

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Wednesday 18 January 2012

at 4.30 pm

in Committee Room B

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors Cook, Fenwick, Gibbon, Ingham, A Lilley, Loynes, Robinson, Tempest and Thomas

Resident Representatives: John Cambridge, Iris Ryder and 1 Vacancy

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2011.

4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM

No items

5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

No items

6. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS/BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

- 6.1 Neighbourhood Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTF) 2012/13 to 2014/15 – Final Consultation Proposals – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Private Sector Housing Schemes Investigation

- 7.1 Evidence from Durham Tees Valley Probation Service:-
- (a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Support Officer*
 - (b) Presentation – *Representatives from Durham Tees Valley Probation Service*
- 7.2 Evidence from Hartlepool Borough Council Health Improvement Team:-
- (a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Support Officer*
 - (b) Verbal update – *Assistant Director Health Improvement*
- 7.3 Evidence from Hartlepool Council Regeneration Housing Services Team:-
- (a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Support Officer*
 - (b) Verbal update - *Assistant Director of Regeneration and Planning*

8. ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM FORWARD PLAN

9. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- i) **Date of Next Meeting Monday 30 January 2012, commencing at 3.30 pm in Committee Room B, Civic Centre, Hartlepool.**

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

9 November 2011

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Stephen Thomas (In the Chair)

Councillors: Mick Fenwick, Steve Gibbon, Alison Lilley, Brenda Loynes and Sylvia Tempest.

Resident Representatives: John Cambridge and Iris Ryder.

Also Present: Councillor Jonathan Brash, Housing and Transition Portfolio Holder.

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning
Louise Wallace, Assistant Director, Health Improvement
Nigel Johnson, Housing Services Manager
Elaine Hind, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

51. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Rob Cook.

52. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

53. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2011

Confirmed.

54. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this Forum

No items.

55. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

No items.

56. Private Sector Housing Schemes Investigation - Evidence from the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Transition *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Transition, Councillor Jonathan Brash, thanked the Chair and Forum for the opportunity to be involved in the investigation and to give his comments on the specific questions raised within the report. The Portfolio Holder addressed the questions by making the following comments.

What are your views on the Private Sector Housing Schemes operating in Hartlepool and how effective do you feel the current schemes are in improving homes in the private rented sector?

The Portfolio Holder commented that delay to extension of the licensing areas had had an effect but the reasons for the delay were well reported and in his opinion justified, though disappointing. When licensing was implemented properly it did have a positive effect for local residents. Landlord accreditation had, however, only been good at regulating the good landlords; it did nothing to correct the bad landlords. The Council was being proactive in wishing to work with landlords to improve housing streets and neighbourhoods. The pilot scheme in Baden Street being a good example of what could be done.

What are your views on the effectiveness of legislation in this area and do you see the levels of enforcement action undertaken in Hartlepool changing in the future?

The Portfolio Holder had recently received a report outlining the wide range of action that was available to the local authority to tackle problem properties, landlords and tenants. What was clear that the council had not been using the full range of enforcement open to it and the Portfolio Holder highlighted the use of Section 215 enforcement notices to tidy and repair properties as a particular example.

The Portfolio Holder made a plea to all elected members who were having problems with empty properties within their ward to report them as officers needed as much information as possible. There may be a role for the Forum though the investigation to lobby the town's MP to make it easier for the authority to take quick action to alleviate problems before they became issues that started to 'drag down' whole streets and neighbourhoods. Many of the powers available now were too slow and too cumbersome and frequently the law seemed to be on the side of the owner rather than those suffering the consequences. The new Minister had also proposed changes to the law so

properties have now to stand empty for two years rather than 6 months before action could be taken.

What in your view are the key challenges facing the provision of private sector rented accommodation in Hartlepool and how do you envision these being addressed in the future?

The Portfolio Holder considered that a key aspect was the changes in benefits – not just housing benefit but the localisation of management. The government was allocating the funding direct to local authorities but not before top slicing 10% and determining that benefits to pensioners must be protected. As the local authority would have to manage these benefits, the Portfolio Holder could envisage the benefits being paid out being reduced by up to 20% for other recipients. Many individuals and families could be priced out of private rented sector and landlords would need to be realistic on rent levels in the future.

In relation to the quality of housing on offer in private sector. There were powers for the authority to tackle issues such as no heating, damp etc. The Portfolio Holder had asked for officers to implement a more robust communication process with private tenants who were often unaware of their rights. Housing at the lower end of the market was damaging people's health and some investment now would save money later. There were such a lot of changes coming through that could push people out of private rented sector and 'we' were going to need more affordable housing in the social sector.

There were some positives coming through and the Planning Committee had recently considered and approved an application that would bring £1.2m for affordable housing in the Borough. However, while there was a drive to bring at least 10% of housing development approvals as affordable housing, another prominent development approval had brought no affordable housing either on the site or through a commuted sum. The government was no longer investing in public sector housing so this route to bringing affordable housing forward was key.

Do you have any views as to how current or future services can be delivered more effectively and efficiently within the resources available in the current economic climate?

The Housing Team had recently been restructured and will be more efficient. The scale of savings that Hartlepool had to make in real terms were put in context when Durham County Council talked about absorbing their budget cuts through a jobs restructure, but their teams dwarfed ours.

Do you have any other views / information which you feel maybe useful to Members in forming their recommendations?

The Portfolio Holder stressed that he believed that the link between housing and health was extremely important. There was clear evidence to show that those in poor housing suffered poor health.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for his excellent appraisal of the issue and his comments which reflected many of the comments that had been made through the earlier meetings in the investigation. The importance and robustness of enforcement was a major issue for members. The changes to the benefits structure were extremely concerning and were going to have wider impact than many were anticipating. The impact on young single people for example could be very significant.

The Portfolio Holder considered that while the authority 'needed to show its teeth' through enforcement, much more could be achieved through working with landlords to ensure good tenants were placed in good quality housing. Enforcement should be targeted at those who did not wish to work with the authority.

Members commented that there were many tenants that were concerned that complaining about their housing conditions could lead to repercussions with their landlord. It was indicated that the council could issue orders for problems to be put right and would support tenants coming forward and there were options available to the Council where the landlord need not necessarily know that the tenant had raised concerns. The main problem appeared to be that the majority of tenants were unaware of their rights. Members considered that it was important to ensure that tenants were made aware of their rights and the powers the authority had to put them right and the Forum would be supportive of measures to publicise this.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning commented that there was a need to build upon the landlord tenant relationship. Enforcement was a tool that could be utilised and one landlord in court could act as an encouragement for others to improve their properties but bringing landlords 'on side' through their own volition would be much more productive.

Recommended

That the Portfolio Holder be thanked for his contribution to the investigation and that the comments and debate be noted.

57. Private Sector Housing Schemes Investigation - Evidence from Hartlepool Borough Council Health Improvement Team (Scrutiny Support Officer)

The Assistant Director, Health Improvement, gave a presentation to the forum on the issue of health and housing. The Assistant Director commented that the link between poor housing and health was complex and difficult to assess but research did suggest that poor housing was associated with increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases and depression and anxiety. There was also housing related hazards in poor housing that could contribute to the risks of accidents. The Assistant Director went on in the presentation to outline the issues associated with cold houses, the impact of poor housing on children and young people, the level of the problems created by poor housing

on health and the campaigns and initiatives to tackle them.

The Assistant Director then outlined the issues that needed to be tackled such as integrating the work highlighted through this investigation into the work of the shadow Health and wellbeing Board bringing partners on board and raising the profile through the Financial Inclusion and Child Poverty Groups and staff training. What was being done in other areas was also highlighted, particularly in Middlesbrough through the adoption of the adoption of a programme based on the Liverpool Health Homes Programme.

The Housing and Transition Portfolio Holder commented that he wished to tap into some of the health money that was available to deal with one off spending to support schemes to tackle small scale but important works such as insulating homes. Members supported such an approach and questioned if the various health providers could do more to help in this work, even through bringing pressure on the government to tackle the issues of poor housing and its affect on poor health and the inflated costs of energy for those on low incomes. The Chair commented that initiatives such as that in Baden Street could be linked into wider initiatives to highlight the influence of improved housing on health.

The forum discussed many of the issues raised by the presentation such as the significant concerns relating to winter fuel costs for the elderly, the Cleveland Fire Brigade's Hotspots campaign, community staff and those visiting people in their own homes being more proactive in picking up these issues and referring people for help and support, the pooling of local government and health resources to make a greater impact and the focusing of the delivery of public health programmes and initiatives through the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Forum supported that idea of joint working between the NHS and the Council and the feasibility of bringing a scheme such as that operated in Liverpool to Hartlepool be explored further.

Recommended

That the Assistant Director, health Improvement be thanked for her informative presentation and that the issues and comments raised be noted.

58. Neighbourhood Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/13 to 2014/15 - Initial Consultation Proposals *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods gave a presentation to the Forum outlining the initial consultation proposals for the Neighbourhood Services budget particularly for 2012/13. The presentation highlighted the budget pressures and savings being proposed across the department. The Director specifically highlighted the following –

- The income shortfalls relating to car park income, the shopping centre and land charges.
- The budget pressures relating to Concessionary Fares, the increasing fuel costs for the Waste Collection Service and the Street Cleansing Service. And the increases in costs associated with Waste Disposal.
- The budget pressures that were recommended not to be funded for Coastal Protection, the Housing Hartlepool contribution towards Environmental Operatives in the North and Environmental Enforcement, School Catering, (Green) Waste Disposal, Economic Development Income and a potential shortfall in Procurement Income from a reduction in NEPO rebate.
- The department contribution to the 2012/13 deficit target of approximately £2m.
- The major capital cost issues surrounding Housing Market Renewal following the withdrawal of government funding, Land Remediation costs at the former Leathers site (the old Zinc Works), and the Council Capital Investment Requirements.
- The funding strategy for meeting the capital issues and redundancy and early retirement costs.
- The review of Corporate and Departmental Reserves.
- The initial forecast outturns for 2011/12 highlighting income shortfalls and additional costs.

The Director went on to outline the Budget proposals for the next financial year which included the following savings –

Waste Management: - £90,000 savings

Household Waste Recycling Centre - £72,000 through increased recycling, increased policing to prevent traders using site, reduction in amount of waste going into site, and bringing management of site in-house.

Waste Transfer Station - £18,000 through increased segregation of Council waste.

Neighbourhood Management: - £90,000 savings

Including a reduction of Neighbourhood Managers from three to two and a further post reduction.

Regeneration and Planning: - £634,000 savings including -

Public Protection Section - £27,000 achieved through various budget reductions not affecting staffing numbers.

Housing Services - £95,000 involving a fundamental restructure of the Private Sector Housing functions, specifically involving selective licensing, landlord accreditation and housing standards with an enhances landlord and tenant function

Integrated Transport Unit and Highways, Traffic and Transport: - £524,000

savings including -

- Passenger transport – reduction of two posts and increased income generation
- Road safety
- Highways condition surveys budget reduction
- Stop contribution to Neighbourhood Forums
- Reduce bus shelter maintenance budget
- Reduce budget for works to trees on highways
- Reduce contribution to insurance pot
- Traffic and transport planning – reconfiguration with staffing reductions
- Reduction in highways accident damage budget
- Reduce gully teams from two to one
- Increased income generated by highways trading account
- Rapid response highway maintenance team to focus on Tees Valley bus network improvements and be funded accordingly
- Provide in-house service for floods and watercourses grant
- Increase fee activity from the major bus scheme grant and the Local transport Plan

Following and during the presentation Members asked questions of the Director and raised the following points –

- Was the decline in the shopping centre affecting car parking income? The Director indicated that it was but the council had implemented free parking at certain times/days following discussions with the shopping centre to encourage trade and the feedback was positive.
- NEPO (North east Purchasing Organisation) did give greater purchasing power and had led to big savings on larger contracts but for smaller goods it was cheaper to buy local and this purchasing outside the NEPO contract arrangements would lead to lower dividends for the Council.
- The remediation of the former Leathers site would fall to the council as the original leaseholder of the land. The costs could be very significant.
- The age profile of staff within the division, as with the council, was high. An ER/VR (Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy) sweep had been undertaken to bring forward those that wished to go.
- Could concessionary fares administration be brought in-house? Unfortunately, no, the government had issued a national contract for the provision of the new passes; all the council did was collect the information and send it off to the contractor.
- Was the council selling valuable waste from the transfer site? Yes, there was a 9 month contract which was timed to allow the council to link in to a bigger Tees Valley contract next year. There was a link with a local trader and this was working well with recycling levels up. This had to be weighed up against the costs of the dirty waste recycling.
- The posts saved in Neighbourhood Management had come through staff suggestions.
- In Public Protection there would be a reduced staff development scheme; this would become a corporate scheme so would transfer to corporate centre.

- In the Housing Team, how would the savings impact on their ability to deliver the current service and the longer term wider roll-out of selective licensing as Members wouldn't wish to see this being lost through the team being swamped when the service was extended. The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning commented that there would be an impact. The service had been realigned. It was, however, critical that the problems were put right. There had been a focus on licensing properties and we were now moving away from that to inspections and enforcement. There was a focus on selective licensing functions. Work would increase but would be more structured. Enforcement would be extended through the use of S215 notices for example. There would be pressures and a service couldn't be reduced by these numbers without that and there wasn't much 'slack' in the system before that. If the service was extended, then the Council could expect some additional income and that would be how work would be funded. Functions and administration were now in place. The service was prepared and may need additional staff but only when there was the income stream.
- There were 30 jobs at risk in the division but the Director hoped that by the end of the process through redeployment and retraining, the people who would lose the jobs could be less than ten.
- Reducing the council Highways team by two so they had to essentially earn their income. Work could be sought outside of the town.
- Sickness levels had reduced significantly though there were still some issues with long term sickness.
- This was the sixth year in a row the division had cut staff; there was now half the staff there were six years ago. All staff were having to be generic. Members understood that in many areas services had been cut down to the bone and this was an unenviable job for the managers.
- Income generation was being maximised in almost every area. The Integrated Transport Unit was seen as the best in the north east – the council was discussing providing this service to another authority. Charges were being introduced in many areas such as the planning one stop shop, offering skills to the private sector, Catering, PV cell services, property and land purchasing etc.
- Members questioned if the school buses could be used to fill in the gaps left by the withdrawal of commercial services to certain areas, such as the villages. The Director stated that the Council could not operate commercial services. The option of operating a 'bus club' had been explored but the response from the villages was exceptionally small.
- Members were concerned that income generation shouldn't impact on services. There needed to be guarantees on the purchasing of buildings and land as the council could not run the risk of reputation damage. The Director commented that officers took a very cautious view of such purchases and would only recommend schemes when everything did stack up in their favour.

In summing up the Chair thanked the Director for the presentation and the frank responses to Members questions. The comments of the forum would be referred to the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee as part of the budget consultation process.

Recommended

That the following comments be referred to the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee as the Forum's response to the budget consultation process –

The Forum expressed concerns at the extent of the cuts on the Department's budget and was mindful that this could make it very difficult for the directorate to continue their delivery of high quality services.

Housing Services - Members raised concerns regarding the impact of the savings on the capacity to deliver private sector housing services going forward, specifically selective licensing. Members considered that there had been a significant improvement in private rented sector housing in the last six to twelve months as a result of selective licensing, which was at risk of being lost.

Income Generation - Members welcomed the fact that officers were looking at income generation, but expressed a view that income generation activities must never impact on the delivery of core services.

Land Acquisition - Members welcomed that a strategic view on land acquisition was being taken, but considered that the Council should only acquire land to realise income in the future where the acquisition did not place the authority in a position of financial risk.

59. The Executive's Forward Plan *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented the report which outlined the key decisions contained within the Executive's Forward Plan (November 2011 – February 2012) relating to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum for Members consideration and information.

Recommended

That the report be noted.

60. Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman informed the Forum that in addition to the next scheduled meeting on 18 January 2012, there would be additional meetings in December 2011 and late January 2012. The dates for these meetings would be confirmed shortly.

The meeting concluded at 6.45 p.m.

CHAIR

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

18 January 2012



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES: MEDIUM TERM
FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTF) 2012/13 TO 2014/15 -
CONSULTATION PROPOSALS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the opportunity, as part of the consultation process in relation to the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTF) for 2012/13 to 2014/15, for the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum to consider finalised proposals in relation to those service areas of the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Department's budget that fall within its remit.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 As a starting point for the 2012/13 budget process, Cabinet on the 10 October 2011 considered a detailed report in relation to the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTF) for 2012/13 to 2014/15 and approved details of the consultation process and timetable for consideration of the Executives proposals. In addition to this, it was also brought to the Cabinet's attention that, over and above dealing with core budget issues, the Local Authority will also have to deal with:
- A number of one-off strategic financial issues, around redundancy/early retirement costs, housing market renewal, land remediation costs and capital investment requirements; and
 - The impact of Government Proposals for changing Business Rates and Council Tax funding arrangements; and
 - Changes to Grant regimes.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 23 September 2011 it was agreed that, as in previous years, consideration of the budget proposals would be split to enable each standing Scrutiny Forum to look in detail at the service areas that fall within their remit. Comments /

observations were then fed back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, to enable a formal response to Cabinet on 19 December 2011.

- 2.3 This process was undertaken throughout November 2011, and the comments/observations of each Forum were fed back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 2 December 2011, for inclusion in the formal Scrutiny response to Cabinet. The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's formal response was received by Cabinet on the 19 December 2011 and the comments/observations expressed were taken into consideration during the finalisation of its Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2012/13. Minutes attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.4 For Members information, details of the comments / observations formulated by the Forum, as part of the initial budget consultation process, and the Cabinet response to them, are outlined in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.5 The Executive's finalised budget proposals were subsequently considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 13 January 2012, and repeating the process previously implemented they were referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Forum for consideration. The process is to be undertaken during January 2012.
- 2.6 In accordance with the wishes of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum is today being asked to look in detail at the finalised proposals in relation to those service areas within the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department that fall within its remit. Details of the proposals in relation to the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department and other corporate areas / issues, which Cabinet have referred to Scrutiny for consideration, are outlined within the following appendices. Please note that these departmental issues are unchanged from the initial proposals referred to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in October 2011:-

Appendix A - Proposed pressures;

Appendix B*- Proposed Savings (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department Business Transformation (BT) Programme Budget Reductions); and

Appendix C - Review of Reserves.

*Please note that this now summarises the savings on a project basis to reflect the detailed reports submitted to Cabinet and specific Scrutiny Forums on individual projects.

- 2.7 The comments / observations formulated by each Forum are to be fed back to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 27 January 2012, to enable the submission of a formal Scrutiny response to Cabinet on 6 February 2012.

- 2.8 To assist Members of this Scrutiny Forum in the consideration of the finalised proposals, arrangements have been made for the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods to be in attendance and an invitation to this meeting has also been extended to the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) (attendance subject to availability).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum: -
- a) as part of the Budget and Policy Framework consultation proposals for 2012/2013, consider the (BT) Programme Targets, pressures and reserves relating to the neighbourhood services areas of service provision within the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department; and
 - b) formulates any comments and observations in relation to each to be presented by the Chair of this Scrutiny Forum to the meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, to be held on 27 January 2012, to enable a formal response to be presented to the Cabinet on 6 February 2012.

Contact Officer:- Elaine Hind – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- (i) Report of the Corporate Management Team entitled 'Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/2013 To 2014/2015' presented to Cabinet on 10 October 2011
- (ii) Minutes from Cabinet - 10 October 2011
- (iii) Report of the Chief Finance Officer entitled 'Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/2013 To 2014/2015 – Initial Consultation Proposals' presented to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 14 October 2011
- (iv) Minutes of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee - 14 October 2011
- (v) Report of the Corporate Management Team entitled 'Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/2013 To 2014/2015' presented to Cabinet on 19 December 2011

(vi) Minutes from Cabinet -19 December 2011

(vii) Report of the Chief Finance Officer entitled 'Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/2013 To 2014/2015 – Consultation Proposals' presented to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 13 January 2012

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

19 December 2011

The meeting commenced at 9.15 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond - In the Chair

Councillors: Jonathan Brash (Housing and Transition Portfolio Holder)
Robbie Payne (Deputy Mayor) (Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder),
Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder),
Cath Hill (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder),
Chris Simmons (Children's Services Portfolio Holder),
Hilary Thompson (Performance Portfolio Holder),

Also Present: Councillor Christopher Akers Belcher, Vice Chair of Scrutiny
Coordinating Committee and Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny
Forum.
Councillors Turner and Wells.

Officers: Nicola Bailey, Acting Chief Executive
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive,
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor
Joanne Machers, Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer
Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning
Graham Frankland, Assistant Director, Resources
Jill Harrison, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care
Caroline O'Neill, Assistant Director, Performance and Achievement
Phil Homsby, Head of Service
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

181. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Pam Hargreaves (Transport and Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder) and Peter Jackson (Regeneration and Economic Development and Skills Portfolio Holder).
Councillor Stephen Akers-Belcher, Chair of Health Scrutiny Forum.

184. Formal Response to the Executive's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 – Initial Budget Consultations (*Scrutiny Coordinating Committee*)

Type of decision

None.

Purpose of report

To provide the formal response of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee in relation to the Executive's initial proposals for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/2013 to 2014/2015.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee reported that at the meeting of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee held on 14 October 2011, consideration was given to the Executive's initial proposals for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/2013 to 2014/2015.

At the meeting it was agreed that, as in previous years, each of the Standing Scrutiny Forums would consider the budget proposals covering the service areas within their remit. Comments / observations were subsequently fed back to the meeting of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee held on 2 December 2011 to assist in the formulation of this Committee's formal response to Cabinet. The Vice-Chair of Scrutiny Coordinating Committee also highlighted that further consideration would be given to Cabinet's finalised proposals by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee at its meetings on 13 January 2012 and 27 January 2012.

The Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee commented that during the determination of a formal response, Scrutiny Members were largely supportive in principle of the identified saving proposals, pressures, capital receipts, reserves and outturns and were keen to examining in greater detail the final budget proposals, once approved by Cabinet. Details of the specific comments made by each of the scrutiny forums was set out in the report.

Tabled at the meeting was a document setting out Cabinet's initial responses to the scrutiny comments on the initial budget proposals. The Mayor indicated that this would be formally forwarded to scrutiny with the MTFS for further consultation.

Decision

That the report be received.

185. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/13 to 2014/15 *(Corporate Management Team)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to update the MTFS and to enable Cabinet to refer formal budget proposals to Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chief Finance Officer referred to the comprehensive report submitted to Cabinet on 10 October 2011 (Minute No.111 refers) and referred to Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on 14 October 2011. The report advised Members that the public sector and the Council are facing the greatest financial challenge which has existed in the past 50 years. This position reflects both national financial issues reflecting the Governments deficit reduction plan and locally the impact of demographic pressures.

The previous report identified two key financial issues facing the Council over the next three years.

- (i) the need to address a £15.083m budget deficit on the current net general fund budget of £91.8m.
- (ii) the need to fund one-off strategic costs of £14m, mainly relating to redundancy/ early retirement costs and unfunded Housing Market Renewal commitments.

The report presented to this meeting provided an update on these issues and other factors relevant to the budget strategy for the next three years.

Existing legislation requires the Government to formally make an annual settlement announcement regarding the allocation of grants to individual Councils. The 2012/13 settlement had not been announced by the Government when this report was prepared and was expected to be issued late on 8th December 2011. An additional appendix to the report had been circulated to Cabinet in advance of the meeting setting out the key issues arising from the formal consultation proposals for the distribution of Formula Grant for 2012/13 issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 8 December, 2011.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that there were no changes to the initial proposals set out by the government in February 2011 and therefore the grant cut of £4.1m (8%) for 2012/13 had been confirmed. The Chief Finance Officer referred Members to the table in the report comparing Hartlepool's 'spending power' cuts for 2010/11 and 2011/12 with other authorities, which shows the higher cuts facing Hartlepool. The Chief Finance Officer did indicate that the Government had announced that they would abolish Whitehall capping and replace it with Council Tax

referendums.

The Government were proposing thresholds for 'excessive' Council Tax increases which would trigger referendums, as follows:

- 3.5% for local authorities;
- 3.75% for the City of London;
- 4% for the Greater London Authority, police authorities and single purpose fire and rescue authorities.

These proposals needed to be formally approved by Parliament in late January 2012 as part of the final report on the 2012/13 Local Government Finance Settlement. It was expected these thresholds would be subject to annual review by the Government.

If an authority determined to approve a proposed Council Tax increase above the 'excessive' threshold a Council Tax referendum needed to be held not later than the first Thursday in May.

Authorities going down this route effectively needed a 'fall back' budget based on the referendum being unsuccessful. Under this scenario the Council Tax increase would be limited to the 'excessive' increase determined by the Government for triggering a referendum, i.e. 3.5% for 2012/13.

The Government's consultation on the 2012/13 Local Government Finance Settlement closes on 16 January 2012. It was suggested that Hartlepool did not seek a meeting with the Minister and provided only a written response, which it was proposed the Chief Finance Officer agreed with the Mayor.

Key issues that would be covered in the consultation response would be: -

- The fairness of the proposed settlement;
- The concern that funding had not been found to extend Transitional Grant to follow principles adopted for the previous 'floor damping system' which provided protection for a number of years. Particularly against background of Government finding significant funding to freeze Council Tax for 2012/13;
- The concern that the 2012/13 Council Tax freeze grant would only be paid for one year. This proposal clearly recognised that councils need additional funding, but only provided a temporary solution which would increase the financial challenges facing councils in 2013/14. The removal of this funding could not be viewed in isolation and needed to be considered in the context of other changes being made in 2013/14, including re-localisation of business rates, Council Tax Benefit changes and reform of the Local Government funding system.

The Chief Finance Officer went on to highlight the main aspects of the report for Cabinet's information. The matters highlighted sought Cabinet's approval to the detailed consultation issues that were to be referred to

Scrutiny Coordinating Committee. In addition to the fourteen matters that had been set out in the report, the Chief Finance Officer also indicated that in light of the Government announcement on Council Tax Referendums, Cabinet needed to have a view on a potential Council Tax rise.

The Mayor commented that as well as submitting a response on behalf of the Council to the Government's Consultation, Hartlepool would also be part of the joint response of North east Councils being coordinated by the Association of North East Councils (ANEC). This was welcomed by Cabinet members. Members suggested that any response for Hartlepool needed to include the comparison of spending power cuts set out on page 2 of the report as this highlighted the significant and undue pressure the council was being placed under through the government's cuts.

During the debate on the report, the following issues/questions were discussed –

- Would the Furniture Solutions proposal be going through a tendering process. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that if agreed it, then yes it would.
- The proposal to create a fund to tackle empty properties as set out in the report was supported.
- Concerns were expressed at the fact Hartlepool didn't qualify for transitional funding for 2012/13.
- Cabinet considered that the public needed to be made fully aware of the situation that would arise in the 2013/14 budget if the government's grant for maintaining a council tax freeze in 2012/13 was accepted. The Chief Finance Officer stated that if the Council did not support a Council Tax rise in 2012/13, then that income was effectively gone forever and this would increase the 2013/14 budget deficit by approximately £1m. Through the consultation response, the Council needed to emphasise that putting the money into transitional funding would have assisted council's more than the money being spent on the council tax freeze. Many other authorities had seen through this and were proposing increases for 2012/13.
- The prudential borrowing to fund the coastal defence works in Seaton Carew was welcomed.
- The revenue saving of £39,000 relating to the Church Square Capital fund was to be considered further.
- It was proposed that an element of capital receipts be utilised in the Central Linear Park to provide changing facilities.
- The Mayor indicated that the Government was hoping that authorities would see the grant to maintain the council tax freeze as a 'gift' but it had huge longer term consequences and with the changes to business rates and the cuts in benefits; a council tax rise of around 5% would be needed in 2013/14 to regain the income lost. Neighbouring authorities had already chosen not to take the grant and were proposing council tax rises of 3% to 3.5%.
- The new council tax rise referendum were discussed and Members commented that it effectively set a ceiling as it was unlikely that a vote

for a rise above the threshold would ever be won. The Mayor considered that through extensive consultation, beyond what was normally undertaken, it could be possible to bring forward the same response as a referendum would. Consultation would need to be geared towards what people didn't want, i.e. service cuts.

Cabinet supported the consultation set out in the report with the additions outlined above. In relation to Council Tax, Cabinet reluctantly agreed to recommend acceptance of the government grant and maintain a council tax freeze for 2012/13. Cabinet did recommend that the consultation with scrutiny include an indicative council tax rise of 3.5% being built into the budgets for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Decision

1. That the following issues be referred to Scrutiny Coordinating Committee for formal scrutiny:
 - (i) Details of revised outturn detailed in Appendix A to the report and proposal to earmark: -
 - a. £50,000 to provide a cash backed fund for the completion of housing works in default;
 - b. between £29,000 and £359,000 to support the 2012/13 budget; and
 - c. the remaining 2011/12 outturn balance of £867,000 to £1,197,00 to be carried forward to 2013/14 to either support the 2013/14 budget, or to provide a transitional scheme to partly mitigate the impact of changes to the Council Tax Benefit regime.
 - (ii) Seek views on the use of the 2011/12 savings of £76,848 from the Acting Chief Executive arrangements and £21,402 from the joint Head of HR role.
 - (iii) Seek views on the use of the one-off saving arising from the Industrial Action based on an estimated value of £50,000.
 - (iv) Proposed pressures detailed in Appendix B to the report.
 - (v) Revised planning assumptions detailed in Appendix C to the report.
 - (vi) Proposed savings detailed in Appendix D to the report.
 - (vii) Review of Reserves detailed in Appendix E. to the report
 - (viii) Seek views the proposed acceptance of the government's one year grant in order to maintain a council tax freeze for 2012/13 but that indicative council tax rises of 3.5% be set for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

- (ix) Seek views in the proposed strategy for funding the increased costs on the PCP capital schemes detailed in paragraph 4.12 of the report.
 - (x) Seek views on the proposal to create a capital investment fund of between £0.8m and £1.0m to develop a business case to buy and refurbish existing properties to provide affordable houses. This would also need to consider the impact of Section 106 monies secured on the Wynyard development of £1.2m. It was anticipated these monies would be phased over a few years and would increase the total resources to £2.2m.
 - (xi) Seek views on the allocation of the available Furniture Project reserve of £50,000 to kick start this project.
 - (xii) Seek views on whether the Major Regeneration Capital budget of £0.39m should be retained, or the budget should be deleted and a revenue saving of £39,000 taken by removing the Prudential Borrowing repayment budget, subject to the Director or Regeneration and Neighbourhoods providing more information.
 - (xiii) Seek views on the proposal to demolish the Brierton 'top site' building and ancillary buildings.
 - (xiv) Seek views on the proposed purchase of the Ambulance Station.
2. That a written response to 2012/13 Local Government Finance Settlement consultation, which closes on 16 January 2012, be submitted by the Chief Finance Officer following agreement with the Mayor and does not seek a meeting with the Minister.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 23 DECEMBER 2011

SUMMARY OF SCRUTINY FEEDBACK ON BUDGET PROPOSALS AND CABINET RESPONSE

Scrutiny Comments on Cabinet Proposal	Cabinet Response to Scrutiny
Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum Comments 9 November 2011	
<u>Housing Services</u> Members raised concerned regarding the impact of the savings on the capacity to deliver private sector housing services going forward. Members were concerned that the good work which had been carried out to date being lost.	The comment is noted
<u>Income Generation</u> Members expressed a view that income generation activities must never impact detrimentally on the delivery of core services.	Cabinet note comment and will ensure income generation is based on a robust business case and does not impact on the delivery of core services.
<u>Land Acquisition</u> Members felt that the Council should only acquire land to realise income in the future where the acquisition did not place the authority in a position of financial risk.	Cabinet agreed with comment and would comment that any land purchases will be based on robust business cases and either included in the budget proposals referred to Council in February 2011, or separate reports to Council.

SCHEDULE OF 2012/13 BUDGET PRESSURES - Child and Adult Services

Budget Area	Value of Pressure £'000	Description of Pressure	Comment
School Catering	140	The 2011/12 base budget anticipated a £0.14m subsidy for this service from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This level of subsidy will not be possible in 2011/12 and a £0.07m pressures has been recognised in the 2011/12 outturn strategy. From 2012/13 there will be no DSG subsidy for this service. Alternative measures for funding this pressure for 2012/13 are being investigated and will be reported to a future Cabinet. At this stage it is prudent to make provision for this potential pressure.	
	140		

SCHEDULE OF 2012/13 BUDGET PRESSURES - **Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department**

Budget Area	Value of Pressure £'000	Description of Pressure	Comment
Concessionary Fares	113	Above inflation increase in the cost of providing Concessionary Fares.	
Waste Collection DERV	25	Projected costs for 2012 /13 based on 189,000 litres @ £1.18/litre = £223,000. Budget for 2012 / 13 (current +2.5%)	
Street Cleansing DERV	33	on same basis as above	
Waste Disposal (other)	165	Increase in Landfill Tax and gate fee, which includes rateable value increase and legislative change of law increase.	
	336		

SCHEDULE OF BT PROGRAMME BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Dept	Projects (Title)	Target savings (£K)	Scrutiny Forum	Date reported to Cabinet
R&N	Asset Management	£340,000	Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum	19th December
R&N	Property	£130,000	Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum	7th November
R&N	Traffic	£640,000	Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum	7th November
R&N	Management of Housing/Public Protection	£480,000	Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum	24th October
R&N	Neighbourhood Management/Facilities	£90,000	Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum	26th September
R&N	Waste Management	£90,000	Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum	10th October
	Total Target Savings	£1,770,000		

Created 2010/11 as per Outturn Strategy £'000	Department	Reserve	Actual Balance 31/03/2011 £'000	Reason for/purpose of the Reserve	Total Value of Reserve to be released for One-off Strategic costs £'000	Value of Reserve to be retained £'000	Reason for retention of reserve
£000			£000		£000	£000	
144	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Selective Licensing	144	Income generated from fees required to fund the scheme over a 5 year period.	0	144	Needed to fund running costs for the scheme over 5 years.
100	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Property Services and Facilities Management	100	Use of some of the surplus generated by Trading Accounts to cover the costs of potential remedial works and protect against future income volatility.	0	100	As reported to Cabinet 19.12.11 this reserve is needed to partly fund commitments identified in paragraph 4.12 of the MTFS.
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Housing Reserve	96	Various housing expenditure including, selective licensing, IT costs and CADCAM.	0	96	Includes Selective Licensing which requires funding for staff for a further 4 years, Housing IT system upgrades and funding set aside to cover future CADCAM liabilities.
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Empty Homes	80	To implement / match fund a TV wide pilot to bring empty homes back into use.	0	80	Funding to deliver phase 1 in partnership with HH and match funding Towards bid for HCA funding previously approved by Members.
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Stranton Nursery	70	Expand and improve retail facilities as previously agreed by Members.	0	70	Work already underway.
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Baden Street	55	Balance required to fully implement phase 1 of scheme approved by Members.	0	55	Not possible to reduce scheme. To scale back the scheme at this stage would not have the desired effect on reducing antisocial behaviour and would not address the issue of inadequate management of privately rented housing stock.
50	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Cemetery & Crematoria	50	Planned use of additional income carried forward to partly fund new cremators as previously agreed by Members as part of funding strategy for this project.	0	50	Funding to reduce prudential borrowing costs.

Created 2010/11 as per Outturn Strategy £'000	Department	Reserve	Actual Balance 31/03/2011 £'000	Reason for/purpose of the Reserve	Total Value of Reserve to be released for One-off Strategic costs £'000	Value of Reserve to be retained £'000	Reason for retention of reserve
£000			£000		£000	£000	
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Winter Maintenance	50	Purchase of winter maintenance equipment.	0	50	Replace existing equipment.
46	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	ITU	46	Carry forward of grant set aside to support the running costs of the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU).	0	46	Needed to support staffing costs.
37	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Urban & Planning Policy	37	Relates to the part carry forward of funding identified to support major regeneration projects such as the Innovation and Skills Quarter (ISQ) Gateway and development of Church Square. The reserve is to support feasibility costs and contribute match fundi	0	37	Church Square capital refurbishment commitment.
35	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Social Housing New Build	35	Relates to the surplus generated by the New Social Housing which needs to be set aside to cover future maintenance costs in accordance with the approved business case for this project.	0	35	Contractual requirement of Housing Grant.
31	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Neighbourhood Management	31	Carry forward of NDC (New Deal for Communities) funding to continue scheme.	4	27	£4k released to redundancy pot - remainder needed for salary costs.
27	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Economic Development	27	Carry forward of Income generated by Graffiti Project which is required to meet ongoing running costs associated with future income generation opportunities.	13	14	Scheme currently under review, funding required to fund ongoing staffing costs and exit costs.
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Building Maintenance Remedial	22	Traditionally all building projects require remedial work following their completion and this is a quarter of the figure spent last year.	0	22	Without this reserve there will be a pressure on the trading account.
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Greatham Community Centre	20	Remedial works necessary upon surrender of lease.	0	20	Complete.
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	H & S Training	20	Legislative requirements for operational staff to be trained to HSE set standards.	0	20	Legal requirement.
18	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Property Services and Facilities Management	18	Completion of various commitments under the Invest to Save programme.	0	18	Previously agreed to fund further invest to save projects.

Created 2010/11 as per Outturn Strategy £'000	Department	Reserve	Actual Balance 31/03/2011 £'000	Reason for/purpose of the Reserve	Total Value of Reserve to be released for One-off Strategic costs £'000	Value of Reserve to be retained £'000	Reason for retention of reserve
£000			£000		£000	£000	
16	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Speed Cameras	16	Relates to the funding ring fenced for the Tees Valley Camera Partnership.	0	16	Ring Fenced funding.
11	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Tree Works	11	Tree Works - completion of planned programme.	11	0	N/A
0	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Neighbourhood Community Development Projects	10	With loss of WNF funding needed to support neighbourhood meetings.	0	10	Unavoidable costs which would have to be borne by revenue account.
7	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Housing	7	Committed for Housing Condition Survey/Strategic Housing Market Assessment.	0	7	Has to be carried out.
5	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Neighbourhood Management	5	NDC (New Deal for Communities) Cohesion project - reserves allocated to complete project in 2011/12.	0	5	Needed to complete project in 11/12.
3	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Dog Warden	3	Dog Warden - earmarked for funding of new bins which were not received by year end.	3	0	N/A
529			952		31	921	

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

18 January 2012



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO PRIVATE
SECTOR HOUSING SCHEMES – EVIDENCE FROM
DURHAM TEES VALLEY PROBATION SERVICE -
COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that representatives from Durham Tees Valley Probation Service have been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the investigation into Private Sector Housing Schemes.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 24 June 2011, Members determined their work programme for the 2011/12 Municipal Year. The topic of Private Sector Housing Schemes was selected by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum as its topic for investigation. The Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry / Sources of Evidence for this Scrutiny investigation were approved by the Forum at its meeting on 27 July 2011.
- 2.2 Consequently, representatives from Durham Tees Valley Probation Service have agreed to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the placement of ex-offenders back into the community into private rented accommodation, including details of the systems and checks in place to ensure the location of this accommodation is appropriate.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum consider the evidence of the representatives from Durham Tees Valley

Probation Service in attendance at this meeting and seek clarification on any relevant issues where required.

Contact Officer:- Elaine Hind – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department – Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council

Tel: 01429 523647

e-mail: elaine.hind@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into Private Sector Housing Schemes – Scoping Report' Presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on 27 July 2011.
- (ii) Minutes of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee 24 June 2011.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

18 January 2012



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO PRIVATE
SECTOR HOUSING SCHEMES – EVIDENCE FROM
THE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT TEAM - COVERING
REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that the Assistant Director of Health Improvement has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the investigation into Private Sector Housing Schemes.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 24 June 2011, Members determined their work programme for the 2011/12 Municipal Year. The topic of Private Sector Housing Schemes was selected by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum as its topic for investigation. The Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry / Sources of Evidence for this Scrutiny investigation were approved by the Forum at its meeting on 27 July 2011.
- 2.2 The Assistant Director of Health Improvement from Hartlepool Borough Council is in attendance at today's meeting to provide Members with an update following the discussions at the forum meeting held on 9th November 2011, where evidence was presented in relation to the links between poor housing standards and poor health, any work that may have been carried out in conjunction with the PCT in other areas in relation to this, and how work in this area could be funded.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum consider the evidence of the Assistant Director of Health Improvement from Hartlepool Borough Council in attendance at this meeting and seek clarification on any relevant issues where required.

Contact Officer:- Elaine Hind – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department – Corporate Strategy
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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- (ii) Minutes of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee 24 June 2011.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

18 January 2012



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION IN TO PRIVATE
SECTOR HOUSING SCHEMES – HOUSING
SERVICES TEAM - COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the investigation into Private Sector Housing Schemes.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 24 June 2011, Members determined their work programme for the 2011/12 Municipal Year. The topic of Private Sector Housing Schemes was selected by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum as its topic for investigation. The Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry / Sources of Evidence for this Scrutiny investigation were approved by the Forum at its meeting on 27 July 2011.
- 2.2 Consequently, the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) from Hartlepool Borough Council has agreed to attend this meeting to provide Members with an update in relation to the following:-
- the Council's legal powers in relation to private sector rented housing (as detailed in the Housing Services Enforcement Policy previously distributed to Members of the Forum) and plans to increase the use of these powers;
 - what the ring-fencing of receipts from selective licensing means for future service delivery;

- the outcome of Cabinet's consideration of the 'Implementation of Changes to the Common Allocations Policy Governing the Tees Valley Choice Based lettings Scheme' decision reference RN88/11, as detailed in the forward plan;
- the Carr / Hoops Street development.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum consider the evidence of the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) in attendance at this meeting and seek clarification on any relevant issues where required.

Contact Officer:- Elaine Hind – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department – Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into Private Sector Housing Schemes – Scoping Report' Presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on 27 July 2011.
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