

CABINET AGENDA



Monday 25th September 2006

at 9:00 a.m.

in Committee Room B

MEMBERS: CABINET:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond

Councillors Hargreaves, Hill, Jackson, Payne, Tumilty and R Waller

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 To receive the Record of Decision in respect of the meeting held on 11th September 2006 (previously circulated)

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Preparation of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document and The Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document – *Director of Regeneration and Planning Services*

5. KEY DECISIONS

- 5.1 Strengthening Communities Best Value Review – Strategic Improvement Plan – *Director of Regeneration and Planning Services*
- 5.2 Joint Allocations Policy Review – *Director of Neighbourhood Services*

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 A Review of Hartlepool's Council's Housing Functions – *Director of Regeneration and Planning Services, Director of Neighbourhood Services and Director of Adult and Community Services*
- 6.2 Building Schools for the Future: Stage One Consultation – *Director of Children's Services*
- 6.3 Development of a Children's Trust in Hartlepool – *Director of Children's Services*

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION / INFORMATION

No items

8. REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW OF SCRUTINY FORUMS

- 8.1 Public Convenience Provision in Hartlepool – *Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum*

EXEMPT ITEMS

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9. KEY DECISION

No items

10. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 10.1 Salary Deductions for Industrial Action – *Chief Personnel Services Officer* (para 4)

CABINET REPORT

25 September 2006



Report of: The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services

Subject: PREPARATION OF THE CORE STRATEGY
DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT & THE
PLANNING OBLIGATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY
PLANNING DOCUMENT

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise members that preliminary work has commenced on the preparation of the Core Strategy of the Hartlepool Local Development Framework (LDF) and also the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1. Work has commenced on the two of the documents under the new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. The first is the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), a key element of the new planning system to which all other Development Plan Documents must conform. The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and general planning policies for the area.
3. The Core Strategy must conform to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). As the RSS is quite advanced in its preparation it is now appropriate to proceed with the Core Strategy.
4. The Core Strategy should also reflect the Hartlepool Community Strategy which is currently being reviewed and so now is a good opportunity for both the Planning document and the Community Strategy to be prepared at the same time.

5. In addition a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Planning Obligations is being prepared. This is a non-statutory document and will expand on and provide further detail for the main policy in the Hartlepool Local Plan on Developer Contributions (Policy GEP9). Work has already started on this document with background information gathering.
6. The timetable for the preparation of the documents is set out in the Local Development Scheme recently approved by Cabinet and by the Secretary of State.

3. RELEVANCE TO CABINET

1. The Core Strategy is part of the Council's Development Plan which is part of the Budget and Policy Framework.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

1. For Information only

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

1. Cabinet 25 September 2006

6. DECISION REQUIRED

1. To note that work has commenced on the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Report of: The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services

Subject: PREPARATION OF THE CORE STRATEGY
DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT & THE PLANNING
OBLIGATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING
DOCUMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise members that preliminary work has commenced on the preparation of the Hartlepool Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

2. BACKGROUND

1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, which came into force in 2004, has introduced new types of planning documents which together will make up a Local Development Framework (LDF). The documents to be prepared as part of the Local Development Framework were identified in the Local Development Scheme July 2006 which sets out the programme for the various documents.
2. The Local Development Scheme indicates that work on the first of these documents will commence in August and September 2006 for evidence gathering and initial stakeholder involvement.
3. Work has already commenced on the preparation of both of these documents.

3. THE CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD)

1. The Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) is a key element of the new planning system to which all other Development Plan Documents must conform. It sets out the vision, objectives and general planning policies for the area. Once adopted it will replace many of the more general policies in the Hartlepool Local Plan.
2. The Core Strategy must conform to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). As the RSS is quite advanced in its preparation it is appropriate to proceed with the Core Strategy as soon as possible.

3. The Core Strategy should also reflect the Hartlepool Community Strategy which is currently being reviewed. It is therefore opportune for the planning document to be prepared in the wake of the Community Strategy so that the spatial elements in the Community Strategy can be translated into statutory planning policy.
4. The first step in the Core Strategy preparation is to secure a good robust evidence base on which to base the Core Strategy's issues and options. Such evidence base includes the preparation of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (which has recently been commissioned by the five Tees Valley authorities) and a Housing Market Assessment to ensure a comprehensive approach to the provision of housing taking account of the needs of particular groups and the selection of key locations.

4. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

1. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Planning Obligations is also being prepared with background information currently being gathered. This is a non-statutory document expanding on or providing further detail to the policy on Developer Contributions (GEP9) in the Hartlepool Local Plan.

5. NEXT STEPS

1. Over the coming months interested parties stakeholders and other members of the community will be invited to give their views on the issues to be covered by the Core Strategy and to give views on the draft of the Planning Obligations document. The consultation process will follow the pattern set out in the Statement of Community Involvement recently submitted to the Government for approval.
2. Regular reports will be made to Cabinet and to the Hartlepool Partnership on the preparation of the two documents.
3. The timetable for the preparation of the documents is set out in the Local Development Scheme and is as follows:

Core Strategy DPD

Consultation on Issues and Options	August 2007
Consultation on Preferred Options	March 2008
Submission to the Secretary of State &	
Consultation on Submission Document	October 2008
Public Examination	May 2009
Receipt of Inspector's Report	November 2009
Adoption	January 2010

Planning Obligations SPD

Consultation on draft document	January 2007
Adoption	July 2007

6. RECOMMENDATION

1. That the commencement of work on the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be noted.

CABINET REPORT

25TH September 2006



Report of: The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services

Subject: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES BEST VALUE REVIEW – STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To consider and agree the Strategic Improvement Plan for the Strengthening Communities Best Value Review.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1. The attached report (**Appendix A**) sets out the Improvement Strategy and Improvement Plan for the theme Strengthening Communities. The Review has been used to clarify the Council's responsibilities and what actions are needed to improve performance in this aspect of the Council's work.

3. RELEVANCE TO CABINET

1. Making strategic and significant decisions arising from Best Value review is an Executive function within the Scheme of Delegation.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

1. This is a Key Decision – Test (ii) applies. The theme 'Strengthening Communities' covers a range of Borough-wide services.

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

1. Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee 4th August 2006.
Cabinet 25th September 2006.

5 DECISION REQUIRED

1. Cabinet is recommended to :

a) Approve the Strengthening Communities Strategic Improvement Plan, and in particular the proposed actions contained within the Improvement Plan Schedule at Section 3.

b) Note that the findings of the Strengthening Communities Best Value Review and the associated documentation, including Annex 1 to the Improvement Plan Schedule, is to be used as the starting point for the development and re-launch of a re-negotiated Compact with the Community Voluntary Sector.

Report of: The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services

Subject: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES BEST VALUE
REVIEW – STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To consider and agree the Strategic Improvement Plan for the Strengthening Communities Best Value Review. A draft of the Improvement Plan was considered by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 4th August 2006 and has subsequently been amended to take on board scrutiny comments and those of Officers from other Council Departments.

2 BACKGROUND

1. The Government introduced the Best Value regime as part of its programme to modernise local government. Within this context the Council's Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07 identifies the need to undertake a Best value Review of the theme Strengthening Communities.
2. The findings of the Best Value Review have now been completed for consideration by Cabinet and these are as set out in the Strengthening Communities Improvement Plan **Appendix A** attached to this report.
3. Assessing, monitoring and advising on the Council's progress towards the Strengthening Communities theme also falls within the remit of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee. A draft of the Best Value Report has therefore been considered by that Committee (on 4th August) and, along with other minor alterations suggested by Officers within individual departments, amended where necessary to reflect the following comments made by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee :-
 - Support for the Compact being re-launched as a high priority and that the findings of the Strengthening Communities BVR Report overall be utilised as the starting point for the process of negotiating a revised Compact.
 - The need for greater integration with the community sector regarding the Community Portal and / or its equivalent Council Web-site replacement.

- Resident Representative training programme requirements to feature as an action within the Improvement Plan Schedule.
- In relation to the promotion and encouragement of volunteering – it was noted that from Autumn of this year the Department of Work and Pensions were introducing changes to the way benefits were calculated for volunteers. The Committee acknowledged that this would have a detrimental affect on the decision to become a volunteer and that a letter be sent to the Department of Work and Pensions and to Iain Wright M.P. to this effect.

3 **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THEME**

1. The theme Strengthening Communities is a cross-cutting one across the other six priority themes contained within the Community Strategy. The aims and objectives of the theme are as set out below :-

Strengthening Communities Aim:

Empower individuals, groups and communities, and increase the involvement of citizens in all decisions that affect their lives.

Strengthening Communities Objectives:

1. To enhance the democratic process by introducing new democratic structures that reflects the wishes of the community and increase involvement in the democratic process.
2. To fully value and support the voluntary and community sectors and the communities in the Borough.
3. To empower communities, develop community capacity and opportunities for residents to take a greater role in determining, planning and delivering services.
4. To increase opportunities for everyone to participate in consultation, especially "hard to reach" groups.
5. To develop the community planning approach at a town wide and neighbourhood level, so that residents themselves consider issues and contribute to determining the way forward.
6. To improve accessibility of services and information to residents and businesses.
7. To promote the development, access to and use of information communications technology (ICT) in the public, private and voluntary sectors to benefit everyone in the community.
8. To increase understanding and collaboration between communities of interest and generations.

2. Under each of these objectives the review has focussed specifically upon what the Council needs to do to improve in terms of the contribution it makes to the theme Strengthening Communities. Amongst other things, its conclusions are based upon the main outcomes of a series of “sounding board” meetings with elected members, Council officers and key partners and stakeholders from the community sector.

4 **MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW**

1. The sounding boards in particular have highlighted certain perceived weaknesses relating to the arrangements the Council has in place aimed at developing those aspects of the Strengthening Communities theme it is responsible for.
2. Failure to deliver the Compact between the Council and the voluntary sector for example is a particularly strong concern, as is the perceived lack of support given to the VCS. Greater priority towards empowering communities and community planning - with a stronger emphasis upon Neighbourhood Action Planning – is also deemed necessary.
3. A variety of sounding board scoring exercise were carried out as part of the review and in general these indicated that it is thought that the Council is performing averagely or below average in all areas of the Strengthening Communities theme. In fact only one objective, that of empowering communities, scored slightly higher than 50%, with the other 7 theme objectives in the 30% - 40% range, producing a 43 % overall rating.
4. The Improvement Plan Schedule that has been developed to address these concerns needs to be considered in context with Annexe 1 to the Best Value Review report which explains how the joint sounding board suggestions have been dealt with in the review.
5. The theme Strengthening Communities also encompasses many of the Government's recent and ongoing initiatives aimed at empowering local communities including for example the emerging neighbourhood agenda in context with the Local Government White Paper. The review has therefore taken considerations such as these into account in producing the list of potential action points for inclusion in the Improvement Plan Schedule.
6. Similarly the findings of the review are inextricably linked to the investigation into Partnership Working which has recently been conducted by the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum and the relevant findings of that particular scrutiny work have therefore been reflected within the Strengthening Communities Improvement Plan Schedule.

7. Subject to the views of Cabinet it is suggested that the findings of the Strengthening Communities BVR be used as the starting point for the development and re-launch of a re-negotiated Compact with the Community Voluntary Sector.

5. RECOMMENDATION

1. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - a) Approve the Strengthening Communities Strategic Improvement Plan, and in particular the proposed actions contained within the Improvement Plan Schedule at Section 3.
 - b) Note that the findings of the Strengthening Communities Best Value Review and the associated documentation, including Annexe 1 to the Improvement Plan Schedule, is to be used as the starting point for the development and re-launch of a re-negotiated Compact with the Community Voluntary Sector.

Contact Officer

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Strengthening Communities Strategic Improvement Plan

Best Value Review Final Report for Consideration by Cabinet

1. Position Statement

The theme 'Strengthening Communities' encompasses many of the Government's recent initiatives aimed at empowering local communities. Hartlepool Borough Council undertook a Best Value Review to ensure that all relevant Council Services, Policies and Strategies are meeting the aims and objectives of the Strengthening Communities theme.

1.2 Strategic Context

The Hartlepool Partnership (our Local Strategic Partnership) agreed the Community Strategy (1) in 2002/03. It sets out the overall aims and ambitions for the Borough and provides a planning framework that has been adopted by the Council. The Community Strategy framework is reflected in the Council's Corporate Performance Plan which identifies improvement priorities and contributions for each priority theme, and sets the strategic direction for all departmental / service plans. The theme Strengthening Communities is cross cutting across the other six Community Strategy priority themes.

The theme covers a range of Borough-wide services, policies and strategies, but from the outset of the Best Value Review it was agreed by Cabinet that the approach would concentrate upon arrangements that the Council itself is responsible for. This was done to enable the Improvement Plan to be focussed specifically upon what the Council needed to do to improve, and to avoid the scope of the Review from becoming too wide and unmanageable.

1.3 Reasons for Review

In some parts of the Council there are certain perceived weaknesses as to the arrangements in place aimed at delivering those aspects of the Strengthening Communities theme that the Local Authority are responsible for. The Review has been used to clarify the Council's responsibilities and what actions are needed to improve performance in this area, including the range of performance indicators to be used in future.

It has not fallen within the scope of the Review to address the actual contents and specific wording of the Strengthening Communities theme and objectives, despite a number of comments made by partners participating in the review in this regard. The Community Strategy review that is currently being undertaken throughout 2006 provides a more appropriate opportunity to evaluate the wording and content of the Strengthening Communities theme – and the comments received as part of this BV review will be fed into this process. Consequently the Improvement Strategy and Improvement Plan are

structured to reflect current arrangements as embodied within the existing Community Strategy.

1.4 Methodology

The Review Team consisted of the Director of Regeneration & Planning Services, Head of Regeneration and Head of Community Strategy within the Regeneration and Planning Services Department, and the Head of Environmental Management from the Neighbourhood Services Department. Support to the Review Team was provided from the Council's Corporate Strategy section through the Principal Strategy Development Officer and the National Management Trainee.

To ensure that the Review was properly scoped and allowed for the effective involvement of other Council Officers and external stakeholders / partners of the Council, a wider "sounding board" mechanism was established to work alongside the Review Team. This helped identify the issues and overall direction of the Review, was influential in developing the proposed Improvement Plan and will help support subsequent monitoring.

The Review Team first of all outlined what is actually meant by the 'Strengthening Communities' objectives (2).

The Review Team then organised separate Sounding Board meetings (3) with Officers, representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector, representatives from the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums and Elected Members. A final Joint-Sounding Board was organised for all participants to attend.

The Sounding Boards were used to consult upon what the Council currently does and challenge areas that need improving. The results from the Sounding Boards were used to establish current performance and identify actions that could be included in the Improvement Plan (4). Annexe 1 to the Improvement Plan Schedule indicates how the suggestions prioritised at the final Sounding Board meeting have been dealt with by the Review Team.

The initial Sounding Boards were used to score how well the Council is currently performing against each objective (5), list current Council service provision (6) and decide which objectives will be priorities over the next 2-3 years (7).

The Review Team also produced an initial set of targets arising from the CPA 2005 Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for corporate assessment; this formed the basis of identifying national targets and standards that Hartlepool will need to strive towards and updated to reflect KLOE for 2006.

After evaluating current performance, setting priorities for the next 2-3 years and agreeing performance targets the Review Team identified local authorities

that Hartlepool Strengthening Communities services, policies and strategies could be compared to.

The Review Team visited Blyth Valley District Council (Beacon Council for Getting Closer to Communities) and has used evidence in particular from other Beacon Councils under the Getting Closer to Communities theme, together with other evidence gleaned from the Audit Commission web-site.

During the course of undertaking this research ever increasing levels of guidance have been, and continue to be, issued from Central Government of relevance to the Best Value Review.

An especially strong degree of emphasis is being placed upon the “neighbourhood agenda” in particular, including the emerging concept of “double devolution”. This promotes the idea of a transfer of responsibilities from Central to Local Government with the intention of then achieving greater subsidiarity by the devolvement of power downwards to the lowest appropriate neighbourhood level.

The “neighbourhood agenda” must also be seen within the even wider context and still ongoing debate about potential future local government reforms. The Lyons Review – an independent inquiry into the role, function and funding of local government - has recently produced its interim findings and a final report including the functions and funding elements of the Lyon’s remit is expected in December 2006. (Ref 8)

The Lyons Review is intended to contribute to the debate about what the next local government White Paper should contain, which is expected to be published in the autumn of 2006. Early indications suggest many of the Lyons recommendations could be taken on board and included within the White Paper, but potentially on an optional rather than prescriptive basis.

Local government reform and the abolition of two-tier authorities, together with the rationalisation of unitaries is now no longer expected to feature so strongly. Similarly the concept of city regions and their future governance arrangements will also be diluted and less prescriptive. The main emphasis of the White Paper will therefore fall mainly upon the “neighbourhood agenda”.

The analysis of all of the above information (Ref 9) has led to the overall conclusion that Hartlepool would be best served by the best value review concentrating specifically upon how the Council needs to progress the neighbourhood agenda in terms of those services provided under the strengthening communities theme.

Such a conclusion has similarly been arrived at in consultation with the Chief Executive as part of the ongoing project development work being undertaken by officers through the Leadership & Management Development Programme. As part of this work a project team has been considering under the guidance of the Chief Executive “the future of local government” and the implications for

Hartlepool – where the focus of attention is now upon the neighbourhood agenda.

The Best Value Review has stopped short of using the information obtained from all of this research to propose specific direct actions for adoption within Hartlepool within the BVR Improvement Plan. But it does recognise the strong link between such considerations and the theme of Strengthening Communities.

Accommodated therefore within the BVR Improvement Plan is the need to monitor developments arising from reports such as Lyons and the Local Government White Paper as and when appropriate but in the meantime consider in greater detail the implications and potential of the emerging neighbourhood agenda for adoption in Hartlepool.

Consequently a draft Issues Paper (Neighbourhood Issues in Hartlepool (Ref 10) has been produced alongside the best value review looking at three inter-linked aspects of this agenda ie Governance, Services and Planning, and considers these in terms of emerging government expectations.

This work is still ongoing but the need to take forward this analysis in consultation with Members, officers and other Council partners features especially strongly within the overall improvement plan for the review.

Also accommodated within the BVR Improvement Plan is the need to reflect the outcome of Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum inquiry into Partnership Working.

From September 2005 – May 2006 Hartlepool Borough Council's Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum conducted an investigation into Partnership working in the Local Authority. The inquiry covered a number of key areas:

- The extent of partnership working in the Authority;
- Partnership working – sub-regional level;
- Hartlepool Partnership (The Local Strategic Partnership);
- Community involvement in partnerships;
- Local Area Agreements; and
- Hartlepool and best practice.

The overall aim of investigation was:

To assess the governance arrangements surrounding sub-regional and local partnerships on which Hartlepool Borough Council is represented.

Over the course of the investigation the Forum set out key recommendations, a number of which relate to the Strengthening Communities Best Value Review:

- That increased levels of community and voluntary sector representation be examined on the Lifelong Learning Partnership and the Children and young people Partnership, including the executive;
- That the levels of voluntary sector representation be increased on the Tees Valley Partnership (TVP);
- That the town's MP and Mayor should be invited to support the strengthening of the representation on the TVP;
- That an appropriate measure be put in place for the election of voluntary representatives on the Tees Valley Partnership through the Voluntary Sector Forum;
- That the need for infrastructure organisations offering support to the wider VCS be recognised by the council and be appropriately funded;
- That discussions are held with the Mayor, the MP and Council to support the issues of voluntary sector representation on thematic partnerships;
- That an annual review of both the levels of community representation and the compact be reviewed as part of the Best Value Review of Strengthening Communities.

These recommendations were presented to the Council's executive, Cabinet, in May 2006. It is anticipated that Cabinet will have set out its response to the report in August 2006. Key actions emerging from the inquiry will be addressed alongside those established in the Best Value Review.

1.5 Aims of Theme

The aims and objectives of the Strengthening Communities theme are as contained within the Hartlepool Community Strategy and set out below :-

Strengthening Communities Aim:

Empower individuals, groups and communities, and increase the involvement of citizens in all decisions that affect their lives.

Strengthening Communities Objectives:

1. To enhance the democratic process by introducing new democratic structures that reflects the wishes of the community and increase involvement in the democratic process.
2. To fully value and support the voluntary and community sectors and the communities in the Borough.
3. To empower communities, develop community capacity and opportunities for residents to take a greater role in determining, planning and delivering services.
4. To increase opportunities for everyone to participate in consultation, especially "hard to reach" groups.

5. To develop the community planning approach at a town wide and neighbourhood level, so that residents themselves consider issues and contribute to determining the way forward.
6. To improve the accessibility of services and information to residents and businesses.
7. To promote the development, access to and use of information communications technology (ICT) in the public, private and voluntary sectors to benefit everyone in the community.
8. To increase understanding and collaboration between communities of interest and generations.

1.6 Current Performance

The Council restructure occurred part way through the Best Value Review (11) taking effect from July 2005 and enabled the Council to establish five instead of six departments. The Review conducted initial paper-based research to establish the responsibilities and performance of the departments prior to restructure, of which the results are outlined below. The Review then used the Sounding Board mechanism to ensure that under the new structure all officers responsible for delivering services that meet the Strengthening Communities theme were able to contribute to the assessment of current performance.

Principally, the then Community Services Department, Neighbourhood Services Department and Regeneration and Planning Department were responsible for delivering on the Strengthening Communities theme.

The main lead department historically was the Community Services Department. Community Services activity focused on community development work, community centres and sports clubs, the youth service including detached youth workers, financial support to the community and voluntary sector through a grants pool. It also included the development of the Community Compact between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector and support to the ethnic minority communities through the Racial Harmony Forum and special events. However, over time the capacity for this activity within Community Services has been reduced. So much so that the need to address the issue of the Council failing to take forward the Compact in particular was a main concern of partners participating in the review and consequently this features very strongly in the BVR Improvement Plan.

The Compact was agreed by the Cabinet in January 2003 and built upon the existing links between the Council and the community and voluntary sector in Hartlepool. It is a memorandum concerning relations and an expression of commitments, following on from the very first draft document produced in 2000. The Compact was developed through a working group including Members and elected representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The finalised agreement (12) formed a three-year development

programme including a three-year action plan, applying to all departments of the Council and a wide range of organisations in the VCS in Hartlepool.

Progress against the three – year action plan has been varied at best, although achievements were made in a number of important areas including : Production and distribution of the HVDA telephone contact list : Provision to front line staff within the Council of the HVDA Directory of Voluntary Organisations : Mapping exercise of the range and activity of community groups and voluntary organisations operating in Hartlepool : Changes to the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums to include resident representatives with voting rights : A rolling programme of neighbourhood action plans.

Nevertheless, there are other actions that have fallen behind schedule and which still remain outstanding and the responsibility for delivering the vast majority of these rested with the Council, including : merging of the voluntary and HBC directories into one document for staff and public : annual meetings between Members, key officers and the voluntary sector : nomination of specific contact officers in each department to assist voluntary sector liaison : a Compact training programme to increase participation from minority communities in partnership working. Even more significantly the absence of any working group meetings and / or annual reviews has in part been responsible for the lack of progress in certain areas of the Compact.

Because of the significance attached by the Sounding Boards to the importance of the Compact, those main outstanding items have also been reflected in Annexe 1 to the Improvement Plan Schedule at the end of this report. The Strengthening Communities BVR represents in effect the first real opportunity since production of the original Compact to assess progress – symptomatic of the lack of capacity rather than commitment necessarily within Council departments to move the Compact forward.

There are a number of reasons for the reduction in capacity including budget pressures and changing priorities reflecting the shift of resources to education and social services and overall budget cutbacks to other services. Within Community Services there has been a reduction in community development worker capacity and the then lead on key areas of work such as the Community Compact has since been re-deployed to other duties. There was also a strategic decision to support the voluntary and community sector directly through the community fund on the basis that this was likely to be more effective in developing sustainable capacity within the sector and this approach would also attract match funding not directly available to the local authority.

In the Neighbourhood Services Department, the main emphasis has been on supporting tenant and resident associations, the operation of Neighbourhood Consultative Forums, estate management of the former council estates and some elements of neighbourhood management within the recognized north, central and south neighbourhoods - including involvement of the then Town Care Managers in the delivery phase of Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs).

The recent decision to re-designate the Town Care Managers as Neighbourhood Managers and to appoint three Neighbourhood Development Workers to operate alongside them will now provide an additional valuable resource within the Council to deal with issues arising from the Strengthening Communities Best Value Review.

The transfer of housing to Housing Hartlepool an independent Registered Social Landlord (RSL) led to much of the tenant association support and community development work capacity and the estate management activities transferring out from the Council. Although this is perhaps off-set by the good working relationship that does exist between both organisations.

In the Regeneration and Planning Services Department there is a long history of community development activity. Activity has been in a range of areas. This has included the coordination of the preparation of the statutory Community Strategy and support to the establishment and operation of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). And the development and evolution of associated partnerships including discussions with community groups, extensive consultations and surveys to establish community views using a range of methods and liaison with the Community (Empowerment) Network (CEN). This included the establishment of a protocol with the CEN and the framework of arrangements and organization of the partnerships making up the LSP (Hartlepool Partnership). More recently the Department has had a leading role in the preparation of the Local Area Agreement.

Neighbourhood Renewal Activity and especially the coordination, preparation and review of Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs) has also involved close working with communities and encouragement for the establishment of sustainable community groups and associations in the form of Neighbourhood Action Plan local forums. These oversee the local NAP delivery process within the context of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and are intended specifically to influence the activities of local service providers, including the Council, to reduce the gap between disadvantaged and more prosperous wards within Hartlepool. More importantly local forums also determine how the NRF resident priority budgets are spent and decide on the theme for the Neighbourhood Element funding as well as overseeing spend.

The department has also led on area regeneration programme activity. This has involved intensive partnership development, area based programmes and community capacity development such as in the Single Regeneration Budget areas and in the New Deal for Communities area. The European Programme has also involved strong community development activity and support. Sustainable Communities are at the heart of the departments activities established through planning, regeneration and housing activity. The Development Planning System is increasingly requiring more intensive involvement and participation from the community. And this will increase significantly with the new Local Development Framework, which is more broadly based than previous planning legislation and requires e.g. publication of a Statement of Community Involvement (achieved Feb 2006), and an

emphasis upon “spatial” rather than purely land-use planning so will be strongly linked into the Community Strategy aims and objectives through the production of a “Core Strategy” and other associated documents. Community Safety has also become part of the Department as part of the Council re-structure, and currently assist the Local Forums for Dyke House/Stranton/Grange in their Neighbourhood Element Funding.

The Housing Market Renewal Activity also requires strong involvement from the community through extensive consultation with local residents, businesses and housing landlords in the future planning of housing programme areas.. In addition, the Department leads on the development of the business community through the Economic Forum, support to business and business networks and leads on the implementation of the Commercial Area Strategy for the Central Area.. More recently the department has taken the lead on the strengthening communities themes of the community strategy in the Best Value Performance/Corporate Plan which has resulted in a degree of responsibility for leading upon the preparation of this Best value Review into the Strengthening Communities theme.

The Chief Executives Department supports the theme from a corporate position and has been involved in the preparation of a number of documents such as the recently prepared Communications Package that includes the Consultation Strategy, Complaints and Compliments Procedures, Customer Charter and Corporate Communications Strategy. A number of consultation exercises have also been arranged including View Point, a resident’s panel and also a SIMALTO budget exercise. This department is also involved in the development of the Contact Centre.

As a result of the first Sounding Board meeting, held with the Council Officers, a number of other services and activities that contribute to the strengthening communities theme were identified. These include Street Ambassadors, joint-working with the VCS to commission and provide services, Community Safety Initiatives, Youth Offending Referral Order Panels, the Children’s Information Service, Extended Schools and Children’s Centres, 80% of services accessible online and cultural events, such as International Women’s Day that encourage community cohesion (13).

The subsequent Sounding Board Meetings challenged how well Council services and activities are doing to meet the Strengthening Communities objectives (14). The scoring exercise showed that generally it is thought the Council is performing averagely or below average in all areas of the Strengthening Communities theme. It was found that the Council is performing best in the areas of Empowering Communities and Accessibility to Services. The Council was found to be performing poorly in the areas of Democratic Processes and Community Cohesion.

Monitoring of the Best Value Performance Plans for 2004/5 and 2005/6 illustrates that the key achievements in this area have been the completion of NAPs for the Burbank / Rift House/Bum Valley / Owton and Rossmere areas and the drafting of NAP’s for the North Hartlepool and NDC areas (North

Hartlepool NAP was completed May 2006 3 Local Forum sub-groups were set up in June 2006 with the main forum for the area to be established by the end of July 2006). Also the Audit Commission's validation of the Hartlepool Partnership's Performance Management Framework and the Government Office's Green/A rating of the Hartlepool Partnership, the SIMALTO exercise and consultation with young people aimed at improving mechanisms for their involvement.

Performance against current indicators in the Strengthening Communities area is satisfactory. In terms of the Community Strategy and electronic service delivery the Council are performing well (15). The Review however has recognised that the range of performance indicators needs expanding to better reflect the Strengthening Communities theme and this fact has been accommodated within the Improvement plan Schedule.

2. Improving Future Performance

The improvement priorities identified at each of the separate Sounding Board groups reflected the needs of each individual group(16). For example top priority for: the VCS Sounding Boards is Objective 2, Support for the VCS; the NCF is Objective 3, To Empower Communities; the Officers is both Objective 1, Democratic Processes and Objective 3, To Empower Communities; the Councillors is Objective 1, Democratic Processes.

The separate Sounding Board groups also discussed areas for improvement with many ideas for improvement being put forward. These included suggestions such as promoting children and young people's participation in the democratic process, rewarding people who become actively involved in community planning and development. Other diversity issues have since been raised including working with the All Ability and 50+ Forums and addressing religious belief and LGBT issues. Also a relaunch of the Compact, and involvement of the VCS in service delivery options was called for, plus an accelerated management programme for the VCS. Other suggestions included ensuring all consultation has a 'feedback' process, making smaller NAP areas, improving the Community Portal, putting NAP groups in touch with each other, and using more plain English. The Council also needs to think 'out of the box', support the infrastructure for the VCS, include minimum standards for the VCS in service level agreements. It should conduct planning at a neighbourhood level, offer increased basic IT training, and train older people to be mentors for younger people. Simplifying the democratic process, giving more financial support to the VCS, increased VCS representation at meetings, and use of the Community Network for capacity building and empowering specific groups was also called for. As was the use of more public venues for consultation events, continuing to have a human face to services – not just access through the Contact Centre – and more cultural awareness events. (17)

The Joint Sounding Board (18) was used to identify high priority areas for improvement as agreed by all groups involved in the Review process. It was agreed by Cabinet that resources would initially be used for improvements in

the areas identified by the officers, councillors, VCS representatives and NCF representatives as important. The high priority areas are:

- Support for the VCS
- Empowering Communities
- Community Planning

The Joint Sounding Board consequently agreed suggested areas for improvement, these are (19):

Democratic Processes

- Improve understanding of the democratic processes in Hartlepool.
- Develop a consistent approach with difficult to reach groups – need to support groups to access democratic processes.
- Consider ways to maintain a Youth Council and promote other forums where young people can be involved in the democratic process, e.g. school councils and local youth forums.

Support for the VCS (High Priority)

- The Compact – strengthen and relaunch.
- Increase support for the VCS and its infrastructure.
- Increase Council familiarity with VCS services and expertise.
- Enable VCS to access Council training programmes that both Officers and Councillors participate in.
- Review Community Pool.
- Create list of VCS groups and services.

Empowering Communities (High Priority)

- Use the Community Network for capacity building and empowering specific groups.
- Provide all parts of the town with a resident association and NAP.
- Raise awareness of NAPs in communities affected by them.
- Create a resident representatives training programme.

Consultation for All

- Consultation needs to take a community development approach.
- Consultation needs to be done with more young people.
- Improve mechanisms for feedback to those who have been consulted, and introduce ways of informing people how their suggestions have been used.
- Consult more 'hard-to-reach' groups.
- Better use of public buildings for consultation events that are outside of working hours.
- Use various consultation methods.

Community Planning (High Priority)

- Review NCF consultation mechanisms.
- Develop a training programme for those involved in consultation.
- Develop NAP in other areas.

Accessibility to Services

- One-stop shop (Contact Centre) should include VCS.
- Regular audit of all service providers to share new ideas and make people aware of what is available.
- Develop and explain the community portal.
- Simplify Council language – KISS
- Improve access for physically disabled to public buildings, bus service and other agencies.
- Have one single telephone number to be used 24-hours in case of an emergency.

ICT

- ICT in all major public buildings and post office.
- Redesign portal and set up support groups to use the portal.
- ICT in poorest areas.
- Support and provide equipment for VCS to use and access portal.
- Use ICT to improve mobile working within the community.

Community Cohesion

- More inter-generational work and events.
- Continue to put NAP groups in touch with each other socially and formally.
- Make the most of links and networks that already exist.

2.1 Improvement Strategy

The research carried out during the period of the review, plus results from the Sounding Board meetings and to an extent the comparison activities, have suggested a set of outcomes upon which the Improvement Plan could be based. And these have subsequently been considered in context with indicators / impacts / outcomes developed for the LAA and BVPP with a view to helping decide how to manage future performance.

In order for the Council to achieve its contribution to fulfilling the Community Strategy Aim and objectives for the Strengthening Communities theme an Improvement Plan with performance indicators has been prepared with a view to achieving the following outcomes :

Outcomes

As a result of the Improvement Plan the following outcomes are expected in 2-3 years time:

- Greater understanding in the community of how the established democratic processes work.

- An updated Compact that will be used to ensure the Voluntary and Community Sector has better access to funding, support, and service provision opportunities.
- Increased range of services and activities that have been developed and delivered in partnership with local communities.
- Consultation will continue to be with a broad range of groups and all results, and impact of results will be fed back to the consultees.
- Having clear community planning mechanisms in place that are used at both a town-wide and neighbourhood level.
- More Council buildings accessible to members of the public.
- Access to ICT is town-wide and residents are highly satisfied with the services.
- More activities and events that bring different groups and communities of interest and generation together.

Performance Indicators

To be considered as part of compact Review process but may include:-

- No of meetings held – Talking with Communities Group – No. of attendees
- Compact Plus accreditation measures (to be determined)
- No of grants awarded (people and projects) via Community Fund
- Nap's produced and reviewed
- Participation rates – Viewpoint / Talking with Communities / NAP Forums
- No of sessions held – Neighbourhood Consultative Forums
- Participation rates – Neighbourhood Consultative Forums
- MORI results (2-yearly indicators)
- Contact Centre – no of personal visits / electronic enquiries / responses successfully dealt with
- Council web-site monitoring

Resources

A number of the actions identified in the Improvement Plan will be completed using existing financial and non-financial resources. Where there is a need for extra resources this has been identified. The main resource implication however involves an increased re-apportionment in staff time.

Timescales

The Improvement Plan covers a 2-3 year period. It is anticipated that with the Improvement Plan implemented all of the outcomes will be achieved within the allotted time-scales.

Reporting Mechanisms

Progress on the Improvement Plan will be reported to the Regeneration, Liveability and Housing Portfolio Holder on a 6-monthly basis pending the incorporation of the specific actions into departmental service plans. The Corporate Performance Plan will monitor progress on an annual basis over

the next 3-years. The actions contained within the Improvement Plan will also be monitored through Best Value Review quarterly monitoring and service planning reporting mechanisms within each department of the Council.

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3. Actions to Achieve Continuous Improvement

The Improvement Plan has been considered by Scrutiny and is to be agreed by Cabinet and then adopted by all relevant Departments. The objectives identified as high priority will initially be addressed, with all actions complete by 2008/9.

Improvement Plan (To be considered by Cabinet in association with Annexe 1)

Objective 1. To enhance the democratic process by introducing new democratic structures that reflects the wishes of the community and increase involvement in the democratic process.			Outcome: Greater understanding in the community of how the established democratic processes work.		
Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources (other than staff time)	Progress / Comments
1. Med	Improve understanding of and participation in election processes and Neighbourhood Consultative Forums (NCF's) and Police and Community Liaison (PCL) Forums	Democratic Services (Amanda Whitaker) Neighbourhood Services (Neighbourhood Managers) and Regen & Planning (Alison Mawson)	By Mar 2008	No additional requirement	NCF and PCL mechanisms are considered to be a particularly valuable resource to encourage engagement with the democratic processes

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2. Med	<p>Develop a consistent approach to engaging people from different communities in the democratic processes, particularly :-</p> <p>Work with Young People</p> <p>Work with BME Communities</p> <p>Work with All Ability Forum Work with Religion & Belief Groups Work with LGBT</p> <p>Work with 50+ Forum</p>	<p>John Robinson</p> <p>Vijaya Kotur</p> <p>Vijaya Kotur Vijaya Kotur Vijaya Kotur</p> <p>Margaret Hunt</p>	<p>By Mar 2008</p> <p>By Mar 2009</p> <p>By Mar 2009</p>	<p>Current work on Participation is being funded by Children's Fund Partnership until April 2008 when programme ceases.</p> <p>No significant additional resource requirements.</p>	<p>At a recent BME consultation event it was agreed to no longer use the terminology "Hard to Reach" groups and to instead refer to "people from different communities in Hartlepool".</p> <p>Participation strategy will include a range of opportunities to involve all groups of children and young persons and should be in place by April 07</p> <p>Other groups listed have been included at the suggestion of HVDA and in discussion with Diversity Officer. There is also a need to maintain links with the BMG Reference Group which is co-ordinated by HVDA.</p>
3. Med	<p>Enhance the impact of Local Democracy Week year on year including greater involvement in the initiative by young people. Reflect relevant outcomes from the Children's Services Scrutiny process when these become available.</p>	<p>John Robinson / Dave Cosgrove / Amanda Whittaker</p>	<p>By Mar 2007 (ongoing)</p>	<p>As identified in CS Action Plan</p>	
Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	5	Longer Term Target	
Talking with Communities (No. of meetings per annum)		5	5	5	
Talking with Communities (No. of attendees av.)		20	TBC	TBC	
Other indicators to be determined by Compact Review process		TBC	TBC	TBC	

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Objective 2. To fully value and support the voluntary and community sectors and the communities in the Borough.			Outcome: An updated Compact that will be used to ensure the Voluntary and Community Sector has better access to funding support and service provision opportunities		
Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources (other than staff time)	Progress / Comments
4. High	Strengthen and re-launch the Compact and consider within the context of emerging guidance for Compact Plus. Utilise this as the vehicle for increasing Council awareness of CVS and ensuring it has better access to funding and service provision opportunities, and ensure buy-in from all Departments of the Council	Existing BVR Team (Lead Geoff Thompson) supported by Neighbourhood Managers	By Mar 2007	Increased capacity provided by soon-to-be appointed Neighbourhood Development Workers	Use the results and findings of the Strengthening Communities BVR as the starting point for this process - including consideration of Compact Plus principles.
5. High	Monitor developments arising from the Lyons Review , Local Government White Paper and other associated guidance including the emerging “neighbourhood agenda”. Consult with Members / Officers / Partners on appropriate adoption in Hartlepool and feed into the Compact Review process.	Chief Exec / LMDP Project Team / Peter Scott CMT / LNDP Project Team	By Mar 2007	No significant additional resource requirement	Various initiatives already underway as indicated per the BVR Improvement Plan main report
Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Longer Term Target	
To be determined by Compact Review process		TBC	TBC	TBC	

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Objective 3. To empower communities, develop community capacity and opportunities for residents to take a greater role in planning and delivery of services			Outcome: Increased range of services and activities that have been developed and delivered in partnership with local communities		
Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources (other than staff time)	Progress / Comments
6. High	Better publicise the existence of the Community Network and utilise more effectively for empowering community groups as appropriate. Recognise the additional resource of the soon-to-be appointed Neighbourhood Development Workers as an additional resource to help deliver aspects of the Strengthening Communities Best Value Review. Also recognise the need for a Resident Representatives training programme (as requested by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee)	Joanne Smithson Neighbourhood Managers	By Mar 2007	The resource requirements for a Resident Representatives training programme have yet to be identified	Recruitment of Development officers is currently underway with appointees potentially in post Nov2006. Note: There is also a need to recognise the role played by HMVA and other organisations in providing capacity-building support for local groups. This is a key issue to be considered by the Compact re-launch process (Action 4 refers).
7. High	Continue to fine-tune and develop the current NAP consultation processes and implement any recommendations from the NAP Review around these issues, including the extent to which NAPs have the potential for being extended into other areas of the town.	Sylvia Burn Neighbourhood Managers	By Mar 2007	Existing Staffing resource plus NRF funding	NAP Review currently underway
8.	Implement the findings of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny inquiry into Partnership Working	Joanne Smithson	As set out in PW Action Plan	As identified in PW Action Plan	
Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Longer Term Target	

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Value of grants awarded via the Community Grants Pool		TBC	TBC	TBC	
No. of NAP's produced		6	7	Subject to NAP/NRS review	
No. of NAP's reviewed		0	3	Subject to NAP/NRS review	
Objective 4. To increase opportunities for everyone to participate in consultation, especially people from different communities in Hartlepool			Outcome: Consultation will continue to be with a broad range of groups and all results, and impact of results will be fed back to consultees		
Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources (other than staff time)	Progress / Comments
9. Med	Promote the use of appropriate buildings for consultation events and meetings with the community through Good Practice Guide and the Council's Corporate Consultation Group.	Liz Crookston	By Mar 2008	No significant additional requirement	
10. Med	Promote use of appropriate consultation methods through the Good Practice Guide and Corporate Consultation Group.	Liz Crookston	By Mar 2008	No significant additional requirement	
Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Longer Term Target	
Resident satisfaction with opportunities for participation in local design making		Baseline to be set Oct 2006	Baseline to be set out Oct 2006	Target to be set after baseline data is collected in BVPI General Survey 2006	
Objective 5. To develop the community planning approach at a town wide and neighbourhood level so that residents themselves consider issues and contribute to determining the way forward			Outcome: To have clear community planning mechanisms in place and that are used at both a town-wide and neighbourhood level		

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Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources	Progress / Comments
11. High	Review Neighbourhood Consultative Forum (NCF) consultation mechanisms within context of the wider emerging Local Neighbourhood agenda.	Dave Stubbs / Neighbourhood Managers	By Mar 2007	Existing	
12. High	Promote consideration of training requirements for specific consultation through the Good Practice Guide and Corporate Consultation Group.	Liz Crookston	By Mar 2007	No significant additional resource requirement	
Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Longer Term Target	
No. of NCF meetings per annum		27	27	27	
No. of participants (average no.)		Central	10	20	To be determined
		North	14	28	To be determined
		South	15	30	To be determined
Objective 6. To improve the accessibility of services and information to residents and businesses			Outcome: All buildings will be accessible to members of the public		
Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources (other than staff time)	Progress / Comments
13. Med	Consider inclusion of VCS along with other Council partners in the One-Stop-Shop (Contact Centre) facility.	Christine Armstrong	By Mar 2008	Additional Requirement (yet to be determined)	Time-scales as previously agreed by Cabinet
14. Med	Simplify Council Language – keep it simple and specific (KISS)	Alistair Rae	By Mar 2008	No significant additional resource requirement	Immediate attention being given to a review of all Council standard letters to ensure they are easily readable and understandable. Other aspects of Council communications to be considered thereafter

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Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Longer Term Target	
Telephone calls received at central switchboard		164018	-12%	Reduce calls to switchboard and increase those to Contact Centre to be dealt with at first point to contact	
Telephone calls received in Contact Centre		56708	+15%	Increase calls as council services are transferred to Contact Centre	
% of lost telephone calls		8%	6%	To reduce lost calls to 2% of total received	
% of requests resolved at first point of contact		75%	80%	To resolve 90% of requests at first point of contact	
No. of electronic requests received		921	+30%	To increase electronic requests as a proportion of all enquiries dealt with by the Contact Centre	
Objective 7. To promote the development, access to and use of information communications technology (ICT) in the public, private and voluntary sectors to benefit everyone in the community			Outcome: Access to ICT is town-wide and residents are highly satisfied with the services		
Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources (other than staff time)	Progress / Comments
15. Low	Provision of ICT in all major public buildings and backed up by appropriate training on how to access and input information on the Internet web site.	Joan Chapman	By mar 2009	The ICT training requirement will have significant resource implications	The issue of training for the VCS on how to access the Council web-site and input information to it will need to be re-considered under the Compact Review.
16. Med	Map current provision of ICT access and identify gaps particularly in poorest areas based upon an assessment of availability via the library network. Also (at request of Scrutiny) consider greater integration with the community sector regarding the Council web-site as a replacement for the Community Portal.	Paul Diaz	By Mar 2007	No additional resources requirement for initial mapping exercise	

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Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Longer Term Target	
No. of visits/hits to website		-	113500	+ 5% per year	
No. of registered users		Not available	132	140	
Objective 8. To increase understanding and collaboration between communities of interest and generations			Outcome: Increase in number of activities and events that bring different groups and communities of interest and generations together		
Ref. No. / Priority	Actions Required	Responsible Person	Time-scale	Resources (other than staff time)	Progress / Comments
17. Med	Continue to put NAP groups in touch with each other as part of the NAP production processes	Sylvia Burn	Sept 2006 (ongoing)	Existing including NRF Funding	
18. Med	Make the use of other links and networks that already exist	All Departments	By Mar 2008		Revisit this action as part of the Compact Review
Performance Measures		Outturn 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Longer Term Target	
To be determined by Compact Review process					

Note: Performance measures are subject to further consideration by Review Team and through the pending Compact Review process.

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ANNEXE 1 TO THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN SCHEDULE : HOW SOUNDING BOARD SUGGESTIONS HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH THROUGH THE REVIEW

<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
<u>OBJECTIVE 1 – DEMOCRATIC PROCESS</u>		
Improve understanding of the democratic process in Hartlepool	<p>Suggest this action needs to be extended to also include improved understanding about Neighbourhood Consultative Forums (NCF) and Police and Community Liaison (PCL) Forums. It is also not just about improving “understanding” but should make reference to increasing “participation” in the election processes.</p> <p>Participation Strategy for children and young people concentrates on service development and democratic process and will link children and young people into local democracy and involve them in the development of services.</p>	Revised wording carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 1)
Develop a consistent approach with difficult to reach groups – need to support groups to access democratic services	Suggest the emphasis of this action needs to be about engaging people from different communities in Hartlepool in the democratic processes with an emphasis	Revised wording carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 2) as follows :-

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	<p>upon work with young people, BME communities, and after discussion with the HVDA and Council's Diversity Officer, work with the All Ability Forum, 50+ Forum and users around Religion & Belief and LGBT.</p> <p>The "Talking with Communities" consultation programme established since Sept '05 is one mechanism for doing this e.g. this forum is currently working with the Community Network on the elections for a new BME representative for the Hartlepool Partnership. For further info : http://consultation.hartlepool.gov.uk/inovem/consult.ti/talkingwithcommunities/consultationHome In the corporate workforce development plan there is a commitment to attract young people to local government with a specific action to hold one event to coincide with local democracy week. (see below)</p>	<p>"Develop a consistent approach to engaging people from different communities in Hartlepool in the democratic processes, particularly :</p> <p>Work with Young People</p> <p>Work with BME Communities"</p> <p>Work with All Ability Forum</p> <p>Work with LGBT</p> <p>Work with Religion and Belief Groups</p>
Consider ways to maintain a Youth	School Councils will be involved in	Revised wording with emphasis upon

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
<p>Council and promote other forums where young people can be involved in the democratic process, e.g. school councils and local youth forums.</p>	<p>elections of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (likely to be 19/10/06). Hartlepool Young Voices developing brand for town-wide youth forum to be in place by April 2007. Participation strategy currently evolving with support of children and young people.</p> <p>The references about school councils and local youth forums should also link more closely with the annual Democracy Week.</p> <p>Work with corporate on developments for involvement of young people in the Children's Services Scrutiny process is ongoing with a final report due in September / October and these outcomes also need to be reflected.</p>	<p>Democracy Week and outcomes of Children's Services Scrutiny carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 3)</p>
<p><u>OBJECTIVE 2 – SUPPORT FOR THE VCS</u></p>		
<p>The Compact – strengthen and re-launch</p>	<p>The failure of the Council to effectively take forward the Compact has been a main concern of the partners and stakeholders participating in the Best Value Review. This needs to be rectified as a high priority. There is also a need to</p>	<p>Carried forward as a high priority within the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 4) and reworded to reflect Compact Plus principles.</p> <p>The opportunity has also been taken</p>

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	consider with the CVS any re-launch of the Compact within the context of emerging guidance for Compact Plus (main BVR report refers). This seeks to introduce some form of accreditation scheme, backed up with the appointment nationally of a Compact Commissioner Office to monitor progress and promote the principles of the Compact into a more clear statement of core commitments.	during the course of the Best Value Review to identify and re-assess those existing actions contained within the existing Compact that have fallen behind schedule and not been undertaken. These are identified and commented upon immediately below to serve as a precursor in support of the proposed Compact re-launch.
Compact : Merge voluntary sector and HBC directories as one reference document for staff and the public	Voluntary sector directory now used by HBC Departments?	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Compact : Produce a CD-Rom version of the Directory	May no longer be necessary given availability on web-sites / internet	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Compact : Provide directories on Hartlepool integrated ICT networks being developed In libraries, community centres, voluntary sector and other HBC facilities	Further clarification needed	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Compact : Nominate specific HBC “contact” officers in each department as facilitators to assisting in liaison with voluntary sector and encourage their access to info / services (intranet and	Nomination considered fairly straightforward but doing so may dilute the attention given to CVS by other officers within the departments?	Reconsider as part of Compact Review

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
contact ctr included)		
Compact : Liaise with Corporate Strategy to identify current HBC consultation programme	Consultation programme readily available but action below is the more significant	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Compact : Collate HBC consultation with Voluntary Sector and other agencies' consultation proposals to forecast and develop a comprehensive Consultation Strategy for Hartlepool	Maybe very resource intensive ?	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Compact : Promote and encourage volunteering – including links with Personnel (HR) re Jobs Bulletin	Volunteering manly covered via CEN and Voluntary Sector membership of Hartlepool Partnership	Reconsider as part of Compact Review It was noted by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee that from autumn of this year the Department of Work and Pensions were introducing changes to the way benefits were calculated for volunteers who receive expenses. The Committee acknowledged that this would have a detrimental affect on the decision to become a volunteer and that a letter be sent to the Department of Work and Pensions and to Iain Wright, MP to this effect.
Compact : Establish principles of longer term funding intent without guarantee	An audit is currently underway by Adult and Community Services (requested by scrutiny) in relation to ongoing pressures on voluntary sector, focussing on those	Reconsider as part of Compact Review

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	organisations with premises or staff to support	
Compact : Quality standards to be incorporated into funding agreements	The issue of QS is now raised as part of the monitoring process of groups funded by HBC	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Compact : Training programme to increase participation from minority communities in partnership working, consultation and representation	Partly covered by Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 11)	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Compact : Annual review of Compact and action plan	BVR the first opportunity to review since compact was launched due to limited capacity	Reconsider as part of Compact Review
Increase support for the VCS and its infrastructure	Agreed is a high priority. VCS has aspirations to work with the Council to deliver services but specific details will best materialise from the proposed Compact re-view and in context with the Council's Procurement Strategy. CHECK - Graham Frankland to provide text)	Carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 4) as a High priority as part of the high-level action to review the Compact.
Increase Council familiarity with VCS services and expertise	This refers to the CVS wishing to make more presentations about it's work to the Council (members, Senior Officers and individual departments. Again, needs to be reflected within the higher level action to review the Compact.	Carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule (REF 4) as a High priority as part of the high-level action to review the Compact. Also reflected in the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 5) in relation to the emerging Neighbourhood Agenda

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
		expected to be set out in the Government's White Paper.
Enable CVS to access Council training programmes that both Officers and Councillors participate in	The corporate training programme is currently available to all voluntary and community groups and is distributed via the HVDA	Carried through into the Improvement Plan schedule at the request of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.
Review Community Pool	A review of the Community Pool was undertaken in 2004/05 in order to make the grant criteria more focussed. Implemented in 2005/6.	Not carried through into the Improvement Plan schedule.
Create a list of VCS groups and services	This has already been implemented by the HVDA and the document is available for use throughout the local authority.	Not carried through into the Improvement Plan schedule.
<u>OBJECTIVE 3 – EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES</u>		
Use the Community Network for capacity building and empowering specific groups	This is considered to be partly about needing to publicise the existence of the Community Network and also when it is most appropriate to use it. The Council has also recently decided to appoint three new Neighbourhood Development Officers within the Neighbourhood Services Department which will be an additional valuable resource to help	Revised wording carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 6)

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	increase capacity building in the community. Recruitment process underway – interviews Sept 2006.	
Provide all parts of the town with a resident association and NAP	Currently a NAP Review is being undertaken that will look at the relative merits and disadvantages of providing all parts of the town with a NAP. Resident Associations should not be imposed as they need to be flexible and responsive to particular local initiative sat any particular point in time.	Revised wording carried through into the improvement plan schedule (Ref 7)
Raise awareness of NAP's in communities affected by them	As above	Revised wording carried through into the improvement plan schedule (Ref 7) above
Create a resident representatives training programme	Resident representatives are included and invited to attend some Member Development activities if appropriate	Not carried through to the Improvement Plan Schedule.
OBJECTIVE 4 – CONSULTATION FOR ALL		
Consultation needs to take a community development approach	Further dialogue / clarification needed. The type of consultation to be used depends on the topic, the target groups and the type of information needed / resources available etc.	Not carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule. However there will be an opportunity to re-visit this suggestion through the Improvement Plan action to re-launch the COMPACT (Ref 4 refers).
Consultation needs to be done with more young people	There is an extensive programme of consultation and involvement with Children & Young People currently	No need to carry forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule. Revisit by inviting Children's Fund Manager (John

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	<p>underway using a variety of techniques. This is being led by John Robinson, Children's Fund Manager, in the Children's Services Department. This work is ongoing and is central to the development of the Participation Strategy. A vision statement backed up by standards will be taken through the political and consultative process in the Autumn of 2006.</p>	<p>Robinson) to become involved in the COMPACT review.</p>
<p>Improve mechanisms for feedback to those who have been consulted, and introduce ways of informing people how their suggestions have been used</p>	<p>This currently is done eg Viewpoint participants receive regular newsletters and actions arising out of these surveys are also reported to the Performance Management Portfolio Holder. Corporate Consultation Strategy (adopted Oct 2005) states that "results of any consultation should be fed back to participants". Consultation good practice guidelines currently being developed will emphasise this message – due for completion Autumn 2006.</p>	<p>No need to carry forward into Improvement Plan Schedule. Revisit by inviting representative of Corporate Consultation Group (Liz Crookston) to become involved in the COMPACT review.</p>
<p>Consult more "hard to reach" groups</p>	<p>The Corporate Consultation Strategy has in it's 2006/7 Action Plan to "promote consultation with hard to reach groups". The "Talking with Communities"</p>	<p>No need to carry forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule but can revisit and assess progress as part of COMPACT Review.</p>

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	<p>meetings which concentrate on the BME communities are part of this. The Children's Services Department (John Robinson) is leading on work with young people – see consultation with young people reference above. We will next be exploring the area of people with disabilities to look at what is currently being done and whether it can be improved – for completion this financial year. The Corporate Consultation Plan indicates that a very wide range of groups is already consulted.</p>	
<p>Better use of public buildings for consultation events that are outside of working hours</p>	<p>This suggestion for improvement is considered to be really about the Council ensuring that we are using appropriate venues for consultation – convenient, accessible, safe, welcoming etc – whether they are Council buildings or not and being used during the day or in the evening.</p>	<p>Revised wording “promote use of appropriate buildings through Good Practice Guide and Corporate Consultation Group” carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule.(Ref 9)</p>
<p>Use various consultation methods</p>	<p>The HBC Consultation Plan indicates that a range of consultation methods is being used across the authority. The methods used include postal questionnaires, on-line surveys, fact to face interviews, focus groups,</p>	<p>Revised wording “promote use of appropriate consultation methods through the good practice guide and Corporate Consultation Group” carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 10)</p>

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	workshops, action planning, whole system events, public meetings, information stands, Neighbourhood Consultative Forums, user groups and so on. The forthcoming corporate consultation guidelines will cover aspects such as choosing an appropriate methodology.	
<u>OBJECTIVE 5 – COMMUNITY PLANNING</u>		
Review NCF consultation mechanisms	Being undertaken as part of the wider investigations into the emerging “neighbourhood agenda”	Revised wording carried through into the improvement plan schedule (Ref 11) above
Develop a training programme for those involved in consultation	The officer view is that training needs are best considered on a case by case basis as training with no clear purpose is unlikely to be effective in achieving the desired outcomes. People have different skill levels and different needs depending on the type of consultation they are involved in or want to do. The Workforce Development and Diversity Officer does recognise the need for this training and will include in the corporate training programme.	Revised wording “promote consideration of training requirements for specific consultations through the good practice guide and Corporate Consultation Group” carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule. (Ref 12)
Develop NAP in other areas		Comments Ref 7 above refer

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
<u>OBJECTIVE 6 – ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES</u>		
One-Stop-Shop (Contact Centre) should include VCS	Cabinet has already approved the roll-out programme for the Contact Centre. This makes provision for expansion of Contact Centre to include partners up to 2008. This is important to allow consolidation of the corporate Contact Centre through to March 2007.	Suggested improvement carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 13) but priority reduced from High to Medium to reflect the already agreed time-scales by Cabinet.
Regular audit of all service providers to share new ideas and make people aware of what is available	Suggest this be considered as part of the Compact Review and within the wider context of the Council's Procurement Strategy	Not carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule. But re-visit as part of Compact Review.
Develop and explain the community portal	The Community Portal received Government and Single Programme funding that ended in March 2005. An evaluation of the existing package was undertaken and a new product purchased that went live in April 2006. This provides a Council Web-site and micro-sites for partners, including the Hartlepool Partnership.	No longer appropriate to carry forward into work programme as Community Portal no longer available. Now needs to relate to the Council web-site (Ref. 16 of Improvement Plan Schedule refers).
Simplify Council Language – KISS	The Council's Communications Strategy includes an action to review all Council standard letters to ensure they are easily	Revised wording to reflect the actions being brought forward through the Communications Strategy carried

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	<p>readable and understandable. Thereafter other aspects of how the Council communicates with others will be similarly reviewed, potentially with a view to meeting the standards of the Plain English Crystal Mark.</p>	<p>through into the Improvement Plan Schedule. (Ref 14)</p>
<p>Improve access for physically disabled to public buildings, bus service and other agencies</p>	<p>There are already actions to improve accessibility in the Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan and within the Neighbourhood Services Departmental Service Plan. The Council has invested over £300k since 2001 in a programme of works to reduce major barriers to access at Council buildings. The programme continues until 2008/9 and the completion of these works is a key performance measure. BVPI 156 is also a relevant performance indicator for this improvement suggestion. Currently 20% of Council buildings open to the public comply with the definition of BVPI 156 and there is a target to achieve 30% by 2007/8.</p> <p>The Diversity Sub Group 3 is tasked with producing a Buildings Access Policy which will feed into the Council's overall</p>	<p>No need to carry forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule or extend beyond non-Council facilities as part of this review.</p>

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	Access Policy.	
Have one single telephone number to be used 24-hours in case of an emergency	A 24hr sign-posting service is already available – a recorded message giving emergency number for Richard Court. There are no plans currently for a dedicated 24-hour emergency number.	This is not considered to be a priority for the Contact Centre. Not carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule. (however there are plans for a police related 999 non-emergency number)
<u>OBJECTIVE 7 – ICT</u>		
ICT in all major public buildings and post office	Need to re-visit as part of the Compact Review.	Not carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule.
Redesign portal and set up support groups to use the portal	Comments on Community Portal in Objective 6 above refer	Not carried forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule but need to revisit at the request of Scrutiny in context with Council web-site (Ref. 16).
ICT in poorest areas	It is considered that there are already many ICT opportunities out in the community. In terms of the Council's priorities, the network of community libraries is deemed to be the best infrastructure from which to map current provision and identify gaps in coverage.	Revised wording to map provision and identify gaps through the library network carried through to the Improvement Plan Schedule but as a lower priority (Ref 16).
Support and provide equipment for VCS to use and access portal	There are no resources available to do this. The Council does not own ICT equipment as the assets are provided through the ICT contract with Northgate	No need to carry forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule
Use ICT to improve mobile working within the community	There is already a great deal of mobile working supported by ICT done in the	No need to carry forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
	community. Mobile benefits is already targeting disadvantaged groups by allowing officer to visit and assess claimants in their homes. Adult and Community Services are piloting a similar scheme to assess peoples needs within their homes.	
<u>OBJECTIVE 8 – COMMUNITY COHESION</u>		
More inter-generational work and events	There is already a great deal of inter-generational work done in the community. Examples include ‘Their Past Your Future’ exhibition in conjunction with the Imperial War Museum to highlight the end of WW2 and impact on young people today. Others include art initiatives with home care residents, the Maritime Festival and the ‘Window on the World’ theme performances.	No need to carry forward into the Improvement Plan Schedule
Continue to put NAP groups in touch with each other socially and formally	The Neighbourhood Managers and Development Officers within Neighbourhood Services are a resource that could help take forward this suggestion for improvement but the emphasis should not be on "socially and formally"	Revised wording carried through into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Ref 18)

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<u>SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
Make the most of links and networks that already exist	Further clarification is being sought about what was intended from this suggestion for improvement and its relevance for the Council.	Action to be re-considered as part of Compact reivew.

References

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-
- 1 Community Strategy
 - 2 Objective Meanings
 - 3 Meeting Agendas
 - 4 Meeting Notes
 - 5 Objective Scores
 - 6 Scoping Schedule
 - 7 Priority Ratings
 - 8 Lyons Inquiry Interim Findings
 - 9 Comparison Report
 - 10 Neighbourhood Issues in Hartlepool
 - 11 Restructure Report
 - 12 Compact Action Plan
 - 13 Scoping Schedule
 - 14 Objective Scores
 - 15 Strengthening Communities BVPP Section
 - 16 Objective Priorities Round 1&2, Final Sounding Board Priorities
 - 17 Suggestions from Officers, VCS and NCF
 - 18 Final Sounding Board Results
 - 19 Joint Sounding Board suggestions – Objectives 1-8

CABINET REPORT

25 September 2006



Report of: Director of Neighbourhood Services

Subject: JOINT ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To recommend amendments to the Joint Allocations Policy following a thorough review of the policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all legislative requirements, in particular the introduction of Choice Based Lettings before the Government's target of 2010.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Within the Housing Agency Agreement concerning the transfer of Council housing to Housing Hartlepool, it was agreed to adopt a Joint Allocations Policy, which would be subject to regular review and be in place for at least a five-year period following transfer.

This report details the findings of the review and makes detailed recommendations regarding access to accommodation for vulnerable groups along with clearer guidance for applicants and practitioners, as well as some necessary amendments to comply with legislative changes and recommended good practice.

Housing Hartlepool's Management Board has also been recommended to agree the amendments arising from the review.

3. RELEVANCE TO CABINET

The Joint Allocations Policy has strategic relevance across a range of portfolios.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Key decision (Test (ii) applies).

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Cabinet (and Housing Hartlepool Board).

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

To approve the recommended amendments to the Joint Allocations Policy between Housing Hartlepool and Hartlepool Borough Council.

Report of: Director of Neighbourhood Services

Subject: JOINT ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the findings of the Joint Allocations Policy Review and seek approval for the recommended amendments necessary to ensure the policy is fit for purpose and complies with legislative requirements, in particular the introduction of Choice Based Lettings by the Governments target of 2010.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Although the Council transferred ownership of all its housing stock to Housing Hartlepool in March 2004, the Council retains both strategic and statutory responsibilities for housing issues throughout the town. As part of the process of the stock transfer the Housing Agency Agreement was developed between the Council and Housing Hartlepool and within this it was agreed that we would operate a Joint Allocations Policy (JAP).

- 2.2.1 Under the terms of the Housing Agency Agreement the JAP is subject to regular review and will remain in place for at least five years following the transfer of stock. As well as ensuring the Council can meet its statutory responsibilities for housing and homelessness, the JAP also has a key role to play in helping the Council achieve its key housing priorities which are to:

- Achieve balance in local housing markets
- Meet the housing needs of vulnerable people

- 2.3 A review has been undertaken by officers from Housing Hartlepool (HH) and HBC who are responsible for overseeing the JAP's operation and the monitoring of the Housing Agency Agreement. Additionally an independent review of the JAP also formed part of a piece of work by Peter Fletcher Associates, commissioned by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership following concerns that vulnerable groups of applicants, particularly those with issues around offending and/or substance misuse were finding it difficult to access suitable permanent accommodation and that this was causing a major barrier to their successful rehabilitation, as well as having a negative impact on the level of crime and disorder and ultimately the sustainability of neighbourhoods and the community.

- 2.4 The review is particularly timely given Governments ongoing consultation with regard to developing a "Respect Standard for Housing Management". An opportunity has also been taken to refer to the future introduction of Choice Based Lettings (CBL), and amendments to the JAP with the development of a preferred scheme.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The methodology adopted was firstly to identify changes within the strategic context within which the JAP has to operate and where it is required to be fit for purpose in delivering outcomes. This includes:

- the operation of the housing market
- delivery of the homelessness strategy
- responding to developing local needs
- issues arising from the operation of internal controls and compliance with regulatory guidance
- responding to national policy initiatives

3.2 As is often the case in the review of any policy, the above tests are not discrete, and issues are inter-connected.

3.3 The existing provisions within the JAP were then tested with regard to the ability to effectively meet requirements given the identified changes within the above contexts, and recommendations made as to amendments, which would make the policy function more effective.

3.4 The opportunity has also been taken to amend the policy with regard to identified procedural “inefficiencies”, and introduce approaches to delivering emerging policy issues, for example, developing the framework for Choice Based Lettings which all Local Housing Authorities (LHA’s) must have in place by 2010 and which is hoped to be ready for adoption in Hartlepool during 2007/08 ahead of the governments target.

3.5 This report will summarise the conclusions reached by the review and give the detailed recommendations for amending the policy.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

4.1 Operation of the Market: Issues

4.2 2005/06 witnessed the continuing trend of applicants finding it increasingly difficult to secure a social rented property from HH with the additional pressures caused by reduced supply and increasing demand. A full analysis is included within Appendix 1.

4.3 This has inevitably resulted in the “price”, measured in terms of allocated priority, increasing. The effect of this is that to qualify, particularly for general needs family accommodation, often requires applicants to have been awarded a high priority, and often a homeless person’s priority. Although this reflects the market and the policy gives those in the most need “reasonable” priority, there are issues raised by the operation of the JAP under the present housing market conditions. Firstly, other groups within the housing register who have a reasonable level of housing need are finding it increasingly difficult to access HH property. Secondly, in

meeting the requirements of those with the highest assessed need it has been difficult to demonstrate that Housing Corporation guidance (02/03 Local Authority Nominations) is being followed in that a “reasonable proportion of housing is being set aside to satisfy internal transfers”.

- 4.4 In common with many communities in the UK, Hartlepool has experienced a significant increase over the last year of European “A8” nationals i.e. from Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, who have settled to work in the town. Applications for registration on the Housing Register have been received from these nationals and their eligibility is subject to separate guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLOG) and the Home Office.
- 4.5 The review also highlighted that Hartlepool does not participate in “Move UK”. Move UK is a national scheme which enables tenants of social landlords to access a range of services which assist in achieving their geographical mobility, including:
- Homeswap
 - New start
 - Shared ownership
 - Homemove
 - Seaside and country homes

Move UK also provides associated services:

- Homesearch
- Landlord directory
- Jobsearch
- Area information

The scheme is voluntary and gives tenants who wish to locate to another part of the country an excellent data base of others who may wish to exchange with them but also associated information regarding employment opportunities and the availability of services. The scheme operates on a number of levels where tenants achieve mobility via the right of exchange or by direct application to a landlord for available empty properties. Allocations of empty properties are subject to the local allocation policy and the acceptance of nominations through Move UK operates on a reciprocal basis between local authorities.

- 4.6 Nomination agreements between a local authority and Housing Associations are not that common in the North East, because of the previous ease of access to council housing. However, the shift in the in the local housing market makes it vital that the nomination agreements between HBC and other RSL’s are strengthened, effectively monitored and enforced. The DCLG and the Housing Corporation has provided guidance on what should be incorporated into nomination agreements, in “Effective Co-operation in Tackling Homelessness: Nomination Agreements and Exclusions”, published in 2004. The HC consultation paper on Homelessness (April 06) echoes many of these points, and particularly that blanket bans are not acceptable as justification for refusing nominations:

“Where exclusion policies operate, we want them to be clearly understood and underpinned by proper risk assessments and transparent policies where each case is judged on its merits. We have made it clear in Circular 07/04 that blanket bans arising from certain types of past behaviour (such

as debt, history of anti-social behaviour or previous imprisonment) are not acceptable.” “Evidence about reasons for refusing nomination and reasons for the local authority’s selection of nominees is limited. “

4.7 Housing Associations are bound by the HC Regulatory Code to co-operate with the LHA in discharging its duties to homeless applicants, and the guidance produced in 2004 reminds LHA’s and RSL’s that it is good practice to have a nomination agreement with all RSL’s to set down what is expected of each party.

4.8 Therefore the following amendments to the policy are recommended in response to the operation of the local market for social housing:

R1. That a ratio be introduced with regard to the allocation of general needs family accommodation, with one in every three properties becoming available being offered to internal transfers or need categories other than homeless persons. The operation of the ratio will be as guidance and be flexible where for example the allocation of a property for an internal transfer or other need category would result in a homeless household remaining in temporary accommodation.

R2. Those households who are awarded “threatened with homeless priority” are awarded the priority for a period of six months. The priority would only be awarded outside the six-month period if the applicant had not received an offer of accommodation suitable to their needs.

R3. That with regard to applications from European “A8” nationals that these be referred directly to the Housing Advice Team and eligibility to register be determined subject to the relevant guidance.

R4. That the policy includes reference to participation within Move UK

R5. A standard nominations agreement should be adopted between HBC and all RSL’s operating in Hartlepool including robust arrangements for monitoring and review.

5. DELIVERING THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACKNOWLEDGING DEVELOPING LOCAL NEEDS

5.1 As stated earlier, Peter Fletcher Associates were originally commissioned utilising finance made available by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership to initially to examine issues regarding the accessing of permanent housing of ex offenders and substance abusers. The remit of the study widened to include a review of the JAP to ensure it is fit for purpose both with regard to statutory and regulatory guidance and in terms of its usability for applicants and practitioners.

5.2 The review focused upon key sections of the policy and made recommendations to ensure that the JAP continues to comply with statutory and regulatory guidance and reflects elements of best practice within the sector.

- 5.3 **Prioritising Applications and Giving Reasonable Preference.** S 167 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 says that local authorities must give reasonable preference within their policy and within their procedures to people in particular groups. Recent case law has emphasised that this is not to be ignored, even where CBL schemes are in use.
- 5.4 Groups that are to be given reasonable preference are:
- Homeless applicants (including ‘priority’ and ‘non-priority’, intentional homeless, and those who are threatened with homelessness)
 - People living in unsanitary or overcrowded conditions
 - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds
 - People who need to move to a particular area to avoid hardship
 - Additional preference - people in urgent housing need
- 5.5 The DCLG Code of Guidance advises LHA’s to ensure they have mechanisms in place for assessing the needs of each applicant, identifying the applicants in the greatest need, taking account of people who qualify under more than one category, and monitoring the outcome of allocations. It also advises that you may give additional preference to other groups, so long as these do not outweigh the preference given to the groups set out above.
- 5.6 The consultants point out that it is not clear that reasonable preference is given in the existing HBC/ HH Joint Allocations Policy or in the procedures set out for staff. This raises the question as to how does the JAP demonstrate that reasonable preference is given to people in the required categories, or between those categories, or to people who qualify in more than one category? It is also not clear how people who are not statutorily homeless are to be given reasonable preference.
- 5.7 With regard to Prioritising Applications and Giving Reasonable Preference the following amendments to the policy are recommended:
- R6. Allocations Policy to state how applications will be dealt with where applicants are in one of the reasonable preference groups, and where applicants are in more than one of these groups**
- R7. Preference to be given to all homeless or potentially homeless applicants – and policy should state how a threat of homelessness would be assessed and who would allocate the additional points as a result of this being recognised**
- 5.8 **Helping Vulnerable Households through the System** - people leaving designated supported accommodation get priority outside the normal system however there is no guidance provided for staff about how to apply this, or for other agencies who are working with this group, other than a list in Appendix C of the policy identifying the supported accommodation from which priority would be given for moving on.

5.9 The review highlighted the need to develop a co-ordinated way of allocating property and housing based support. The proposal is to develop a “Panel” at which relevant agencies would be represented to case manage vulnerable individuals and ensure access and co-ordination of accommodation and other resources (details attached in appendix 2).

5.10 For Helping Vulnerable Households through the System the following amendments to the policy are recommended:

R8. The JAP and guidance to be amended to show clearly how people moving from designated supported housing will be given priority: what priority it gives, any circumstances under which priority would not be given, and how the need to move on would be recognised alongside any other priorities for being in reasonable preference groups.

R9. That a Hartlepool Vulnerable Persons Housing Panel be established, as detailed in appendix 2, and that this be serviced by the appointment of a full time Vulnerable Persons Panel Coordinator.

Members are advised that recommendation R9 includes the proposed appointment of a full time position and has direct financial implications for the Council. The possibility of this new appointment has been included as a budget pressure consideration and the progress in establishing a Vulnerable Persons Housing Panel, is subject to council approval of this appointment for 2007/8

5.11 **Under 18’s** - there is a debate in process around the country about whether under 18’s can be excluded from applying on housing registers. The Homelessness Act 2002 amended S.160 of the Housing Act 1996 to the effect that all applications for social housing must be considered unless they are subject to immigration control, or considered to be unsuitable because of unacceptable behaviour. Those authorities which say that applicants under 18 may not be considered for rehousing unless they are homeless may have policies which contravene the legislation. Newcastle is currently seeking a barrister’s advice on this.

5.12 The Joint Allocation Policy states that “Anyone of 16 years or over may apply for re-housing but will not normally be considered for re-housing until they are 18 years of age. Applicants of 16 or 17 years will normally be suspended until their 18th birthday but only after they have been visited and their application assessed.” It is not clear what criteria will be used to assess applications and the staff guidelines do not clarify this. It is becoming common for this group to be housed only after they have been assessed as being able to manage a tenancy, but the JAP does not say whether this is the case.

5.13 With regard to Under 18’s the following amendments to the policy are recommended:

R10. Clarification within the Policy as to the circumstances which an applicant under 18 years old would be accepted onto the register. To be accepted onto the register the applicant must be competent to manage a tenancy, and the criteria for who will assess this and how will be published within the JAP, and be accompanied by guidance for agencies working with this age group about how to help young people to gain tenancy management and independent living skills

5.14 **Suspension from the Housing Register** - the Homelessness Act 2002 says that Housing Authorities and Housing Associations may no longer decide that groups of applicants can be excluded from their lists. However, individual applicants can be considered unsuitable as tenants because of “unacceptable behaviour”. This can be because of:

- Rent arrears – only significant rent arrears should be taken into account in deciding that the applicant is not suitable to be a tenant –
- Past poor behaviour – only evidence of recent anti-social behaviour should be taken into account, or previous poor behaviour which is still current and relevant to the tenancy.

In either case, the housing organisation must be certain that they could have detained an absolute possession order (one that is not suspended), had the applicant already been a tenant.

5.15 The review confirms that the JAP correctly lists behaviour that could lead to a Possession Order but does not state that this has to be an absolute (or immediate) Possession Order.

5.16 With regard to Suspension from the Register the following amendments to the policy are recommended:

R11. Policy to be amended to state that an applicant would be suspended only if there was evidence of unacceptable behaviour that would have led to an absolute Possession Order, that the £200 is only a guideline, and that this will be reviewed in the light of recent court cases in the area

R12. Guidance should be provided for applicants and staff to give greater detail on what circumstances would be likely to lead to an absolute possession order.

R13. Policy should be amended to make it clear that a breach of tenancy in relation to another social landlord, and an attack on a member of staff, would have to be one that would be likely to lead to an absolute Possession Order.

R14. Guidance should be provided for both applicants and staff to give greater detail on how repayment of rent arrears could lead

to suspension being lifted, and what evidence would be required for a suspension for ASB to be lifted.

R15. Guidance needs to be clarified on whether homeless applicants are suspended from the housing register, and what action is taken to ensure they can be rehoused if they are suspended. Ideally, the Policy should be revised so that it is not possible for a suspension to be applied where an applicant has been accepted as statutorily homeless.

R16. Advice agencies and other organisations should be encouraged to help applicants to work towards having their suspensions lifted.

- 5.17 **Criminal Records** - the JAP states that if the applicant denies any criminal record, but the Council or HH have reason to suspect they are not telling the truth, they should be asked to provide a copy of their criminal record. The applicant should be advised that any fee charged upon production of a valid receipt if it proves to be clear of any relevant offence will be reimbursed. However, it can sometimes take several weeks for an applicant to obtain an official print out of their criminal record from the police and therefore if written confirmation can be obtained from another official source, such as their Probation Officer or solicitor, this should be requested.
- 5.18 Housing providers are allowed to ask about an individual's criminal record, but if that individual's record is classed as spent, the individual has the right not to disclose their record under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- 5.19 Under current legislation, individuals can exercise their right to apply for access to information held on them including criminal record information under the 'subject access' provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. Currently, some employers seek to obtain this information about employees and potential employees by compelling them to exercise their rights under the Data Protection Act. This process is known as 'Enforced Subject Access' and is undesirable because details of all convictions are revealed. Most employers are not entitled to ask for this information under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974.
- 5.20 Under the Data Protection Act 1998 as amended in 2000 the government has made an enforced subject access illegal. Therefore if housing providers are asking applicants to provide proof of a clear record by way of a subject access they are breaking the law.
- 5.21 Many social landlords have an arrangement with the Police for information about criminal record to be extracted, on request by the landlord and with consent from the applicant, free of charge to applicant. In Tyne & Wear, this is the Safer Estates Agreement. Northumbria Police provide the information from their records, in an agreed format.

- 5.22 The Neighbourhood Policing pilot in Hartlepool provides an opportunity to replicate this, and the Police are in the process of negotiating something similar in Redcar & Cleveland, so there is a precedent already set in Cleveland Police Force area. The information is used in the private rented sector as well as in the social housing sector.
- 5.23 With regard to Criminal Records the following amendments to the policy are recommended:
- R17. HH and HBC to end the practice of requesting applicants to provide evidence that they have no criminal record or details of what their criminal record is.**
- R18. HH and HBC to negotiate to explore whether the Safer Estates Agreement could be replicated in Hartlepool, so as to receive information from the Police about the criminal record of applicants for social or private housing**
- 5.24 In May 2005 HH adopted a policy for the repurchase of properties which had been subject to the Right to Buy. An important driver to the adoption of the policy was the potential in some circumstances to prevent homelessness by HH acquiring the property. In ensuring the continuity of occupation the JAP will require amendment in order that the family in occupation can be allocated an assured tenancy
- 5.25 It is therefore recommended that:
- R19. Where HH acquire a former Right to Buy property that the occupiers are allocated the assured tenancy of the property providing the property meets their assessed needs in terms of the JAP**
- 5.26 **Compliance with regulatory guidance and responding to national policy initiatives.**
- 5.27 The latest regulatory self assessment undertaken by Housing Hartlepool confirms that it is fully compliant with regard to the requirements of meeting housing needs.
- 5.28 HBC and HH are aiming to introduce a Choice Based Lettings scheme during 2007/8. Currently both organisations are involved in a project to establish the feasibility of participating in a Tees Valley sub-regional model. There are however outstanding tasks to be undertaken in preparation for CBL, and the following recommendations are made which will impact on the future operation of the JAP.
- 5.29 The change from traditional allocation systems to CBL is a radical step. There are major policy and practice issues such as balancing need and choice, ensuring that vulnerable households are not disadvantaged, and making systems customer-orientated. Equally significant are organisational and

management issues such as developing effective partnership working, building up project management skills and resolving information communications technology (ICT) challenges.

5.30 The requirements for the long term vision for CBL include:

- A need for enhanced advice and support on welfare benefits, rents, money advice and household budgeting
- Better information will be needed on advertised properties and neighbourhoods so that customers can readily and easily compare the detailed attributes of each home
- Social landlords are likely to engage in competitive marketing behaviour highlighting added-value elements for customers
- Customers will require even better up-to-date information on the social housing market.

5.31 Recommendations with regard to the preparation for Choice Based Lettings -

R20. To exclude all supported housing from the CBL process

R21. In preparation to redesign the JAP in 2006/7 to provide a banded approach to priority which is more appropriate to CBL

R22. To explore the development of a Housing Options Centre which will be necessary to facilitate the introduction and management of CBL as well as enhancing the Housing Advice Service and enable continuous improvement on homelessness prevention.

5.32 The future introduction of CBL will involve a radical change to the traditional allocations process and a further detailed report to Cabinet, including a business case for the resource implication of providing the necessary Housing Options Centre, will be produced.

5.33 The recent Government consultation paper “A Respect Standard for Housing Management” contains significant challenges to social landlords to deliver services which support creating sustainable communities where people feel safe, secure and happy to live.

5.34 The paper is focused on seeking 10 commitments from social landlords to deliver specific outcomes in support of the stated policy objectives. On examination there are clear linkages between the recommended amendments to the JAP, particularly the development of the “Panel” and the “building blocks” identified within the consultation paper, including:

- Regularly reviewing allocations and letting policies to ensure issues of respect and anti-social behaviour are fully reflected – for example sensitive lettings to avoid potentially problematic situations and identifying vulnerable individuals who may require intensive tenancy support

- Undertaking full assessments of any potential problems that may require tenancy support when entering into a new tenancy agreements and delivering appropriate support
- Delivery of intensive tenancy support for residents identified as vulnerable or at high risk of anti social conduct
- Follow clear policies and procedures on dealing with vulnerable residents (for example mental health issues and drug and alcohol problems)
- Where available and appropriate referral to residential intensive rehabilitation programmes for residents with complex support needs

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The review to the JAP has been subject to structured discussion with stakeholders as part of the formal review process.
- 6.2 The Housing Partnership considered and agreed the draft amendments at their meeting on the 14th June 2006.
- 6.3 The Tenants Consultation Panel considered the draft recommendations on the 17th June 2006.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 Cabinet is requested:
- (i) to approve the amendments to the JAP which are highlighted in bold within Section 5 of this report.
 - (ii) consider the merits of holding a training day/briefing session for Members, or a joint seminar with Members and partner agencies to consider the future introduction of Choice Based Lettings and the possible future provision of a Housing Options Centre. Alternatively the matter could be referred to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.

Appendix 1

ISSUES INFLUENCING THE AMMENDMENT OF THE JOINT ALLOCATION POLICY**The Market for Social Rented Housing**

2005/06 witnessed the continuing trend of applicants finding it increasingly difficult to secure a social rented property from HH. As the dominant provider of social rented property within the town the supply of available accommodation from HH is a key variable in gauging whether there should be review of the eligibility criteria and priority weighting within the policy.

Table 1 demonstrates the change in the number of terminations, Right to Buy sales, total lettings and void property rates between 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06.

Table 1.**Supply of HBC/HH Housing Stock 2003-2006**

Activity	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	(+/-)% change since 03/04
Total Stock	7502	7243	7097	- 5.4%
Terminations	1484	983	690	-54.5% (-29.8% from 04/05)
RTB	313	259	113	- 56% from 04/05
Lettings	991	840	642	- 35.2%
Void Rate and No.	2% (156)	1.4% (105)	1.3% (97)	- 35%

Source: Housing Hartlepool

Table 1 includes a basket of indicators all of which illustrate the trend of reduced availability within Housing Hartlepool's stock. Right to Buy completions in 2005/06 were significantly lower than in the previous two years, although they were in line with the forecast within the Business Plan. This reflected the growth in capital values and factors such the dampening in the reaction to transfer by tenants. RTB has though substantially contributed to the 5.4% reduction in stock numbers since transfer; almost all the units sold being general needs for families.

The 29.8% decrease in the number of terminations and 35.2% decrease in lettings (23% in 05/06) has been marked and has continued a year upon year trend.

Another aspect that illustrates the trend in the market is the shift in the proportion of the property types becoming available for re-let. Table 2 contains an analysis that tracks the situation from 2003/04.

In terms of the review of the JAP the most significant issue raised by the data in Table 2 is the 28% reduction in the number of houses let in 2005/06. This again reflects the impact in the price inflation of the local housing market (27% since 05/06), and of RTB completions over the last three years. The position is particularly acute with regard to three bedroom houses, which made up 61% of RTB completions in 2005/06. The significance of this is the reduction in the ability to re-house households with children, particularly those with more than one child, who are in acute need and are often

homeless. This is confirmed within the 2005/06 CORE returns which reports that the 46.7% of all lettings made within 2005/06 were to single adults aged 16 to 59, with 20.2% of lettings made to a household containing a child.

Table 2. Lettings of HBC/HH Property by Type

Property Type	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	% Change
House	499	391	280	- 44%
Bungalow	94	108	79	- 16%
Bedsit	62	47	55	- 11%
Flat	380	337	251	- 44%
Maisonette	5	4	2	- 60%

Source: Housing Hartlepool

The demand side of the equation confirms the situation that accessing social housing in Hartlepool for most household types is becoming increasingly difficult. At the end of June 2006 there were 3089 households registered. This compares to 2590 in June 2005. This excludes applications for a transfer from existing tenants of Housing Hartlepool.

Caution is required in measuring demand by the “size” of a housing register alone. This is due to the Housing Register being open to all who wish to register and not only applicants with an “objective “housing need. Therefore to obtain a better understand the situation there is a need to “drill down “into the register and examine the situation with regard to applicants with a high level of assessed need which included homelessness, disability and where applicants homes are subject to clearance schemes.

Table 3 lays out the number of households that have been awarded a priority status and are waiting to be re-housed as of June 2006.

Table 3. “High Priority Applications” 2004/06

Allocation Category	June 2004	June 2005	June 2006
Homelessness	43	55	5
Disability	22	30	55
Clearance	0	71	50

Source: Housing Hartlepool

42% (272) of all lettings made by Housing Hartlepool in 2005/06 were made to these three priority groups.

To summarise, the situation has continued the trends identified in 2005:

- Reducing supply of accommodation
- Increasing demand on the waiting list
- Increasing demand particularly from vulnerable applicant groups, although there has been a marked success in homelessness prevention

Appendix 2

Hartlepool Vulnerable Persons Housing Panel: Terms of Reference - June 2006

Primary Objectives of the Panel:

- To share information about rough sleepers in Hartlepool and formulate multi-agency action plans to resettle people into appropriate accommodation and housing support services.
- To share information about people who are due to return to Hartlepool from prison within the next 2 months, but who have no confirmed accommodation. To establish plans for resolving the housing and support needs of these people, in line with the HARP Protocol and Hartlepool Protocol for Housing Offenders and Substance Mis-users.
- To share information about existing tenants at risk of homelessness, due to potential or actual risk of eviction. Where possible, to establish support plans with the aim of maintaining those tenancies. Where action to evict is imminent, to consider options for resettlement elsewhere.
- To prioritise service users for forthcoming vacancies in hostels and supported accommodation services (including floating support), based on assessments of need and matching these needs with available placements.
- To identify service users in hostels / supported accommodation projects, whom are ready to move on into independent tenancies. To establish suitable move-on accommodation for these service users, with appropriate packages of follow-on support where needed.
- To ensure that specialist hostel / supported projects are utilised as effectively as possible, by promoting sustainable move-on accommodation and support plans, thus increasing availability of placements for people in need of a period intensive support in staffed accommodation projects.
- The Panel is not intended to offer an emergency response for homeless people in crisis situations, needing an immediate response.
- To monitor the Hartlepool Protocol for Housing Offenders and Substance Misusers, and make recommendations for any changes to the Protocol

Panel Steering Group:

The Steering Group will be made up of senior managers from the agencies which are core members of the Panel, as outlined below. It is envisaged that, once the panel is fully functional, the Steering Group would need to meet on a 6 monthly basis. The functions of the Steering Group are:

- To ensure that their staff representatives on the Panel have sufficient delegated authority to participate effectively in the Panel decision-making processes. This may include decisions on allocation of resources.

- To ensure that the Panel operates within local agency and multi-agency policies / procedures and joint working protocols.
- To ensure consistent attendance at Panel meetings by participating agencies.
- To receive an annual progress report from the Chair of the Panel, highlighting areas of success and issues which need to be addressed at policy and strategic levels. Where such issues are identified, the Steering Group will ensure that these are addressed by the relevant strategic and policy managers. (e.g. by feeding into reviews of Homelessness and S.P. Strategies)

Panel Membership:

Panel membership will include representation from all of the key housing / housing support agencies in Hartlepool, together with other agencies (e.g. substance misuse services) with a direct interest in housing needs of vulnerable people. All Panel members (both core members and additional members) will be signatories to the multi-agency protocol on housing ex-offenders and people with substance misuse problems, which includes an information sharing protocol. Core members will attend all meetings, while the additional members will attend when service users' circumstances needs indicate that input from that agency is likely to be integral to current or future housing and support needs.

Core members:

- Hartlepool Council (*Chair*)
- Housing Hartlepool
- Stonham Housing
- Probation / Dordrecht
- Endeavour Housing
- SmartMove
- YOS
- Supporting People
- Registered private sector landlord representative

Additional members:

- Social Services Department
- Women's refuge
- DISC
- Substance Misuse Team
- CMHT
- Advance
- Other agencies as appropriate

On occasions, it may be appropriate to invite representatives of non-participating agencies to a Panel meeting in order to assist with a support plan, where the initial assessment indicates a specialist area of need. This could include, for example, training agencies, voluntary organisations, disability services, etc. An initial decision to invite organisations who are not Panel members would be made by the Panel Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the referring agency.

Frequency of meetings:

- Panel Meetings will be scheduled on a monthly basis. If there are no new referrals and no other urgent business, the Panel Co-ordinator may decide to cancel the meeting.

Panel Co-ordination

The Panel will be co-ordinated and chaired by Hartlepool Council, who will appoint a senior officer from the Housing Directorate, as Panel Co-ordinator. The Panel Co-ordinator will be responsible for:

- Setting dates and arranging venues for Panel meetings.
- Chairing Panel meetings and ensuring minutes are taken and circulated
- Accepting referrals of clients from participating agencies
- Ensuring that referral information is adequate and that service users referred fall within Panel criteria (*to be determined by the Panel*). If it is decided that further assessment is necessary prior to discussion at the Panel, ensuring that a referral for assessment is made to the appropriate agency.
- If further assessments are necessary obtaining permission for this from the client and co-coordinating the assessment with the relevant agency.
- Checking that the referring agency has provided a copy of an information sharing consent form, signed by the service user.
- Identifying any other agencies that may need to be involved in providing a resettlement plan and support package to the client and ensuring that these agencies are invited to the panel meeting. This may require specific consent from the service user.
- Ensuring that written referral information and needs assessments are circulated to all Panel members at least 7 days in advance of the Panel meeting.
- Ensuring that meetings are minuted and that decisions regarding service users are written up on client case files held by the identified lead agency for each service user.
- Keeping records, statistics etc. in order to effectively monitor and evaluate the work of the Panel.
- Feeding back monitoring and evaluation of the Panel to the Steering Group, highlighting any issues arising from operation of the Panel, which need to be addressed on a strategic / multi-agency level.

Referral Procedure for participating agencies:

- Check that the service user meets the agreed criteria.

- Explain the Panel process to the service user, including the referral and assessment procedure, the agencies involved and the possible outcomes.
- Ensure that the service user signs a consent form, allowing for all relevant information to be shared between organisations represented on the Panel.
- Undertake a comprehensive needs assessment (*Need a format for this – or use the Shelter template?*) and forward this to the Panel Coordinator, together with the signed client consent form. (See information sharing protocol)
- For inclusion on the next scheduled Panel meeting, the documents will need to be delivered to the Co-ordinator at least 10 working days in advance.

Meeting format:

Meetings will have the following standard agenda items:

- Minutes of previous meeting
- Matters arising
- Service users to be discussed
- Feedback on service users previously assessed
- Strategic and policy issues to refer into the Steering Group.

Decision Making:

Agencies taking part in discussion and planning for a service user will share collective responsibility for delivering agreed housing and support plans.

On the basis of the needs assessment received at least 7 days in advance of the meeting, agency representatives will attend with pre-prepared information on the services which their agency could provide as part of a package of housing and support.

In the unlikely event that the Panel is unable to reach agreement on an appropriate package of services, the matter will be referred to the Chair of the Steering Group, who will consult with other Steering Group members, with the aim of reaching an outcome which can meet the needs of the service user.

User participation:

An underlying principle of HVPHP will be to ensure that user participation is at the centre of the Panel process. To this end all participating agencies agree to:

- Ensure equality of opportunity is central to the assessment, resettlement and support plan process, for example by means of monitoring, provision of interpreters, provision of advocates etc.
- Ensure views and opinions of clients are taken into account during the comprehensive needs assessment.

- Ensure clients are given the opportunity and practical assistance to attend discussions of their cases at Panel meetings, should they wish to and feel able to do so
- Ensure that the view of the client is taken into account when decisions are made about resettlement and support plans.

CABINET REPORT
25TH September 2006



Report of: Director of Regeneration and Planning Services,
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Director of
Adult and Community Services

Subject: A REVIEW OF HARTLEPOOL COUNCIL'S
HOUSING FUNCTIONS

SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To review the Housing Functions of Hartlepool Council.

2.0 SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1. The report considers guidance from the Government and the Audit Commission, the reasons for the review and the views of managers and staff within the service. It concludes that housing services need to be strengthened and suggest two options for positioning the services within the Departmental Structure of the Council.

3.0 RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

1. Housing is a key strategic service that requires strengthening.

4.0 TYPE OF DECISION

1. Non key.

5.0 DECISION MAKING ROUTE

1. Cabinet.

6.0 DECISION(S) REQUIRED

1. Members are requested to agree the report, select a preferred location option for the positioning of the service within the departmental structure, agree the implementation of the proposed head of housing post and the immediate repositioning of the services and note the pressures identified for strengthening the service which are being considered in the budget review.

Report of: A Joint Report of the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services, Director of Neighbourhood Services and Director of Adult and Community Services.

Subject: A REVIEW OF HARTLEPOOL COUNCIL'S HOUSING FUNCTIONS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider strengthening the housing functions, which are the responsibility of the Borough Council. The objective is to provide a fit for purpose housing function that will properly meet the needs of the residents of the Borough and to raise the performance of housing services in a changing housing environment by improving management arrangements, its capacity, its integration and linkage with other services and its profile within the Council. The report recommends ways of strengthening the management and capacity of the housing service and its structure and then options for positioning the housing service within the overall departmental structure of the Council. It aims to make best use of existing experience and expertise within the Council and takes into account the views of managers in housing services.
- 1.2 The report is based upon a review undertaken by the Director of Neighbourhood Services, the Director of Adult and Community Services and the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Housing Service involves a range of related activities which provide services focussed particularly on meeting the needs of vulnerable people, families and communities, meeting the decent homes standard and balancing housing supply and demand. This is reflected in the core actions identified for the Housing Strategy for the period 2006-2011. The Service seeks to ensure a proper assessment of housing needs, planned and coordinated interventions to secure appropriate housing and avoid homelessness, assessment of provision of housing accommodation and services, assessment of conditions, securing the improvement and provision of housing, seeking to ensure a balanced supply of housing in sustainable communities, effective private sector housing renewal and regulation and proactive work to provide advice and support to vulnerable people and to prevent homelessness and facilitate independent living. These services are increasingly related to housing market renewal, spatial planning, community safety and economic regeneration through the sustainable communities' agenda (Sustainable Communities; Home for All ODPM 2005, Sustainable Communities; Building for the Future ODPM 2005, Planning for Mixed Communities; Consultation Paper ODPM 2005).

- 2.2 Housing services are extremely important in help to meet basic needs and well being and it is of course vital that the best services practicable are provided for Hartlepool residents. A large proportion of issues raised by residents relate to housing related matters and issues related to housing affect particularly vulnerable people and wider communities under stress. The Housing Service features prominently in the Government's agenda and comprehensive performance assessment and it has its own separate housing inspectorate and associated mandatory targets and standards and BVPIs which include person and property related targets.
- 2.3 The Council in its role as Housing Authority has very significant statutory housing responsibilities emanating from various housing acts and the homelessness act, despite the large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) of its stock to Housing Hartlepool. As in many cases nationally, following housing transfers the importance of "retained housing services" has tended to be understated and under-resourced.
- 2.4 There are however strong teams and committed and skilled staff within the housing service in Hartlepool. The homelessness service for example is a regional champion and is proactively addressing homelessness issues, the voluntary landlord licensing accreditation scheme is regarded as "cutting edge" and the service is well established for selective licensing to complement Housing Market Renewal.

3. CURRENT HOUSING SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 In Hartlepool, most of the "retained housing service" is currently located in the Neighbourhood Services Department, within the Public Protection and Housing Division and is managed by the Strategic Housing Manager who reports to the Head of Public Protection and Housing. The housing functions currently within Neighbourhood Services are situated within three teams and are as follows:

- Implementing and developing the Government's Supporting People programme in respect of housing related support services
- Assessment of special housing needs and managing the Disabled Facilities Grants (a statutory function) as well as undertaking assessments for 'special needs' housing and proactive intervention and liaison with housing providers and statutory agencies
- Home Energy Conservation
- Statutory responsibilities under homelessness legislation (including harassment and unlawful evictions)

- Provision of housing advice, covering homeless prevention, tenancy relations, housing options and resettlement services
- Asylum seekers support service
- Floating support service to assist people in accessing and managing a sustainable tenancy
- Assessment, management and provision of renovation grants (as per Housing Renewal Strategy)
- Landlord accreditation and licensing
- Gypsy and travellers needs and enforcement
- Nuisances primarily related to housing

3.2 There are also a number of significant functions not specifically allocated to any of the three teams responsible for the above, which are the responsibility of the Strategic Housing Manager. These include the following:

- Housing strategy (a statutory function)
- Needs assessment (a statutory function)
- Strategic bidding for housing resources
- Sub-regional & regional housing relationships

3.3 There are also a number of services that are not specifically allocated including

- Support for partnership working especially the Housing Partnership and input into LAA
- The full extent of the requirement for transfer agreement monitoring and overview of Housing Hartlepool

3.4 Housing Market Renewal (HMR) is also a very significant housing related function, which is located in the Regeneration and Planning Department. As a result, housing market renewal is already integrated with Planning and Regeneration and Community Safety services and sub-regional activity and local delivery with the assistance of Hartlepool Revival and Housing Hartlepool and is working well. Two senior housing officers coordinate this activity from within the Regeneration Division, which also includes a spatial planning and regeneration team working alongside the officers concerned.

4. REASONS FOR THE REVIEW

- 4.1 The principal triggers for the review of the “Retained Housing Service” within Neighbourhood Services were in particular the weaknesses identified in the service and also the changing context for housing services nationally.
- 4.2 Firstly, though there are strong teams and extremely committed and skilled staff within the housing section in Neighbourhood Services as referred to above, there some serious weaknesses have been revealed within the service. In particular, a poor outcome from an Audit Commission “Housing-Supporting People Inspection Report” (February 2006) and the risks associated with the late securing of government endorsement of the Housing Strategy has revealed some significant weaknesses that need to be addressed through this review.
- 4.3 The Supporting People programme consists of **housing related support services** for a range of vulnerable people working with housing, social care, health and probation service providers across sectors to plan, commission support services and meet identified needs. The Audit Commission Housing-Supporting People Inspection Report (February 2006) concluded that the Supporting People service in Hartlepool was rated as poor with uncertain prospects for improvement.
- 4.4 The report was critical of a failure of management of the service and the support provided to it, a weakness of performance management, monitoring and delivery, commissioning and re-contracting, effectiveness of governance, and linkages and learning from expertise in other services within the council and amongst partners especially on commissioning and service reviews. It was considered that “the Council has not adequately utilised the existing skills of council staff outside the supporting people team, especially those working in procurement in general and social care procuring in particular” and that “links to all other strategies especially around regeneration and adult social care prevention, independence and choice agenda are not yet clear”. It was considered that there was poor leadership and a lack of a clear vision and strategy. The speed and effectiveness of service reviews to enable reshaping of the provision of services was criticised and inequities in provision - between tenures (being over focused on social rented accommodation) and non-traditional groups in need of support. In terms of strategy the inspectors indicated that “links to all other strategies especially around regeneration and adult social care prevention, independence and choice agenda are not yet clear”. The inspection report indicated that “there is a clear read over from the homelessness strategy ... Supporting People is seen as critical to making the new extra care strategy work; but the link is not clear in regeneration and renewal strategies, in Safer Hartlepool work or as part of the new vision for care”. It was considered that “the potential for Supporting People to contribute to the wider agenda is not fully recognised...” The inspectors had an expectation of strengthened management in housing and additional capacity in the Supporting People team and effective addressing of the issues raised.

4.5 The inspection recommended a series of measures to:-

- Improve performance management of the programme
- Strengthen monitoring and delivery and improve value for money
- Prepare for commissioning of new services and re-contracting and monitoring of existing services
- Review current resources available to effectively deliver the programme and effectiveness of arrangements for governance
- Improve approaches to access and diversity
- Actively learn from relevant services within the Council

4.6 Since the inspection the Team Leader and another member of staff who had been on long-term sickness absence prior to the inspection have returned to work and a lot of good progress has been made. An improvement action plan is in place. This proposes a review of the skills and capacity of the supporting people team to undertake review and future running of the programme and a review whether the supporting people team's current place within the Council departmental structure is the most advantageous" (AC19-21) referring to a specific recommendation of the inspection report. It also proposes to identify existing expertise from within the Council to help with the backlog of review work and with future requirements such as commissioning, publicity, diversity work, on-going links with service users and ongoing monitoring. An interim inspection visit was made in September 2006 with a further visit scheduled for 1st November 2006.

A further full inspection is due on 26th March 2007. Recent improvements include interim strengthening of capacity, a formal review process, the development of eligibility criteria and a value for money methodology and consideration of the longer-term capacity and structure of the Supporting People Team (See Section 8.9-13). The Quality Housing Network has recently reviewed aspects of the service particularly related to programme governance and a report is expected imminently to assist with improvement of the service. It is expected for example to recommend closer linkages with Community Safety Services and stronger commissioning body including representatives from adult social care, community safety, probation, housing, the accountable officer, the PCT and lifelong learning. The Supporting People Strategy has recently been agreed by Cabinet, governance arrangements are being reviewed and the Director of Neighbourhood Services has taken on the role of Accountable Officer.

4.7 While significant progress has been made recently it is essential that this cross-cutting service is put on a firm footing properly resourced and structured and positioned appropriately within the departmental structure, and effectively linked with other services and supported at all levels within the Council including at a corporate level and at a departmental management team level through an "accountable officer" within which ever department it is located. It also requires strong strategic leadership and governance, and effective business procedures.

- 4.8 The Housing Strategy is a huge and complex statutory document which has been recognised as a particular area of concern and risk within the Council. The Council belatedly achieved a "fit-for-purpose" rating for its strategy by Government Office for the North East. However, considerable risks were evident when this strategy was delayed. It took a considerable time to prepare and improve on an initial assessment and was signed off within only a few weeks off the final deadline of June 2006 following considerable cross departmental efforts. This strategy is critical to all housing related services providing the framework for all other services including housing market renewal, homelessness and supporting people.
- 4.9 Overall the management of the "retained" housing services needs strengthening to improve the housing service's standing and presence in the Council, to increase its capacity especially in its strategy/community leadership role and monitoring of performance, management, agreements, scrutiny, etc; to help strengthen its linkages and in some areas its service provision to vulnerable people; and to improve strategic leadership, governance, partnership working and working relationships with partners and other services.
- 4.10 Secondly, the role and relationships of housing services in local housing authorities nationally is changing and needs to be taken into account. There is increasing emphasis on housing as part of a broader Sustainable Communities agenda, the relationship with housing market renewal and wider economic regeneration and spatial planning, control and regulation of private housing, community safety and ensuring the needs of vulnerable people are met. Housing needs to consider the housing market as a whole and to input and relate effectively to sub-regional and regional frameworks including Tees Valley Boards and the Regional Housing Board which is now included within the Regional Assembly with the Regional Planning Board. There is also emerging a new National Strategy for Supporting People services, which is seeking to focus more effective service provision with an emphasis on users and outcomes.

5. THE REVIEW PROCESS

- 5.1 The need to review the Housing Service within Neighbourhood Services has been recognised and pursued in the context of the need to strengthen the Supporting People service in preparing for further inspection and the budget review. A report from a housing consultant (copy attached as Appendix 1) was commissioned earlier in the year but the recommendations involved "externalising" some significant parts of the service and following briefings of Cabinet Members this was not considered acceptable and was not pursued. At the Neighbourhood Services Trade Union Liaison meeting held on 27 April 2006 the Housing Service issue was discussed and the Trade Unions requested strongly that an early briefing for all staff that may be affected by any changes was arranged.

- 5.2 The need to involve staff fully in any proposals was also raised. The Head of Public Protection and Housing had a meeting with the Trade Union during the week beginning 1 May 2006 to discuss arrangements for briefing the staff who would be affected by any changes.
- 5.3 Following discussions within the Corporate Management Team and informal discussions with Cabinet Members assurances were made to staff of the Neighbourhood Services Housing Section that externalisation was not an option. A review process was then undertaken by the then Acting Director of Neighbourhood Services, the Director of Adult and Community Services and the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services.
- 5.4 This has involved a number of meetings with all the managers of the existing housing services teams individually and collectively and the Strategic Housing Manager, to establish their views on the nature of the issues within the service and the options to address these and improve the service. The views expressed by the team managers were summarised and confirmed with the managers collectively, and these helped to inform this report and understanding of the operation of the service. Managers have also been consulted individually and collectively as the process has proceeded and they have kept their team members informed. The review has been based upon a consideration of the functions and operations of the Housing, consideration of inspection reports, an examination of the national trends and expectations for good practice housing services, statutory duties and the Hartlepool context. It recognises the need to make maximum use of existing expertise within the Council and provide a sustainable housing service.
- 5.5. The basis of this report was discussed with the managers and union representative of the housing teams most directly affected, and then in a meeting to which all the staff primarily affected were invited on 8th September 2006. Comments received are attached at Appendix 2. The report has also been agreed by Corporate Management Team.

6. CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCING FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1 A number of recent Government, Audit Commission and other inspection body and professional body reports have been examined to identify current expectations of housing related services. This analysis is summarised as follows:-
- 6.2 The government considers that the strategic role of housing needs to be interpreted broadly and potential links forged corporately and especially with coordinated housing and planning arrangements (Reviewing the Strategic and Enabling Roles ODPM 2004)
- 6.3 The Audit Commission has indicated that in post transfer situations councils should review local arrangements and the skills needed by officers and members. A recent report indicates that "*local priorities and circumstances*

should determine staffing arrangements and the organisational structure after transfer should be appropriate to the needs of that authority” and that “links with regeneration, land use planning and social services can be locally important”.

- 6.4 It significantly recommends that arrangements after transfer ***need to allow for a minimum base of skills and information to maximise the capacity and skills of the staff and career development.*** It notes that ***“it is rarely effective to divide retained housing staff between different sections- in particular, separating private sector staff from strategy and housing needs staff limits cover and makes it less likely that policies will complement each other as they should.”*** A series of questions on the role of housing authorities in improving housing services after transfer are listed in Appendix 5. The main emphasis is on a focus on future users not just tenants, managing relationships with housing partners rigorously and clarifying the role of councillors. (Audit Commission 2002 “Housing After Transfer – The Local Authority Role”)
- 6.5 There is also a general expectation that housing and planning and regeneration services are increasingly integrated and this is evident at the national, regional and sub-regional level for example with the recent transfer of the Regional Housing Board into the Regional Assembly (Regional Planning Body) and the integration of the Regional Housing Strategy into the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and adjustments in the role of English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation. At a sub-regional level the establishment of the Tees Valley Living Board has integrated housing and planning and regeneration activity, and within Hartlepool the establishment of Hartlepool Revival a housing regeneration company and the location of the Housing Market Renewal coordination team within Planning and Regeneration Services have achieved closer integration with planning and regeneration. Experian state that housing policy is a complex issue that requires authorities to act as strategic enablers, ***integrating housing more deeply in the context of planning, regeneration and economic development*** (Experian 2006).
- 6.6 A recent Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)/Local Government Association (LGA) report states that ***“planning for housing provision is essentially a new element of cross-tenure housing strategy ...local authorities need to see it as a new element of housing strategy, closely aligned with the planning function, informing local plans and requiring particular knowledge and new skills”.*** ***“Local authorities should consider generating a single planning for housing document that is both part of the housing strategy and is one of the authority’s local development framework documents serving to translate housing strategy into spatial planning outcomes”.*** ***It is also noted that” local authorities should ensure that their strategies for private housing...are properly brought under the umbrella of housing strategy’....The engagement through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreements (LAAs) was also emphasised and it suggests that “local authority members should commit to developing a strong strategic housing role in their councils” and that “local authorities should review their arrangements for fulfilling their strategic housing role and in particular the numbers and seniority of***

staff involved... “This report places a particular emphasis on the links with planning and suggests the strategic housing role should be located with planning services. (Chartered Institute of Housing & Local Government Association November 2005 “Visionary Leadership in Housing A New Future for Local Housing Strategy)

- 6.7 A joint report by the three key local government, housing and planning bodies (LGACIH/RTPI) is aimed specifically at integrating housing and planning. The report indicates that “*over the last couple of years there has been a **revolution in the way that the strategic aspects of both housing and planning are handled**. The formulaic approach to housing investment has been abandoned in favour of a much more flexible approach based on regional strategies for housing and the new legal framework for planning has enshrined the concept of a ‘spatial strategy’ in legislation a huge step away from a system that focused simply on land use” and the Barker Review of Housing Supply*”. It states that “*the government’s commitment to the delivery of its sustainable communities plan, the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant, the creation of Regional Housing Boards and the introduction of new Regional Spatial Strategies/Local Development Frameworks has **fundamentally changed the landscape for strategic housing and planning functions at all levels***” . It is recommended that these “*changes create **an urgent need for the two functions to work together on a common agenda and for new approaches to evolve.***”
- 6.8 The report emphasises the importance of co-ordination between economic and infrastructure decisions, housing investment and planning policy and that rebalancing and maintaining balanced housing markets requires an integrated approach. It states that ***a new commitment must be made to understanding housing markets as a whole and to coordinating the full range of investment going into housing and that this must be set within a spatial vision for new and redeveloped housing in sustainable communities***. It concludes that “*to achieve these outcomes successfully, local authorities must be prepared to adapt and, where necessary, radically change the way they work*”.
- 6.9 The report suggests that “***closer alignment of housing, planning and indeed wider economic and social development strategies will be crucial ...’ and that “this means adopting new approaches so that housing and planning functions do not operate according to separate programmes and agendas that deal with different tenures and new and existing housing in isolation from each other***”. A number of measures are identified for improving internal local authority joint working practices on housing and planning issues including “***establishing joint planning and housing departments or, where stock has been transferred, locating the strategic housing function within the planning department***”, joint policy development and integrated training and consultation. (LGACIH/RTPI 2006; Intelligent Approaches to Housing - Achieving Better Integration in Planning for Housing).

Supporting People Services

- 6.10 Supporting People is the government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide **housing related support services** that helps vulnerable people with a range of different needs to live independently. The programme was introduced in April 2003 following two years of ODPM funded local preparation.
- 6.11 The aim of the Supporting People programme is to deliver a strategic, integrated policy and funding framework, delivered locally in response to identified local needs, to replace the previous complex and uncoordinated arrangements for providing housing related support services for vulnerable people.
- 6.12 The programme allows for greater diversity of provision tailored to individual needs and delivered in a strategic context. For example:
- housing related support services for vulnerable people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities whose needs have previously not been met in an appropriate or timely manner;
 - housing related support services for vulnerable older people who wish to live independently, including those in sheltered housing;
 - temporary hostel accommodation - including probation hostels and those providing support for women fleeing domestic violence;
 - housing related support services for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties;
 - floating housing related support to a range of vulnerable people including young people leaving care, teenage parents and refugees; and
 - Home Improvement Agency services whose work includes providing practical support to disabled and older owner occupiers to enable them to live independently.
- 6.13 It is increasingly recognised that there is a need to develop supporting people services beyond core vulnerable groups and particularly in addressing anti social behaviour. The aim is to help those most disadvantaged and at risk of social exclusion. It relates to a wide range of vulnerable users including the elderly and disabled, the young and people affected by antisocial behaviour, offending, substance misuse and domestic violence.
- 6.14 The government recognises the need to ensure that housing support services are both high quality and sustainable. It is recognised that it is essential that supporting people has corporate ownership and that there are strong linkages to other services and partners and reflect an increasing focus on service users and outcomes. With reducing budgets there are needs to develop and focus supporting people, ensure efficient transparent commissioning, new

ways of joint working and user commissioning. In recent consultation on the future strategy for supporting people it was felt that there is not enough recognition of housing related support as a service in its own right (DCLG July 2006).

7. HOUSING FUNCTIONS: THE VIEWS OF HOUSING TEAM MANAGERS

7.1 The main views on improving the Housing Service identified through the discussions with housing team managers can be summarised as follows:

a) Management and Profile of the Housing Service

The managers universally felt that the profile of housing services was too low and that its image needed to be improved. They considered that the management and leadership of housing services needed to be strengthened and there needed to be greater delegation and effective management and support. They generally felt that there had been a significant loss of senior professional housing expertise and strategic leadership resulting from some previous management team changes within Neighbourhood Services. The general feeling was that a specialist “Head of Housing” post was essential at a senior level and that this should be part of the management team of the department in which the service is located and most managers suggested that this should be at divisional management team level. Most felt that this level of post needed to have the Supporting People Service “Accountable Officer” role.

b) Capacity of the Housing Service

As referred to above, team managers generally felt that there had been a significant loss of senior professional housing expertise resulting from some previous management team changes within Neighbourhood Services. The managers considered that when the housing service was originally configured there were two principal housing officer posts that were never provided related to strategy and performance management of services, partnership support, monitoring etc. Some managers perceived that capacity was light compared to some other authorities.

There were a number of financial issues identified, which are referred to later in the report or are been considered through the budget review process.

c) Location and Arrangement of Housing Services

All the managers indicated that they would prefer the housing related services including supporting people services to be kept together within one division and to be linked more closely with housing market renewal and regeneration activity which was felt to be the most high profile area

of housing activity regionally and nationally. All the team managers suggested that there was a strong case for positioning housing services within the Regeneration and Planning Department alongside housing market renewal, planning, regeneration and community safety activity. Major synergies and advantages were perceived and some suggested that this would probably help with recruitment/retention of a head of housing services. Some felt that there was a compelling case for this. They felt that this would help to maintain the profile of housing and give a sustainable basis for the future development of the service and career opportunities, and was most likely to retain and attract qualified housing officers. In particular the managers distinguished the special needs function as being central to the housing services.

d) Supporting People Service

In the case of the Supporting People function (approximately 4 FTE staff) there was a preference among the managers for its retention with other housing related services, which were thought to work well together, though there was recognition of the need for significant improvements to the capacity of this service and management support to it. Supporting People was considered to be an important part of the housing strategy and a housing support service. Some however accepted that this service was positioned in different departments in different authorities and sometimes separately from other housing services and sometimes within housing services and that supporting people was a cross-cutting service that needed strong linkage to a number of services and partners including health and care. There were some concerns as to the future emphasis of the Supporting People Service and the maintenance of links with other housing services if it was located in Adult and Community Services.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE HOUSING SERVICE

- 8.1 The views of the team managers as set out above are generally agreed in terms of management and profile of the Housing Service, the capacity of the service and the location and arrangement of the service. In the case of Supporting People services however it is considered prudent to consider another option recognising some of the links to social care and commissioning expertise i.e. to position Supporting People within the Adult & Community Services Department.
- 8.2 Overall it is critical that the capacity, management, strategic leadership and governance of housing services is strengthened so that it can operate more effectively and efficiently. The housing service needs to be strengthened which ever locational option is chosen, in particular the strategic function is under-resourced and this is resulting in delays in preparing key strategies and the supporting people service as shown in recent inspections.

- 8.3 The Housing Service is recognised as being small. It is considered crucial to balance the need for the best configuration to provide effective services to residents of the town and the need to maintain housing services together as far as practicable and further integrate them to maximise the robustness and sustainability of the service by seeking to maintain a minimum base of skills, maximising cover and making it more likely that policies will complement each other as recommended by the Audit Commission. For example maintaining a critical core of housing services is seen as essential to retaining and attracting staff of sufficient calibre (Audit Commission 2002).
- 8.4 The Government's guidance, Audit Commission reports and changing approaches to housing services sub-regionally, regionally and nationally and the need to maintain together and further integrate the housing service strongly suggests that most if not all of the Housing Services should be closely aligned with Housing Market Renewal, Regeneration, Planning and Community Safety services being located within the Regeneration and Planning Service Department. However, it is also considered that an option for the location of Supporting People services in Adult and Community Services Departments should be considered. This would enable the skills and experience of efficient commissioning of services and the benefits of an emphasis on services focussed on individuals to be maximised.
- 8.5 The Strategic Housing Manager post is considered to be over-stretched, in terms of the wide range of functions and management responsibilities attached to the role. In addition it appears that a number of functions are not explicitly recognised including for example support to partnership working and the critical monitoring of housing services provided by and the relationship with Housing Hartlepool. It is proposed therefore that role of the Housing Strategy Manager post will focus more closely on strategic related functions, including the preparation and implementation of the housing strategies including the housing strategy, housing needs assessment including special needs, housing partnership support, affordable housing development programme, resource bids such as SHIP and RSL monitoring, liaison and development including an overview of Housing Hartlepool, and consultation and liaison with residents, families and communities and partners. The post will also be responsible for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and reporting of divisional performance plans and work programmes, improvement and action plans, etc. and deputise for the Head of Housing. The role of the "accountable officer" associated with Supporting People service is already taken on an interim basis by the Director of Neighbourhood Services and would not be associated with this post.
- 8.6 A new "Head of Housing" post is recommended as essential to provide strategic leadership, professional expertise, profile and rigorous management and improvement of the service. The holder of this post would be a member of the departmental management team, wherever the service is located, and would increase the profile of the housing service and act as champion for all residents of the town and particularly those in need on housing related matters. It is proposed that this post would focus on the leadership and

development of the housing services with overall responsibility for functions, services and resources and ensuring that statutory duties are met, contract obligations are delivered and regulatory standards are reached. The post would ensure that the housing needs of the town are met through comprehensive needs assessment and the development of plans and policies to address them, ensure action is taken to enforce housing and related standards, develop and implement effective housing improvement and lead collaboration to assess and meet special housing needs. The post will provide the strategic direction and vision for the housing service and be the principal source of professional advice on housing matters within the Council. It would lead the Council's input to partnership working and would also provide management support to all the teams within the housing service and drive service improvement through effective performance management and close liaison with members and partners at all levels. If all housing services are retained together, then this post would also take the role of "accountable officer" for Supporting People service. The strategic leadership of the housing service, effective governance particularly through the Housing Partnership, corporate ownership and effective and efficient business procedures are necessary wherever the housing services are located.

- 8.7 In appointing to the Head of Housing post it is proposed that this is advertised internally and ring fenced to housing services post holders in Housing Services and the Housing Market Renewal Team. This should ensure that every effort is made to seek to maximise the potential for giving opportunity and utilising existing expertise and experience within the Council.
- 8.8 It is proposed that the housing services would be closely managed alongside the existing Housing Market Renewal (HMR) team, regeneration and planning and community safety services and where practicable opportunities for integration with HMR will be considered.

Supporting People

- 8.9 As Supporting People Services are focused upon housing related support services there are naturally strong links between housing services and supporting people. Indeed they are closely related to the need to assess needs and influence housing accommodation and service providers and they therefore figure significantly in the housing strategy.
- 8.10 In Hartlepool the Supporting People Service has therefore been positioned within the housing service. This service currently consists of a small team consisting of 4 FTE posts and a major part (80%) of the time of a team manager. The "accountable officer" role has until recently been performed by the Strategic Housing Manager post-holder. The positioning of the supporting people services in the retained housing services has had the benefit of helping to create a critical mass within the housing service and the team is led by an officer with a professional housing background.

- 8.11 Nationally, however, there appears to be no correlation between the department in which supporting people is positioned and the relative success of the service at inspection. And it is positioned in various departments within other authorities. Wherever it is positioned, cross departmental links would allow strong and creative opportunities for supported housing packages to be realised.
- 8.12 Wherever the Supporting People service is positioned within Hartlepool's departmental structure it will require strong informal and formal linkages with Housing Services, Adults Services, Children's Services, Health and Community Safety. A positive quality interface between services is essential and achievable wherever the service is located. It also requires a senior officer at departmental management team level to act as the Accountable Officer and ensure strong corporate support at all levels. This is required to ensure that the wide ranging potential benefits from supporting people are realised.
- 8.13 The two primary options for positioning supporting people are either to retain it with other housing related services and relocate it within the Regeneration and Planning Department helping to maintain a critical mass of housing related services and alongside community safety, or to locate it within the Adult and Community Services Department, making use of commissioning expertise and with some ring-fencing to ensure its priorities are not inappropriately subsumed and formal linkages are established with Housing Services.

Interim Arrangements & Restructuring Supporting People

- 8.14 The supporting people team has required immediate support irrespective of this restructure to provide sufficient capacity to meet the requirements of the forthcoming Audit Commission re-inspections. Some interim arrangements have therefore been put in place to provide some additional ICT, specialist and general capacity in the team. These temporary arrangements are being funded from within existing budgets. In addition a longer term strengthening of the team is proposed which will make it fit for purpose and address some of the inspection concerns.
- 8.15 If the Supporting People commissioning team is relocated in Adult and Community Services then there will need to be strong formal linkages established with the rest of the housing related services to ensure effective delivery of the housing strategy and service. In this case, it is proposed that the Supporting People commissioning team and manager would be positioned within the Support Services Division of Adult and Community Services. The HEFCA and special needs team would be relocated within the housing services teams as part of the private sector housing team.

- 8.16 The remaining functions within Neighbourhood Services Department will be repositioned by the new Director of Neighbourhood Services.

9. LOCATION OPTIONS WITHIN THE COUNCILS DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE

- 9.1. The recommended options for the location of the Housing Service are as follows:-

OPTION A: Strengthen Housing Services and locate them within the Regeneration and Planning Services Department.

Advantages

- a) Meets expectations of the changing national and regional agenda and best practice for housing related services.

- b) Keeps Housing Services and staff together maximising the robustness and sustainability of the service as recommended by the Audit Commission by seeking to maintain a minimum base of skills, maximising cover and making it more likely that policies will complement each other.

- c) Takes maximum advantage of housing skills and experience within the Council and maximising likely retention of such expertise.

- d) Maximises linkages and synergy with Housing Market Renewal, Planning, Regeneration, and Community Safety.

- e) Maintains strong linkage between supporting people housing related support and other housing services helping to implement the actions aimed at meeting the needs of vulnerable people identified in the Housing Strategy.

Disadvantages

- a) Some disruption for staff

- b) Would require strong links to Adult and Community Services Department teams and other departments and partners to ensure maximum use of commissioning and review expertise.

- c) Some restructuring in Neighbourhood Services would be necessary.

OPTION B: Strengthen Housing Services and locate them within the Regeneration and Planning Services Department except for the commissioning of Supporting People Services which would be located within the Adult & Community Services Department.

Advantages

- a) Meets most expectations the changing national and regional agenda and best practice for housing related services.
- b) Maximises use of commissioning expertise in Adult and Community Services Department and potential integration with health and care.
- c) Strong linkages and synergy with between most Housing Services and Housing Market Renewal, Planning, Regeneration and Community Safety.

Disadvantages

- a) Does not keep all housing services and staff together and therefore retained housing likely not to be as sustainable a service.
- b) Linkages between Housing Services and Supporting People Services would need to be emphasised to ensure maximum service opportunities are realised.
- c) Need to ring fence the Supporting People Service within Adult and Community Services.
- d) Some disruption for staff.
- e) Some restructuring of Neighbourhood Services would be necessary.

10. ACCOMMODATION ISSUES

- 10.1 Which ever locational option is selected through this review there is not anticipated to be any major accommodation issues as there is likely to be sufficient flexibility within both Bryan Hanson House and also within the Civic Centre to accommodate the options considered. It is likely that most of the housing services would be relocated to Bryan Hanson House. Further detailed assessment is necessary.

11. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS & RISKS

- 11.1 Irrespective of the location of the Housing Service there are capacity and management weaknesses in the Housing Service, which need to be addressed to ensure it is fit for purpose and which have cost implications.
- 11.2 To facilitate the restructure of the service, the recommended Head of Housing post will need to be appointed in the short term. It is estimated that this and associated effects will cost up to £80,000 (including on-costs at the top of the salary range). The Chief Financial officer has advised that funding arrangements have already been agreed for this within the corporate base budget. However, it is hoped to achieve an internal appointment for this post as outlined above which may enable some savings, and in the medium term there will be some potential savings within the Neighbourhood Services Department from possible restructuring of the Public Protection and Housing Division. It has also been taken account in moderating the pressures identified below.

The need for the Housing Service to be made fit for purpose to meet statutory requirements has been identified in the budget review. A total of £154,000 of pressures have been identified including the funding of the special housing needs team which can no longer be fully funded from the supporting people, a housing strategy post, establishing a choice based letting scheme, strengthening the statutory homelessness team. In addition a permanent strengthening of capacity in the Supporting People Team is considered to be necessary to ensure improved service provision on a sustainable basis and to effectively respond to the concerns expressed in the inspection. This would cost approximately £100,000 per year and has also been included in the unavoidable pressures identified in the budget review.

- 11.3 If the housing service is relocated as proposed in either of the options then a transfer of some commensurate support services resources is also necessary as far as practicable to ensure adequate operational support.
- 11.4 The issues underlying this review are complex. The principal risk associated with the review is to ensure it is fit for purpose that will provide good and improving services for residents and meet inspection expectations. A key risk is also the need to ensure that what is recognised as a small service in a small authority is sustainable and robust in terms of the retention and recruitment of staff. It is also essential that strategic leadership, governance and business operation is improved.
- 11.5 It is considered that the risks associated with not implementing this review outweigh a no action option or “a retain in current location” option, which have been discounted as less likely to provide a fit for purpose service. The recommended options include some essential strengthening of capacity and management and repositioning of the service with essentially the choice being between positioning the Supporting People Service with the other housing related services or within the Adult and Community Services Department with informal and formalised linkages.

- 11.6 Wherever the Supporting People Service is positioned within Hartlepool's departmental structure it will require strong informal and formal linkages with Housing Services, Adults Services, Children's Services, Health and Community Safety. A positive quality interface is essential between services and partners to achieve the full potential of this service wherever it is located. It also requires a senior officer at departmental management team level to act as the Accountable Officer and ensure strong corporate support at all levels. This is required to ensure that the wide-ranging potential benefits from supporting people are more fully realised.

12. RECOMMENDATION

- 12.1 Members are requested to agree the report, select a preferred location option for the positioning of the service within the departmental structure, agree the implementation of the proposed head of housing post and the immediate repositioning of the services and note the pressures identified for strengthening the service which are being considered in the budget review.

Appendix 1 Initial Consultant's Report on Housing Services

Appendix 2 Comments Received on Proposed Review

Appendix 3 Proposed Broad Structure for Housing Services

Appendix 4 Questions for Housing Authorities After Transfer (Housing After Transfer –the Local Authority Role; Audit Commission 2002)



HARTLEPOOL
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Review of Retained Housing Function

February 2006

John Delahunty

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope of the review

- 1.1.1 The scope of the review was to consider the future structure of the retained housing function within the Neighbourhood Services Directorate.
- 1.1.2 The review was commissioned by the Director of Neighbourhood Services to support the actions planned as a response to the Supporting People Inspection undertaken in Nov 2005.
- 1.1.3 Part of that response was to plan to introduce additional capacity into the retained housing service and the review was intended to test this proposal and consider whether any other approaches were available.

1.2 Approach to the review

- 1.2.1 The review has been undertaken using desk top research, including a consideration of existing plans, strategies, reports and other documents.
- 1.2.2 In addition, a small number of key interviews have been undertaken with operational staff in the current retained service, and with senior managers in the Neighbourhood Services Directorate, including the Director.
- 1.2.3 Interviews were held with Director of Regeneration and Planning, the Director of Adult and Community Services and the Assistant Chief Executive.
- 1.2.4 An interview was held with the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool and a round table discussion was held with other key senior Housing Hartlepool Managers.

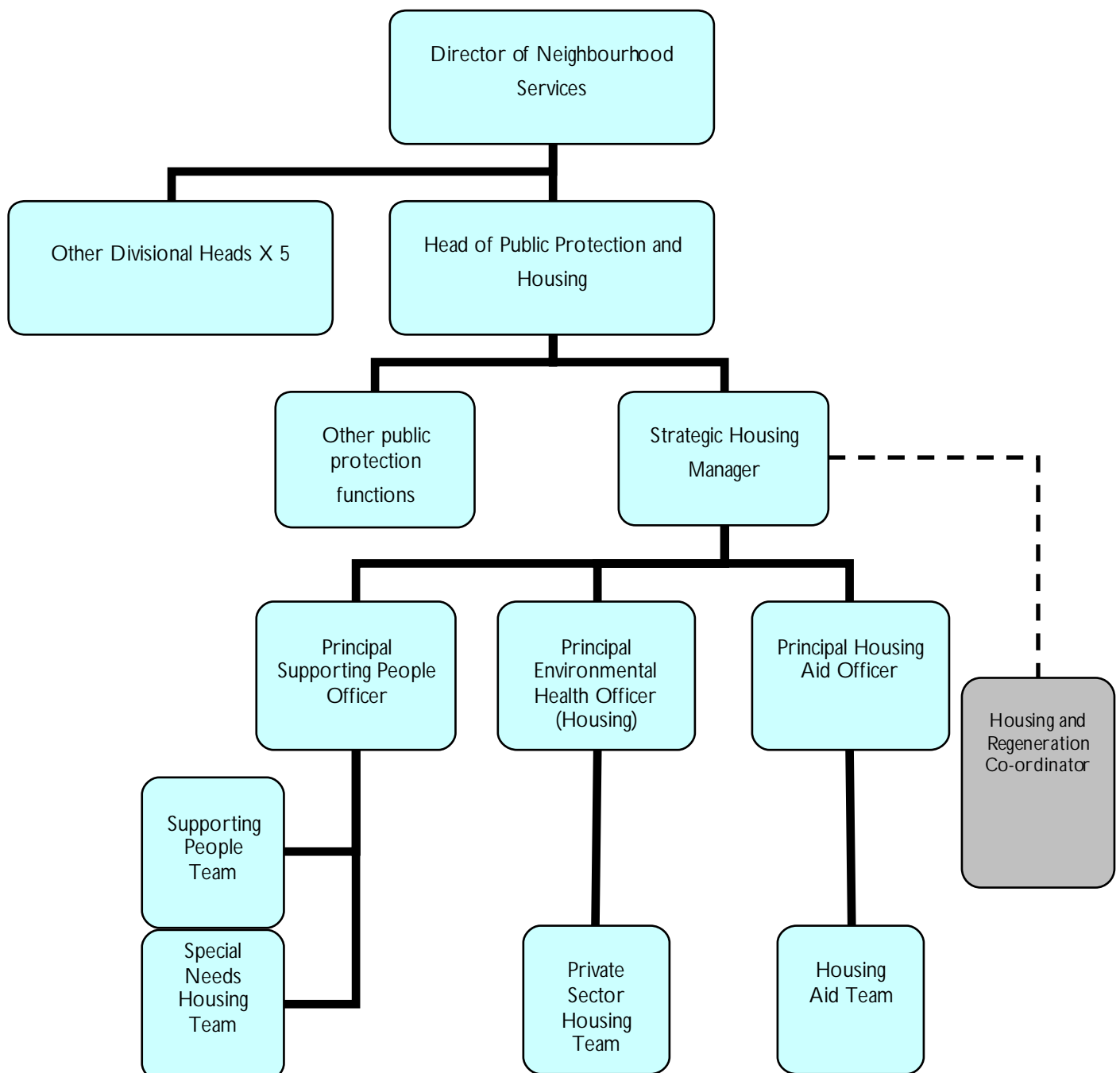
2 The current picture: a snapshot

2.1 The current structure for the retained housing service

- 2.1.1 The Public Protection and Housing Division was formed within Neighbourhood Services Directorate in 2002 to receive the housing functions to be retained by the council prior to the stock transfer to Housing Hartlepool. Further consideration was given to the structure in 2004 (Cornwell restructure report)
- 2.1.2 Although a large amount of material has been accessed about the arrangements for the landlord functions to be transferred, no detail has been available setting out the rationale for the structure for the retained services.
- 2.1.3 The current structure appears to have a weakness in the definition for the role of Strategic Housing Manager; the role appears to have too large a scope of work at present but, in addition, the definition does not appear to capture the full extent of the requirement for the monitoring relationship with Housing Hartlepool nor the very specific support required for the Housing Partnership.

- 2.1.4 The postholder is tasked to lead the development of a number of key strategies, principally the housing strategy, but no other resource is dedicated to support this function. In addition, the post carries operational responsibilities for some high visibility, front line services.
- 2.1.5 The structure arrangements for the delivery of Supporting People also need to be considered, at least on an interim basis, in order to deliver the necessary improvements.

Current structure



2.2 Supporting People Inspection (Audit Commission 2006)

- 2.2.1 The draft inspection report had been received at the time of the review and was about to be published. The findings were not being challenged.
- 2.2.2 The report had identified a number of weaknesses, many of them significant.
- 2.2.3 Issues around the resources available to effectively deliver the SP programme were raised, which are directly relevant to the current capacity and location of this part of the retained housing function.

2.3 Strategic Housing Audit (Audit Commission Action Plan 2005)

- 2.3.1 This one day audit undertaken in December 2004 led to an Action Plan which is referenced below at 4.2.

2.4 Housing partnership (LSP Thematic Partnership)

- 2.4.1 The focus that this separate thematic partnership places on housing is appropriate in the context of the town.
- 2.4.2 The performance management framework of the Hartlepool Partnership has given the thematic partnership a green light for 2004/5.
- 2.4.3 However, the two objectives for the partnership (Achieving Decent Homes and Thermal Efficiency) do not seem to resonate with the key issues for the town – regeneration, balancing housing markets and neighbourhood action.
- 2.4.4 There is a risk that the profile and impact of the thematic partnership will reduce if its agenda is not identified as a driving force for housing in the town.

2.5 Relationship with Housing Hartlepool

- 2.5.1 The relationship with Housing Hartlepool (HH) seems to have been successfully managed during the stock transfer process.
- 2.5.2 Close and positive working relationships, both at strategic and operational level, are apparent and the ability of the new organisation to be a catalyst for housing change in the town is tangible. An innovative proposal from HH, "Hartlepool Choice", is described below in the context of options for structure.
- 2.5.3 The formal arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the transfer agreement have been developing following the Strategic Housing Audit undertaken by the Audit Commission.
- 2.5.4 However, it is not clear that this transfer agreement monitoring function has been allocated to a specific officer; the generic monitoring of performance of all RSLs in the town does appear currently as a responsibility of the Strategic Housing Manager post.

2.6 The housing agenda for the town

2.6.1 The agenda tends to be described in terms of housing market renewal, regeneration and neighbourhood action.

2.6.2 If these are the key housing drivers, then they need to be supported by the structure for the strategic housing function.

3 Broad influences on the retained housing function

3.1 Reviewing the Strategic and Enabling Roles (ODPM 2004)

3.1.1 This guide to undertaking a review of these functions is designed in part to be a prompt for those authorities moving to LSVT or ALMO arrangements, so that the retained functions aren't given less consideration than those transferring.

3.1.2 Some of the advice in the guide includes:

- considering the continued need to work together with many external partners;
- accepting the retention of a range of responsibilities for sustainable communities, black and minority ethnic (BME) issues, regeneration priorities, low demand properties and aspects of the Supporting People agenda;
- achieving an effective impact by aligning the demand for and supply of local housing, through strong and co-ordinated strategic housing and planning arrangements;
- acknowledging that a range of people are being increasingly marginalised in gaining access to housing in the private and public sectors and local authorities have an increasingly pivotal role in shaping and implementing new initiatives to access housing.

3.1.3 The conclusion is that the strategic housing role needs to be interpreted broadly with the potential for stronger links to corporate strategies (e.g. through community plans).

3.2 Housing after Transfer: The local authority role (Audit Commission 2002)

3.2.1 This report draws on the experience of transfers completed by March 2002; 650 000 homes sold and a quarter of all local housing authorities no longer landlords.

3.2.2 It highlights some of the risks for the retained housing function, such as losing profile within the authority and of operating with a smaller housing team.

3.2.3 It also highlights innovative ways of acquiring new skills for the new agenda and of effectively using available resources.

3.2.4 Some of the key messages are around:

- creating a focus on future service users, not just existing tenants;

- managing relationships with all housing partners rigorously, with formal arrangements to minimise future risks;
 - clarifying the changed roles for councillors in the new arrangements, for example their continued role as advocates for constituents and the role of scrutiny.
- 3.2.5 A checklist of questions is included at [Appendix One](#) which is designed to stimulate thinking on the role of the authority in improving local housing services after transfer.

3.3 CPA Service Assessment Framework from Nov 2005

- 3.3.1 This framework clarifies how the housing service element has changed, and how this assessment is made for a transfer authority. Some details are shown at [Appendix Two](#).
- 3.3.2 The set of Pls (also at [Appendix Two](#)) may not be immediately affected by the structure of the retained housing services, but future improvements are unlikely to be realised without structure change.
- 3.3.3 Supporting People is included in the Housing the Community service element for single tier housing authorities. This is likely to present the biggest risk to the scoring of the service element.

3.4 Visionary Leadership in Housing (CIH/ LGA Nov 2005)

- 3.4.1 This report sets out a vision for a new-style strategic housing role to enable authorities to better serve the communities they represent, to help deliver across a range of PSA targets and to achieve better value for money.
- 3.4.2 It reflects on recent speeches by David Milliband, Minister of Communities and Local Government, including one to the NHF Conference in September 2005 when he said:

" The strategic role of the local authority starts from its ability to look at land use in an area and the operation of the housing market across all tenures - in other words to be a custodian of the community and not just a custodian of some of its housing."

- 3.4.3 It places a particular emphasis on the links with planning and does suggest that the strategic housing role could be appropriately located in the same Directorate as the planning function.
- 3.4.4 It recognises the importance of the role of neighbourhoods in housing strategy, with cross reference to Local Area Agreements and to LSPs.
- 3.4.5 The newer dynamics of regional and sub-regional working are suggested to be further drivers for change in the role, as is the need for building partnerships and influencing partners' activities.
- 3.4.6 The report specifically suggests that authorities should review their arrangements for fulfilling their strategic housing role, including the numbers and seniority of staff involved.

4 Specific drivers for the retained housing function

4.1 Supporting People Inspection and Improvement Plan

- 4.1.1 The Inspection report makes a number of recommendations, but specifically one about reviewing resources available to deliver the programme in part by:
- evaluating skills and capacity of the team and the senior managers involved in the programme;
 - reviewing whether the team's current place in the Council structure is the most advantageous and making any resultant changes speedily;
 - evaluating the effectiveness of the current Commissioning Body and Partnership Board and rearranging activity...etc
- 4.1.2 The draft improvement plan identifies the range of operational changes that need to be put in place and recognises that additional resources need to be available to support the improvement.
- 4.1.3 These clearly are factors for the future structure, albeit some may require time limited responses.

4.2 Strategic Housing Action Plan (see 2.3)

- 4.2.1 One recommendation in the Action Plan is directly relevant:
- R3 Review staffing arrangements to provide capacity within the housing structure to deliver a fit for purpose housing strategy.
- 4.2.2 The response to this recommendation put in place during the summer of 2005 did not result in the outcome intended and therefore the recommendation requires further attention in this review.

4.3 FFP Housing Strategy Assessment and Action Plan

- 4.3.1 These assessments of the Draft Housing Strategy were undertaken by GO-NE and independent consultants in the summer of 2005.
- 4.3.2 Both reflect strengths in the draft strategy, particularly around descriptions of national, regional and sub-regional priorities.
- 4.3.3 Key weaknesses include effective consultation arrangements, prioritisation/option appraisal and an action plan.
- 4.3.4 These aspects of the required approach to delivering a FFP Housing Strategy need to be factored into the structure/job role(s).

4.4 Housing Partnership

Performance Management Framework Improvement Plan for Delivery

- 4.4.1 The Strategic Housing Manager is identified as the key contact for 5 of the 6 improvement actions in this improvement plan.
- 4.4.2 If this support role for the Housing Partnership is to be delivered effectively, it needs to be reflected in the structure/job role(s).

Development of Local Area Agreement

- 4.4.3 This is an emerging agenda for the Hartlepool Partnership to be delivered through the thematic partnerships.
- 4.4.4 Again, if the support role for the Housing Partnership in relation to this agenda is to be delivered effectively, it needs to be reflected in the structure/job role(s).

4.5 KLOEs 2 (Strategic Approach to Housing) and 9 (Private Sector Housing) draft Jan 2006

- 4.5.1 The new draft KLOEs are useful indicators of likely future requirements for excellent services.
- 4.5.2 Much of the content is not *immediately* relevant to the structure of the retained housing function, but a few points to consider include:

KLOE 2 (Strategic Approach to Housing)

The Council has a high quality, fit for purpose Housing Strategy which is clearly based on the research and information that supports its understanding of the housing market. The Council's aims, objectives and priorities for the housing market, described in the strategy, are ambitious and challenging. These make clear what the Council wants to achieve, the outcomes and how it will measure its success. The Council's strategy for housing supports and is consistent with other key internal documents such as Community Strategy, Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan and also strategies that may be external to the Council such as those for Supporting People and Community Safety. It is clear the Council's housing strategies have influenced the strategies and actions of key stakeholders such as PCTs and the Youth Services

Highly effective internal communication and working processes ensure development and delivery of the Council's strategic housing objectives. Joint working between services such as housing, planning, legal, finance, benefits, environmental health and economic development with clear commitment and focus on strategic housing objectives is effective and ensure the best use of staff and financial resources .

(Text reproduced as it appears in Audit Commission drafts)

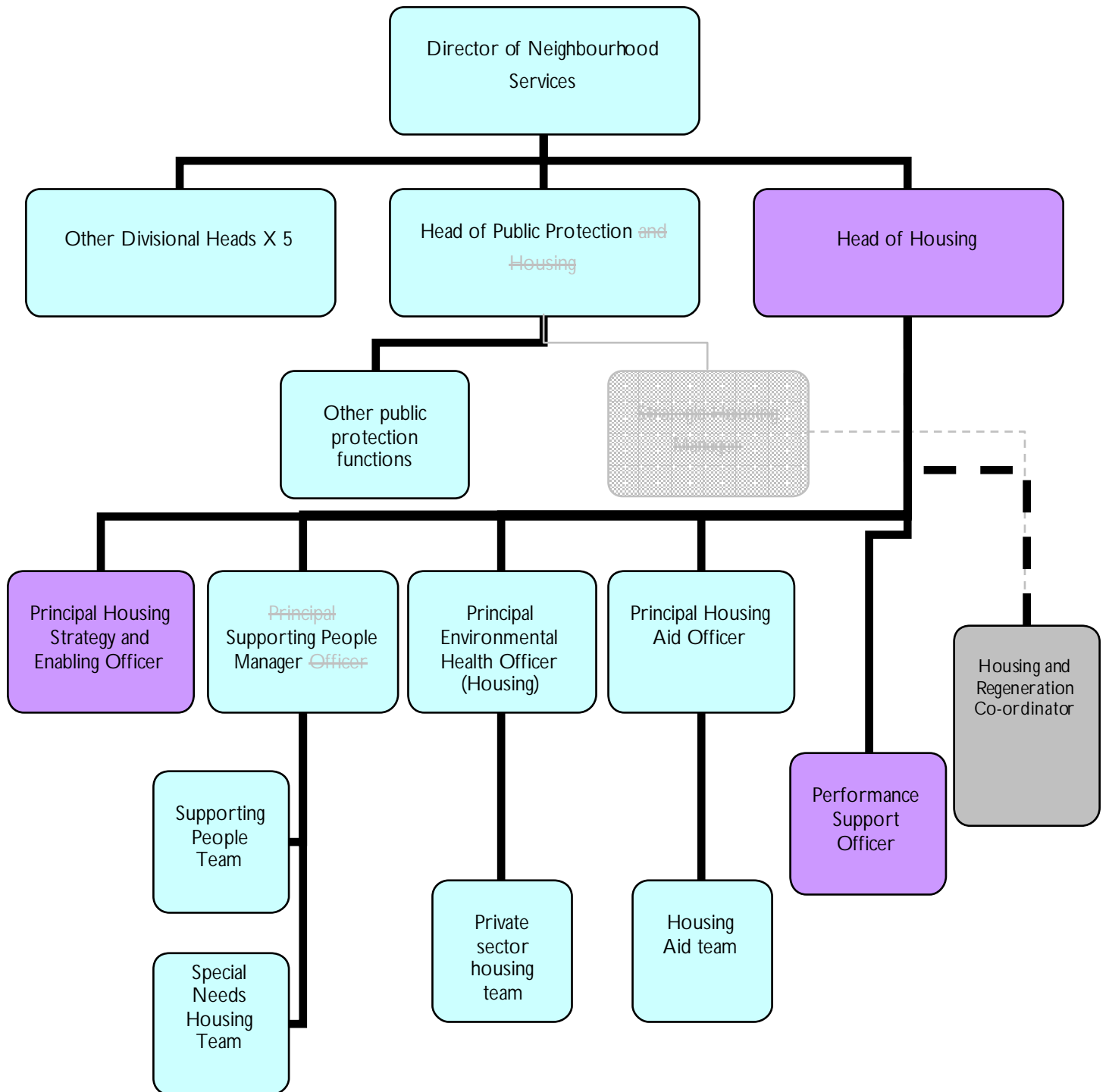
5 Options for structure

Option One

5.1 A division within the Neighbourhood Services Directorate

- 5.1.1 This option introduces some extra capacity into the existing structure and clarifies roles.
- 5.1.2 It does not attempt to draw in any additional functions currently located in other Directorates.
- 5.1.3 Specifically, it does **not** seek to draw back the housing regeneration functions currently delivered by the Regeneration and Planning, Directorate, but it does envisage improved delivery of this agenda as a result of the increased capacity in housing.

See structure chart below



Head of Housing

Job purpose

Lead the division – overall management responsibility for functions, services and resources (human and financial)

Ensuring statutory duties are met, contract obligations delivered, regulatory standards reached.

The Council's principal source of professional advice on housing matters

Member of Neighbourhood Services DMT and to actively contribute to aims and objectives of NSD and the Council.

Act as champion for housing consumers (all sectors) in the town

Duties and responsibilities

Staffing: structure, work programmes, review and development

Resources: budgets (capital and revenue), contracts, commissioning, procurement, income

Relationships: liaison internally /externally, stakeholder consultation, reporting to Cabinet, Boards and partnerships, partnership commissioning/outourcing.

Ensure production and implementation of strategies (list)

Liaison and monitoring relationship with Housing Hartlepool (Special RSL relationship)

Supporting People Accountable Officer

Lead support to Housing Partnership

Principal Housing Strategy and Enabling officer

Job purpose

Production and implementation of strategies (limited list) – to ffp/excellent standard

Affordable development programme

Resource bids (SHIP etc)

RSL monitoring relationship (shared with Principal Housing Aid Officer)

Identify housing needs: the diverse housing needs of the town, including support and special needs

Support to Housing Partnership

Consultation and involvement (public and stakeholder)

Performance Support Officer

Job purpose

(This is administration/coordinating/formatting/reporting)

Divisional performance plans

SP Improvement plan

HH monitoring data

RSL monitoring data

Housing Strategy Action plan

Homeless Strategy Action Plan

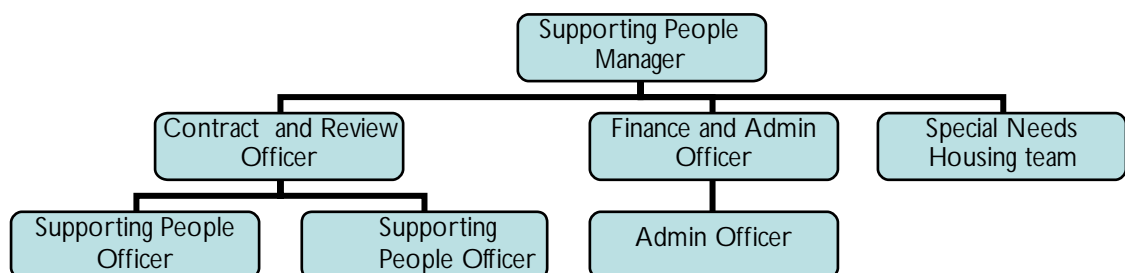
HECA

Landlord accreditation/licensing

Housing Partnership Improvement Action Plan

Supporting People

- 5.1.4 There is a need to establish an interim improvement structure (resource higher than normal operation), with the key difference being a Contract and Review Officer thus freeing the Supporting People Manager to undertake an outward-facing improvement role.
- 5.1.5 The range of improvement actions which are reliant on relationship building and partnership with a range of stakeholders, require significant senior capacity to be directed to them. This is the new, more strategic emphasis for the Manager.



5.2 Evaluation of Option One

- 5.2.1 This option responds to many of the drivers in section 4 above.
- 5.2.2 It delivers some of the immediate capacity needed to allow the function to operate more effectively, including the immediate priority of the Supporting People Programme.
- 5.2.3 The continued location in Neighbourhood Services Directorate suggests greater potential collaboration over the agenda around neighbourhoods, highlighted in some of the drivers. It also may reduce the uncertainty of staff affected by the structure change – it is not radical.
- 5.2.4 However, as an incremental change, it may not create the impact of a more radical shift of emphasis for the town and the key stakeholders. It doesn't structurally respond to the suggestions for integrated working with planning,, which may be particularly relevant given the agenda for housing in the town.
- 5.2.5 In addition, it may not appear to respond to the Supporting People Inspection Recommendation for structure review (see 4.1.1 above)

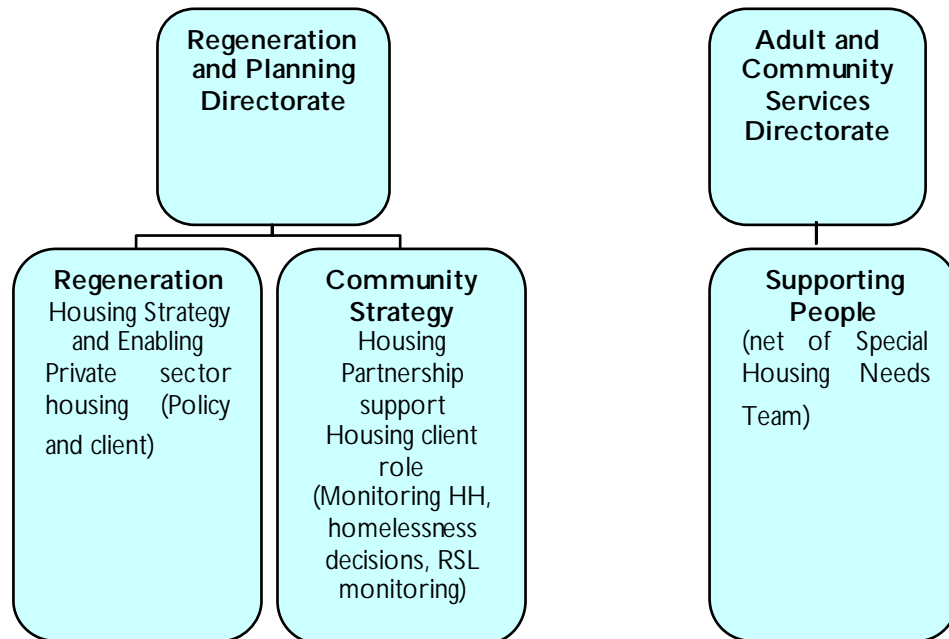
Option Two

5.3 Service elements relocated

- 5.3.1 This model shows the elements of function split across Adult and Community Services Directorate, Regeneration and Planning Directorate and Housing Hartlepool.
- 5.3.2 The movement of Supporting People is self explanatory, save that it would continue to require the additional interim resources (set out at 5.1.4 above) required to deliver improvement.
- 5.3.3 Within Regeneration and Planning, the functions of Housing Strategy and Enabling could sit effectively in the Regeneration Division, as could the policy and "client" side of Private Sector Housing. This model would have stripped out the front-facing/service delivery element of the Private Sector Housing function to be delivered by Housing Hartlepool. The policy and client role would essentially involve monitoring a contract / agreement for the delivery of these functions by Housing Hartlepool, developing and reviewing the private sector housing strategy and making any decisions "retained" by the Council on enforcement and the provision of assistance.
- 5.3.4 The significant activity of supporting the Housing Partnership could sit in the Community Strategy Division, alongside the other support to the Hartlepool Partnership.
- 5.3.5 A Housing Client role would need to be established to deliver the arrangements for monitoring the enhanced service delivery run through Housing Hartlepool. This would encompass the current arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the transfer agreement, as well as the additional requirements that would flow from the delivery of a Housing Advice Service, including homelessness. The role would also include making any decisions "retained" by the Council in respect of homelessness and tenancy relations.

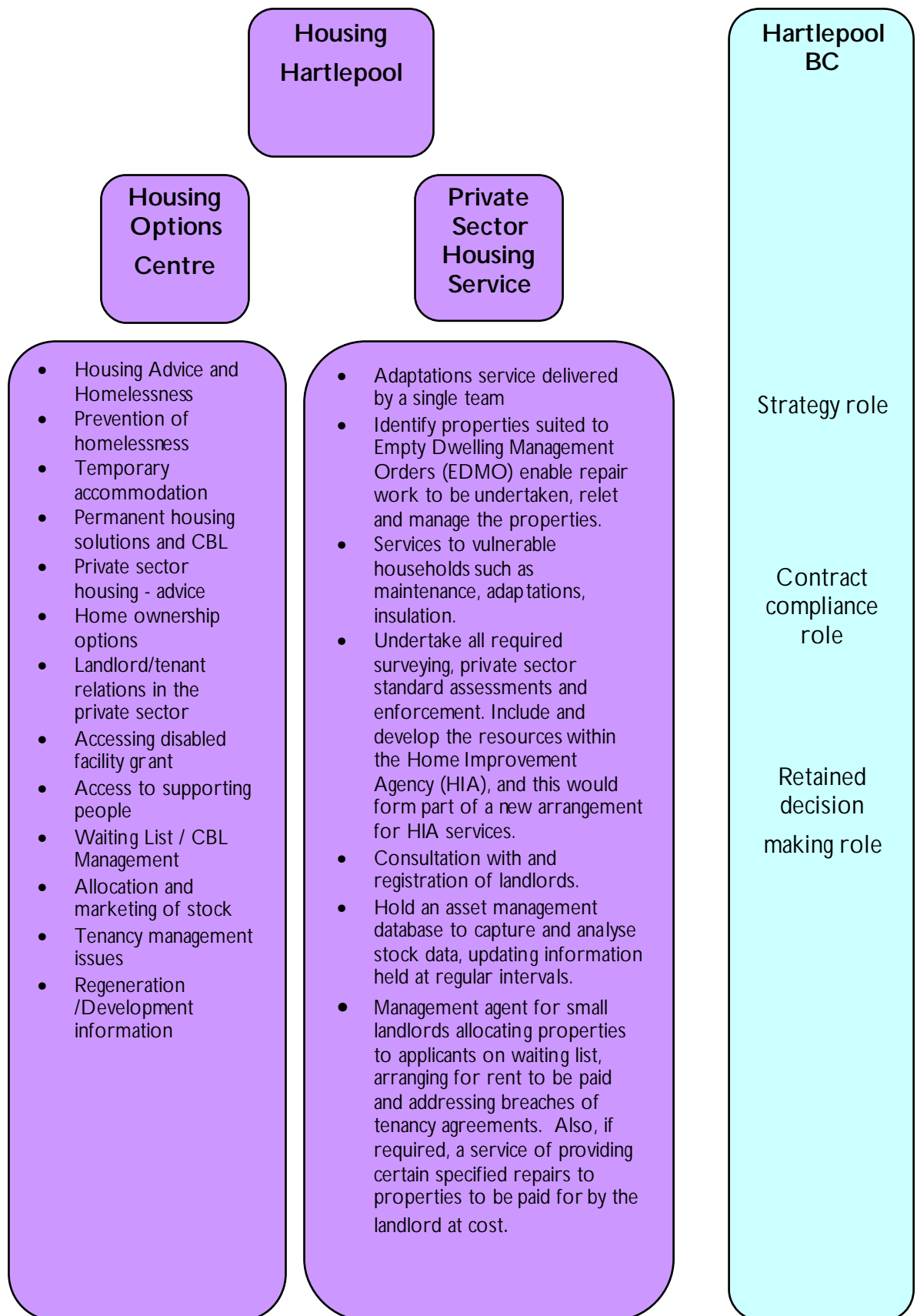
See structure charts below

Delivery by Hartlepool BC



Delivery by Housing Hartlepool

- 5.3.6 The proposal for service delivery through Housing Hartlepool stem from the twin proposals around the "Hartlepool Choice" housing options centre, and the coordination of private sector housing delivery in the town.
- 5.3.7 This element springs from a vision for transforming the way that the town responds to the housing needs of its community.
- 5.3.8 This envisages the staff delivering these functions being managed by Housing Hartlepool, with contracts / agreements in place for the delivery of the functions and these agreements being monitored by client officers in the Council (situated in Regeneration and Planning).



5.4 Evaluation of Option two

- 5.4.1 This option also responds to many of the drivers in section 4 above.
- 5.4.2 It introduces the additional capacity needed to facilitate the necessary improvement and it has the character of a more radical and visionary approach. In that respect, it particularly reflects the approach advocated by the Visionary Leadership in Housing paper produced by the CIH/LGA.
- 5.4.3 In tandem, it addresses the issue about improving the townspeople's access to housing - across all tenures - with the concept of Hartlepool Choice, and this strongly responds to the KLOE requirements for access and customer care (not reproduced in the table above)
- 5.4.4 Structurally, the arrangement resonates with the big housing issues for the town in the next 10 years, sitting alongside Planning and Regeneration on the one hand, but becoming a sizeable and vibrant front line delivery arm within Housing Hartlepool.
- 5.4.5 However, the radical nature of the proposal dictates that further feasibility is required to determine whether it can be realised, and if so, when and with how much resource.
- 5.4.6 The scale of the proposed change is likely to lead to greater concerns for staff affected, involving as it will more movement within and between organisations.

6 Examples of structures elsewhere

6.1 Near neighbour comparisons

- 6.1.1 Examples of near neighbour authorities are attached for comparison, although as always, local circumstances will dictate differences.
- 6.1.2 **Stockton on Tees** shows a structure with a separate division for housing within the Directorate of Development and Neighbourhood Services. The housing stock is managed by the ALMO, TriStar Homes. Supporting People is located in this division, as are front line services including Housing Benefit. (See [Appendix Three](#)).
- 6.1.3 **Redcar and Cleveland** shows a structure with a separate housing and health division in the Directorate of Sustainable Communities. The housing stock is managed by an LSVT organisation. The structure shows delivery of some regeneration activity. Supporting People is located in Adult Social Care. (See [Appendix Four](#))
- 6.1.4 **Middlesbrough** shows a structure with a housing division including some market renewal and regeneration activity, as well as community development. The housing stock is managed by the ALMO, Erimus Housing. Supporting People is managed in Adult Social Care. (See [Appendix Five](#)).

7 Recommendations

7.1 Analysis of current position and future requirements

- 7.1.1 The current structure for the retained housing function cannot deliver what is required now or in the future.
- 7.1.2 No change is not an option and a clear determination to make change should now be established.
- 7.1.3 The future requirements for the function include the core activities that will be seen in every locality, but there are particular reasons to capture specific requirements for the town – this is the continued emphasis on housing market renewal, regeneration and neighbourhood action.

7.2 Decide on the structure that best delivers the future requirements

- 7.2.1 Both options proposed will deliver positive change, but a judgement needs to be made as to which should be chosen.
- 7.2.2 Option One is likely to be more immediately realisable, but does not carry a sense of new vision and transformation.
- 7.2.3 Option Two will have a more marked impact over a longer period, but is likely to require a longer and more complex gestation period.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix One

Checklist of questions on the role of the authority in improving local housing services after transfer (see 3.2)

These questions focus on issues sometimes neglected in transfer areas. They are not comprehensive but aim to start local debates and reviews. There are no model answers and different questions may be more or less relevant to different areas. They are for councillors, officers, service users and others involved in housing locally.

1. How do you know that the promises made at transfer are being delivered?
2. What is the strategy for investing and spending usable receipts – and how is it monitored?
3. What is the local authority now responsible for in housing?
 - What are the local priorities for improvement?
 - What evidence are these based on?
 - How does the authority monitor success?
4. How does the authority consult and involve users of 'retained' housing services, including housing benefit, in improving services and what happens where services are run by an external organisation on the council's behalf?
5. Are the area housing strategy and the business plans of the main local social housing providers mutually supportive? How could links be improved?
6. Are all councillors clear about their housing responsibilities?
 - Is there up to date, accessible information that councillors and others can use?
 - On what basis are council nominees for association boards selected and is it clear what is expected from those individuals?
 - How will the council involve local housing providers in scrutiny?
7. Who monitors the quality of all local housing services, and pushes for improvements where needed?
8. How do staff/volunteers at all levels in local housing organisations and different sections of the council share information and ideas?
9. Which local housing services could be improved by more collaboration with neighbours and partners – are there opportunities for the council to share expertise, standard documents/processes, specific costs or project leadership?
10. Who leads and co-ordinates housing-related work that crosses agency boundaries, for example on:
 - housing choice, including more affordable housing and choices for tenants/prospective tenants;
 - standards in rented accommodation, including accreditation for private landlords;
 - Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, particularly issues such as reducing antisocial behaviour, and addressing drug and substance misuse;and
 - support for vulnerable individuals living in the community.

8.2 Appendix Two

CPA Service Assessment Framework from Nov 2005

Detailed housing services assessment framework weightings for authorities that have transferred their housing stock

Inclusion of inspection score(s)	Weighting of scoring element (as a % of housing service assessment score)		
	Housing the community PI element	Housing the community inspection element	Total
Housing the community inspection	40%	60%	100%
No relevant inspection	100%	Not applicable	100%

PI set for CPA 2005 housing service assessment (Housing the community only)

Service Ref	Title of PI	Source and reference	Applicable authorities	Treatment notes and comments	Lower threshold	Upper threshold	Change from consultation proposal	Adjustment
Housing the community – homelessness								
H14	Average time in temporary accommodation – time spent in B&B.	BVPI – BV 183a	LBs, MDCs, UAs		9.1 weeks	1.2 weeks	Yes - change to the lower threshold, given in the consultation as 6 weeks, to 9.1 weeks to respond to concerns raised in consultation that this PI includes a historical measure of performance. ¹	
H15	Average time in temporary accommodation – time spent in hostels.	BVPI – BV 183b	LBs, MDCs, UAs		21.3 weeks	0 weeks	No change	
H16	Repeat homelessness acceptances.	HIP – section E1b	LBs, MDCs, UAs		8%	1%	No change	
H17	Private unfit made fit.	BVPI – BV 62	LBs, MDCs, UAs	Thresholds based on 25 th and 75 th percentile points in 2003/04 (based on LBs, MDCs, UAs, DCs).	1.44%	4.32%	No change	
H18	Percentage of total private sector homes vacant for more than 6 months.	HIP – HSSA section A1 and A7	LBs, MDCs, UAs	Thresholds are based 50% on all-England 25 th and 75 th percentile points for 2003/04 and 50% based on regional (Government Office Regions) 25 th and 75 th percentile points for	London - 0.74% SE – 0.77% SW – 0.81% East of Eng –	London – 0% SE – 0% SW – 0% East of Eng – 0% EMids – 0.07% WMids –	Yes - change to the thresholds given in the consultation to take account of the differences that exist regionally in the housing market.	Deprivation

¹ Note for the housing service assessment for CPA 2006 we will consult on reducing the lower threshold to six weeks on the basis that the guidance for this PI will allow pre April 2004 stays in B&Bs to be excluded

Service Ref	Title of PI	Source and reference	Applicable authorities	Treatment notes and comments	Lower threshold	Upper threshold	Change from consultation proposal	Adjustment
				2003/04, threshold is adjusted for deprivation.	0.88% EMids – 0.87% WMids – 0.88% NE – 0.71% NW – 1.14% Y&H – 1.04%	0.05% NE – 0% NW – 0% Y&H – 0.14%		
Housing the community – community safety								
H19	Racial incidents with further action.	BVPI – BV 175	LBs, MDCs, UAs	Thresholds based on 25th and 75th percentile points in 2003/04 (based on LBs, MDCs, UAs, DCs).	57%	100%	No change	
H20	Domestic refuge places.	BVPI – BV 176	LBs, MDCs, UAs	Thresholds based on 25th and 75th percentile points in 2003/04 (based on LBs, MDCs, UAs, DCs).	0 per 10,000 of population	0.77 per 10,000 of population.	No change	

1. Supporting People is also included within the housing the community sub-block for councils that have a housing function.
2. As the Supporting People performance information data is still in its first year of collection, it is not possible to include this within the housing service assessment for CPA 2005. However, a number of Supporting People inspections have been published, with more to come as we move into year three of the five-year inspection programme. Therefore the Supporting People inspection scores are included for single tier housing authorities within the housing the community sub-block for the CPA 2005 housing service assessment. Detailed proposals for 2006, to include the Supporting People PI data, will be consulted upon early in 2006.

8.3 Appendix Three

Stockton BC

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF
DEVELOPMENT &
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

HEAD OF DIRECT
SERVICES

JAMIE McCANN

HEAD OF
HOUSING

JULIE
ALLPORT

HEAD OF
COMMUNITY
PROTECTION

MIKE BATTY

HEAD OF
PROPERTY
DEVELOPMENT

KEITH NOBLE

HEAD OF
ENGINEERING AND
TRANSPORTATION

MIKE ROBINSON

HEAD OF PLANNING

HEAD OF
REGENERATION

IAN THOMPSON

CFYA
Highways
Maintenance
Catering
Building Cleaning
HV&E Contracting
Waste Management
Recycling
Fleet Management

Housing Benefits
Strategy
Homeless
Supporting People
RSL Investment
Private Sector
Link with Tristar
Housing led
Regeneration

Youth Offending
Service
Community Safety
ASB Team
Environmental
Health
Licensing
Trading Standards
Security Services

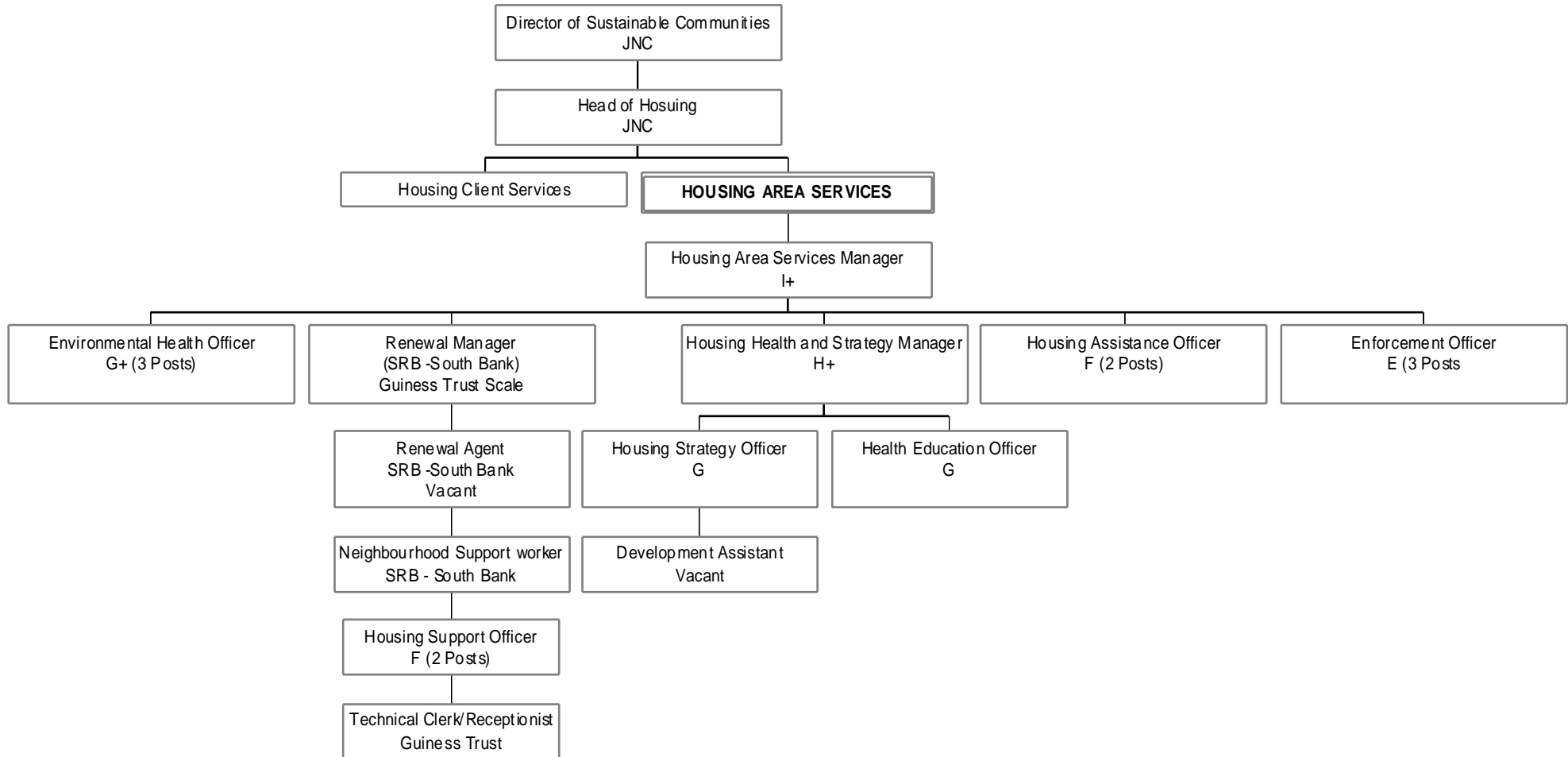
Architecture
Quantity Surveying
Clerks of Works
Asset management
Project
management
Capital strategy
management
Legionella
management
Asbestos
management
Building surveying
Access auditing -
DDA
Mechanical
engineering
Electrical
engineering
Building
maintenance

Traffic Management
Road Safety
Car Parking
Concessionary
Fares
Blue Badges
Business Support
Design Consultancy
Highway Asset
Management
Highways and
Bridges
Private
Development &
Planning Advice
Street Lighting
Traffic Manager role
Transport Planning
&
Strategy

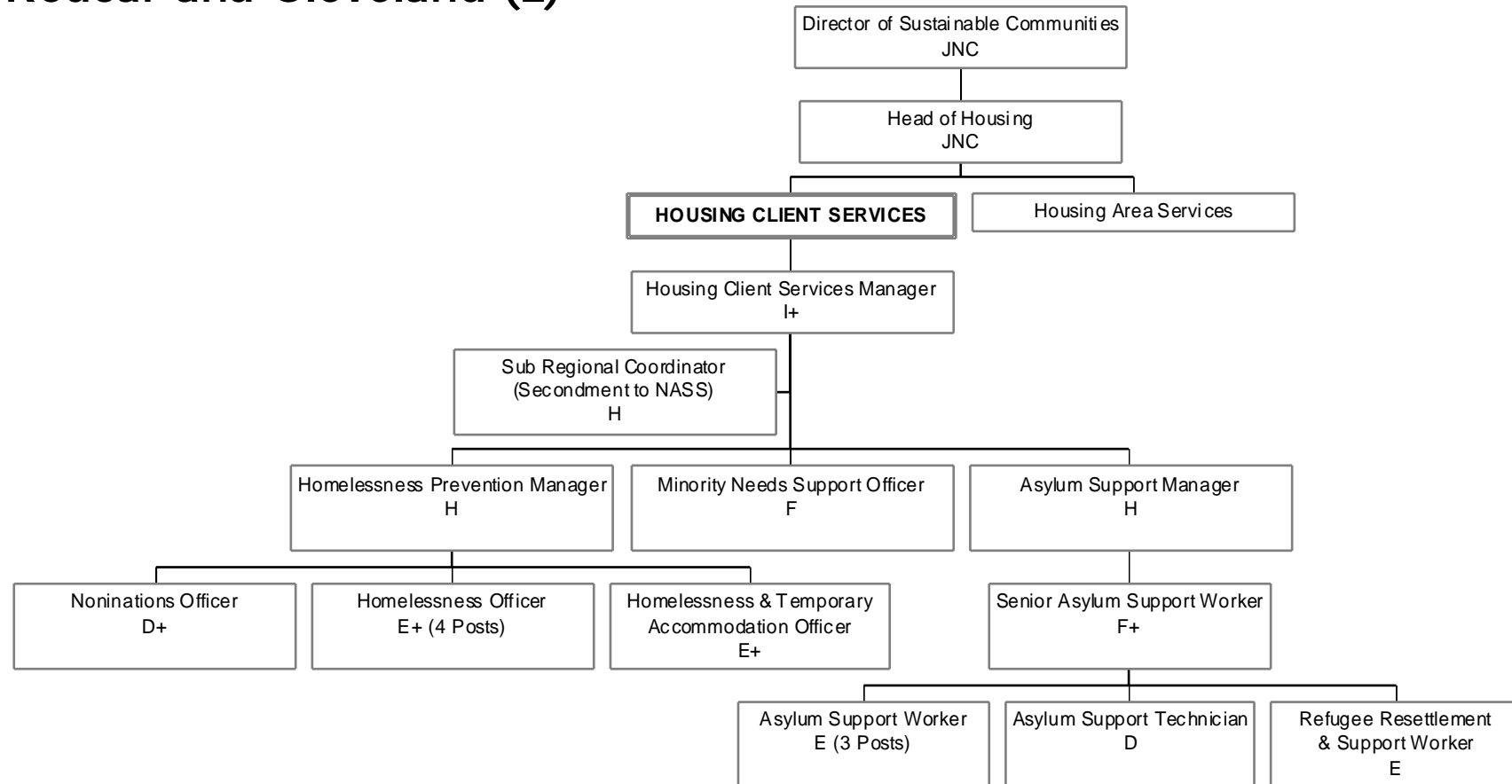
Development
Control
Development Plans
Building Control
E-Government
Co-ordination
GIS/Draughting
Support

Regeneration
NRF
Town Centre
Management
Development
Funding &
Business Unit
Management
Leisure Facilities

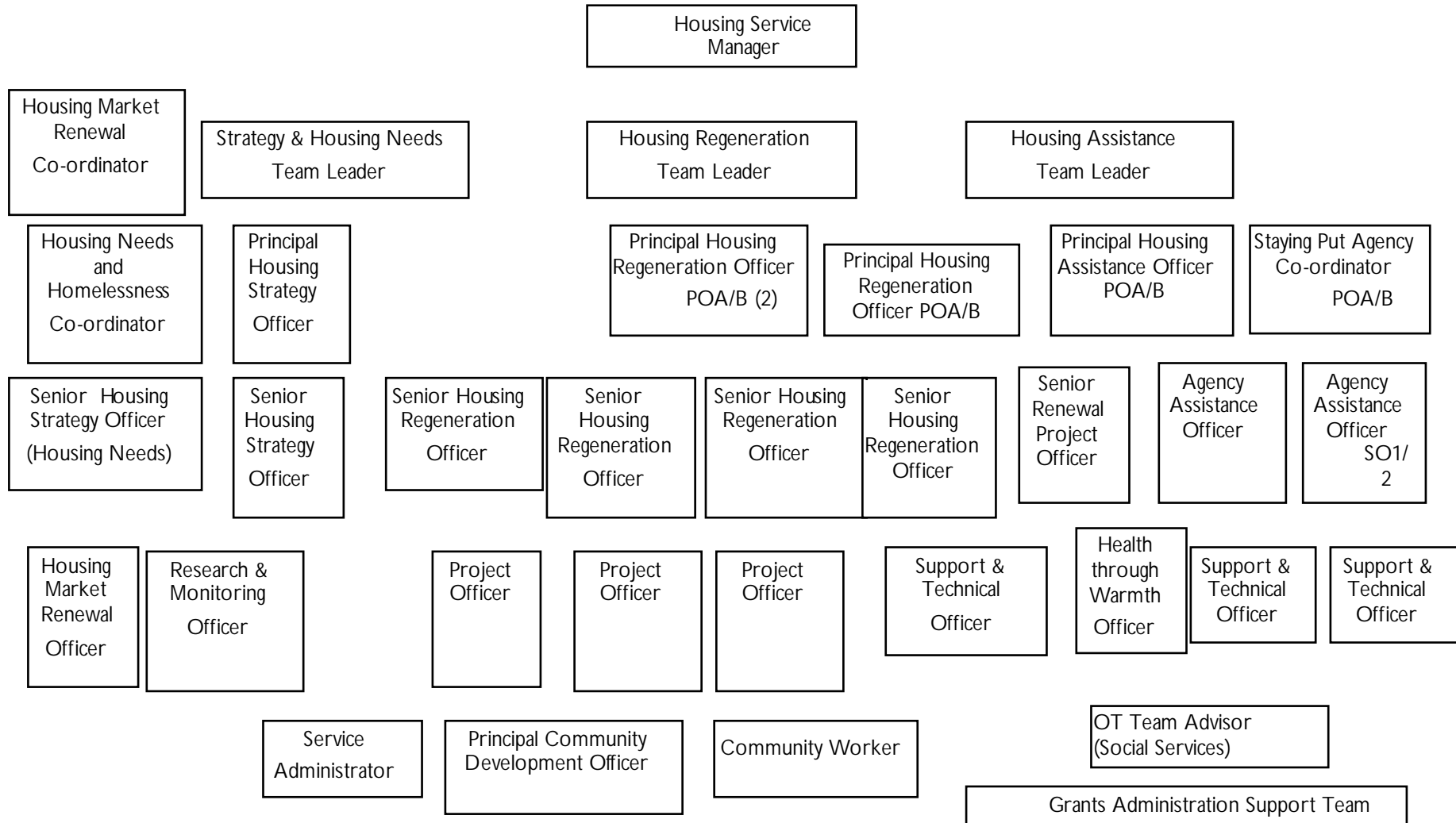
8.4 Appendix Four Redcar and Cleveland (1)



Redcar and Cleveland (2)



8.5 Appendix Five Middlesbrough



COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED REVIEW OF HOUSING FUNCTIONS

Staff and Union representatives on the 8th September 2006.

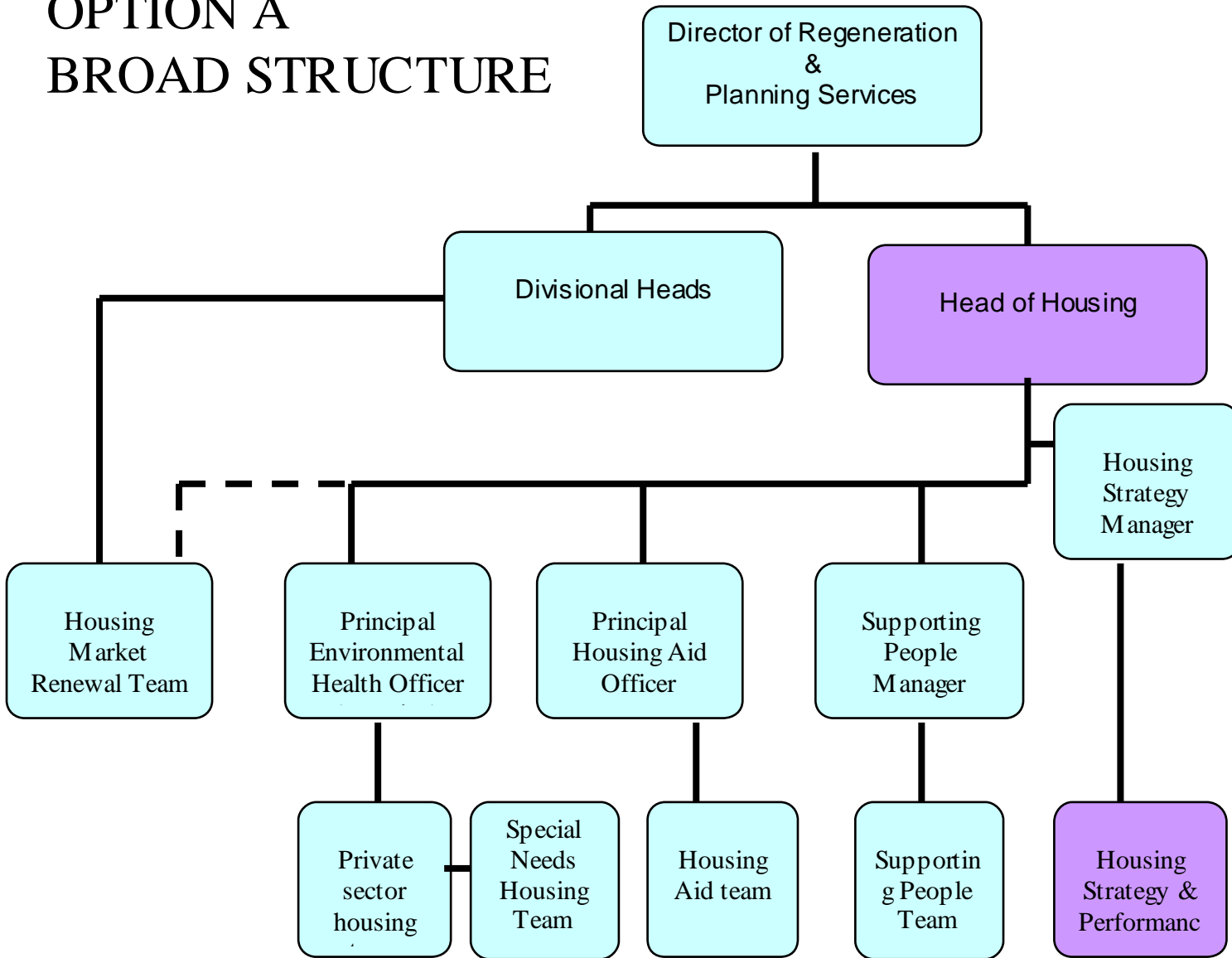
The main comments raised were as follows

- There was concern that additional funding should strengthen the whole of the Housing Services and not just Supporting People.
- The proposed Head of Housing post should be ring-fenced internally to existing Housing Services within the authority including Housing Market Renewal.
- Staff asked how quickly the relocation of services would be implemented. There appeared to be a keenness to implement the changes as soon as practicable. It was suggested that the aim would be to implement the review as agreed before Christmas.
- An individual officer expressed concern that the proposal involved reducing the role of an existing management post.
- Assurances were sought that there was no bias as to where the service would be located.
- An existing staff member currently in a post with a split role across supporting People and another housing function expressed the wish to be placed within a post that would be 100% related to the Supporting People function.
- The perceived need for improved accommodation generally, either through relocation of Bryan Hanson House or elsewhere in the Civic Centre was raised.
- A Manager noted that the Audit Commission report on Supporting People did not make any specific recommendation for the location of Supporting People or to separate it from other housing services.

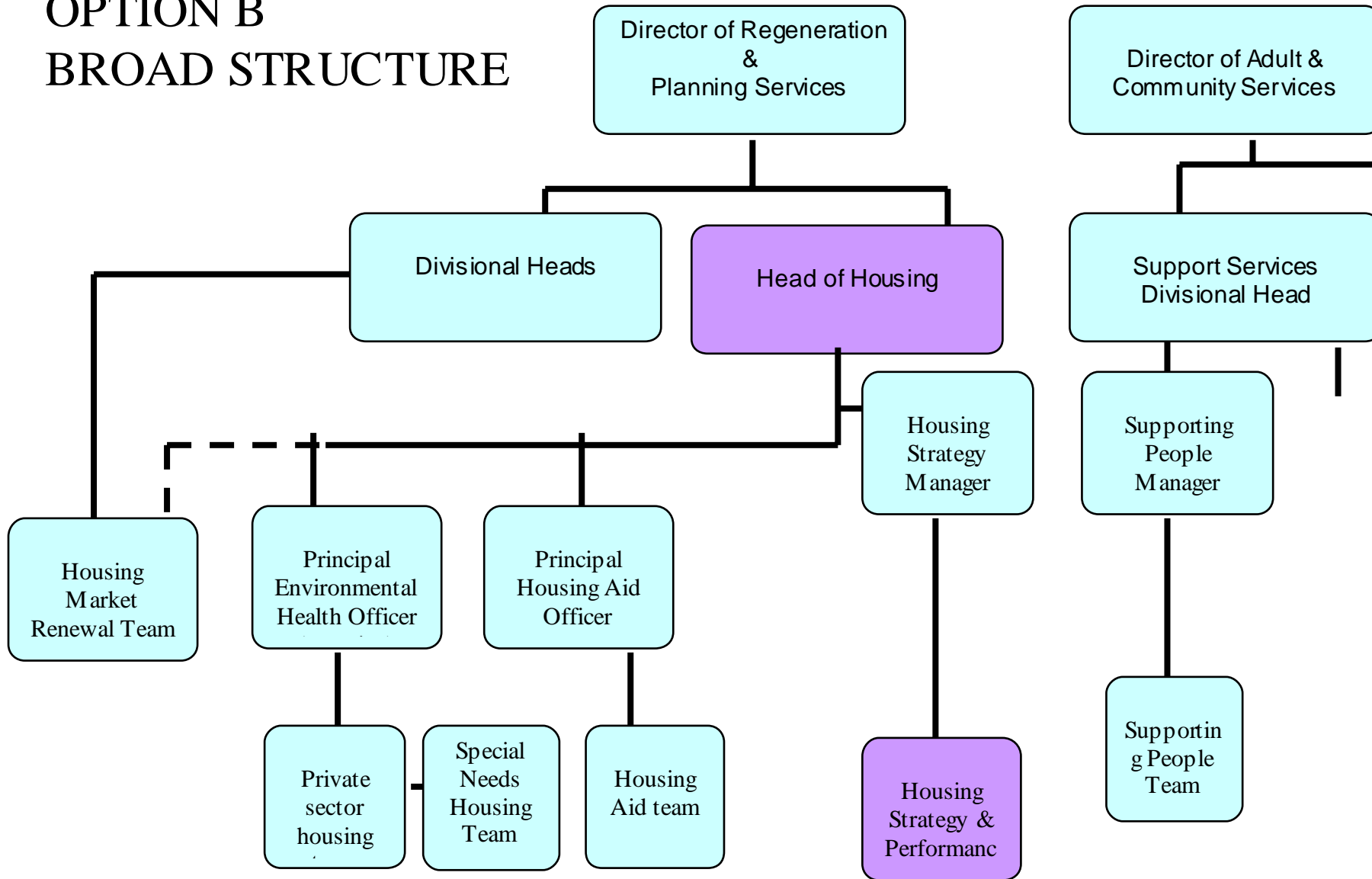
The discussion was generally well received.

Any further comments received will be reported verbally at the meeting.

OPTION A BROAD STRUCTURE



OPTION B BROAD STRUCTURE



Checklist of questions on the role of the authority in improving local housing services after transfer

1. How do you know that the promises made at transfer are being delivered?
2. What is the strategy for investing and spending usable receipts – and how is it monitored?
3. What is the local authority now responsible for in housing?
 - What are the local priorities for improvement?
 - What evidence are these based on?
 - How does the authority monitor success?
4. How does the authority consult and involve users of 'retained' housing services, including housing benefit, in improving services and what happens where services are run by an external organisation on the council's behalf?
5. Are the area housing strategy and the business plans of the main local social housing providers mutually supportive? How could links be improved?
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 - Is there up to date, accessible information that councillors and others can use?
 - On what basis are council nominees for association boards selected and is it clear what is expected from those individuals?
 - How will the council involve local housing providers in scrutiny?
7. Who monitors the quality of all local housing services, and pushes for improvements where needed?
8. How do staff/volunteers at all levels in local housing organisations and different sections of the council share information and ideas?
9. Which local housing services could be improved by more collaboration with neighbours and partners – are there opportunities for the council to share expertise, standard documents/processes, specific costs or project leadership?
10. Who leads and co-ordinates housing-related work that crosses agency boundaries, for example on:
 - housing choice, including more affordable housing and choices for tenants/prospective tenants;
 - standards in rented accommodation, including accreditation for private landlords;
 - Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, particularly issues such as reducing antisocial behaviour, and addressing drug and substance misuse; and
 - support for vulnerable individuals living in the community.



Report of: Director of Children's Services

Subject: Building Schools for the Future: Stage One Consultation

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval to launch a first stage of consultation in preparation for the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

To seek approval in principle to the outline of a Stage One Consultation Document.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

This report provides an outline of a first stage consultation process in preparation for Building Schools for the Future.

The outline of a First Stage Consultation Document is presented for approval in principle.

3. RELEVANCE TO CABINET

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) will have a significant impact on the future provision of education in Hartlepool.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non Key.

5. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

Members are requested to approve the launch of a first stage of consultation in preparation for Building Schools for the Future

Members are requested to approve in principle the outline of a Stage One Consultation Document.

Members are request to delegate final approval of the Stage One Consultation Document to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

Report to: Cabinet

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Date: 25th September 2006

Subject: Building Schools for the Future: Stage One Consultation

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval to launch a first stage of consultation in preparation for the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

To seek approval in principle to the outline of a Stage One Consultation Document.

2. BACKGROUND

On 14th August 2006 Cabinet agreed that the Local Authority should indicate to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Partnerships for Schools (PfS) that it wished to be a Wave 5 Authority for BSF. Cabinet also approved the preparation of a "Readiness to Deliver" assessment document, for submission to DfES and PfS by 13th October 2006.

It is expected that Wave 5 authorities will be launched on the BSF programme in September 2007.

In order to demonstrate Hartlepool's readiness to be a Wave 5 authority, it is necessary to design a consultation process which allows key decisions to be made, by the launch date, on the future pattern of education provision 11-19.

This report describes a proposed Stage One Consultation process and outlines a draft Stage One Consultation Document.

3 THE STAGE ONE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed that a first stage of consultation on Building Schools for the Future (BSF) begins on 26th September 2006 and runs until 3rd November 2006.

The aims of the first round of consultation will be to share information on the BSF programme with as wide an audience as possible and to collect views on possible ways forward. The Authority will not formulate any options or proposals as part of the Stage One process. This would happen as part of further rounds of consultation, depending on the outcomes of Stage One.

As a minimum, it is recommended that consultation should involve:

- Parents and carers
- Children and young people
- Schools and Colleges
- Residents of Hartlepool
- Ward Councillors
- Strategic partners - these will include:
 - The Learning and Skills Council
 - The Church of England Diocese
 - The Roman Catholic Diocese
 - Hartlepool Primary Care Trust
 - Cleveland Police
- The Voluntary and Community Sector
- Trade Unions and Professional Associations
- The Hartlepool Partnership
- The Lifelong Learning Partnership

As part of the consultation process, respondents will be invited to suggest other groups or organisations that should be consulted in future stages.

Using existing meeting schedules wherever possible, meetings will be arranged and these will be advertised as widely as appropriate. In addition a series of meetings will be arranged at each of the secondary schools in the town. In the afternoon and early evening of each of the selected dates, there will be opportunities to meet with the Chair of Governors and Headteacher; all teaching and support staff, along with their union and association representatives; the governing body. At 7.00 pm there will be an open meeting to which all will be invited, although parents, carers and residents of the area will be particularly targeted. These open meetings will be advertised in the press and media.

An area of the Council's website will be dedicated to Building Schools for the Future. All documents relevant to the consultation process will be posted on this site and interested parties will be able to respond on-line.

4 THE STAGE ONE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

An outline of the proposed Stage One Consultation Document is attached as **Appendix 1**.

This document will be distributed to the families of all children currently attending Hartlepool's primary and secondary schools.

Copies of the document will be made available in as many public places as possible and every effort will be made to advertise the booklet and encourage responses.

The document will also be sent to key partners and partner organisations.

5. DECISIONS REQUIRED

Members are requested to approve the launch of a first stage of consultation in preparation for Building Schools for the Future

Members are requested to approve in principle the outline of a Stage One Consultation Document.

Members are recommended to delegate final approval of the Stage One Consultation Document to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

Contact Officer: Paul Briggs, Interim Assistant Director (telephone 284192)

Children's Services Department

Every Child Matters



Building Schools for the Future (Secondary)

Stage One Consultation Document

Autumn 2006

(Outline of Document Structure and Content)

Contact Officer:

Paul Briggs
Interim Assistant Director
Children's Services Department
paul.briggs@hartlepool.gov.uk
01429 284192

Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

1. INTRODUCTION

A one page summary of the content of the document, including contact details

2. BSF – THE MAIN FACTS

This section will set the national context for BSF and apply this to Hartlepool. The funding methodology will be described and the potential funding for Hartlepool will be quantified. The scope of possible building works will be outlined, along with references to possible timescales and procurement methodologies. This section will also introduce the issue of falling pupil rolls that will be developed later in the document

3. DATA ON EACH INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL

Data will be provided on each of the six existing community schools, in an identical format. This data will cover:

- Capacity
- Occupancy
- Current surplus
- Projections for next ten years
- Projected surplus
- Deprivation
- Performance
- Condition of existing buildings
- Suitability of existing buildings
- Developments (e.g. additional facilities at the school)

Appropriate data will also be provided in relation to Catcote Secondary Special School and Access to Learning (A2L).

A summary of the data will suggest that demographic decline must be addressed as schools are redesigned.

5. SOME KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

A) School Standards

B) Size of Schools

C) Admission Zones

D) Education 14-19, including Sixth Form College Provision

E) Primary Schools and primary education issues.

F) Special Educational Needs

G) Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

H) Extended Schools

I) Making major changes

J) Governance Issues

K) Change and Transition

6. CONCLUSION

An invitation to respond and share views, with full contact details provided.

SUPPLEMENTARY SECTIONS

- A “Frequently Asked Questions” type section, anticipating some of the concerns that are likely to be raised
- An open-ended response form without set questions.

CABINET REPORT

25th September 2006



Report of: Director of Children's Services

Subject: DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILDREN'S TRUST IN HARTLEPOOL

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider possible models for the development of a Children's Trust from 1st April 2007.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The report describes the nature of a Children's Trust, identifies how it links to current developments in Hartlepool and identifies possible models for the development of a Children's Trust.

3. RELEVANCE TO CABINET

The Children's Trust will have possible implications across a wide range of services impacting on Children and Young People.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-Key Decision.

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Cabinet on 25th September 2006.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

To agree a preferred model for the development of a Children's Trust in Hartlepool from 1st April 2007.

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Subject: DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILDREN'S TRUST IN
HARTLEPOOL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider possible models for the development of a Children's Trust in Hartlepool from 1st April 2007.

2. BACKGROUND

The need to establish a Children's Trust is set out in Section 10 of the Children Act 2004. Children's Trusts are intended to be a mechanism to lead the way in delivering a step change in services for children and young people. They will provide a mechanism by which local authorities and their relevant partners can co-operate to improve children's wellbeing in relation to the five national outcomes. Statutory guidance published by the DfES makes clear the requirements relating to Children's Trusts (Statutory Guidance on Inter-Agency Co-operation to Improve the Wellbeing of Children: Children's Trusts).

The exact configuration of Children's Trust Governance arrangements are a matter for local discretion, but they must include the relevant partners outlined in section 10 of the Children Act 2004:

- The Police Authority and the Chief Officer of Police;
- A local Probation Board;
- The Youth Offending Team;
- A Strategic Health Authority and Primary Care Trust;
- Connexions Partnership;
- Learning and Skills Council.

The governance arrangements also need to include other bodies involved in work relating to children and young people and their families:

- Voluntary, community and private sector;
- Young people and their families (either directly or through some form of advocacy arrangement);
- Schools including special schools;
- Other agencies with responsibility for delivering front line statutory services to children, young people and their families e.g. colleges, general practitioners, faith organisations and Job Centre Plus;

- Agencies which may come into contact with children, young people and families on a regular basis e.g. Immigration Service.

A Children's Trust in action will consist of a set of effective local arrangements involving:

- Front line staff providing integrated service delivery to the child and family;
- The shared process used to support their work;
- Joint assessments of need;
- Plans and commissioning arrangements with pooled and/or aligned budgets – setting priorities and delivering the necessary resources, and
- The inter-agency governance arrangements needed to agree the overall vision and drive through change.

The essential features will include a child-centred outcome-led vision, integrated front line delivery, integrated processes, integrated strategy and inter-agency governance.

Children's Trusts are required to be in place by April 2008 but it is expected that the majority of local authorities will have Trusts in place ahead of that date. They are expected to promote a shared commitment to equal opportunities, a drive to narrow the gap for vulnerable groups, a holistic approach to delivery on the five outcomes, a culture of openness and participation in decision making.

3. MODELS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILDREN'S TRUST IN HARTLEPOOL

Nationally, there is a wide variety of models of a Children's Trust. These range from broad partnership arrangements to legally constituted trusts and cover either individual or small groups of services (e.g. learning disabilities, geographical areas) or the full range of children's services including education, social care and out of hospital health care.

Hartlepool has already developed many of the features of a Children's Trust, without formalising the arrangement. The following features are already in place:

- A Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in which the relevant partners and many of the other partners are engaged;
- Location of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership within the overall Hartlepool Partnership arrangements;
- A role for the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership across all children's services in the town, with thematic sub-groups to consider specific areas of provision;
- A coterminal PCT, with a coterminal police command unit;
- A framework for locality-based commissioning through the development of the Children's Centres and Extended Schools Strategy;

- Collaborative arrangements to develop the Common Assessment Framework, Information Sharing and Assessment and other integrated processes;
- A child-centred, outcome-led vision based on the five outcomes and embedded in the Children and Young People's Plan;
- A strong Children and Young People's Plan developed through the Partnership activity which provides a strong base for joint planning and commissioning of services.

There are two main options for the development of a Children's Trust in Hartlepool.

Option A: Partnership Model

It would be possible for Hartlepool to build on the existing strong partnership arrangements which are currently under review as part of the Hartlepool Partnership review. The Children's Trust could be established as a high-level partnership within the overall Hartlepool Community Strategy. This would give clear direction for improvement on the five outcomes for children and would provide a clear forum for the development of children's services commissioning across the town. It would also link strongly to the locality-based commissioning model. It would be in line with the Vision for Care already developed in Hartlepool and with the pragmatic Hartlepool style of growing existing good practice to deliver new agendas. This would replace the current Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

Option B: A "Hard" Trust

Hartlepool could establish a formal, hard legal Trust model with clear delegated powers of decision-making and delegated budgets. The work to develop a formal legal trust would be extensive and could result in a focus on bureaucratic and legal issues, rather than on the development of strategy and commissioning arrangements. It might be a possible model in the future if the government continues to progress its agenda of increasing the number of trust schools. However, moving towards a legal trust might delay the development of a Trust in Hartlepool because there would need to be significant discussions about the scope of the trust, whether it should focus on the whole area or on divisions in terms of themes or geographical areas. There would also be a risk that it could fragment the agenda, rather than develop a holistic approach.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The establishment of a partnership model of Children's Trust (Option A) would enable a Children's Trust to be developed quickly as it would build on existing good practice. Preliminary discussions through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership suggest that this model would be supported by key partners and stakeholder in the town. The role, remit and membership of the Trust and its place within the Local Strategic Partnership could be

developed as part of further reports to Cabinet with a view to having a Children's Trust in place by 1st April 2007. The establishment of the Trust would provide the structure for further development of children's commissioning and for the alignment and possible pooling of budgets to encourage improved efficiency and effectiveness of children's services across the town. As the Trust matured, there would still be scope to move towards an increase in delegation and to consider development of "harder" Trust models for the future, if appropriate. This option provides maximum flexibility in the longer-term and provides better options for the Council to adapt to changing circumstances appropriately.

Option B, a "hard" Trust would have the advantage of providing a very strong governance model with clear lines of accountability, clearly defined partnership arrangements and delegation of budgets. The detailed legal framework would, however, take significant time to develop and there is a risk that the focus of activity might in the short to medium term shift from outcomes to structures. It would also be difficult to make progress as this model while the management structures of other significant partners such as the PCT are under review.

On balance, therefore, it is recommended that Option A be the basis for the development of a Children's Trust in Hartlepool from 1st April 2007.

Once the model for development is selected, further reports will be brought to Cabinet during Autumn 2006 to determine roles, remit and membership, in parallel with the review of the Local Strategic Partnership Structure.

5. DECISION REQUIRED

To agree a preferred model for the development of a Children's Trust in Hartlepool for implementation from 1st April 2007.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Statutory Guidance on Inter-Agency Co-operation Improve the Wellbeing of Children: Children's Trusts.

7. CONTACT OFFICER

Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services

CABINET

25 September 2006



Report of: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

Subject: FINAL REPORT – PUBLIC CONVENIENCE
PROVISION IN HARTLEPOOL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum in relation to the Public Convenience Provision Scrutiny Referral.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Cabinet at its meeting on the 12 April 2006 was asked to consider options and proposals for the development of a policy for the provision of public conveniences in Hartlepool. Prior to making a decision Cabinet referred consideration of the various options and proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Function, with a prescribed timescale for submission of a formal response by September 2006.
- 2.2 Subsequently, at a meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum held on the 12 July 2006, the Overall Aim and Terms of Reference and Timetable for the undertaking of the Scrutiny referral were agreed, as outlined in paragraphs 4 and 5 of this report.

3. SETTING THE SCENE

- 3.1 The provision of public conveniences by Local Authorities is one of the longest established discretionary (non statutory) municipal services in England and Wales.
- 3.2 With most public conveniences in towns and cities between 50 and 100 years old rising maintenance costs have become a real issue for Local Authorities. This coupled with poor hygiene, vandalism, drug abuse or other inappropriate behaviour has resulted in a reduction in the overall number of public conveniences from 10,000 ten years ago to in the region of 5,500 today.

- 3.3 Over the years Hartlepool has experienced similar maintenance, budget and anti-social behaviour issues as other Local Authorities. Budget restrictions in Hartlepool have on a regular basis resulted in the provision of funding that is insufficient to ensure the maintenance of buildings and equipment to an appropriate standard. The subsequent deterioration of buildings and equipment, coupled with ever-increasing vandalism, has resulted in a situation where this year's maintenance budget is insufficient to meet maintenance costs.
- 3.4 The shortfall in the maintenance budget and the poor condition of conveniences led to an examination of how the service is provided and how this might change in the future. Whilst in the past public conveniences have been provided without the benefit of a sustainable operation or maintenance policy the benefits of the formulation of such a policy are now clear in terms of the effective operation of the service and levels of future provision. With this in mind, options and proposals have been developed to form the basis of a policy for the future and consideration of these options and proposals forms the basis of the scrutiny referral.
- 3.5 Details of the options and proposals referred by Cabinet to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum are outlined in **Appendix A**.

4. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to examine public convenience provision in Hartlepool and express, within the prescribed timescale for the referral, a view on the options and proposals presented to Cabinet for the formulation of a sustainable operation and maintenance policy.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 5.1 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny investigation were as outlined below:-
- (a) To express a view on the options and proposals outlined in the report considered by Cabinet on the 12 April 2006;
 - (b) To look at where public conveniences are needed across the town to enable Cabinet to make an informed decision; and
 - (c) To identify the estimated cost of replacing all public conveniences with new facilities along with the cost of bringing existing conveniences up to an acceptable standard to enable a comparison to be made by Cabinet; in time for the 2007/08 budget setting process.

- 5.2 To assist with the formulation of a response to the Cabinet Referral, additional Terms of Reference were agreed as follows:-
- (d) To gain an understanding of Government policy in relation to the provision of public conveniences and the position nationally;
 - (e) To gain an understanding public convenience provision in Hartlepool, i.e. demand, condition, location and costs;
 - (f) To examine the condition and location of public conveniences in Hartlepool and compare;
 - (g) To compare Hartlepool's service provision with that of another Local Authority and where examples of good practice exist examine how they could be used to improve provision in Hartlepool;
 - (h) To seek the views of residents and representatives from Parish Councils, Residents Associations and the Access Group on issues including:
 - (i) The quality of existing provision;
 - (ii) Suggestions for how they would like to see it improve in the future; and
 - (iii) Where public conveniences are needed across the town.
 - (i) To consider public health, safety and equality issues relevant to the provision of public conveniences, including the impact of the Disability Discrimination Act.

6. MEMBERSHIP OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

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

Councillors S Allison, Brash, Clouth, R Cook, Cranney, Gibbon, Hall, Henery, Lilley, Rayner, Rogan and D Waller.

Resident Representative: Alan Lloyd and Linda Shields.

7. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

- 7.1 Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum met formally from 12 July 2006 to 9 August 2006 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.

- 7.2 A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:-
- (a) Detailed Officer reports supplemented by verbal evidence;
 - (b) Verbal evidence from the Authority's Elected Mayor;
 - (c) Examination of good practice within, and experience gained by, other neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to the provision of public conveniences;
 - (d) A site visit to a selection of public conveniences within Hartlepool on 20 July 2006;
 - (e) Presentation from the Head of Street Scene Services, Scarborough Borough Council on 8 August 2006;
 - (f) The views of local residents and representatives from interested groups (Hartlepool Carers, Hartlepool Access Group and Hartlepool's 50+ Forum); and
 - (g) Feedback from each of Hartlepool's Neighbourhood Consultative Forums on the proposals and their wishes for future of public convenience provision in the town.

FINDINGS

8. GOVERNMENT POLICY IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

- 8.1 Evidence presented to the Forum confirmed that there was no statutory requirement for Local Authorities to provide public conveniences and that the Government did not see the introduction of legislation to require the provision of public conveniences as the way forward.
- 8.2 Government did, however, recognise the value of a national strategy for public convenience provision and the negative effect which a lack of provision, and poor maintenance, has on tourism. As a result of this a national strategy was to be developed by Government and emphasis placed upon the need to identified alternative measures to increase provision. Such alternative measures included the possible introduction of charging, the involvement of the private sector (by increasing access to commercial premises) and the inclusion of public toilets in planning applications.
- 8.3 In the absence of legislation specifically relating to the provision of conveniences there are, however, pieces of legislation that Local Authorities need to consider in providing the service. These are:-
- 8.4 **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995.** The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 required that the Council makes the public conveniences it provides accessible. Where this does not occur the Council will in the future leave its self open to challenge.

- 8.5 **The Public Health Act 1936.** The Public Health Act merely gives the Local Authority the power to provide public conveniences. This Act also applies to Parish Councils.
- 8.6 Consideration is given to the implications of these pieces of legislation later within this report.

9. PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION IN HARTLEPOOL

- 9.1 There are currently seventeen public conveniences provided by the Council, the condition, location and age of which vary greatly. In addition to these facilities public conveniences are also provided across the town in premises including public houses, shops and cafes. There is, however, no formal agreement at this time to allow access to these facilities for those not entering as customers. The Council also has no control over the quality of provision and cannot require the provision of disabled facilities. These are issues which the Forum felt should be pursued.
- 9.2 As with other Local Authorities rising maintenance costs, budget restraints, anti-social behaviour and vandalism have resulted in the closure of conveniences in Hartlepool over recent years. In order to enable the Forum to realistically assess the level and condition of conveniences in Hartlepool visits were undertaken to the following sites on 20 July 2006:-
- (i) Thorpe Street;
 - (ii) Pilot Pier;
 - (iii) The Lighthouse;
 - (iv) Ward Jackson Park;
 - (v) Stockton Street;
 - (vi) Seaton Baths; and
 - (vii) The Clock Tower.
- 9.3 Examples of the conditions observed are shown in detail below along with a summary of the comments made:-

a) **Thorpe Street and Pilot Pier** – Support was expressed for the closure of the facilities in view of their poor condition and the inability to update the buildings to meet Disability Discrimination Act standards.



An illustration of the deteriorating condition of the Thorpe Street facility.

b) **Disabled facilities** - Members highlighted problems with disabled access at some sites and the inability for some facilities to be adapted to improve access.

Some of the towns better disabled facilities (Lighthouse - Heugh Battery).



The absence of disabled facilities/access at the Pilot Pier facility.

c) **Partnership working** – The Forum discussed the value of partnership working and suggested that this should be looked into in relation to the Seaton Baths site, and the adjacent Wine Bar development, and the proposed facility on the old Rocket House site.

Conditions at the former Seaton Baths site.



d) **Ward Jackson Park and the Clock Tower** – The contentious nature of the proposals for the demolition of the Ward Jackson Park convenience and closure of the Clock Tower site were acknowledged. It was, however, felt that demolition of the Ward Jackson Park public convenience would be justified in view of its poor condition and the inability to bring the building up to Disability Discrimination Act standards. It was also felt in relation to the Clock Tower facility that although it is not a bad facility the cost of improving and maintaining the building would be too great to support its continued use as a public convenience.

10. WHERE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES ARE NEEDED ACROSS THE TOWN?

- 10.1 During the evidence gathering process it was highlighted that the management of the public convenience service is currently undertaken without a defined policy against which the need or location of conveniences is assessed. In considering options for the provision of conveniences there was a need to consider the possible provision of fewer, better quality, conveniences in more carefully selected locations including for example tourist areas and parks.
- 10.2 It is recognised that in order for Hartlepool to be promoted as a tourist attraction there is a need to provide facilities in tourist areas. These include Seaton, the Headland and the Marina. In relation to facilities on the Marina improved signage is needed to direct visitor towards conveniences in the Maritime Experience. In the longer term a study is also needed to assess the most appropriate locations before any new facilities are provided.
- 10.3 In terms of the provision of public conveniences in Parks, the Forum appreciated the level of feeling in support of the existing Ward Jackson facility. In consideration of the proposal for the closure and demolition of the facility the Forum concluded that this would be the appropriate course of action with the proviso that the opening hours of the café on the site be extended to mirror the opening hours of the Park.
- 10.4 Regarding the proposals for the conveniences in the Bum Valley the Forum also felt that the demolition of the Upper Bum Valley convenience was justified. There were, however, concerns regarding the level of provision in the park and it was suggested that this needed to be given further consideration.

11. ESTABLISHMENT OF ESTIMATED COSTS OF REPLACING ALL PUBLIC CONVENIENCES WITH NEW FACILITIES AND BRINGING EXISTING CONVENIENCES UP TO AN ACCEPTABLE STANDARD.

- 11.1 The Forum was advised that it would cost approximately £500,000 to bring existing public conveniences up to an acceptable standard and approximately £4 million to replace all conveniences with new facilities. The Forum noted these figures and gave full consideration to the proposals for the provision of conveniences as suggested to Cabinet.
- 11.2 In relation to the cost of the proposals upon which the Forum is being ask to comment it is suggested that the prudential borrowing arrangement should be continued in the future to assist in funding public convenience provision in the longer term. It is also suggested that any savings identified from the revenue budget as a result of changes to public convenience provision be utilised to contribute to future provision.

12. COMPARISON OF HARTLEPOOL'S PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION WITH THAT OF ANOTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY.

- 12.1 In order to gain an understanding of the level and type of provision of other Local Authorities a comparison was undertaken against the other Tees Valley Local Authorities (Middlesbrough, Stockton, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland). A presentation was also received from a Scarborough Borough Council representative on his Authority's experiences in providing public conveniences as a coastal tourist resort.
- 12.2 **Tees Valley Comparison** - The comparison (**Appendix B** refers) showed that the number of conveniences provided had reduced year on year and that improvements to the quality of facilities has in most cases been funded through capital bids. In most cases facilities were provided with no partnership working or funding, with the exception of Middlesbrough Council which relies on the provision of facilities by shops and other such facilities.
- 12.3 Whilst attendants appear to be the option that most authorities see as the best deterrent against anti-social behaviour and vandalism the cost associated with their employment means that only two out of the four remaining Tees Valley authorities provide them, and only on a part time basis in a limited number of locations. Other options utilised to address anti-social behaviour problems include the development of a close working relationship with the Police and Community Wardens and the use of anti-vandal finishes such as stainless steel.
- 12.4 **Scarborough Borough Council Comparison** - In terms of a Local Authority with similar tourism issues and past experience of reducing the number of convenience the presentation from Scarborough Borough Council provided the Forum with a good comparison. During the course of discussion it became apparent that Hartlepool could learn from Scarborough's experience in terms of:
- (a) The use of attendants and charging arrangements, although facilities were still heavily subsidised;
 - (b) The intention that all of their conveniences comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act within the next five years;
 - (c) The provision of the opportunity for Parish Councils to take over the provision of facilities in instances where the Council cannot continue to do so and the use of other forms of partnership i.e. sponsorship;
 - (d) Efforts made to encourage commercial sector involvement in the provision of conveniences. Although there has been little success at this as of yet;
 - (e) A requirement as part of the planning process for the provision of access and facilities; and

- (f) The use of small annex facilities, one or two cubicles, attached to larger public conveniences that can be left open when the main facility closes.

13. THE VIEWS OF RESIDENTS AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM RELEVANT GROUPS INCLUDING PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND EQUALITY ISSUES.

13.1 During the course of the Forum's investigation residents and representatives from Hartlepool Carers, Hartlepool Access Group and the 50+ Forum participated in discussions and expressed their views in relation to the quality of existing provision and how/where they would like to see provision in the future, a summarised below:-

- (a) Concern was expressed regarding current condition of public conveniences in Hartlepool and indeed the whole of the country. Particular attention was drawn to the failure of the majority of public conveniences in Hartlepool to meet the requirements of the Disabled Discrimination Act and the longer implications of the Authority in that it could be challenged in the future if it should fail to provide the appropriate facilities. Attention was also drawn to the absence of any form of facilities to assist those who care for disabled adults and it was suggested that the introduction of lifting facilities in conveniences to assist carers should be looked into.
- (b) Representatives from the various groups highlighted the importance of dignity for all and emphasised the role appropriate public convenience provision could have in providing this. The Forum was also advised that representatives from the 50+ Forum had indicated that they would prefer to pay for the use of conveniences if they could be guaranteed clean and safe facilities.
- (c) Request were also put forward for the full involvement of the Hartlepool Access Group and the Councils Access Officer in proposals for improvements to, or installation of, disabled facilities and the need to provide over and above the minimum requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act in terms of size and layout of facilities.
- (d) The views of residents were also fed back to the Forum via the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums on 14, 15 and 16 June 2006 and the Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on 9, 10 and 11 August 2006. Comments made included support for the retention of the Ward Jackson Park and Clock Tower facilities, the need to explore partnership working through the use of facilities in commercial premises, planning requirements and the provision of disabled facilities.

14. CONCLUSIONS

14.1 In considering the Cabinet referral it was found that in addition to budgetary issues there is a real concern regarding the level and condition of public conveniences. The Forum is of the view:-

- (a) That whilst there is no statutory requirement for the provision of public conveniences they should continue to be provided by the Local Authority. Careful consideration would, however, be necessary in the future in terms of the location of facilities;
- (b) That the Council should look at innovative ways of delivering the service with higher quality facilities. The Forum supported the closure where necessary of some older, less accessible, facilities to make this possible;
- (c) That the closure of some older facilities is justified in terms of their condition and inability to update/improve to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- (d) That the provision of public conveniences should be focused within tourist areas and that a policy should be developed to formalise arrangements for the identification of locations in the future;
- (e) That there is a need for the development of a policy for the future to ensure that all public conveniences provided by Hartlepool Borough Council comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- (f) That Parish Councils should be given the opportunity to take over the provision of public conveniences for which closure is the proposed course of action, with a requirement that they meet the conditions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- (g) That alternative ways of ensuring public convenience provision should be explored. i.e. partnership working with local shops and businesses;
- (h) That there should be a requirement as part of the planning process (Section 106 Agreements) for the provision of, or provision of access to, public conveniences that meet the conditions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- (i) That the use of small 'annex' facilities which can be attached to larger public conveniences and left open when the main facility closes be explored (para. 12.4 (a) refers);
- (j) That the location of public conveniences, and their opening times, be better advertised, in particular with improved signage on the Marina;
- (k) That the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act must be fully considered and the implications/effect of proposed closures on the elderly, disabled and children taken into serious consideration; and
- (l) That the prudential borrowing arrangement proposed be continued in the future to assist in funding public convenience provision in the longer term and that any savings identified from the revenue budget as a result of changes to public convenience provision be reinvested in the service.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations.

15.2 That in relation to each of the options and proposals put forward as part of the Cabinet Referral (as outlined in the report considered by Cabinet on the 12 April 2006) the Forum:-

(a) Supports the proposals for the:-

- (i) Closure of the Thorpe Street, Pilot Pier and Rocket House facilities and their securing with aesthetic materials;
- (ii) Building of a new facility adjacent to the old Rocket House site and closure of the Clock Tower site;
- (iii) Undertaking of only essential maintenance to Clock Tower facility to keep them functioning until the new facilities are up and running;
- (iv) Refurbishment and upgrade the Lighthouse (Heugh Battery) facilities;
- (v) Undertaking of no work to the Albert Street facility;
- (vi) Taking no action in respect of the Seaton Park facilities other than essential maintenance;
- (vii) Demolition and making good of the site at the Ward Jackson Park facilities. The toilets at the café to be made available to all public during the opening hours of the park;
- (viii) Maintenance and improvements to the facilities at Rossmere Park;
- (ix) Demolition and making good the site in the Upper Burn Valley, with the development of a policy for the provision of public conveniences in the Burn Valley to be looked into;
- (x) Maintenance of the Lower Burn Valley facility;
- (xi) Introduction of adequate heating, together with routine and planned maintenance to the Stranton Cemetery main facility;
- (xii) Maintenance of existing facilities at West View Cemetery; and
- (xiii) Demolition of the Hartlepool Maritime Experience facility and the marketing of the site with any capital receipt to be reinvested for the improvement of public convenience provision.

- (b) Disagrees with the proposed course of action for the former Seaton Baths site and recommends that the facility be improved in terms of its general condition and more specifically its disabled access externally and disabled facilities;
- (c) Agrees that all Council owned buildings should provide, wherever possible, toilet facilities for the public and that town centre landlords and other businesses need to be encouraged to make their facilities available to the public during normal, and extended opening hours.

15.3 In addition to providing recommendations as outlined above the Forum also recommends to Cabinet:-

- (d) That a policy be established for the future provision of public conveniences requiring:-
 - (i) The location of public conveniences in Hartlepool be concentrated in tourist areas, i.e. the Headland, Seaton and the Marina;
 - (ii) That all public conveniences provided by Hartlepool Borough Council comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and where this is not possible facilities be closed and/or replaced;
- (e) That the location of public conveniences, and their opening times, be better advertised, in particular with improved signage on the Marina giving directions to the conveniences in Hartlepool Maritime Experience;
- (f) That in relation to future provision on the Marina a study be undertaken to assess the most appropriate locations before any new facilities are provided;
- (g) That options for the provision of public conveniences in the Burn Valley be explored further;
- (h) That the feasibility of the provision of facilities through partnership working and the identification of resources through sponsorship funding, advertising in facilities, and charging be explored;
- (i) That any capital receipts that may result from the disposal of a public convenience be re-invested for improvements to the service;
- (j) That the Hartlepool Access Group and the Councils Access Officer be fully involved in proposals for the adaptation/improvement of older, and building of new, facilities to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- (m) That as part of the Civic Centre Refurbishments Programme the feasibility of the installation of a hoist for disabled adults within the Civic Centre's public conveniences be explored;

- (n) That there be a requirement as part of the planning process (Section 106 Agreements) for the provision of, or access to, public conveniences that meet the conditions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- (o) That Parish Councils should be given the opportunity to take over the provision of public conveniences for which closure is the proposed course of action, with a requirement that they meet the conditions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- (p) That the use of small ‘annex’ facilities which can be attached to larger public conveniences and left open when the main facility closes be explored (para. 12.4 (a) refers);
- (q) That where public conveniences are closed and not demolished alternative uses for the buildings be explored;
- (r) That the Council should look at innovative ways of delivering the service with higher quality facilities. The Forum supported the closure where necessary of some older, less accessible, facilities to make this possible; and
- (s) That the prudential borrowing arrangement proposed be continued in the future to assist in funding public convenience provision in the longer term and that any savings identified from the revenue budget as a result of changes to public convenience provision be reinvested in the service.

16. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Hartlepool Borough Council:

Stuart Drummond, Elected Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability

Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services

Colin Ogden, Waste Management Manager

Albert Cope, Environment Manager

External Representatives:

Barry Scott, Head of Street Scene Services, Scarborough Borough Council

Mary Diver, Hartlepool Carers

Mrs Remmer, Hartlepool Access Group

Joan Scrafton, 50+ Forum

Phil Lee, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Sylvia Hague, Darlington Borough Council

Robert Clough, Stockton Borough Council

Julie Hoff, South Tyneside Council

**COUNCILLOR GERARD HALL
CHAIR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

August 2006

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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 Referral – Hartlepool's Public Convenience Provision – Scoping Report presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum held on 12 July 2006.
- (ii) Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services entitled 'Public Conveniences' to Cabinet on the 12 April 2006.
- (iii) Minute number 230 of Cabinet held on the 12 April 2006.
- (iv) Phil Woolas MP – speech to the 'Public Toilet Provision – The Way Forward' Seminar – 19 July 2006.
- (v) Minutes of the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums on the 14 June 2006 (North), 15 June 2006 (Central) and 16 June 2006 (South).
- (vi) Public Conveniences Condition Surveys Report – 2004.
- (vii) Public Conveniences Condition Surveys Report - Rocket House.
- (viii) Parks - Public Conveniences Report

- (ix) Fifth Viewpoint 1000 Survey Results – Public Conveniences (2001)
- (x) British Toilet Association News – Spring 2006
- (xi) London Assembly – An Urgent Need – The State of London’s Public Toilets – March 2006
- (xii) Scarborough Borough Council – Cabinet reports (31 January 2005, 22 February 2005, 26 July 2006) – Public Convenience - Improvements
- (xiii) Public Health Act 1936
- (xiv) The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO CABINET**APPENDIX A**

- i) Closure of the Thorpe Street, Pilot Pier and Rocket House facilities.
- ii) Build a new facility adjacent to the old Rocket House site and close the Clock Tower site.
- iii) Carry out only essential maintenance to Clock Tower facility to keep them functioning until the new facilities are up and running.
- iv) Refurbish and upgrade the Lighthouse (Heugh Battery) facilities.
- v) Consider what, if any, maintenance ought to take place to the Albert Street facility or whether it ought to be closed prior to any future land sale.
- vi) Consider the building of a new facility at the former Seaton Baths site, with closure and demolition of the existing facility.
- vii) Take no action in respect of the Seaton Park facilities other than essential maintenance. The new facilities at the Rocket House are in close proximity.
- viii) Demolish and make good the site at the Ward Jackson Park facilities. The toilets at the café to be made available to all public during opening hours. Consider extending the café opening hours to accommodate need.
- ix) Maintain and improve the facilities at Rossmere Park.
- x) Demolish and make good the site in the Upper Bum Valley.
- xi) Maintain the Lower Burn Valley facility.
- xii) Introduce adequate heating, together with routine and planned maintenance to the Stranton Cemetery main facility.
- xiii) Maintain existing facilities at West View Cemetery.
- xiv) Consider the options in respect of the Hartlepool Maritime Experience. (Either completely refurbished to make it as anti-vandal proof as possible, closed and marketed or continue with its current limited use).
- xv) That all Council owned buildings should provide, wherever possible, toilet facilities for the public. In addition, town centre landlords need to be encouraged to make their facilities available to the public during normal, now extended, opening hours.

OVERALL COST OF PROPOSALS

£565,000 + £30,000 provisional sum, together with:
 Hartlepool Maritime Experience options £15,000 (Capital)
 or £100,000 - £200,000 (Capital)
 plus added revenue costs of £50,000

TEES VALLEY COMPARISON**APPENDIX B**

	STOCKTON BC	DARLINGTON BC	REDCAR AND CLEVELAND BC	M'BORO BC
i) Number of conveniences. Has the number reduced?	Seven. Has reduced by four over the last ten years, with one new convenience provided.	Seven (One manned and six unmanned). Has reduced by two over recent years.	14 (Up to 2004 reduced - re-opened 2 since 2005 and close another)	None. Relies on Shopping Centres and other such facilities.
ii) Have facilities been improved recently?	Yes, with the aid of a Capital bid.	Yes, with the aid of a Capital bid.	Yes, with the aid of a Capital bid.	N/A
iii) Maintenance budget. Is it sufficient to cover maintenance & staffing costs?	Figure not provided. Yes.	Figure not provided. Yes.	£9,300. No (always overspent)	N/A
iv) Are any partnership arrangements in place in terms of provision of facilities and funding?	No. All facilities are funded by the Local Authority.	No. All facilities are funded by the Local Authority.	No. Whilst good idea Councils need to look at their own buildings as well as. Need to advertise.	N/A
v) Are attendants employed?	Yes, but only the facility in the town centre facility is permanently staffed.	Yes	No.	N/A
vi) Do you charge for the use of any of your conveniences?	Yes. Have a coin operated facility.	No.	No.	N/A
vii) What has been the most significant factor in reducing ASB and vandalism?	Use of: - attendants; - a good working relationship with the Police.	Use of: - attendants; - anti vandal finishes i.e. stainless steel; - A good working relationship with the police and Community Wardens.	Use of: - devised notice saying under CCTV (even though not)	N/A