

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Wednesday 29 November 2006

at 2.00pm

**in the Central Library Community Room
York 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: Ann Butterfield, Ian Campbell and Linda Shields

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2006**
 - 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2006 – to follow
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No Items.

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

No items.

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

No Items.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- 7.1 Six Monthly Progress Report – Scrutiny Investigation into Hartlepool's Local Bus Service Provision – *Head of Technical Services*
- 7.2 Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation – Further Information – *Head of Public Protection and Housing*

8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

- i) **Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 10 January 2007, commencing at 2.00pm at Owton Manor Community Centre, Wynyard Road, Hartlepool**
- ii) **Focus Group Meeting as part of the Private Sector Landlord Scrutiny Investigation – Wednesday 13 December 2006 commencing at 6.00 pm – venue to be confirmed**

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

29 November 2006



Report of: Head of Technical Services

Subject: SIXMONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT - SCRUTINY
INVESTIGATION INTO HARTLEPOOL'S LOCAL
BUS SERVICE PROVISION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum with an update on the progress that has been made in relation to the investigation into Hartlepool's Local Bus service Provision six months six months after the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee made its recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 During the 2005/6 Municipal Year Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum conducted an investigation into Hartlepool's local bus service provision.
- 2.2 On May 15th the Final Report of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum was submitted to the Cabinet for approval. Following Cabinet's decision in relation to the Scrutiny Investigation an Action Plan and progress report from the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation was considered by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on 12th July.
- 2.3 This report has been produced six months after the Committee's recommendations were considered by the appropriate decision-making body and as such provides an outline of the progress made to date in relation to the recommendations made by the Neighbourhood Services Forum.
- 2.4 An updated Action Plan is attached at **Appendix A** with the progress made to date outlined in bold text under the proposed action. **Appendix B** provides an example of the new bus registration circular, outlined in section (g) of the progress report.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 Members will recall that the overall aim of the Scrutiny Investigation was to examine the bus service provision currently operating within Hartlepool.

4. RESPONSE BY THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO THE PROGRESS MADE TO DATE UPON THE DELIVERY OF THE ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 Whilst good progress has been made against the agreed actions, six months is a comparatively short timescale in which to see significant improvements. In the longer term, the Major Scheme bid for bus infrastructure and the Connect Tees Valley project should bring greater benefits to local bus services in Hartlepool.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That Members note the good progress to date in relation to the delivery of the Action Plan, and where appropriate, seek clarification upon the achievement/non achievement of the delivery timescales/recommendations.

Contact Officer:- John Lewer, Public Transport Officer
Neighbourhood Services Department, Traffic and
Transport Division
Hartlepool Borough Council

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum Final Report: Hartlepool's Local Bus Service Provision – Response from the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation presented to Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on 12th July 2006

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

APPENDIX A 7.1

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Hartlepool's Local Bus Service Provision

DECISION MAKING DATE OF REPORT: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum 29th November 2006

RECOMMENDATION		PROPOSED ACTION/ACTION ACHEIVED	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(a)	That work be undertaken by the Authority to improve the infrastructure of the bus network in Hartlepool, with particular reference to:- (i) improving the provision of bus stop shelters to ensure better waiting facilities (with a consideration of lighting and CCTV in shelters should resources be available);	Review infrastructure at all bus stops to ensure it meets the requirements of bus users and operators. Commence a rolling programme to replace bus stop poles, flags and bus shelters according to route priority. Provide CCTV at key town centre stops. Review of infrastructure at all bus stops complete with information included in database. Programme ongoing to replace bus stop poles and flags. A total of 41 bus stops poles	Geoff Knowlson (Transportation Team)	September 2006

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		and flags have been replaced since April 2006 on core bus routes 1, 6 and 7. List of bus stops subject to regular vandalism provided to the Council's Community Safety Team to inform monitoring. Mobile CCTV system currently being investigated to monitor stops not covered by existing CCTV system.		2006/07
(ii)	new and innovative means of providing up to date timetable information and ensuring that such information is co-ordinated in a timely manner (with a consideration of the provision of information for blind individuals);	Continue to review issues relating to timetable information. Improve clarity and presentation of at stop timetable information. Provide Real Time information at selected stops and through the internet, WAP and SMS. New style of timetable displays introduced at bus stops to improve clarity and presentation. Real Time Passenger Information delayed as a result of problems with the Tees Valley system.	Geoff Knowlson (Transportation Team)	2006/07 to 2010/11
(iii)	future improvements to the highways within Hartlepool to improve bus punctuality, for example bus priority lanes, where appropriate; and	Implement traffic management measures identified through the Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership. Provide selective detection at traffic signal controlled junctions.	Peter Frost (Traffic and Transportation)	2006/07 to 2010/11

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	<p>(iv) the compilation of a rolling programme for the implementation of measures to aid easier access to buses for disabled users.</p>	<p>Highway improvements to York Road approved for delivery in 2007/08. Improvements for core bus routes identified as part of Major Scheme Bid that was submitted to the Government in October 2006. Hartlepool Punctuality Improvement Partnership to be included as part of existing Bus Quality Partnership.</p> <p>Continue rolling programme of raised kerbs to enable level boarding of buses.</p> <p>LTP funding totalling £150k identified for installing raised kerbs from 2006/07 to 2010/11. A total of 20 raised kerbs will be installed in 2006/07 with priority given to core bus routes.</p>	<p>Geoff Knowlson (Traffic and Transportation)</p>	<p>2006/07 to 2010/11</p>
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(b)	That the Authority enforces parking restrictions at bus stops to allow easier access for bus operators and disabled users;	<p>Review Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) at bus all bus stops. Enforce parking restrictions using Hartlepool Borough Council Parking Wardens. Allow Wardens to travel on buses to assist enforcement. Identify trouble spot locations.</p> <p>Review of TRO's at bus stops (over 600) ongoing with priority given to trouble spot locations. Parking wardens have been provided with scooters to provide faster access to bus stops for enforcement purposes.</p>	Phil Hepbum (Traffic and Transportation)	2006/07
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(c)	That the possibility of utilising the Council's current transport provision, Dial a Ride and the voluntary sector provision, be explored as an alternative to subsidising individual routes, where appropriate;	<p>Maintain current funding for the Dial a Ride service. Expand existing Hartlepool Borough Council Dial-a-Ride service. Liaise with the voluntary sector on the options for public transport service provision.</p> <p>The current funding for the Dial-a-Ride service has been maintained. Innovative options are being considered as part of a review of Hartlepool's tendered bus network, which could involve linkage with the Dial a Ride service. The new Community Lynx hospital service operated by HBC Transport Services may offer further options for linkage with tendered bus services. The Council's Strategic Transport Group is also researching the integration of the Council's transport functions.</p>	Jayne Brown (Transport Services)	2006/07
(d)	That the Authority, in partnership with bus operators, promote the Tees Valley Wide free concessionary fares scheme, and progress aspirations to extend the scheme to County Durham in the future;	<p>Publish a Borough wide and Tees Valley wide concessionary fares leaflet. Support government plans for UK wide concessionary fares in April 2008, including County Durham.</p> <p>A new concessionary fares leaflet has</p>	Geoff Knowlson (Traffic and Transportation)	2006/07 to 2007/08

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		<p>been produced for the Hartlepool area. A Tees Valley map is being progressed through the Tees Valley Bus Quality Partnership. County Durham will be covered by the new national concessionary fares scheme from April 2008.</p>		
(e)	<p>That the town's commercial operators, in partnership with the authority, be encouraged to invest in marketing and publicity campaigns to improve the image of bus travel in order to increase bus user patronage;</p>	<p>Develop a borough wide promotional strategy for buses, involving bus operators and other stakeholders. Continue to build on existing joint publicity campaigns with operators including the Hartlepool timetable map.</p> <p>A promotional strategy for buses is included as an integral part of the Hartlepool Bus Strategy. Funding for promotional campaigns included as part of the Major Scheme Bid submitted in October 2006. A new Hartlepool area public transport timetable book will be published in November 2006. The council will work with Stagecoach to publish a new timetable map to replace the 2005 edition. It is proposed to hold another bus surgery in conjunction with Stagecoach during 2007. A Tees</p>	<p>Geoff Knowlson (Traffic and Transportation)</p>	<p>2006/07</p>

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		Valley Bus Users Forum is planned to be held in early 2007.		
(f)	That a formalised mechanism be established to engage the Authority, commercial operators and developers in early discussions of future planned developments within Hartlepool, to establish how the bus network may be extended to areas of new development prior to approval of planning applications, such as the Victoria Harbour Development;	<p>Review accessibility by local bus services as part of the consideration of planning applications. Ensure the successful implementation of Section 106 agreements to secure funding towards improving the bus service network where appropriate.</p> <p>The accessibility of proposed new developments included as an integral part of the consideration of planning applications. Funding for justified additional bus services secured as part of legal agreements (Section 106). Recent examples include Morrison's, Victoria Harbour and Tesco.</p>	Chris Roberts (Traffic and Transportation)	2006/07
(g)	That a mechanism be established to enable the Authority and commercial operators to consult with Elected Members in advance of the withdrawal of and/or major changes to bus services within Hartlepool;	<p>Produce a bus registration circular for members detailing changes to bus registrations.</p> <p>A circular detailing changes to registrations during October and November 2006, and proposed action, was circulated to members. Members who have an objection to any of the</p>	John Lewer (Traffic and Transportation)	August 2006

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		items in the circular may have them raised at the next available meeting of the Culture, Housing and Transportation Portfolio.		
(h)	That the Authority, through negotiation, awards future subsidised bus contracts that are mutually beneficial to the Authority and bus operators (with particular reference to the major tendering round in 2007);	<p>Produce a bus-tendering programme for 2007, including a review of existing supported services and involvement of operators and communities, which are mutually beneficial to the authority and bus operators.</p> <p>A detailed review of HBC supported bus contracts for August 2007 is currently on-going with the help of consultants. Passenger surveys will be undertaken in November 2006 and January 2007 to inform the process. A full consultation exercise on supported services will be conducted in early 2007. A tendering programme has been produced as part of this exercise.</p>	John Lewer (Traffic and Transportation)	August 2006
(i)	That a reduced fares scheme to enable access to education and employment across the Tees Valley area for 16-18 year olds be explored;	Review provision for a 16-18 Borough wide and Tees Valley wide concessionary scheme. Identify potential funding sources. Liaise with other Council departments and Tees Valley authorities	John Lewer (Traffic and Transportation)	December 2006

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		<p>on such a scheme.</p> <p>An investigation into a Tees Valley wide 16- 18 year old concessionary fares scheme is currently investigated by a sub-group the Tees Valley Employment, Education and Training Partnership of which Hartlepool Borough Council is a member.</p>		
(j)	That the discontinuation of individual services, together with a lack of provision in particular areas of the town, (paragraph 15. 4 refers) be addressed by the Authority in negotiation with commercial operators in order to reinstate or introduce services, where funding allows;	<p>Review bus provision in Hartlepool as part of the Borough Council supported bus contracts in 2007. Review under provision of bus services in negotiations with bus operators. Reinstate services where funding permits.</p> <p>The overall coverage of supported bus services is being addressed by the review of tendered bus services for August 2007. Coverage for withdrawn commercial bus services is being addressed where budgets permits, for example service 5.</p>	John Lewer (Traffic and Transportation)	March 2006
(k)	That the Authority explores a mechanism by which to lobby Central Government in relation to regulating the local bus service	The authority will lobby Central Government on greater bus regulation, through the Government Office for the North East, membership of the	John Lewer (Traffic and Transportation)	2006/07

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	provision (that was de-regulated under the Transport Act 1985);	<p>Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) and other regional groupings.</p> <p>The Government is due to present outline proposals for modifying the regulation of bus services in the Queen's speech in November 2006, ahead of draft legislation. The Council will continue to lobby the Government through Government Office for the North East, at a Tees Valley level and through membership of the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers (ATCO).</p>		
(l)	That the findings of the Tees Valley Quality Bus Network Review and their implications for Hartlepool be assessed.	<p>Assess the impact of the recommendations of the Tees Valley Bus Network Review on Hartlepool. Take account of recommendations as part of the major bus tendering round undertaken in 2007, and in future negotiations with bus operators.</p> <p>The Tees Valley Quality Bus Network Review is now a major element of the Tees Valley Connect Project and the Major Scheme Bid. This forms part of the City Region Development</p>	John Lewer (Traffic and Transportation)	March 2007

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		Programme. Presentations have already been made to members relating to Tees Valley Connect. The Tees Valley Quality Bus Network Review will be taken into account in the review of tendered bus services for August 2007.		
(m)	That the Authority submits a progress report on the recommendations contained within this report, within six months, to the Neighborhood Services Scrutiny Forum.	A progress report is to be presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum on November 29 th . Covering report and this response against agreed actions.	John Lewer (Traffic and Transportation)	November 2006

PROPOSED CHANGES TO REGISTRATION OF BUS SERVICES APPENDIX B

Date: 8/11/06

This circular covers the 'Notices and Proceedings' publications published by the North East Traffic Commissioner, for the period 15/9/06 to 13/10/06.

Members are asked to contact the Transportation Team Leader within seven days from the date on the notification if they object to the recommendation.

Details of any objection from members will be confirmed in writing by the Transportation Team Leader (telephone ext 4140).

Service Number	Operator	Description of Change	Recommendation
30	Go Wear	<p>From 9th October 2006 a new service 30 was introduced linking Hartlepool with Sunderland. This service travels via Blackhall, Horden, Peterlee, and Ryhope before terminating at Sunderland Interchange. The route within Hartlepool is via Marina Way, A689, Stockton Road, Victoria Road, York Road, Raby Road, Winterbottom Avenue, Holdforth Road, A179, and Easington Road.</p> <p>The service operates from Monday to Saturday to an hourly frequency with the first departure from Marina Way at 0730 the final journey arrives back in Hartlepool at 1838. The journey time from Hartlepool to Sunderland is 56 minutes.</p>	No Action

33	Arriva	From 12th November 2006, the service 33 operating between Hartlepool and Bishop Auckland daily, will be cut back to Chilton near Ferryhill. For passengers wishing to travel forward to Bishop Auckland, rapid interchange is available onto the hourly Arriva service 3. The hourly frequency of the service 33 will remain.	<p>No Action</p> <p>While Hartlepool passengers will have to have a change of bus between Hartlepool and Bishop Auckland, easy connections are available, and journey times are little affected.</p>
231	Go Wear	From 12th November 2006 the service 231 between Hartlepool and Sunderland will be withdrawn. The service between Sunderland and Peterlee will be replaced by the new X35 service. For passengers travelling between Sunderland and Hartlepool, the daily 229/230 and the new Monday to Saturday service 30 are available.	<p>No Action</p> <p>In view of the good range of alternative services there is no need for further action in this instance.</p>

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

29 November 2006



Report of: Head of Public Protection & Housing

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE
SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION – FURTHER
INFORMATION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Having considered a scoping report on the background to the private rented sector generally at the meeting held on 21 October 2006, this report considers some of the main issues in more detail.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum considered a scoping report on Private Sector Landlords on 25 October 2006. Following that meeting, further details and information are set out in this report on the following:
- (i) Housing benefit issues
 - (ii) Voluntary Accreditation Scheme for private landlords
 - (iii) Selective licensing
 - (iv) Housing market renewal
 - (v) Shared ownership

3. HOUSING BENEFIT ISSUES

- 3.1 The main issues of housing benefits affecting the private rented sector are:
- Under 25 single room rates
 - Discretionary Payments
 - Rent assessments

3.2 Under 25 Single Room Rate

This was introduced 10 years ago and limits housing benefits for under 25s to what you would pay in your areas for a single room in shared accommodation. This severely restricts the accommodation that under 25s can take on. It affects our ability to house statutorily homeless applicants in the private sector. Nationally tens of thousands of under 25s are affected and Government statistics indicate that the number of claimants assessed under single room rent rules fell dramatically since its introduction from 31,600 in 1997 to 11,990 in 2005. So what happens to them?

- 3.3 Many are forced to 'sofa surf' and have become part of the 'hidden homeless', others use other benefits to pay their rent (going without food or fuel) many end up in hostels or houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Vulnerable young people may be forced to live in unsuitable accommodation where they are exposed to drugs, crime etc. This can lead to future 'failure' of tenancies leading to repeat homelessness, rough sleeping etc. Even for those young people in work the under 25 rule affects their ability to find and pay for accommodation. Young people earn less money and may be reliant on housing benefit, landlords also consider the implications of their tenants losing their jobs and being unable to afford to pay the rent.

3.4 Rent Assessments

There is a 'mechanism' (via the Rent Officer Service) to restrict rents to the average of the area. The Rent Service provides valuations on rents charged to Housing Benefit Claimants. The valuation is their assessment of a reasonable rent based for a property based on locality, size and general condition. They compare rent charged to the general level of rent for similar accommodation in the immediate area. The valuation should, therefore, be based on the current market for rented accommodation in the area. Housing Benefit is restricted to that assessment. Where the actual rent charged is higher, claimants have to pay the shortfall themselves. Additionally the accommodation should be 'suitable for the applicants needs' so where the accommodation is bigger than the claimant 'needs', perhaps has an extra bedroom, then the assessment will be less, again leading to a shortfall for the claimant to cover.

- 3.5 In Hartlepool there is a growing issue over rent assessments – the assessed rent rarely covers the actual rent charged and there is a feeling that they do not reflect the market. This may be intentional to help keep rents low, it would be detrimental if housing benefit levels were to artificially inflate the market rent. It is expected that the rent charged will be reduced to the assessed rent, however this appears to be rarely the case.
- 3.6 The shortfall leads to financial difficulties for residents, rent arrears, homelessness etc. There is some, limited assistance through discretionary payments, however these payments are not a solution to the 'problem' of rent assessments being consistently lower than the actual rent charged. This may be a North East problem – in some areas the rent assessment issues would

affect certain areas where rent levels are higher due to demand for accommodation. In Hartlepool it appears to be across the whole rented sector.

3.7 Discretionary Payments

This fund is not a true housing benefit payment. A sum is allocated to each authority annually to prevent homelessness and maintain tenancies. Whilst there is no time specified in the regulations it is often assumed to have a maximum of 6 months. It's aimed at helping people plan their move rather than be evicted. For example if a family becomes unable to pay the full rent it can top up their housing benefit to enable them to find cheaper accommodation.

- 3.8 Hartlepool is allocated £45,000 and so far this year we have used £39,000 helping 185 applicants. Last year we helped 250 applicants and spent all the allocation. Any money not spent is returned to the Government and they have, historically, split this between the authorities who have spent additional funds that year. It therefore makes no sense to under spend and, whilst no additional funds are guaranteed, spending additional funding should be considered.

Options to consider:

1. To lobby parliament to change the under 25 single room rent
2. To fund the H/B shortfall for under 25s who are statutorily homeless to enable them to access private rented sector
3. To further lobby Rent Officers for 'more realistic' rent assessments
4. To spend over the grant allocation for discretionary payments in order to prevent homelessness (and to encourage a higher level of funding).

4. **VOLUNTARY ACCREDITATION SCHEME FOR PRIVATE LANDLORDS**

- 4.1 The accreditation scheme was implemented to encourage landlords to improve the standards of property and management. It forms part of a holistic approach to dealing with issues in the private rented sector. It is just one element of a range of tools to encourage and enforce improvements in the sector and to support good landlords. As a voluntary scheme with no statutory enforcement power the accreditation scheme was not intended to resolve all the issues, particularly with the worst landlords. It complements the Council's enforcement powers – for repairs and management (harassment and illegal eviction).
- 4.2 The introduction of the accreditation scheme has led to an improved engagement with landlords. Closer relationships with landlords improved our understanding of the market and enabled us to focus activities more effectively.

- 4.3 The very nature of the scheme means that the worst landlords will not improve their standards. Landlords can withdraw from the scheme rather than act to remedy issues. When faced with non-compliance or non-cooperation the scheme can only threaten withdrawal of membership and recommend to colleagues enforcement action where appropriate. The scheme is one of advice; it relies on landlords to take action and to cooperate. It cannot take direct action to resolve problems and relies on advice and persuasion to encourage landlords to comply and improve.
- 4.4 The scheme provides advice to over 200 landlords per year on management and maintenance of rented properties. The scheme is also involved in antisocial behaviour complaints and advises landlords on responsible and effective methods to deal with ASB.
- 4.5 Staffing levels within the scheme and the private sector housing team in general has meant that not all properties covered by the scheme have been inspected – forcing a reliance on random inspection or reaction to complaints from tenants. Whilst the scheme can encourage a high level of property conditions, the scheme (and the Council) is unable to enforce property conditions that are above the statutory minimum.

5. SELECTIVE LICENSING CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The returns from the consultation are currently being analysed. Whilst it is important not to prejudge the outcome the early indications are that residents are very interested in the scheme and landlords have a number of concerns.
- 5.2 The awaited guidance has now been produced and preliminary indications are that our consultation process complies with the guidance.
- 5.3 Further information on the consultation process may be available to verbally report at your meeting.
- 5.4 Should we introduce a licensing scheme we should consider the implications for the accreditation scheme. As the licensing scheme is limited both geographically and in what is included it should, perhaps, be seen as complementary to the accreditation scheme, rather than an alternative. The accreditation scheme is very successful in achieving its objectives of advising and encouraging landlords – this success should be retained and expanded to work alongside the licensing scheme in order to achieve optimum outcomes from both schemes.

6. HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL

- 6.1 It has been clear for some years that the housing market in Hartlepool has not been in balance. Relatively low prices for new build properties up to a couple of years ago have encouraged owner-occupiers to move from the town centre and for first time buyers to buy new properties rather than the more traditional

first time buyers market of terraced homes. Rising prices of all properties has changed this slightly as first time buyers are less able to buy properties of any type, increasing the demand for rented homes. Other owner-occupiers have continued to choose new build in preference to the smaller terraced properties.

- 6.2 To tackle housing market issues two regeneration areas (NDC area of West Central Hartlepool and North Central Hartlepool) are currently in the process of demolishing 620 homes plus commercial properties between the first three sites. Between 40 and 50% of these were owned by private landlords, although not of them were let.
- 6.3 The costs for acquisitions for the first three sites (including property purchase, relocation packages, home loss and disturbance payments, conveyancing and valuation costs, security and decommissioning costs, various professional fees, CPO public enquiry costs, delivery team running costs etc) has been around £20m. New private investment by Yuills and Wimpey (developer partners) i.e. the build and construction costs and other investment associated with the new build programme will equate to about £40m plus additional investment including 20 shared ownership units, training and employment opportunities for local people etc.
- 6.4 Ideally we are looking for a further minimum of £20m over the next five years to implement the next phases of both programmes, in consultation with residents. Funding will continue to be a mixture but will include:
 - Housing Capital Grant through Regional Housing Board (subject to bidding process, contributions to Regional and Sub-Regional and TVL Housing Strategies) in partnership with Tees Valley partners.
 - New Deal for Communities
 - Housing Corporation capital funding for new build properties to rent or low cost home ownership.
 - Additional resources from Housing Corporation.
 - Exploration of TVL gap funding model to assist in financial modelling in partnership with Housing Hartlepool (who also have additional resources/assets to contribute).
- 6.5 Our regeneration strategy sets out how we will continue to monitor and assess the housing market in the town.

7. SHARED OWNERSHIP

- 7.1 There are numerous reasons for increasing home ownership and the range of objectives it could meet. These include enabling people to fulfil their aspirations and exercise choice as well as helping create sustainable communities or freeing up social tenancies for households in greater 'need'. This, however, includes inevitable trade-offs between the objectives. For example, freeing up social tenancies by encouraging better-off households to

move into home ownership elsewhere could lead to a greater concentration of people on low incomes in certain neighbourhoods.

- 7.2 There are a range of low cost home ownership initiatives – from discounted sales (where for example houses are built for sale on land owned by the council, enabling them to be sold minus the cost of land – discount would be repayable if property sold within e.g., 5 years). However, the most popular form of low cost home ownership initiatives is shared or equity share.
- 7.3 The property is owned, usually by a registered social landlord and a share is sold (through a lease) to an applicant – the remaining share is usually rented from the RSL, or in the case of equity share is held by the owner until the property is sold when a return is made on the investment as a result of an increase in value of the property (this assumes that house prices will rise).
- 7.4 Until a couple of years ago there was very little demand for shared ownership schemes in Hartlepool. Terraced houses and some new build properties were relatively affordable. Today however, the more desirable terraced houses and new build properties have risen above many residents ability to purchase. In order to encourage residents of North and West Central Hartlepool to remain in the area and to help them purchase homes, it will be essential to offer shared ownership options.
- 7.5 We do have some limited shared ownership properties in Hartlepool – Tees Valley Housing Association built and sold 6 bungalows for the elderly at Middle Warren under a s106 (a planning requirement for 'affordable' housing). This scheme has proved extremely popular. Additionally we made a successful bid through Three Rivers Housing Association for department of health funding for 6 shared ownership flats for people with a learning disability. The scheme offers residents the opportunity to own their own home. As the remaining 'share' is owned by Three Rivers HA the resident pays rent – which covers a complete repairing responsibility by the Housing Association, offering peace of mind for the residents. The Retirement Village currently being built by the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust will include outright purchase and shared ownership properties as well as homes for rent.
- 7.6 The current housing market situation means that shared ownership is now a viable and essential requirement to enable residents to remain within the regeneration areas and to remain owners. Shared ownership properties together with rented and full ownership homes contribute to sustainable mixed communities.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That members of the Forum note the content of the report and where appropriate seek clarification.