic Centre (Jane Shaw) ramp is narrow to negotiate a large buggy (Denise Ogden)

Whilst the recent access audit for the Civic Centre does not comment upon any problems with the width of the ramp, it does comment upon changes that need to be made to the gradient and handrail heights. However proposals to alter the ramp involve significant construction related difficulties due to the existing car park and at this point in time construction solutions and funding implications have yet to be resolved.

Burbank Street (Clive Hall) Rear Streets don't get cleaned because of alleygates (Clare Clark)

This has been passed to Environmental Supervisor to ensure that this back street is routinely cleansed

Burn Road/Newburn Bridge (Norma Morrish) smell round this area (Denise Ogden)

The Council's Environmental Enforcement Team has investigated this issue due to complaints about the stench and dust emanating from the site. Photographs and a statement have been taken and handed over to the responsible organization, the Environment Agency, who is undertaking further investigations and will take appropriate action.

BURN VALLEY WARD

Arncliffe Gardens (Ray Waller) will residents be fined if park on redundant bus stop? (Denise Ogden to get response from Alastair Smith)

Unfortunately residents are currently unable to park in these clearway areas because the traffic regulation order is still in place and will remain so until the outcome of the re-routing becomes permanent.

ELWICK WARD

Butts Lane and Nine Acres, Hart Village (Hillary Thompson) – overgrown (Jon Wright)

These works are now complete

School Lane, Hart Village (Hillary Thompson) gulleys overflowing (Jon Wright)

This has been passed to Chris Scaife who will include this in his programme of works.

Front Street, Hart Village (Hillary Thompson) mismatched railings (Jon Wright)

A site meeting took place and all prices for the proposed works passed to Cllr Hilary Thompson. A funding request to partially complete these works is included in the December Minor Works report.

Newton Bewley (Hillary Thompson) general tidying up (Jon Wright)

The South area Coordinator is dealing with this request and is liaising directly with Cllr Thompson

Kingfisher Close, Bishop Cuthbert (Hillary Thompson) needs more grit boxes for winter (Jon Wright)

The North area Coordinator is dealing with this request and is liaising directly with Cllr Thompson.

WARDS

Burn Valley
Elwick
Foggy Furze
Grange
Park
Rift House
Stranton

***CENTRAL POLICE &
COMMUNITY SAFETY
CONSULTATIVE FORUM***

12th November 2009

MINUTES OF THE MEETING



The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Victoria Road Hartlepool

PRESENT:

Chair: Councillor Kevin Cranney – Foggy Furze Ward

Vice Chair: Resident Representative Evelyn Leck

Councillor Gerard Hall	- Burn Valley Ward
Councillor Frances London	- Foggy Furze Ward
Councillor Carl Richardson	- Grange Ward
Councillor Hilary Thompson	- Elwick Ward
Councillor Victor Tumilty	- Grange Ward

Resident Representatives:

Ted Jackson, Brenda Loynes and Julie Rudge

Residents: Gordon and Stella Johnson and D Kirkwood.

Officers:

- Clare Clark, Neighbourhood Manager
- Sally Forth, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
- Jon Wright, Neighbourhood Co-ordinating Manager
- Irene Cross, Neighbourhood Development Officer (Central)
- Julie Hetherington, Community Safety Assistant
- Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

Cleveland Police: Inspector Tony Green and Sergeant Glen Westmoreland

Cleveland Fire Brigade: Peter Bradley

Housing Hartlepool: Andy Elvidge

Cleveland Criminal Justice Board – Will Fletcher

Cleveland Probation Service – Julie Keay

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors George Morris and Jane Shaw and Resident Representatives Liz Carroll and Jean Kennedy.

11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 AUGUST 2009

The minutes were confirmed as a true record.

12. MATTERS ARISING

None

13. UPDATE FROM THE POLICE

Inspector Green provided an overview of crime in the Cleveland Force and also the Central area of Hartlepool. Force-wide figures were down for House Burglaries, Violent Crime, Criminal Damage, Vehicle Crime and Drugs activity had risen. This positive trend had continued in Hartlepool, with the exception of violent crime which had risen by 26.9% over the last three months, despite a downward trend over the whole year. The numbers of arrests, cautions, charges, warrants, AS13s and Street encounters in the Central area of the town were also given.

Inspector Green also highlighted a number of items of interest including Operations PACT, Staysafe and Cleansweep and Not In My Neighbourhood Week. Details were also given of a joint initiative with the armed forces to combat disrespectful behaviour at the Cenotaph and the issuing of a number of drug warrants, the majority of which were positive.

Councillor Hilary Thompson congratulated officers on the successful

apprehension of the quay arsonist. She raised the problem of fly tipping as experienced by farmers in the Elwick Ward. Inspector Green advised that off-road bikes were available to the police but information regarding dates and times etc would be needed before these could be successfully deployed. Police helicopters could also be redirected to the area. Councillor Thompson also highlighted the problem of criminals trespassing on privately owned property to ascertain the presence of diesel.

A Resident Representative reported ongoing problems with Borrowdale Street. Several of the houses were in a dilapidated state as the landlord was in prison and there had been a number of police patrols and the resident representative asked that these be increased and the area made tidier. Inspector Green acknowledged these problems but said there were no short term fixes available. Police had met with Baden Street landlords but engaging in any dialogue of this nature was becoming increasingly difficult. Reference was also made to an increase in the activities of a notorious drug dealer on Stockton Road. Inspector Green made a public pledge that action would be taken by the end of the month.

Resident Representative Julie Rudge queried whether any street surgeries had taken place yet. Inspector Green advised that surgeries had already taken place in Cornwall Street, Sheriff Street and West Park among other places. A projector had recently been purchased to enable officers to advertise these surgeries on dark nights.

Resident Representative Rudge further queried whether street surgeries were another form of street audits. Inspector Green indicated that they were

completely different. Mrs Rudge advised that she had not received a reminder for the previous two audits in her area despite being the main contact for the Residents Association. This would be rectified.

Councillor Victor Tumilty felt it should be made clear that a caution was a criminal record which could affect the recipient's future. Inspector Green acknowledged this saying it meant that the person had fully admitted the offence in question and there could indeed be consequences.

Resident Representative Brenda Loynes asked if anything could be done about the ongoing litter problem near High Tunstall School. Inspector Green advised that this was not a black and white issue. Recently a person found littering at the Cenotaph had been approached and voluntarily cleaned the whole area. If the person involved was respectful and contrite no further action would be taken however if not there would be punitive measures. Mrs Loynes asked if enforcement officers could be supplied with black bags. She also suggested that prosecutions be sought with fines taken out of their family allowance. The Chair acknowledged this was an issue across Hartlepool but felt it was a question of prioritising police resources.

Councillor Chris Simmons congratulated police on the obvious success of neighbourhood policing. He asked that for future presentations numbers rather than percentages be used.

The Chair thanked Inspector Green for attending the meeting and answering questions.

14. UPDATE FROM THE FIRE BRIGADE

The Fire Brigade representative, Peter Bradley, gave details of the number of

incidents in the Central Area of the town between August and October 2009. There had been a reduction in all categories of fire with only a slight increase on bonfire night. There had been no vehicle fires at all in the Central area during these months. Ward Jackson Park had seen a number of arson incidents in the last six months but these were all nuisance fires and not related to property. Leaflets had been issued to residents asking for their help and a possible suspect had recently been identified.

The Chair thanked the Fire Brigade representative for attending the meeting.

15. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT UPDATE

The Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator gave details of recent activity in the unit and a breakdown of where cases were occurring, what category of complains were dealt with, broken down into wards and outcomes of referrals. She referred to successful partnership working, successes with the good tenant scheme and an increase in the take up of parenting courses. The Staysafe programme had been run on the last 3 consecutive Fridays and had proven very successful with 4 young people picked up by officers.

The Chair referred to the case categories rowdy behaviour and noise, querying why these were not linked. The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator advised that these categories were set by the Home Office. She clarified that an increase in these cases did not necessarily mean that it was happening more but that it was being brought to officers' attention.

Councillor Frances London praised the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit for their efforts in making Hartlepool a better place to live. Councillor Chris Simmons

suggested that future presentations be provided in a hard copy form to make it easier for those present to read them.

The Chair thanked the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator for attending the meeting and answering questions.

16. CLEVELAND CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD

A representative of the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, Will Fletcher, provided a brief update of their work. An executive decision-making body comprising representatives from the Police, Probation Service, Crown Prosecution Service, Courts and Youth Offending, they would meet on a monthly basis and had the authority to commit resources to achieve targets. Among their recent achievements had been the implementation of the Community Cashback Scheme whereby received criminal assets were redistributed to community projects. Further information was available via the website <http://lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/Cleveland/home.html>

The Chair advised that none of the organisations which had applied for funds from the Criminal Cashback Scheme had officially been told they were successful, although the information was available on the website. Mr Fletcher took these comments on board and would ensure this did not happen in the future.

The Chair thanked the representative of the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board for attending the meeting and answering questions.

17. PROBATION UPDATE

A representative of the Crown Prosecution Service, Julie Keay, gave a brief update on the work undertaken by the division. Utilising two offices in

Avenue Road and Church Street they supervised approximately 600 offenders. This had led to a reduction of 15% in re-offending rates in Teesside (11.5% reduction in Hartlepool). The Teesside National Probation Service was the best performing in the Tees Valley area and in the top five countrywide.

The Chair commended these statistics saying more publicity should be given to this work. The Representative highlighted the more risky profile of Teesside when compared to the rest of the Tees Valley which made these statistics even more impressive.

Councillor Gerard Hall queried whether these figures could be affected by a relatively small number of individuals. The Representative confirmed this but said that it depended on the type of offence.

The Chair thanked the Representative of the Crown Prosecution Services for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

18. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No issues.

19. ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS AND RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVES

None

The meeting concluded at 11.40am

Chair

Report of: Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Subject: DRAFT PUBLIC CONVENIENCE STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the proposed and newly developed policy for the future provision of public conveniences in Hartlepool.

2. BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The first public toilet in Britain was opened over 150 years ago, and for a long time, the provision of municipal public convenience facilities was a matter of considerable civic pride. Over recent years however, many local authorities were unable to maintain or improve the facilities to the required and expected standards, and were forced to close many public conveniences due to financial pressures and high operating and maintenance costs.
- 2.2 Another reason for their decline was the high level of persistent and increased levels of vandalism and antisocial behaviour, which apart from its financial implications, created issues of public anxiety and concern, health and safety and put staff and users of the facilities at risk. As such, many facilities became an eyesore and a focus for activities such as vandalism, drug taking and other anti-social activities which accelerated and necessitated the closure of some of the facilities.
- 2.3 In 2007 the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum carried out a comprehensive investigation into the provision of public conveniences in Hartlepool. The investigation recognised the vital contribution a well-managed public convenience service can make, both to the quality of life for our residents, and our visitors and the negative effect which the lack of adequate provision and the poor maintenance of public conveniences can have on tourism and on the town's image in general. Cabinet accepted the findings of the Scrutiny investigation and an all-embracing action plan was implemented covering the demolition of old redundant and closed facilities, the refurbishment of the remainder and new build in tourist areas such as the Headland and Seaton Carew.
- 2.4 The Scrutiny investigation also recommended the Council had a policy for the provision of Public Conveniences, as there are no corporately agreed criteria for deciding on the provision and the location of public conveniences. The proposed policy is based upon the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny review and re-examination of the relevant evidence and information available relating to the provision of Public Convenience in Hartlepool. In attempting to develop and

formulate the most appropriate policy, it is necessary to set-out the parameters of the current and the proposed service requirements.

- 2.5 The provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is at the discretion of local authorities who have a power, under section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936 ("PHA 1936"), to provide public conveniences, but no duty to do so. It is therefore up to the local Authority to decide whether it should provide public toilets and, if so, how many.

3. CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION

- 3.1 Currently, Hartlepool Borough Council provides public toilet facilities, at the following sites;

Item	LOCATION	NUMBER OF CUBICLES		URINALS	DISABLED FACILITIES	BABY CHANGING
		FEMALE	MALE	MALE		
1	Clock Tower - Seaton Carew	10	4	8	Yes	Yes
2	Seaton Old Baths Site	6	2	9	Yes	Yes
3	Middlegate - Headland	3	2	3	Yes	Yes
4	Lighthouse - Headland	2	1	3	Yes	Yes
5	Stranton Crematorium	1	1	2	Yes	No
6	West View Cemetery	1	1	2	No	No
7	Ward Jackson Park	3	2	3	Yes	Yes
8	Rossmere Park	3	2	3	Yes	Yes

OPENING HOURS

- 3.2 Summer Period - 1 March to 31 September

Item	LOCATION	OPERATING HOURS					
		OPENING			CLOSING		
		MONDAY - FRIDAY	SATURDAY - SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY	MONDAY - FRIDAY	SATURDAY - SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY
1	Clock Tower - Seaton Carew	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	9:30 pm	10:00 pm	10:00 pm
2	Seaton Old Baths Site	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	9:30 pm	9:30 pm
3	Middlegate - Headland	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	9:30 pm	9:30 pm
4	Lighthouse - Headland	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	9:30 pm	9:30 pm
5	Stranton Crematorium	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	4:30 pm	8:00 pm	8:00 pm
6	West View Cemetery	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	8:00 pm	8:00 pm
7	Ward Jackson Park	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		
8	Rossmere Park	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		

3.3 Winter Period – 1 October to 28 February

Item	LOCATION	OPERATING HOURS					
		OPENING			CLOSING		
		MONDAY-FRIDAY	SATURDAY-SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY	MONDAY-FRIDAY	SATURDAY-SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY
1	Clock Tower - Seaton Carew	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
2	Seaton Old Baths Site	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
3	Middlegate - Headland	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
4	Lighthouse - Headland	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
5	Stranbn Crematorium	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	4:30pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
6	West View Cemetery	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
7	Ward Jackson Park	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		
8	Rossmere Park	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		

NOTES:

- All public conveniences shall be opened on **Bank Holidays**, unless otherwise specified.
- Closing times as above or at **DUSK** if earlier (Health & Safety implications)
- Entry to 'Disabled' toilets will require 'Radar' key.

Clock Tower, Seaton Carew

- The Clock Tower public conveniences facilities are in the process of being completely refurbished, providing a higher standard of equipment and better level of service.
- Apart from the structural and the general building fabric improvements, the refurbishment includes the complete replacement of the current equipment with new modern equipment incorporating anti-vandal properties.

Seaton Old Baths Site and Coronation Drive

- New modern facilities are currently being built near the car park in Coronation Drive, adjacent to the Newburn Bridge which is approximately 500m to the North of the Old Seaton Baths site, which will be demolished and the area grassed over once the new facilities have been fully commissioned and opened.

Headland (Middlegate and Lighthouse)

- The newly purpose built public conveniences at Middlegate, close to the Northgate Shopping Parade and the Croft Gardens, and the recently refurbished and upgraded facilities at the Lighthouse public conveniences near the Heugh Battery, include

disabled and baby changing facilities providing high quality public toilet facilities for the visitors to the Headland's foreshore and tourist areas.

Stranton Cemetery

- 3.8 Heating, together with routine and planned maintenance to the main facility has been introduced.

West View Cemetery

- 3.9 No major investment required, maintenance of existing facilities is ongoing.

Ward Jackson and Rossmere Parks

- 3.10 Following the recent refurbishment and modernisation of these facilities, Ward Jackson and Rossmere parks now offer high quality public conveniences. Both sites have been upgraded to include facilities for the disabled people, as well as baby changing facilities.
- 3.11 The Council will ensure that all conveniences are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness at all times and shall ensure there is an adequate supply of toiletries.

4. SECURITY

- 4.1 The Council has and continues to invest substantial resources in combating anti social behaviour and vandalism. The public's perceived fear of crime is such that CCTV etc is now almost a necessity.
- 4.2 As a further measure to reduce and deter vandalism and anti-social behaviour, and also to discourage large groups from gathering near or inside these facilities, CCTV cameras have been installed at the lobby of the new toilets at the Middlegate – Headland. Reports indicate that this measure has been successful, particularly in terms of reassuring the elderly and other vulnerable people.
- 4.3 In line with above findings and experiences, and in an attempt to alleviate public concerns, to improve the security aspect even further, and to reduce the criminal and anti-social behaviour, consideration will be given to installing low light stand-alone CCTV cameras to all public conveniences as funding opportunities become available.

5. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 5.1 The Council gives great importance to the positive value of those high prominence events such as the Maritime Festival, Dock Fest and Tall ships 2010.

- 5.2 As far as the provision of public conveniences for large events is concerned, the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) 'Event Safety Manual' in relation to the provision of sanitary facilities, requirements is recommended.

6. COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME

- 6.1 As an addition and supplement to the Councils provision of public conveniences, it is proposed the Council approaches the private sector to work in partnership and provide additional public toilet facilities.
- 6.2 The Community toilet scheme would use existing toilets within the business community for the public benefit rather than building a new toilet. The scheme is recognised by the Department of CLG and the British Toilet Association as one of best practice. The scheme would enable local businesses such as pubs, restaurants and shops, to work in partnership with the Council to make more clean, safe and accessible toilets available to the public.
- 6.3 Businesses are invited to enter into an agreement with the Authority, which involves the Authority paying an annual amount to the business for making their toilet facilities accessible to the public. Their commitment is to ensure they keep their toilets up to a certain standard of cleanliness. Members of the public can use toilet facilities during the premises opening hours and without the need to make a purchase. A survey would be carried out and if the premises are considered suitable, then an agreement between Hartlepool Borough Council and the private business will be signed, setting out the terms of the agreement. Participating businesses would have to display purposely designed stickers in their window, advertising they are members of the scheme and that they provide public toilet facilities. The sign shows the type of service i.e. male, female, and whether it also provides wheelchair or baby changing facilities.
- 6.4 Richmond upon Thames Council has in excess of 60 facilities taking part in its 'Community Toilet Scheme', and Perth and Kinross Council has over 20 business taking part in its 'Comfort Scheme'. Both Councils reported that the business number participating continues to grow.
- 6.5 It is proposed to develop the scheme in tourist areas, retail parks, and shopping precincts inviting interested business with the appropriate facilities to apply and be considered to take part in the scheme.

- 6.6 Preference will be given to premises offering high quality facilities, including facilities for the disabled and baby changing, first in the tourist areas, and in areas where the Council does not provide public convenience facilities or the facilities may not be adequate.
- 6.7 The level of payment would depend on the level of service to be provided, namely, the type and number of facilities and whether they provide disabled or baby changing facilities, and the hours the facilities would be made available to the public.
- 6.8 Initially it is proposed to run a pilot scheme involving the participation of no more than ten facilities spread throughout the town. The scheme would then be evaluated and if successful as it is anticipated, the scheme can be further expanded as considered appropriate.
- 6.9 The disadvantages are that not all toilets are kept up to the said standard. Businesses can close without notice and the Authority is beholden to their opening and closing times.

7. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 7.1 New public and private developments, new large leisure and retail business premises should be encouraged to make provision for public toilet facilities, highlighting the many benefits such facilities can bring to their business, as well as to the local economy and community. Effective use of the planning legislation such as 'Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as well as the Licensing provision process should also be considered secure reasonable levels of public toilets in new buildings.

8. PUBLICITY / ADVERTISEMENT

- 8.1 All relevant information about the Public Conveniences in Hartlepool will be made available and displayed on the Council's webpage including the location and the facilities provided on each site.
- 8.2 Business participation in the Community Toilet Scheme would be expected to display appropriate and specific signage on their premises. In addition, where appropriate, highway signs / directoryfinger posts would be installed.

9. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS / IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The current budget provision provides for the day to day planned maintenance and operational costs. The revenue budget does not include for any major future

refurbishment or major capital schemes or any future structural works. The facilities will be considered and included within the Council's Asset and Property Management Plan.

- 9.2 Annual, condition surveys will be undertaken by building surveyors to identify and to schedule planned maintenance works, and any other extensive capital works, so these could be timely included in the Council's capital works programme.
- 9.3 The initial costs for the setting-up, the signage and the operational costs for the proposed 'Community Toilet Scheme', is yet to be determined, however, it is expected the costs can be considered within existing budgets.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Having considered all the relevant information, Hartlepool Borough Council has recognised there is a clear need and public expectation for the provision of clean, safe, well planned, well designed, well maintained and clearly signposted high quality public toilets.
- 10.2 The Council has invested significantly in a refurbishment programme over the last 2 years based on the finding of the Neighbourhood Scrutiny Forum.
- 10.3 It is recommended that additional public convenience facilities in Hartlepool be provided partnership, between Hartlepool Borough Council and the private sector in through the development of a Community Toilet Scheme.
- 10.4 As part of the Council's measures to minimise vandalism and anti-social behaviour, we will investigate all funding opportunities to install low light CCTV cameras to its facilities, where this is technically possible and where appropriate, the Council's security contractor will be used to monitor areas of risk.
- 10.5 New facilities will be considered in line with this policy's aims and must fulfill the relevant criteria. Appropriate consultation with interested parties and stakeholders would also take place, prior to the final decision.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The views of the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums are sought to shape the policy prior to reporting to Portfolio for Transport and Neighbourhood

THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE POLICY

Our aim is *“to provide clean, safe, high quality, and well signposted public convenience facilities catering for the needs of our residents and tourists”*.

The expected outcome of this policy is to provide public toilet facilities:

- a) at appropriate locations
- b) which are well sign posted, providing information, including opening and closing times, and an emergency contact telephone number
- c) that are accessible to all
- d) that are clean and safe to use

The policy will be implemented by working to the following service standards.

The Council shall ensure that all conveniences are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness at all times and shall ensure that there is always an adequate supply of toiletries.

The Council will display a notice in each convenience recording the last date and time the toilets were cleansed and checked, and by whom. The Council will display a notice in each convenience to be specified by the Authorised Officer providing sufficient guidance and contact details to enable any member of the public to make a complaint.

The Council shall check the facilities on a daily basis and report all faults and damage of any kind whatsoever as soon as they occur direct to the Council's designated Maintenance Section.

The Council shall ensure that employees are trained to take safe and reasonable steps to discourage improper, anti-social, and criminal behaviour in and around the conveniences, and shall report appropriate incidents to the Police whenever such behaviour occurs.

Being able to access a toilet is a fundamental need for anyone particularly to a visitor in Hartlepool. Tourists need more information and more clear signposts.

Public conveniences including the proposed participating facilities of the 'Community Toilet Scheme' will be well signposted. Appropriate and sufficient number of signs should be installed directing users to the location of the public conveniences. They should be of good quality and comply fully with the corporate signage scheme of Hartlepool Borough Council and comply with any planning, road-traffic and other regulations.

Appendix A

Clear signs indicating the opening and closing times of the facilities will be displayed near the entrance.

Suitable signs showing the date and times of inspection and cleaning of the facilities should be display in appropriate locations inside the toilets. Also signs advising and showing the contact telephone number(s), where anyone wishing to make a complaint about the public conveniences or to report a defect should also be display.

In addition to the day to day maintenance, a yearly condition survey will be carried out to every public convenience facility provided by the Council to establish the condition and to identify the maintenance and any other requirements including costings. Based on the surveys' findings and the planned maintenance requirements, appropriate maintenance regimes and capital schemes should be drawn-up and implemented in order to maintain high standards of service.

The Council recognises that its public conveniences are at risk of abuse by anti-social persons or criminals, including drug users and vandals. As such the Council's security contractor patrol, monitor and open and close some of the facilities.

Report of: Principal Environmental Health Officer

Subject: DRAFT EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To bring the attention of the Forum to the draft Empty Homes Strategy and to seek consultation on the main proposals and its further development

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The need for this Strategy acknowledges the concerns of the community and members about the numbers of empty private houses and the associated issues that relate to the image of the town.
- 2.2 The main aims of the Strategy are to bring empty private houses back into use, maximise the use of existing housing, and contribute towards neighbourhood sustainability and community well-being.
- 2.3 In April 2009 631 private dwellings were recorded as being empty for over 6 months which is 1.9% of the total number.
- 2.4 A proactive approach has been taken to deal with the condition of these individual properties, securing works by agreement with owners or in default after the service of notice. The focus of this work has been on the physical condition of the property and its effect on neighbouring residents.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The purpose of the Strategy is to:

- Bring long-term empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action
- Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty
- Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town
- Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons
- Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes
- Devise and implement an Action Plan with targets and milestones to deliver this Strategy up to 2014 in partnership with departments, organisations and agencies involved in its implementation.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1. The draft Strategy is attached as **Appendix A**. The focus will be on prioritising houses, streets and areas for action using an assessment form and to introduce new actions open to the Council.
- 4.2. The consultation questions are attached as **Appendix B**

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. That the report be noted and that any interested parties be encouraged to submit any representations during the consultation period up to 1st February 2010.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

7. CONTACT OFFICER

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APPENDIX A

Hartlepool Borough Council Empty Homes Strategy 2010 – 2015



Foreword by the Mayor

(Links with EHS and work with derelict buildings and empty commercial units etc)

To be produced by the Mayor after consultation on the strategy.



Contents

Section 1	Introduction / Background – Why is it important to tackle empty homes?
Section 2	What can we do to tackle empty homes?
Section 3	Strategic Action
Section 4	Action Plan
Section 5	Development of the Empty Homes Strategy
Appendix 1	Empty Property Assessment Form
Appendix 2	Options Appraisal Flow Chart
Appendix 3	Enforcement and Incentive Options
Appendix 4	Priority Areas for 2010 - 2015
Appendix 5	Links to Wider Objectives
Appendix 6	Housing Sub-Group Findings
Appendix 7	EDMO Survey Findings



Section 1: Introduction / Background – Why is it important to tackle empty homes?

1.1 Introduction

Hartlepool Borough Council has prioritised the adoption of real measures to bring privately owned empty properties back into use as part of its strategic housing approach.

This Strategy will therefore provide an effective framework for bringing private sector empty homes back into use in Hartlepool. This includes failed private rented properties, abandoned properties, buy to leave empty properties and surplus new build houses and flats.

The key aim of this Strategy is to bring empty homes back into use and acknowledges the concerns of the community about empty homes and the associated issues that relate to the image of the town.

Areas of low demand and abandonment are primarily being dealt with through Housing Market Renewal and regeneration activity.

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Housing Strategy 2006-2011. It will support and complement the current priorities of maintaining housing regeneration; homelessness prevention; provision of affordable housing and improving the quality of existing housing. It is also linked to the wider objectives in Appendix 5.

1.2 Why do we need this strategy?

The aim of this Strategy is to bring appropriate empty homes back into use, using a range of flexible solutions.

1.2.1 Empty homes are a wasted asset if there is unmet demand.

This Strategy needs to be clear about demand for the type and location of empty homes to be targeted for action.

The Government continues to promote the use of private rented sector homes for people in housing need. The Rugg Review of the Private Rented Sector¹ considers how this sector can meet local demand.

1.2.2. To maximise the use of the existing housing stock

The Government has stated the importance of maximising the use of the existing housing stock in order to minimise the number of new homes that need to be built each year. Hartlepool has a significant level of outstanding planning permissions; of these 61% are flats. Given the current number of new build flat developments which are yet to be sold, at the time of writing this strategy, this could potentially result in a significant number of empty homes in the future.

This Strategy also needs to take into consideration the particular problem within Hartlepool of the mismatch between the existing stock and the increasingly diverse and sophisticated aspirations of the local population to own or rent properties.

¹ The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential. October 2008. Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.

This Strategy will also align with contribution towards the provision of affordable housing in Hartlepool. The affordable housing need in Hartlepool has been evidenced through the Hartlepool Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Tees Valley SHMA and is supported by the large social housing waiting list. These reports acknowledge the important role of the private rented sector in meeting this affordable housing need.

1.2.3 To contribute towards neighbourhood sustainability and community well being through:

- An increased stock of good quality housing meeting the Decent Homes Standard
- Promoting regeneration and investment in affected areas
- Discouraging local property price devaluation
- Reducing nuisance and negative environmental impact caused by empty homes i.e. crime, fly tipping, vandalism, vermin, arson
- Reducing damp and other problems for neighbouring properties
- Helping to meet local housing need, therefore reducing the need for new build homes and the potential reduction of greenfield land development
- Cutting carbon emissions by renovating and undertaking home improvements rather than building new homes
- Increasing health outcomes for people
- Encourage economic vitality through increased trade for local businesses and increasing employment opportunities

1.2.4 To reduce the direct and indirect financial costs borne by empty property owners, neighbours, and public services such as the local authority, police and fire service.

1.3 Current Position

1.3.1 As in all towns, there will always be a percentage of empty homes in Hartlepool to allow the housing system to function effectively and facilitate residential mobility and the improvement of the housing stock. This is normal and allows the market to operate effectively. 3% has been generally used as a guideline.

Homes are empty for different reasons and we need to understand the causes in order to provide effective solutions. The main reason identified for the high number of empty private sector homes is the high number of small terraced homes in low demand locations. Other reasons include:

- Neglect by owners / abandonment due to lack of value
- Disputes over ownership
- Inability to sell
- Repossession / bankruptcy
- Deceased estate
- Ownership of the property unknown
- Speculative purchase (buy to keep empty)

An effective strategy will ensure owners of these properties are informed of all the options available, the benefits of filling an empty home and the enforcement options available to the Council.

The total number of properties in Hartlepool is 41,594 and of those XXX are vacant

In Hartlepool the number of empty private homes empty at April 2009 was 631, 1.9% of the total number of private homes. The number of households on the waiting list at April 2009 was 3794. These numbers are counted in accordance with the Government's annual housing return².

To be inserted: No. households approaching the Council for assistance to find accommodation

² Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2009

Dwellings in the following categories are counted as being potentially available to the market:

- Empty between changing occupants
- Undergoing modernisation, repair or conversion
- Awaiting demolition
- Repossessions
- Awaiting probate
- Newly completed but not occupied
- Owned by a charity
- Unoccupied annexes
- Trustee in bankruptcy.

Dwellings in the following categories are excluded because they are not considered as being available to the market:

- Second homes
- Holiday lets
- Flats and houses normally occupied by students
- Owner in prison
- Owner receiving or giving care
- Owner in the armed or visiting forces
- Flood damaged
- Awaiting occupation by clergy

The calculation also excludes long-term vacant private sector dwellings earmarked for redevelopment or demolition.

Using Council Tax Records, the properties that have been empty for over 6 months (as at April 2009) have been mapped out on a Geographical Information System. The map indicates clusters of empty homes in XXX areas. **GIS map to be inserted.**

1.4 Current available resources –

- 1.4.1 Council Tax data is used to provide a snapshot of the numbers of houses empty at any one time. Problematic properties affected by vandalism or nuisance come to the attention of the council by complaints from residents, residents groups and elected members. A proactive approach has been taken to deal with the condition of these individual properties, securing works by agreement with owners or in default after the service of notice. The focus of this work has been on the physical condition of the property and its effect on neighbouring residents.
- 1.4.2 An emergency property securing service in partnership with the Fire Brigade has contributed successfully towards reducing the incidence of deliberate fire setting in targeted areas.
- 1.4.3 Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) have been used to bring two houses back into use and a further Order is pending.

Owners of empty houses which have been the subject of complaint are asked to provide details of their plans to bring dwellings back into occupation.

1.4.4 Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Funding for the period 2008/2012

Single Housing Investment Pot (SHIP) & HMRF £11.5m and Homes and Communities Agency (English Partnerships legacy funding £4.85m)

This funding is to purchase private sector property in three key sites in central Hartlepool. The programme covers the following sites:

- Raby Road Corridor – This includes Hurworth, Perth, Gray, Grainger Streets and parts of Raby Road and Turnbull Street. All properties can be purchased by agreement.

- Belle Vue – This includes properties in parts of Borrowdale, Patterdale, Kathleen Streets together with parts of Windermere Road. Only owner occupied properties can be purchased.
- The third area is Carr, Hopps, Jobson, Richardson, Rodney Streets and parts of Blake Street and Hart Lane. Only owner occupied properties can be purchased.

Other strategic purchases can be made on the three HMR sites.

In order to deliver the programme on the ground a front line delivery Regeneration team is managed on a day to day basis in partnership with Housing Hartlepool. This Team effectively provide a 'mini' Neighbourhood Management Service in the three HMR areas. Each area has named Officers who deal with residents on a 'one to one' basis and hold street surgeries where needed. The Officers liaise with other bodies, sections of the Council and statutory agencies to improve the day to day living environment of residents. They hold and gather up to date evidence and information of how the areas are progressing, what issues/problems are occurring in any particular street.

1.5 Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy for Hartlepool sets out the strategic direction for empty homes work and supports Hartlepool's Local Area Agreement outcomes. Its objectives are to:

- Bring long-term³ empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action
- Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty
- Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town
- Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons
- Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes
- Devise and implement an Action Plan with targets and milestones to deliver this Strategy up to 2014 in partnership with departments, organisations and agencies involved in its implementation.

³ Empty for over 6 months



Section 2: What can we do to tackle empty homes?

2.1 Identify the scale of action needed

Research relevant to this Strategy includes

The **2007 Strategic Housing Market Assessment** identified a shortfall of affordable housing (393 dwellings (244 net)) and a high number of empty homes at 4.7%.

The **2008 Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment** reported an overall vacancy rate of 5.7% for Hartlepool in 2007 (7.1% in the private sector and 1.3% in the social sector) – the highest rate in the Tees Valley. This assessment identified a revised shortfall figure for affordable housing at 291 dwellings (193 net).

The 2009 draft Private Sector House Condition Survey estimates that there are 1,480 vacant dwellings, 4.6% of the private housing stock within Hartlepool. The national average is approximately 4.1%. Based on the results taken from the stock condition survey it is estimated that 1.9% of the private sector dwellings within Hartlepool are long-term vacant.

2.2 Provide Advice

The Council will need to engage owners, and where possible, to work in partnership with them to find the right solutions through the provision of advice on:

- Redevelopment / planning consents
- Finding a contractor / managing repairs
- How to join the Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme
- Finding a tenant through the Compass Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- How to sell the property
- Renting/leasing the property or finding a letting agent

2.3 Provide Financial Assistance

The council has the flexibility within its allocation of central government SHIP funding to provide financial assistance for owners to bring empty properties back into use. A repayable loan could be provided where the property is in need of works to make it habitable or lettable. The recent Government policy shift targeted towards supporting new build affordable homes means that the scope to introduce financial assistance for bringing empty homes back into use has been severely restricted, particularly in the short term.

Potentially any of the voluntary and enforcement options could involve the council in having to find funding to instigate action.

2.4 Voluntary acquisition

The council could purchase by agreement for onward sale/lease to a partner Registered Provider (formerly Registered Social Landlord) or for owner-occupation. Alternatively the council could broker a purchase by a partner Registered Provider.

2.5 Direct owners towards voluntary Leasing Schemes

The Council could work in partnership with suitable Registered Providers or private managing agents to provide a leasing scheme to which owners can be directed. Through such a leasing scheme the owner would agree a lease for a period of years and be guaranteed a rental income. The Registered Provider could sub-lease to the council and take nominated tenants.

2.6 Enforcement Options

- **Tackling security / nuisance issues - Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982**
Used to prevent unauthorised entry or for the purpose of preventing the property from becoming a danger to public health, and to remove rubbish. Works are carried out in default where an owner does not give a verbal agreement to carry out the works and costs are recharged back to the owner.
- **Tackling nuisance issues - Environmental Protection Act 1990**
Used to remove rubbish from empty properties and to carry out works to remedy the cause of the nuisance.
- **Tackling visual impact – Section 215, Town and Country Planning Act 1990**
Poor visual impact is one of the most common complaints about an empty home. The council can serve notice on owners who fail to maintain their properties. It deals with the external appearance (the visual amenity) but does not deal with the internal aspects. It will not necessarily result in the property being returned to use.
- **Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) – Section 132 Housing Act 2004**
The Council can apply to a Residential Property Tribunal to take over a property and to repair, let and manage it on behalf of the landlord for up to 7 years. Costs can be recouped from the rental income. However, it does mean that only properties with relatively low repair costs will be financially viable. This tool is a solution to the empty home whilst balancing the rights of the owner. The Council would seek to work with a partner Registered Provider, and/or an accredited private landlord who have the resources to manage properties to pilot an EDMO.
- **Enforced Sale – Section 103, Law of Property Act 1925** is a last resort option which allows the Council to force the sale of a property subject to a local land charge following works in default Action by the Council. The sale allows the Council to recover debt owed by the owner and also costs incurred as a result of the enforced sale. This tool may indirectly prompt the new owner to return the property to use.
- **Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) –Section 17, Housing Act 1985**, is generally regarded as a last resort solution as it removes ownership from the current owner to the Council. It may only be used if the Council can demonstrate that it has taken other measures to bring the property back into use and has a robust plan for the re-occupation / use / management of the property. This option shifts responsibility from the owner to the Council for bringing the property back into use and requires public resources.

2.6 Joint working across the Council

Although the Council has a range of legislative tools at its disposal the success of the Empty Homes Strategy will depend on co-operation across its various divisions including Planning, Regeneration, Strategic Housing, Community Safety, Council Tax and Legal. Joint working is already well established and can be developed to assist in the delivery of this Strategy.

2.7 End Use of Properties

The location and type of property brought back into use will be important in deciding what residential use is appropriate.

Options for end use include:

- Leasing with Registered Providers through council nominations
- Properties advertised for rent on Compass Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- EDMO
- Disposal of CPO'd properties to Registered Providers

Empty homes brought back into use through this Strategy will be delivered and monitored according to demand for that property type and location.



Section 3: Strategic Action

3.1 Setting Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this Strategy has been outlined in 1.5 and is detailed in the strategic objectives, which form the basis for the Action Plan in Section 4.

Action on empty homes can also be linked to wider objectives such as:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing and temporary accommodation
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and crime
- Neighbourhood regeneration
- Increasing revenue from Council Tax
- Reducing complaints and demands on environmental health, police and fire service
- Increasing local economic activity
- Delivering sustainable development which considers effective protection of the environment.

3.2 Prioritising Action

The aim of this Strategy is to reduce the overall number of empty homes. A targeted approach will be used to bring properties back into use in areas that have been identified for proactive action. Analysis has shown particularly high concentrations of empty homes in particular areas (Appendix 4).

Within these 'priority areas' empty properties will be assessed for future action using the revised Empty Property Assessment Form which is a point based system. The Form will be used to gauge the most appropriate enforcement action for a particular case. The intention will be to return properties to meaningful use based on consistent and transparent criteria and policy. This takes into account factors such as:

- Condition / environmental impact / no. complaints received
- Time empty
- Number of empty properties in the same street

Although most of the proactive work will be within the identified areas it must be recognised that on occasion there will be the need to deal with homes outside of these areas, and a reporting

mechanism is being put in place to do this through the Derelict Buildings, Untidy Land, and Open Spaces Group.

3.3 Balancing enforcement and incentives

The appropriate course of action for any individual property will depend on whether the owner can be located and if they are willing to bring it back into use. In conjunction with this the financial vitality of the property should be considered balanced against the likely rental or sale price.

Action within this Strategy will be prioritised according to how long the property has been empty, the negative visual impact the property is having on the immediate neighbourhood, the level of complaints and the area it is situated in.

A range of solutions will be employed to ensure empty homes are brought back into use in appropriate areas. The Strategy will ensure a consistent and transparent approach to bringing empty homes back into use through the implementation of the revised Empty Property Assessment Form (Appendix 1).

3.4 Impact of the recession and other risks

The current recession and failing housing market offers threats and opportunities for tackling empty homes.

Mortgage repossessions are increasing across the country and there are concerns about the potential impact on buy-to-let tenants. This will be closely monitored within Hartlepool.

The market downturn in 2008/09 may result in an increase in empty homes as owners choose not to sell or can not find a buyer or tenant. The limited access to credit may also make it more difficult for owners and developers to raise finance for renovations and may result in churning of the private rented market. This will also be closely monitored and its impact assessed.

However, the market downturn may also bring opportunities for owners with an empty home falling in value to enter into long-term agreements with Registered Providers while they wait for the market to recover.

The Housing Sub-Group of the Hartlepool Partnership has recently examined the effect of the recession on a range of housing issues, including Private Sector Empty Homes, and identified some immediate actions⁴. (Appendix 5)

Changes in buy to let lending and less availability of owner occupier mortgages will impact on the number of homes left empty for over 6 months.

In addition there are a significant number of new build units currently empty in Hartlepool (mainly on the Marina). In the longer-term there will be a need to work more closely with planning colleagues to better align future housing demand with planning approvals.

3.5 Resources Needed

Most proactive authorities have at least one officer dedicated to carrying out the actions required to be carried out by an Empty Homes Strategy. The scale of action desired by the Council will require consideration of ways to provide this essential staffing resource

⁴ A Review of the impact of the recession on the implementation of Hartlepool's Housing Strategy. Housing Sub-Group, September 2009.

Financial aid towards the cost of empty homes work will be significant in assisting their return into use. Funding sources are restricted, and the Council will have to investigate the possibility of using SHIP capital, Section 106 agreement funding, and borrowing to pump-prime the enforcement actions proposed.

A business case will need to be developed to ensure the financial implications of using EDMO and CPO are understood.

3.6 How we will deal with empty homes / priority areas

In order to address the challenges to delivering this Strategy the following strategic objectives have been identified:



Objective One: Bring long-term empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action



Objective Two: Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty



Objective Three: Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town



Objective Four: Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons



Objective Five: Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes



Objective Six: Devise and implement an Action Plan with targets and milestones to deliver this Strategy up to 2014 in partnership with departments, organisations and agencies involved in its implementation

A SMART action plan for delivery of this Strategy up to 2014 has been developed using the 5 strategic objectives identified above and is contained in Section 4.

Section 4: Action Plan




Objective One: Bring long-term empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action

Desired Outcome: To improve neighbourhoods and the environment by targeting and helping to bring long-term empty homes back into use.

Key Action	Key Task / Actions	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
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	Involved			
Develop an Empty Homes Toolkit	Develop an Empty Homes Management Protocol for private owners and registered providers to use when they own empty properties			
	Develop EDMO policy and procedures			
	Develop CPO policy and procedures			
	Develop Enforced Sale policy and procedures			
Using enforcement proactively tackle long-term empty properties in areas of housing need.	Bring XXX long-term empty properties back into use over the next 5 years			
	Identify first phase empty properties suitable for enforcement action			
	Pilot and evaluate the use of EDMO in line with policy and procedures			
	Explore possibility of employing a dedicated empty homes officer			
Explore opportunities for financial assistance to private owners	Evaluate the costs of bringing homes back into use			
	Investigate sources of funding			

 Objective Two: Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty				
Desired Outcome: Minimise the number of properties becoming empty for longer than 6 months				
Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Develop a marketing and publicity approach to promote the Empty Homes Strategy	Develop empty homes publicity material			
	Improve empty homes information on the internet			
Provide a contact point within the Council for empty homes work	Develop and provide a range of methods of communication to enable people to make contact easily			
Improve liaison with private landlords	Offer advice to landlords on becoming a landlord			

	and assist in letting empty homes			
	Continue to promote and reward good landlords through the Landlords Accreditation Scheme			
Improve partnership working within the Council	Take a proactive approach and work closely with the anti-social behaviour team to educate landlords			
	Work with colleagues in Council Tax to ensure that the options available to bring empty homes back into use are made available to owners			



Objective Three: Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town

Desired Outcome: Improved access to decent and affordable housing for people in housing need

Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Investigate and develop a range of re-use options for owners	Investigate and evaluate the feasibility of developing a leasing scheme with providers through council nominations			
	Promote the use of Compass CBL to advertise properties for rent			
Increase the use of empty homes in meeting housing need	Use the marketing strategy to create demand			
Work with registered providers to maximise housing options in the town	Monitor and evaluate the outcome from the pilot HH Managing Agent scheme			



Objective Four: Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons

Desired Outcome: To have accurate information and mapped trends in order to effectively progress strategy development and enable informed decision making

Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Develop an Empty Homes Database				
Establish an accurate baseline of empty homes information	Undertake a survey of empty home owners and establish why they are leaving their properties empty			
	Consult owners on their			

	views as to what the Council should be doing to help them return their property to use			
	Consult local residents and other groups for their views on empty homes in Hartlepool			
Map areas of housing need	Use the information from the Compass CBL scheme to identify areas of housing need			
Review and monitor empty homes performance	Join National Association of Empty Property Practitioners			
Work in partnership with Council Tax	Work with colleagues in Council Tax section to identify the data held on all empty properties			



Objective Five: Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes

Desired Outcome: Achieve long-term sustainability of these areas

Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Ensure empty homes work complements the regeneration activity for the town				



Section 5: Development of the Empty Homes Strategy

An Empty Homes Strategy Steering Group was established at the start of the Strategy development process. The aim of this was to engage internal and external partners, raise awareness and seek the views of relevant departments and organisations for the issues and priorities that the Strategy should address.

The Steering Group is made up of:

- Strategic Housing Officers
- Private Sector Housing Officers
- Housing Advice Team Manager
- Neighbourhood Managers
- Regeneration Officers
- Planning Officers
- Anti Social Behaviour Team Manager
- Local Taxation Assistant
- Housing Hartlepool
- NDC Trust

The Empty Homes Strategy Steering Group is attended by officers who have a corporate interest to ensure the success of the Strategy. The group reports to the Derelict Buildings Group, chaired by the Mayor.



Appendix 1 Empty Property Assessment Form

Address	_____
Date of Inspection	_____
Number homes in street	_____
Number empty in street	_____

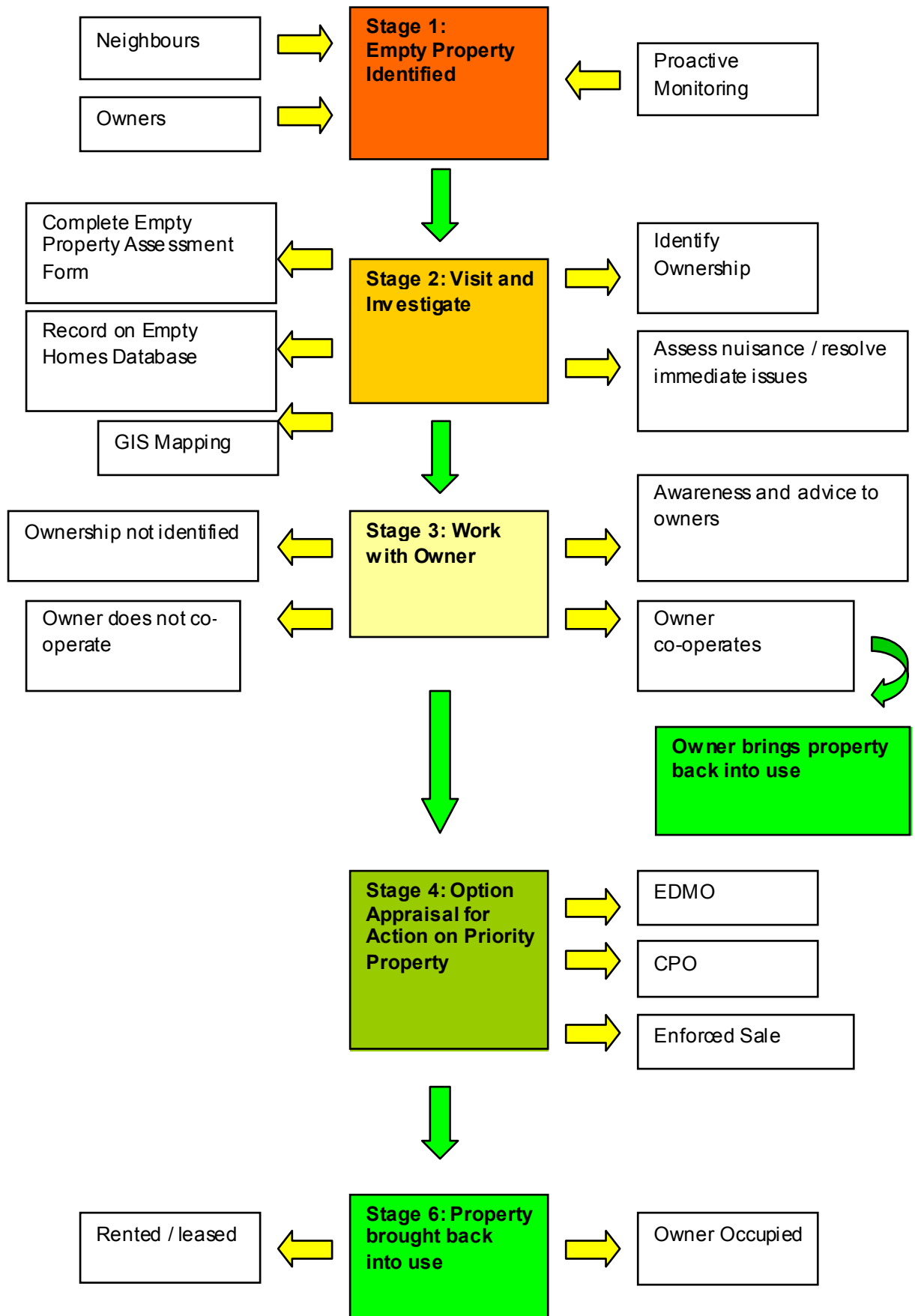
TIME VACANT	
Less than 6 months	5
6 months – 1 year	10
1 year – 5 years	15
Over 5 years	25
VISUAL IMPACT	
Visible neglect	
Broken window (s)	5
Damaged door	5
Partial boarding / shuttering	10
Full boarding / shuttering	20
Poor paintwork (fascias / windows)	5
Overgrown garden	5
History of fly-tipping	10
Insecure / attracting vandalism	10
Location	
Thoroughfare	10

CRIME / COMMUNITY SAFETY	
Risk of Arson	15
ASB Complaints	5 (per complaint)
Repeat Calls to Police / community tension	10
AREA	
Zone A (areas identified for possible HMR work but not yet confirmed – info on streets involved from AW/NJ)	10
Zone B (Regeneration Area)	5
Zone C (list from AW on neighbouring streets to Regen areas + all Selective Licensing streets)	15
COMPLAINTS / STATUTORY ACTION	
Justified Complaints about property condition	5 (per complaint)
Notices Served	5 (per notice)
Works in Default	5 (per order raised)
DEMAND	
Interest from purchasers	10
Interest from renters	10
SCORE	
A. SUB TOTAL	
B. MULTIPLIED BY % EMPTY IN STREET	
C. TOTAL (A+B)	

Works in Default debts – details (notice served and amount of debt:

Other debt (e.g. Council Tax) – details:

Comments





Non-enforcement incentives	Risks / Disadvantages	Advantages
Advice on: *redevelopment / planning consents *finding a contractor / managing repairs *how to join the Landlord Accreditation Scheme *finding a tenant through the Compass CBL Scheme *how to sell the property *the leasing scheme *tax issues		
Financial Assistance The Council could provide a loan to the owner to make the property lettable or suitable for owner-occupation, to be repaid monthly at an agreed rate, in a lump sum, or for a share of the value of the property on future sale	1. Reduced central government funding for private sector housing improvement due to the policy shift targeted towards new build affordable homes means that financial assistance for bringing empty homes back into use is restricted	1. Only relevant for regeneration of targeted areas 2. Council can apply conditions 3. Funding can be recycled 4. Placing a financial charge on a property for repayment on future sale could assist an owner of a single empty with very limited access to finance, to bring the property back into use
Rent Deposit Scheme Providing a link to existing schemes or financing a new scheme to offer landlords a bond in lieu of a deposit for accepting applicants nominated by the Council		
Voluntary Leasing Directing the owner to a Registered Provider management / leasing scheme for a period of years. The Registered Provider could sub-lease to the Council and take nominated tenants		1. The owner will sign a long-term lease and be guaranteed a rental income for the length of the lease.
Voluntary Acquisition The Council can purchase by agreement for onward sale /lease to a Registered Provider for owner-occupation. Alternatively to broker a purchase between the owner and a Registered Provider	1. Restrictions on the Council purchasing and retaining houses for rent. 2. Transfers financial risk to the Council / Registered Provider	1. Gains control of the property 2. Useful as a pre-CPO procedure to show that the Council has tried to deal with the owner by discussion rather than enforcement

Good Tenant Scheme This aims to reduce ASB in the private rented sector by providing landlords with information to enable them to make informed choices about the history of potential tenants		1. Landlord provided with detailed history of potential tenants
--	--	---

Enforcement Tools to deal with property condition	Risks / Disadvantages	Advantages
Preventing Unauthorised Access Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Section 29 Service of notice on properties open to unauthorised access or likely to become a danger to public health. Requires the owner to take steps to secure the property. The Council can secure the property if the work is not carried out, and has powers to secure without notice in emergency		
Removing rubbish Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Section 79/80 Service of notice on the owner to remove rubbish from empty houses		1. Can be used to target premises and to proceed with Works in Default, EDMO, CPO 2. Works lead to a registered charge and is fully recoverable with costs.
Tackling Visual Impact Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - Section 215 Service of notice to improve the external appearance of unsightly property or land considered detrimental to the amenity of the neighbourhood	1. Does not directly bring property back into use 2. Does not deal with the internal parts of the property	1. Non payment of any debt can be used as the basis for Enforced Sale action
Work in Default The Council can proceed to carry out any of the above works when an owner defaults on any of the above notices by not carrying out the works	1. Involves an initial outlay of capital.	1. Accumulation of specific outstanding debts can instigate Enforced Sale

Enforcement tools to bring properties back into use	Risks / Disadvantages	Advantages
Empty Dwelling Management Orders Housing Act 2004 – Section 132		

<p>Council can make an application for an Interim Management Order to a Residential Property Tribunal to take over management for up to a year. If the owner has not reached an agreement with the Council for the owner to resume management during the year, the Council can make a Final Management Order to retain management for up to a further 7 years</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open to appeal, particularly in hard to let areas 2. Procurement process needed to secure managing agent, e.g. RSL 3. Owner entitled to receive rent less acceptable costs of management 4. The Council may not recoup the total cost of repair/refurbishment necessary to make the property lettable 5. May need to identify funding for costs of appearing at Residential Property Tribunal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brings property back into use. 2. Powerful persuasive tool. 3. Costs can be recouped from rental income 4. Funding for acquisition is not required, though some initial expenditure may be needed to bring the property up to a reasonable standard 5. May take as little as 6 months to obtain
<p>Enforced Sale Law of Property Act 1925</p> <p>A debt recovery power which allows the Council to force the sale of a property when charges are registered as a result of works carried out in default and the debt isn't paid.</p> <p>Suggested level of accumulated debt to trigger action is £300.</p> <p>Transfer of ownership is monitored by the Council to ensure that the property is brought back into use</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can't enforce a sale if the debt is paid – but is a catalyst for dialogue. 2. Doesn't apply to all debts, e.g. Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act notices are not registerable 3. May not be appropriate for heavily blighted areas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can't enforce a sale if the debt is paid – but may result in the owner reconsidering the options. 1. Brings property back into use. 2. Recovers debts. 3. Has been successful in larger authorities with dedicated teams 4. Council is never liable for the property 5. Costs incurred in taking action can be taken out of proceeds of onward sale 6. Relatively short time period of 6-9 months to force the sale 7. Owner is required to identify future use and not just pay the debt.
<p>Compulsory Purchase Order Housing Act 1985 – Sec.17</p> <p>The Council can acquire an empty house where it can be demonstrated that there is housing need. Used when an owner has no realistic plans to bring property back into use or won't agree a voluntary solution. The owner is entitled to the market value of the property. The property would be sold, either on the open market or by inviting offers from interested parties.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council financial resources needed up front 2. Council must have proposals for subsequent occupation and management 3. Open to public enquiry 4. Have to hold the purchase funds indefinitely in cases where the owner is not known 5. May not recoup the total cost of purchase 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Threat of CPO can persuade owner to take action without the need to enforce the CPO. 2. Can apply conditions to the sale, e.g. buy back if the property is not renovated within a specified timescale, e.g. restricting the sale for owner-occupation

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 6. May be difficulties in selling on | |
| 7. Process can be lengthy | |



Appendix 4 Priority Areas for 2010 - 2015

In producing this Strategy for 2010 – 2015 the Empty Homes Strategy Steering Group identified the following areas as having particularly high concentration of empty homes:

- 6 Selective Licensing Areas
- Belle Vue
- Oxford Road
- Stephen Street
- Maina
- West View Road
- Individual Streets i.e.
 - Helmsley Street
 - Dent / Derwent Street
 - Baden Street
 - Sheriff Street
 - Mapleton Road / St Oswalds Street⁵

In addition the Strategy will also prioritise individual properties in streets that do not have high numbers of empties i.e.

- Tankerville Street
- St Pauls Road

These priority areas were identified in December 2009 and it is expected that during the lifetime of this Strategy that this list may change and it will therefore be monitored and analysed on a regular basis. Strict criteria will be introduced to remove any streets from the priority list and replace them.

⁵ Please note that this list is not exhaustive



Appendix 5 Links to Wider Objectives

• National Policy

Empty homes have become an important issue nationally over the last few years and the Government, working with the Empty Homes Agency, is encouraging local authorities to adopt measures to bring privately owned empty properties back into use as part of their strategic housing approach.

The government estimates that empty homes account for 3% of the housing stock. Of the 697,055 vacant properties in 2008, 293,728 were identified as private sector vacancies of over 6 months.

The government has produced a range of guidance and legislation designed to help Councils set and achieve challenging targets on this issue.

- All local authorities have been encouraged to publish an empty homes strategy
- VAT has been reduced to 5% on properties empty for 2 years and 0% on properties empty over 10 years.
- Full council tax charging has been introduced on empty homes and access to the name and address details of owners
- CPO streamlining procedures have been introduced

- **Communities Plan – Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future (2003).** This sets a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. The Plan includes housing and planning reforms and offers a new approach to how we build and what we build. It specifically refers to bringing empty homes back into use.
- **Housing Act 2004.** This introduced Empty Dwelling Management Orders, the first power specifically targeting privately owned empty homes. This involves local authorities taking over most of the rights and responsibilities of the owner of an empty dwelling, to refurbish and rent out the property, without becoming the legal owner.
- **Barker Review of Housing Supply 2006.** One of the key themes within the report and recommendations was to ensure more efficient use of urban land – this included more efficient use of existing housing stock and returning empty homes back into use.
- **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.** The Act established the Homes and Communities Agency, which focuses on delivering more new and affordable homes across all tenures and will drive and invest in regeneration. It will help to deliver the commitments set out in the Housing Green Paper 2007, which make specific reference to the need to tackle long term empty properties.

• Regional Policy

Government Office for the North East contributes to the implementation and promotion of the Government's Housing Policy to ensure people have a good quality of life in sustainable communities. They work with local delivery partners and stakeholders around the key policy themes of affordable homes; tackling low demand and market restructuring; the provision of decent homes and addressing the housing needs of vulnerable groups. The North East Housing Strategy 2007 sets the strategic housing priorities for the region with two of the four strategic objectives relating to existing housing stock, therefore impacting on returning empty homes back into use.

• Sub Regional Policy

Across the Tees Valley there are 3918 private sector homes that have been empty for over 6 months⁶. Hartlepool works closely with its Tees Valley partners to develop specific initiatives to address the problem of empty homes and the Tees Valley has a good track record of sub-regional working.

- **Tees Valley Empty Homes Scheme.** Between 2007 and March 2009 the Tees Valley Local Authorities were involved in this initiative to target long term empty homes through purchase and renovation. 7 properties were purchased within Hartlepool.
- **Sub Regional Empty Homes Strategy.** At the time of writing this Strategy work has commenced on the development of a Sub Regional Empty Homes Strategy to introduce wider ranging and varied enforcement approaches, and where possible, to follow a common approach.

- **Local Strategies**

Empty homes impact upon and have links with many local strategies.

- **Community Strategy & Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy 2008-2020.** The Community Strategy, called Hartlepool's Ambition, looks ahead to 2020 and sets out the long-term vision and aspirations for the future:

"Hartlepool will be an ambitious, healthy, respectful, inclusive, thriving and outward-looking community, in an attractive and safe environment, where everyone is able to realise their potential".

The Vision is described in more detail in eight themes:

1. Jobs and the Economy
2. Lifelong Learning & Skills
3. Health & Wellbeing
4. Community Safety
5. Environment
6. Housing
7. Culture & Leisure
8. Strengthening Communities

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy provides the context for neighbourhood level regeneration within Hartlepool. It forms part of the Community Strategy and its aim is to reduce inequalities in the most disadvantaged communities and to help tackle social and economic exclusion by lowering worklessness and crime and improving health, skills, housing and the physical environment.

- **Housing Strategy 2006-2011.** The current Strategy was developed by the Hartlepool Partnership through the Housing Partnership. It details our housing objectives, priorities and the actions that will be undertaken to meet local housing need and aspiration. The aim of the housing partnership is to:

"Ensure that there is access to good quality and affordable housing in sustainable neighbourhoods and communities where people want to live."

In 2008 a supplement was produced to be read alongside the Housing Strategy 2006-11. It acknowledges that there is a need to be more proactive in bringing empty homes back into use and to consider the use of all of the options open to the council.

Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. This Strategy identifies the following priorities:

- Achieving Decent Homes targets for private housing occupied by vulnerable groups
- Delivering empty homes initiatives

⁶ Empty Homes Agency 2008

- Providing targeted support to renovate and repair housing in areas adjacent to redevelopment areas
- **Homelessness Strategy.** At the time of writing this Strategy work has commenced on the development of an updated Homelessness Strategy for Hartlepool. The Strategy will set out the strategic framework for the continued improvement to the housing and support services delivered by the Council and its partners in the prevention of homelessness.
- **Housing Market Renewal / Regeneration.** HMR is a key priority for the Council. It is the leading thrust of the Council's Housing and Regeneration Strategies and a major element of the Local Strategic Partnership's Community Plan. Access to funding since 2006 has been through the Council's participation in the Tees Valley Living Partnership, where the Council is a major local authority partner in the 'Pathfinder'. Sub regional co-ordination is undertaken by Tees Valley Living with implementation and delivery by the individual local authority.

The Council's Housing Regeneration Team prepare neighbourhood, area based and town-wide regeneration strategies, co-ordinate the development of bids and submissions for regeneration resources and manage/support a range of regeneration programmes and projects.

The programme has been driven by community input and involvement which has been heavily influenced and guided by residents. Two key documents are the New Deal for Communities Community Housing Plan and the North Central Hartlepool Master Plan. All current and passed HMR sites have been the key priorities in these documents.

- **Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Strategy 2008.** The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to form a Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and to work with partners to promote community safety. In Hartlepool this is the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and its Strategy 2008 – 2011 has the reduction of criminal damage and anti social behaviour among its priorities.

3.6.5 Links to training / employment

Within the Council's HMR and new build programme links have been made to employment and training. At the initial developer selection stage a development brief is produced which details the employment and training requirements of the scheme. The preferred developer is then appointed and the employment and training requirements secured within a development brief. On commencement of the development the employment and training requirements are monitored by the Council's Working Solutions Team to ensure that all requirements in the development brief are fulfilled. This approach is used for all Council HMR schemes and new build affordable housing schemes.



Appendix 6 Housing Sub-Group Findings

The Housing Sub-Group of the Hartlepool Partnership has identified a small number of issues worthy of more detailed investigation through the process of the updating of the Housing Strategy. For Private Sector Empty Homes these are:

- Through selective licensing, there is the opportunity to engage with landlords earlier, and more proactively when homes are known to be empty
- To date, the Council has not used Empty Dwelling Management Orders. This should be piloted and the approach evaluated
- There is an opportunity to explore more innovative ownership deals for homes which are vacant. This could include a partnership approach between HBC and a RSL in an owner and manager role

- The emerging Empty Homes Strategy and associated Action Plan should be completed. This should clearly identify geographic areas for priority intervention and present a review of resources available for this activity
- There is an opportunity to explore the availability of funding to support loans to fund repairs or rent guarantee / bond payments to make properties available for Council nominated applicants
- The Community Campus activity has been well received. Is there an opportunity to secure additional funding to support this activity?



Appendix 7 EDMO Survey Findings

In July 2009 a survey was sent out to all Local Authorities (LAs) who currently use or propose to use the EDMO tool.

From the responses received from 9 LAs using or threatening to use EDMO it was seen that the time taken to serve an EDMO ranged from 3 months to 18 months. The authorities that take the quickest time have employed dedicated empty homes officers. Where it is taking 18 months can be said to be due to staff undertaking this task as part of their overall duties. The costs of serving an EDMO also range considerably, from £1.5k to £25k. Looking at the funding sources it could be concluded that the authorities with larger budgets are spending more.

EDMOs have been served on a range of property types that have been empty for a range of reasons including mental health issues, debt, owner moved out. The time left empty before the EDMO was served also ranges widely from 12 months to 17 years. Most properties are now being let through private letting agents, the owner, partner ALMO and RSLs. Some have also been sold and a couple are still empty.

All LAs that responded to the survey believe that the EDMO proves value for money and would serve another.

APPENDIX B**EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2010-2015****CONSULTATION 3.12.09 – 1.2.10**

Question	Comment
Do you think our priorities and objectives are the right ones?	
Do you think that the Action Plan will address the objectives?	
Do you think there are any gaps in the Strategy that relate to empty homes?	
Do you think the priority areas (Appendix 4) are the right ones?	
How easy is the Strategy to read?	

Your Name	
Contact Details (please provide your preferred contact details so that we may respond to your feedback)	

This consultation is an opportunity to comment on the draft Empty Homes Strategy for 2010 – 2015. We want to ensure that the document reflects the priorities of the wider community. Please complete the questionnaire to ensure that your comments are included in this consultation process. If you would like further information on the development of the Empty Homes Strategy or have any questions / comments on the first draft please contact Karen Kelly on 01429 524896 or karen.kelly@hartlepool.gov.uk

Report of: Central Neighbourhood Manager

Subject: MINOR WORKS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider improvement schemes for potential funding from the Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forum Minor Works Budget.

2.0 BACKGROUND / CURRENT POSITION

The total available spend on minor works schemes 2009/10 is **£87,000** and the total committed spend to date is **£69,587**. The total Minor Works Budget available to spend is therefore **£17,413**.

3.0 PROPOSED SCHEMES

- 3.1 A number of schemes are detailed below to address concerns raised by Elected Members, Residents' Representatives and residents in the Central Forum area.

(a) Front Street Hart Village

Hart Parish Council has requested that the safety railings in the village are renewed due to their age and design. The costs provided would enable the first phase of these works to go ahead. The total cost of phase one of the scheme is £8,387. Hart Parish Council is contributing £2,500 towards this scheme, and the Forum is asked to approve £5,887 to enable the scheme to go ahead.

Total cost of scheme: £8,387

Total cost to Forum: £5,887

(b) North Lane Elwick Village

Elwick Parish Council has requested the renewal of a timber fence which forms a safety barrier to the open running beck through the village. The total cost of the scheme is £400. Elwick Parish Council are contributing £200 towards the scheme and the Forum is requested to approve the remaining £200 to enable the scheme to go ahead.

Total cost of scheme: £400

Total cost to Forum: £200

(c) Greta Avenue

Local residents have requested this scheme to visually improve the look of an area of open space located at the junction of Greta Avenue and Caledonian Road. Rose bushes in this area currently act as a litter trap. Consequently the scheme proposed will remove the existing rose bushes and replace them with more attractive, and manageable shrubbery. The Forum is asked to approve the total cost of funding this scheme to enable the scheme to go ahead.

Total cost of scheme: £1,000

Total cost to Forum: £1,000

(d) Baden Street

As part of the ongoing visual and safety improvements currently underway in Baden Street, a traffic calming scheme incorporating a raised platform and a zebra crossing has been designed to slow down traffic and enable pedestrians to cross safely at the point on Baden Street between the Burn Valley Gardens. It is anticipated that there will be a contribution of £15,874 towards this scheme from the combined funds of the NDC/Burn Valley Forum and Local Transport Plan. The Forum is therefore requested to approve £9,126 to enable the scheme to go ahead.

Total cost of scheme: £25,000

Total cost to Forum: £ 9,126

(e) Macaulay Road and Sinclair Road

Residents from the bungalows in Sinclair Road have requested the installation of fencing to improve security at this location and to address problems associated with anti-social behaviour. The scheme also aims to reduce the fear of crime, and provide reassurance to the occupants of the bungalows. The Rift House NAP Forum is meeting the majority of the costs of this scheme (£3,100), but a further £700 is needed to enable the scheme to go ahead as planned. The Forum is therefore requested to approve £700 to enable the scheme to go ahead.

Total cost of scheme: £3,800

Total cost to Forum: £ 700

(f) Maritime Avenue

Residents of Chandlers Close have requested a cross path to be constructed across the existing grassed verge to improve access. The Forum is asked to approve £500 enable the scheme to go ahead.

Total cost of scheme: £500

Total cost to Forum: £500

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 The Forum is requested to recommend to the Neighbourhoods and Transport Portfolio Holder that the schemes be approved from the Minor Works Budget.

4.2 The total cost of schemes proposed is: **£17,413**

4.3 Minor works monies remaining if schemes approved is: **£00**

Residents and members of the Forum are reminded to contact members of the Neighbourhood Management team with details of any schemes for future consideration by the Forum.

CENTRAL FORUM MINOR WORKS SCHEMES BUDGET REPORT 2009/10

TOTAL BUDGET: £87,000 - INCLUDES ALLOCATION FROM HIGHWAYS TO ADDRESS SPECIFIC HIGHWAYS ISSUES (£20,000), AND SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF CONVERSION OF GRASS VERGES TO TARMAC HARDSTANDING (£15,000)

WARD	SCHEME	MATCH FUNDING £	CENTRAL FORUM APPROVAL £	TOTAL FUNDING APPROVED £
Central Forum Wide	Tactile crossings Pride in Hartlepool	10,000.00	3,500.00 5,000.00	13,500.00 5,000.00
Central Forum Wide Schemes Total		10,000.00	8,500.00	18,500
Grange	Topcliffe Street	0.00	435.00	435.00
Grange Total		0.00	435.00	435.00
Rift House	Garrick Grove	0.00	13,024.00	13,024.00
	Galsworthy Road	1,000	450.00	1,450.00
	Masefield Road	2,500	2,500.00	5,000.00
	Macaulay Road 129-137	1,250	1,250.00	2,500.00
	Shelley Grove	7,000	3,500.00	10,500.00
	Macaulay Road 169-179	1,500.00	1,000.00	2,500.00
	Arnold Grove	600.00	600.00	1,200.00
	Waverley Terrace	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
	Macaulay / Sinclair Road	3,100.00	700.00	3,800.00
Rift House Total		16,950.00	25,024.00	41,974.00

Park	Keilder Road	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
	Springston Road	0.00	2,030.00	2,030.00
	Egerton Road	3,000.00	8,500.00	11,500.00
Park Ward Total		3,000.00	11,530.00	14,530.00
Stranton	Staindrop Street	0.00	3,500.05	3,500.05
	Burbank Street	LTP 5,000.00 H/H 2,000.00	8,000.00	15,000.00
	Mill House Centre	Community C/B 1,550.00 Parks & Rec 2,960.15	1,410.15	5,920.30
	Maritime Avenue		500.00	500.00
		11,510.15	13,410.20	24,920.35
Stranton Total				
Foggy Furze	Westbrooke Grove	0.00	3,877.80	3,877.80
	Greta Avenue		1,000.00	1,000.00
Foggy Furze Total		0.00	4,877.80	4,877.80
Burn Valley	Ellison Street	0.00	3,200.00	3,200.00
	Colwyn Road	0.00	3,600.00	3,600.00
	Baden Street	15,874.00	9,126.00	25,000.00
Burn Valley Total		15,874.00	15,926.00	31,800.00
Elwick	North Lane	200.00	200.00	400.00
	Hart Church	00	1210.00	1210.00
	Front Street Hart Village	2,500.00	5,887.00	8,387.00
Elwick Total		2,700.00	7,297.00	9,997.00
TOTAL TO DATE		60,034.15	87,000	147,034.15