

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Wednesday 25 October 2006

at 2.00pm

**in the Conference Suite,
Belle Vue Community Sports and Youth Centre,
Kendal Road, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

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

Resident Representatives: Allan Lloyd and Linda Shields

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2006**
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No Items.

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

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

- 5.1 Draft Thoroughfare Policy – Possible Redirection by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee (Referred by Cabinet on 9 October 2006) (*Scrutiny Support Officer*)

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

No Items.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The Performance and Operation of Private Rented Accommodation:

- (a) Scoping Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*)
- (b) Setting the Scene Presentation (*Housing Strategy Manager*)
- (c) Evidence from the Regeneration, Housing and Liveability Portfolio Holder

8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

- i) **Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 29 November 2006, commencing at 2.00pm in the Central Library.**

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

20 September 2006

Present:

Councillor: Gerard Hall (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jonathan Brash, Harry Clouth, Rob W Cook, Gordon Henery
and Dennis Waller

Resident Representatives: Linda Shields
Lesley Hall, Community Network

Officers: Ralph Harrison, Head of Public Protection and Housing
Jane Kett, Principal Environmental Health Officer
Peter Frost, Traffic Team Leader
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

38. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Stephen Allison, Kevin Cranney, Steve Gibbon, Geoff Lilley and Pat Rayner.

39. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

40. Minutes of the meetings held on 9 and 31 August 2006

Confirmed, subject to the addition of apologies for absence from Councillor Henery to the meeting on 31 August 2006.

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

No items.

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

No items.

43. Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2006/07 (*Head of Public Protection and Housing*)

The Head of Public Protection and Housing, Mr Ralph Harrison, submitted the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2006/07 for the Forum's consideration. The Plan was one that formed part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. Mr Harrison indicated that the format and those matters included in the service plan were heavily prescribed by the Food Standards Agency. He did, however, highlight/explain certain of the issues raised in the plan.

- Staff absence as a result of a long-term part time vacancy and two EHO's on maternity leave from November 2004 to November 2005, resulted in a shortfall of both food hygiene and food standards (composition and labelling) premises inspections. External consultants were utilised to minimise the shortfall, though they were twice the cost of the Council's own officers, together with an overtime scheme for existing staff.
- There was one major food poisoning outbreak investigated in 2005/06 involving 92 persons. Seven suspect outbreaks were subsequently confirmed as viral in origin. 322 notifications of suspected food poisonings were received. It was highlighted that the majority of the 'suspected' food poisonings were more probably viral infections. In response to Members' questions, Mr Harrison indicated that it was very difficult to gain all the necessary evidence for a prosecution in food poisoning cases. Prosecution was seen as a last resort and in most cases retailers/premises improved very quickly once issues had been raised with them by Environmental Health Officers. In light of legal advice, Mr Harrison indicated that he could not name the company involved in the serious food poisoning case that had led to 92 people becoming ill.
- A total of 606 premises inspections were undertaken in 2005/06, together with 182 microbiological samples and 205 compositional/labelling samples, 23 of the samples were regarded as unsatisfactory, mainly as a result of high bacteriological counts and 27 were unsatisfactory as the labelling/composition was incorrect. Mr Harrison went on to explain that high risk premises were inspected more than once a year and only six statutory improvement notices had been issued during the last year with only one, voluntary, premises closure.
- In February 2006 the Food Standards Agency introduced Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) aimed at assisting smaller catering businesses comply with relevant legislation. The Tees Valley authorities in partnership with training providers successfully received grant funding from the FSA to assist local business by providing free training and advisory visits to assist in implementing SFBB.
- The Food Standards Agency is encouraging authorities to employ an

alternative enforcement strategy for low risk food premises by the employment of self-assessment questionnaires (as opposed to inspection). Given that low risk food premises often involve other legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act, it is intended to continue to inspect such premises. Mr Harrison indicated that he was very concerned at introducing such an approach to food safety. Members also indicted their apprehension at the proposals and were concerned that premises may feel they were getting away without being inspected.

Members questioned what level of increased scrutiny did premises come under if they were in need of improvement but were not prosecuted? Mr Harrison indicated that each premise inspected was risk assessed; those in lower categories were inspected once a year, those in higher categories would be inspected more regularly. If a premise in the lower category was inspected and in need of improvement, it could be moved to the next higher category and therefore inspected twice yearly. Premises were monitored and if repeated inspection failures were found, even if they were minor, further action would be taken.

Members requested information on the number of complaints made by members of the public against food premises in the town. Mr Harrison indicated that there had been sixteen complaints made last year with most of them being substantiated following an investigation. The issues concerned did tend to be fairly minor in most instances and very few malicious complaints had been received.

Decision

That the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2006/07 be endorsed and forwarded to the Executive for approval as part of the Budget and Policy Framework. The Forum particularly noted that inspections of smaller catering businesses would continue and self-assessment of compliance with legislative requirements would not be introduced in Hartlepool.

44. Six Monthly Progress Report – Scrutiny investigation into 20mph Speed Limits Outside Schools (*Head of Technical Services*)

The Traffic Team Leader, Peter Frost, updated the Forum on the progress that had been made in relation to the investigation six months after the forum had made its recommendations. A detailed action plan was submitted as Appendix A to the report setting out the various actions that had taken place. The following actions were highlighted by Mr Frost and/or raised by Members.

- The draft policy on 20mph Speed Limit Zones had been compiled and was undergoing consultation.
- The future years schemes set out in Appendix B were based on a five year programme. There was currently £20,000 included each year for the next five years in the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The introduction of physical traffic calming measures at a school were currently estimated to be around

£10,000 which meant two schools each year could be completed.

- There was some concern expressed by Members that at some locations the 20mph zones could not be implemented. The Chair commented that schools on main roads could not have physical traffic calming measures introduced. Some Councillors considered that 20mph should be introduced across all residential zones.
- There was concerns expressed that Barnard Grove School was not included in the programme until 2008/09. King Oswy Drive was placed on the safety schemes list at no. 4. Paul Frost indicated that there was concern in relation to introducing a 20mph limit on King Oswy Drive as this was the principal road through the area and some of the problems were related to parking.
- It was highlighted that the Neighbourhood Action Plans could be used as a method of leveraging additional funding in to assist in implementing some schemes.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update report and requested that Members comments be noted and where possible schemes should be expedited at the earliest opportunity should additional funding be identified.

Decision

That the progress report and the list suggested list of school safety schemes for future years be noted.

45. Any Other Items

The Chair raised the following three items of business at the end of the meeting.

Final Report on the Public Conveniences Inquiry.

The final report on the Public Conveniences Inquiry was to be presented to Cabinet on 25 September 2006. The Chair was pleased that the inquiry had been welcomed so far in a largely positive way, with little negative publicity. The Chair thanked the work undertaken by all those involved in the inquiry and particularly thanked Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer, for all her work in producing the report.

Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

The Chair reported that consultation on these two key strategies was to commence shortly and indicated that they would be coming to a meeting of the forum in the near future.

Registered Landlords Scheme and Legislation

The licensing of independent landlords was an issue highlighted by Members as being an important issue they would wish to investigate. The scoping report on the inquiry would be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum on 25 October 2006. Members welcomed the opportunity to investigate this area and welcomed the opportunity to invite interested parties to the meetings to gain their views and opinions.

Decision

That the Chair's comments be noted.

GERARD HALL

CHAIRMAN

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

25 October 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: DRAFT THOROUGHFARE POLICY - POSSIBLE
REDIRECTION OF CABINET REFERRAL BY
SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE
(REFERRED BY CABINET ON 9 OCTOBER 2006)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum of the possible redirection by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee of a referral from Cabinet relating to the Draft Thoroughfare Policy.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cabinet on the 9 October 2006 received a report outlining proposals for the establishment of a policy relating to requests for the restriction of pedestrian access on public thoroughfares, based upon the following guidelines relating to how the Council should address requests:-
- i) Any applications received should initially be directed to the relevant Neighbourhood Manager for investigation.
 - ii) The Neighbourhood Manager will investigate the situation, in liaison with the Police and anti-social behaviour unit to establish the extent of the problem, through available criminal and disorder evidence and appropriate actions, (other than gating or closure at this time), will be identified and initiated by the Neighbourhood Manager in conjunction with the Police, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and the Community Safety Problem Solving section. At this stage the applicants for the closure will be advised that closure will not be considered until all alternative options have been thoroughly investigated and recommendations have been received from all agencies that this is the only possible solution to the problem.
 - iii) If there is strong evidence and the problem persists, and it is recommended by the Police that a closure is the only remaining option, the NMT will undertake a full consultation with all stakeholders, including residents in the immediate vicinity and those residents who will be affected

by the closure appropriate, resident associations, access groups and Council Officers (including those in the Transportation and Planning sections) to determine the extent of support for any proposed closure.

- iv) A report will then be submitted to Portfolio Holder by the Head of Technical Services detailing the results of the consultation and a decision will be sought as to whether the proposed gating or closure should proceed.

- 2.2 Cabinet resolved that the proposed policy relating to the closure of thoroughfares, as detailed above, be forwarded to Scrutiny with the request that its views and/or any amendments to the policy be reported back to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity to allow the policy to be implemented.
- 2.3 As this is a Category C referral (General policy development and advice) consideration of it is discretionary and the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is meeting on 20 October 2006 to consider the appropriateness of undertaking a scrutiny enquiry into this matter. At this meeting consideration is also to be given to the redirection of the referral to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum.
- 2.4 In view of the possible redirection of the referral an update report on the recommendations of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee will be provided to this Forum at its meeting on the 25 October 2006. At this time confirmation will be provided as to process for consideration of the referral and the involvement of this Forum.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members note the possible redirection of the Cabinet referral relating to the 'Draft Thoroughfare Policy' and receive an update report on the progression of the referral following its consideration at the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 20 October 2006.

Contact Officers:- Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officers
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523339
Email: joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

25 October 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE
SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION – SCOPING
REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To make proposals to Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum for the undertaking of their forthcoming investigation into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum at its meeting on the 13 June 2006 selected two issues to form its 2006/2007 Work Programme. The second issue for consideration by the Forum this year relates to the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation.
- 2.2 During discussions members of the Forum expressed concern regarding:-
- i) The problems experienced by private sector tenants and surrounding residents, particularly in relation to the condition of properties and anti-social behaviour;
 - ii) The effect on communities (both social and economic) of increasing levels of private rented accommodation of varying quality in areas across the town; and
 - iii) The operational practices of Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and Private Sector Landlords (PSL's) and the options available particularly for the regulation of the private sector.

- 2.3 These areas of concern and the difference between RSL's and PSL's, in terms of the operation, regulation and methods of enforcement available in relation to each, need to be taken into consideration during the refinement of the investigation's aim and focus. Greater detail of the operation and regulation of these two types of landlords is to be provided as part of a presentation later in the meeting.
- 2.4 In terms of the history of the provision of rented accommodation in Hartlepool, Hartlepool Borough Council until 2004 managed and provided its own housing stock. In March 2004 the Council's housing stock was transferred to Housing Hartlepool, which now provides rented accommodation as one of the town's RSL's.
- 2.5 In addition to accommodation provided by RSL's, rented accommodation is also provided by a variety of PSL's. The operation, regulation and methods of enforcement available in relation to each of these types of landlords is very different, with bodies such as trusts, co-operatives and housing associations acting as RSL's on a 'not for profit' basis. PSL's on the other hand are private individuals or companies who own property that is entirely independent of the local authority or registered social landlord sector. This property is let on a profit making basis and the numbers of properties owned by an individual landlord can vary for one upwards.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 At its meeting on the 13 June 2006 the Forum defined the overall aim of its investigation as being to "Examine the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation with reference to landlord accreditation and including the wider links with Registered Social Landlords, local communities and other relevant agencies."
- 3.2 Following discussions with the Chair and in an effort to more clearly define the investigations aim consideration is sought of a proposal for the amendment of the aim of the investigation as follows:-

"To examine the performance/operation of private sector rented accommodation and evaluate the options available to the Local Authority for the protection of tenants and surrounding residents."

4. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The following Terms of Reference for the review are proposed:-
- (a) To gain an understanding of national policies and practice relating to the operation of Private Sector Landlords, with particular reference to:-

- i) Current and future national policy/legislation regulating the provision of rented accommodation;
 - ii) The difference between private sector landlords and registered social landlords and the legislation/regulations effecting the operation of each;
 - iii) Possible changes to the Local Authorities enforcement powers in relation to private sector landlords as a result of changes in legislation and the introduction of landlord licensing (Mandatory and Discretionary);
- b) To gain an understanding of local policies and practice relating to the operation of Private Sector Landlords, with particular reference to:-
- i) The position in Hartlepool in terms of the regulation of private landlords and the options currently available to the Local Authority for the protection of private sector tenants and surrounding residents;
 - ii) The level and types of problems experienced by private sector tenants, landlords and surrounding residents and the social/economic effects on communities of concentrated pockets of private rented accommodation;
 - iii) Ways of dealing with the social and economic effects on communities of concentrated pockets of private rented accommodation, which could include schemes to facilitate increased home ownership and demolition of properties; and
 - iv) The effectiveness of the voluntary registration scheme for private landlords currently in operation in Hartlepool;
 - v) The implications of current and future actions in relation to the regulation of the private rented sector particularly the 'knock on' effect of enforcement action against landlords and tenants;
- (c) To examine and compare best practice for the provision of rented accommodation with particular reference to:-
- i) Examples of best practice implemented by Registered Social Landlords, responsible private landlords and letting agencies/companies to deal with problem tenants in order to ascertain if any could be implemented as part of a landlord licensing scheme (Mandatory and Discretionary);
 - ii) Strategies/practices implemented in other Local Authorities (for example Gateshead Council, Newcastle Council or Manchester Council), with those in place in Hartlepool in order to identify any possible areas for improvement;

- (d) To seek the views of local residents, Ward Councillors, private landlords, tenants, letting agents and representatives from national and local bodies in relation to the provision of rented accommodation.
- (e) To determine on the evidence provided whether the action available to Hartlepool Borough Council to protect tenants and surrounding residents is being undertaken effectively.

5. POTENTIAL AREAS OF ENQUIRY / SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

5.1 Members of the Forum can request a range of evidential and comparative information throughout the Scrutiny referral.

5.2 The Forum can invite a variety of people to attend to assist in the forming of a balanced and focused range of recommendations as follows:-

- (a) Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability;
- (b) Housing Strategy Manager;
- (c) Relevant officers from the Regeneration and Planning Services Department (including the Regeneration, Anti-social Behaviour Unit and the Community Safety and Prevention divisions);
- (d) Private Landlords already registered as part of the Hartlepool's voluntary registration scheme;
- (e) Representatives from national and regional bodies. i.e. the Registered Landlords Association and Association of Residential Letting Agents;
- (f) Representatives from other Local Authorities with examples of good practice (Gateshead Council, Newcastle Council or Manchester Council);
- (g) Representatives from the Police, Parish Councils, Residents Associations, Housing Associations, Letting Agents, Hartlepool Revival;
- (h) Local residents and Resident Representatives; and
- (i) Ward Councillors.

5.3 The Forum may also wish to refer to a variety of documentary /internet sources, key suggestions are as highlighted below:-

Protection from Eviction Act 1977
Housing Act 1988
Children's Act 1989
Housing Act part VII (as amended) 1996

Homelessness Act 2002
Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2004
Housing Benefit Act (as amended) 2006 - Regulation 12 - Rent
Determinations, Private Sector, Regulation 2 - Single Room Rent
Human Rights Act 1998

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the Scrutiny process and paragraph 5.2, details who the Forum could involve. However, thought will need to be given to the structure in the way that the Forum wishes to encourage those views.

7. PROPOSED TIMETABLE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 7.1 Detailed below is the proposed timetable for the investigation:-

25 October 2006 – ‘Setting the Scene’ – Formal meeting of the Forum to receive a presentation from the Housing Strategy Manager in relation to the issues covered in terms of reference (a)(i), (a)(ii), (a)(iii) and (b)(i) and evidence from the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability.

29 November 2006 –

a) Evidence from relevant bodies/individuals on:-

- i) The level and types of problems experienced by private sector tenants, landlords and surrounding residents and the social/economic effects on communities of concentrated pockets of private rented accommodation;
- ii) Ways of dealing with the social and economic effects on communities of concentrated pockets of private rented accommodation that could include schemes to facilitate increased home ownership possible and demolition of properties;
- iii) The number of properties demolished and of those the number that were PSL owned; and
- iv) The effectiveness of the voluntary registration scheme for private landlords currently in operation in Hartlepool.

w/c 4 or 11 December 2006 – Site Visit - To another Local Authority's to observe best practice. (Gateshead Council or Newcastle Council)

w/c 4 or 11 December 2006 – Focus Group - To seek the views of local residents and tenants on their experiences with Private Sector Landlords.

10 January 2007 –

a) Feedback from the Site Visit.

b) Discuss:-

- i) Strategies/practices implemented in other Local Authorities (for example Gateshead Council, Newcastle Council or Manchester Council), with those in place in Hartlepool in order to identify any possible areas for improvement;
- ii) Examples of best practice implemented by Registered Social Landlords, responsible private landlords and letting agencies/companies to deal with problem tenants in order to ascertain if any could be implemented as part of a landlord licensing scheme (Mandatory and Discretionary).

14 February 2007 –

- i) To seek the views of local residents, Ward Councillors, private landlords, tenants, letting agents and representatives from national and local bodies in relation to the provision of rented accommodation.
- ii) To determine on the evidence provided whether the action available to Hartlepool Borough Council to protect tenants and surrounding residents is being undertaken effectively.

w/c 26 February 2007 – Informal meeting to consider the content of the Draft Final Report.

21 March 2007 – Consideration of Draft Final Report.

20 April 2007 – Consideration of Final Report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.

30 April 2007 – Consideration of Final Report by the Cabinet.

13 June 2007 – ‘Closing the Loop’ report back from Cabinet to the Forum.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Members are recommended to agree the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forums proposed Terms of Reference, together with the suggested timetable, for the undertaking of investigation as outlined in paragraphs 4 and 7 within this report.

Contact Officer: - Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executives Department – Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: - 01429 523339
Email:- joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used at this point for the formulation of this report.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

25 October 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE
SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION – SETTING
THE SCENE PRESENTATION BY THE HOUSING
STRATEGY MANAGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that the Housing Strategy Manager has been invited to attend this meeting to provide a 'Setting the Scene' presentation on relation to the Forums investigation into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 As Members will be aware the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum at its meeting on the 13 June 2006 selected two issues to form its 2006/2007 Work Programme. The second issue for consideration by the Forum this year relates to the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation.
- 2.1 A scoping report was considered by the Forum earlier in this meeting and the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence for the inquiry approved. As part of the first stage of the inquiry arrangements have been made for the Housing Strategy Manager to provide a 'Setting the Scene' presentation covering:-
- i) The current and future national policy/legislation regulating the provision of rented accommodation;
 - ii) The difference between private sector landlords and registered social landlords and the legislation/regulations effecting the operation of each;

- iii) The position in Hartlepool in terms of the regulation of private landlords and the options currently available to the Local Authority for the protection of private sector tenants and surrounding residents; and
 - iv) The possible changes to the Local Authorities enforcement powers in relation to private sector landlords as a result of changes in legislation and the introduction of landlord licensing (Mandatory and Discretionary).
- 2.2 During this evidence gathering session it is suggested that responses should be sought to a variety of questions. Details of these will follow in due course.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members receive the presentation from the Housing Strategy Manager and take its contents into consideration as part of the Forum's inquiry.

Contact Officers:- Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523339
Email: joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation – Scoping Report' presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum held on 25 October 2006.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

25 October 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE
SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION –
EVIDENCE FROM REGENERATION, HOUSING
AND LIVEABILITY PORTFOLIO HOLDER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that the Regeneration, Housing and Liveability Portfolio Holder has been invited to attend this meeting to respond to questions in relation to the Forums investigation into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 As Members will be aware the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum at its meeting on the 13 June 2006 selected two issues to form its 2006/2007 Work Programme. The second issue for consideration by the Forum this year relates to the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation.
- 2.1 A scoping report was considered by the Forum earlier in this meeting and the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence for the inquiry approved. As part of the first stage of the inquiry arrangements have been made for the Regeneration, Housing and Liveability Portfolio Holder to be in attendance at this meeting to provide evidence in relation to his views on the private sector rented accommodation issue and ways of protecting tenants and surrounding residents.
- 2.2 During this evidence gathering session with the Head of Environmental Management and Regeneration, Housing and Transportation Portfolio Holder, it is suggested that responses should be sought to a variety of questions. Details of these will follow in due course.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1** That Members take it into consideration as part of the Forum's inquiry the views expressed by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability.

Contact Officers:- Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523339
Email: joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation – Scoping Report' presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum held on 25 October 2006.