

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Wednesday 10th January 2007

at 2.00pm

**in the Main Hall, Owton Manor Community Centre,
Wynyard Road, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors SAllison, 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

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2006 (*attached*)
- 3.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2006 (*attached*)
- 3.3 Minutes of the Focus Group held on 13th December 2006 (*attached*)

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

- 6.1 Budget and Policy Framework – Consultation Proposals 2007/08 – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Scrutiny Investigation into 'The Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords' :-

- 7.1 Focus Group Session with residents, landlords and tenants held on 13 December 2006: -
- a) Covering Report- *Scrutiny Support Officer*, and
 - b) Verbal feedback/findings from Members in attendance at the Focus Group session.
- 7.2 Evidence from Housing Hartlepool :-
- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*); and
 - (b) Presentation by Cath Purdy, Chief Executive, Housing Hartlepool.
- 7.3 Evidence from New Deal for Communities:-
- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*); and
 - (b) Presentation by Malcolm Walker, Programme Manager, New Deal for Communities
- 7.4 Evidence from Community Safety and Prevention Unit:-
- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*); and
 - (b) Presentation by Alison Mawson, Head of Community Safety and Prevention Unit

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8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

- i) Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 14th February 2007, commencing at 2.00pm in the Main Hall, Owton Manor Community Centre, Wynyard Road, Hartlepool

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

15th November 2006

Present:

Councillor: Gerard Hall (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jonathan Brash, Kevin Cranney, Steve Gibbon, Gordon Henery
and Pat Rayner

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2(ii) Councillor Sheila Griffin
was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Rob Cook.

Also Present: Councillor Ray Waller, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public
Health and Councillor Victor Tumilty, Portfolio Holder for Culture,
Leisure and Transportation

Resident Representatives:
Ann Butterfield and Ian Campbell

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

55. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Stephen Allison, Rob Cook and
resident representative Linda Shields.

56. Declarations of interest by Members

Councillors Ray Waller and Gerard Hall declared a non-prejudicial interest in
minute 59.

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

No items.

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

No items.

59. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents – Neighbourhood Services Department: Budget and Policy Framework Initial Consultation Proposals 2007/08.

At Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 27th October 2006, it was agreed that the Executive's Initial Budget and Policy Framework consultation proposals for 2007/08 be considered on a departmental basis by the appropriate Scrutiny Forum. The Director of Neighbourhood Services was in attendance and presented the departmental pressures and priorities, grant terminations and proposed savings which were attached by way of appendix.

Termination of Grant Regimes

In relation to the ERDF Community Environmental Action Initiative grant termination of £59,000, whilst the Forum supported the mainstreaming of this grant for this year, it was felt that sponsorship should be examined as an option for future years funding.

Budget Pressures

The Director of Neighbourhood Services informed Members that the pressures identified within Appendix A were unavoidable pressures for the next financial year. Members were informed that fines were in place for authorities that go over the landfill targets set. There was a Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme operating whereby authorities can sell any spare capacity to authorities struggling to meet the targets.

Budget Priorities

The Director of Neighbourhood Services informed Members that top level priorities were identified as services that should be carried out, although not at the same level as a pressure. Under second level priorities, considerable concern was expressed by Members regarding increasing pest numbers and in particular pigeons and sea gulls. Members suggested that Cabinet explore further strategies for the reduction of pigeon and sea gull numbers in Hartlepool.

Proposed Savings

3%

Members were particularly concerned about the proposed saving for car parking and the impact it would have on residents. The Forum suggested that an alternative option be explored to avoid the need for the increase by either moving savings with a green risk, as identified in the 4% or 5% savings, to be included as part of the proposed 3% savings or exploring other ways of identifying resources from motorists.

4% and 5%

With regard to the proposed closure of all public conveniences, Members referred to the recent inquiry undertaken by this Forum in relation to the provision of public conveniences across the Town, but mainly linked to the tourist areas. Members were unanimous in their strong opposition to this proposal and asked that Cabinet examine the proposals put forward within the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's report on Public Convenience Provision in Hartlepool, with emphasis on improving provision in tourist areas.

Decision

The Budget and Policy Framework initial consultation proposals for 2007/08 were considered and the following proposals would be presented to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 17th November 2006.

a) Termination of Grant Regimes

It was proposed to accept the budget pressures as identified within Appendix A with the suggestion that sponsorship be examined for future years.

b) Budget Pressures

It was proposed to accept the budget pressures as identified within Appendix B

c) Budget Priorities

It was proposed to accept the budget priorities as identified within Appendix C with the suggestion that Cabinet explore further strategies for the reduction of pigeon and sea gull numbers in Hartlepool.

d) Savings – 3%

Members supported the majority of savings as identified within Appendix D up to the level of 3%. However, they opposed the proposed saving for car parking and the impact it would have on residents. Alternative options were proposed by the Forum as detailed above.

e) Savings – 4% and 5%

Members felt that the savings identified at 4% and 5% would have a detrimental effect on the services provided by the Neighbourhood Services Department. Members were unanimous in their strong opposition to the proposal to close public conveniences across the Town and asked that Cabinet examine the proposals put forward within the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's report on Public Convenience Provision in Hartlepool, with emphasis on improving provision in tourist areas.

GERARD HALL

CHAIRMAN

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM MINUTES

29th November 2006

Present:

Councillor: Gerard Hall (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jonathan Brash, Gordon Henery, Geoff Lilley, Pat Rayner and
Dennis Waller

Resident Representatives:

Ann Butterfield, Ian Campbell and Linda Shields

Also Present

Malcolm Walker, Programme Director, New Deal for the
Communities

Brian Dixon, Programme Manager, New Deal for the
Communities

Officers: Penny Garner-Carpenter, Housing Strategy Manager
Alastair Simpson, Tenancy Relations Officer
Mike Blair, Transportation and Traffic Manager
John Lewer, Public Transport Co-ordinator
Ken Natt, Landlord Registration Officer
Christopher Akers-Belcher, Benefits Manager
Joanne Burnley, Senior Environmental Health Officer
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

60. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harry Clouth, Rob Cook and Steve Gibbon.

61. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

62. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2006

Confirmed.

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

No items.

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

No items.

65. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents

No items.

66. Six Monthly Progress Report – Scrutiny Investigation into Hartlepool Local Bus Services Provision (*Head of Technical Services*)

The Transportation and Traffic Manager presented a report which provided Members with an update on the progress made in relation to the investigation into Hartlepool's Local Bus Service Provision six months after the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee made its recommendations. Following Cabinet's decision in relation to the Scrutiny Investigation an Action Plan and progress report from the Culture, Leisure and Transportation Portfolio Holder was considered by this Forum on 12th July 2006. An updated Action Plan was attached by way of appendix with the progress made to date outlined in bold. An example of the new bus registration circular, outlined in section (g) of the progress report was also attached by way of appendix.

A discussion followed where the following issues were raised:

- i) It was noted that the bus shelter outside the Central Library did not have any seats and that this was a particularly busy stop. The Transportation and Traffic Manager indicated that although previous seating had been subject to vandalism, an approach had been made to Adshel to provide some fixed seating.
- ii) Were the bus timetables available in larger print for the partially sighted? The Transportation and Traffic Manager responded that there was no

specific facility to produce the timetables in large print, mainly due to the amount of information included within the document. However, he added that he would look into this and if any requests for easier to read versions were received, they would be dealt with.

- iii) During the inquiry, disability access to buses was raised, how was this progressing? The Transportation and Traffic Manager indicated that it was proposed that by 2012, the full bus fleet would be low floor buses.
- iv) The Building Schools for the Future programme could lead to particular schools being more popular resulting in across town travel for school children. The Transportation and Traffic Manager indicated that the provision of transport within school hours would need to be looked at in more detail.
- v) If the accessibility of new developments was to be an integral part of planning consents why had this not been considered in relation to the newly developed Headland Doctors' Surgery? The Transportation and Traffic Manager reported it was not built into the planning consent for this development, but that the No.5 bus service had been reinstated to serve this area in June 2006. He added that on-board surveys would be carried out within the first year to ascertain if this service could be improved.
- vi) What was the definition of major changes to bus services in relation to proposed consultation with Elected Members? The Transportation and Traffic Manager reported that all alterations to bus services will be reported, but due to the fact that the bus operator was a commercial enterprise, Elected Members can only express their concerns.
- vii) What form would the consultation take? The Transportation and Traffic Manager indicated that on bus surveys and on-line surveys would be undertaken and to ensure every aspect was covered, the consultation will be made as broad as possible.
- viii) Did the viable services provided not subsidise the less viable services? The Transportation and Traffic Manager responded that if a bus service was not making a profit it would be terminated. However, on-board surveys were undertaken and if a route was proving to be commercial, there would be no need to a subsidy to be provided by the local authority.
- ix) Members discussed the deregulation of bus services and the changes to the provision across the town instigated by this.
- x) Members were pleased to note that the current funding for the Dial-a-Ride service had been maintained along with the proposed expansion of the service.

Decision

The report was noted.

67. Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation – Further Information (*Head of Public Protection and Housing*)

As part of the ongoing investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation, the Housing Strategy Manager presented a report which provided further details and information as requested at the last meeting of this Forum on 25th October 2006. The areas covered included:

- i) Housing benefit issues
- ii) Voluntary accreditation scheme for private landlords
- iii) Selective licensing
- iv) Housing market renewal
- v) Shared ownership

A discussion followed in which Members raised the following issues:

- i) Rent assessments were based on the size of the property, but if the property was below standard how was this affected? The Housing Strategy Manager indicated that if a property was in poor condition, this may be reflected in the amount of Housing Benefit allocated which would impact on the tenants.
- ii) Would housing benefit be applicable where there was shared ownership of a property? The Housing Strategy Manager reported that housing benefit would be applicable for the rented part. Help towards the interest payments on the mortgage could be provided through income support.
- iii) Members supported the third of the proposed options outlined in the report for the lobbying of Rent Officers for 'more realistic' rent assessments, however, concern was expressed regarding what powers/resources the local authority had to do this. The Housing Strategy Manager indicated that the local authority had no power in relation to what assessments rent officers make, but a push to get a reassessment for Hartlepool as a whole should be considered. A representative from the Citizen's Advice Bureau added that from 2008, the local housing allowance would be based on a tenant's needs not accommodation. If the assessment of rent benefit was higher than the cost of their chosen accommodation, the tenant keeps the difference.
- iv) It was noted that there would be a rent convergence in 2012 whereby there would be no difference between private and registered social

landlords. Members questioned whether there was any benefit in lobby for changes to the system when this would occur in 2012 anyway. The Housing Strategy Manager indicated that there had already been numerous delays with this system as a result of which there was no definite date for implementation.

- v) Further attention was drawn to the possibility that the review of the way in which the housing allowance is set, as detailed in paragraph (iii) above could result in a duplication of the problems experienced with the system currently in place for under 25's. In view of this, and the issues raised around the feasibility of lobbying for more realistic rent assessments in light of the rent convergence proposals in 2012 it was requested that Rent Officers be invited to a further meeting of the Forum to discuss the matter further.
- vi) The Senior Environmental Health Officer indicated that consultation had been undertaken with residents and that the preliminary findings had given a good indication. The Scrutiny Support Officer informed Members that a further report would be submitted to this Forum once a full evaluation of the results had been undertaken.
- vii) In relation to the Voluntary Accreditation Scheme Members queried if there was any quantifiable evidence to show the effect of the accreditation scheme introduced? The Landlord Liaison Officer reported that:-
 - (a) It was difficult to prove although from the inspections recently undertaken standards were improving, in particular with regard to smoke alarms being fitted and working and security of the property. The scheme was aimed at encouraging good practice; and
 - (b) Figures were not to hand in terms of the effect of the scheme in particular in relation to the creation of larger numbers of stable tenancies. These figures would, however, be compiled for consideration by the Forum at a later meeting.
- viii) How many landlords had opted out of the scheme? The Landlord Liaison Officer informed Members that one landlord had opted out of the scheme after being challenged although new landlords were being recruited all the time. A number of landlords were increasing their portfolios of properties which were resulting in an increase in rented properties but not landlords. There were currently 1500 properties covered by approximately 380 landlords.
- ix) The Programme Manager from New Deal for Communities indicated that the voluntary scheme of selective licensing had proved positive but that practice elsewhere to deal with anti-social behaviour needed to be examined. It was felt that anti-social behaviour was a major barrier to the regeneration of particular areas of the town.

- x) The proposed shared ownership schemes were discussed and that options were currently being examined where empty homes were being offered through shared ownership arrangements, although it was felt that this would be more attractive if it was offered on new build.
- xi) It was suggested that should the introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme go ahead then the most appropriate course of action would be to continue to run the Voluntary Registration Scheme alongside it for landlords in those areas outside the area chosen for selective licensing.
- xii) Members felt that the implications of the introduction of a Tenant Referencing Scheme needed to be looked into further as part of the investigation and requested that a further report be provided. Members also highlighted the importance of landlord licensing, tenant referencing and enforcement as key elements in dealing with anti-social behaviour.
- xiii) Members commented on the need for a package to be in place to help landlords with 'tricky' tenants and for good tenants to ensure that they where, and what type, of help they can get.
- xiv) It was suggested that the introduction of a scheme should be looked into whereby single tenants in three or four bedroom houses would be given the option of downsizing. This would assist in releasing the types of properties that are in short supply in the town.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to a very interesting and informative discussion. The Scrutiny Support Officer informed Members that a Focus Group had been arranged for 13th December to discuss these issues in more detail. A press release had been issued and all Residents' Associations would be invited to participate at this meeting.

Decision

- i) That the report and discussions which followed be used to inform the on-going investigation.
- ii) That rent officers be invited to a further meeting of the Forum to discuss the way in which the housing allowance was set.
- iii) Figures be provided in relation to the effect that the Voluntary Accreditation Scheme had, in particular in relation to the creation of larger numbers of stable tenancies.
- iv) That a further report be provided in relation to the implications of the introduction of a Tenant Referencing Scheme.

GERARD HALL

CHAIRMAN

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOCUS GROUP

MINUTES

13 December 2006

Present:

Councillors: Gerard Hall, Steve Gibbon, Gordon Henery and Geoff Lilley

Resident Representative
Linda Shields

Also present

Residents/Tenants/Landlords

Terry Barnes, Muriel Boreland, Beryl Clark, Marilyn Kelsey, Mr Lightman, Alison Lilley, Margaret Mansfield, Brian McBean, Irene Nelson, Julie Richardson, Julie Rudge, Bill Sutherland, Phil Thompson and Sue Thompson

Officers: Penny Garner-Carpenter, Housing Strategy Manager
Alison Mawson, Head of Community Safety and Prevention
Sally Forth, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of resident representative Ann Butterfield.

2. Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords

The Scrutiny Support Officer gave a presentation which outlined how the Scrutiny function linked in with the Democratic process together with clarification on the aims and objectives of the investigation.

This was the first of a series of sessions and would provide residents, tenants and landlords with an opportunity to express their views on the performance/operation of private sector rented accommodation and landlords in Hartlepool.

Discussion ensued in which the following issues were raised:-

- Landlords in the Raby Road/Perth Street and Stephen Street areas were renting properties to unacceptable tenants ie drug dealers resulting in anti-social behaviour problems
- Appearance of some rented properties which were not maintained/looked after created an adverse impression of the area and caused inconvenience to residents
- A landlord advised that it was difficult to evict anti-social tenants due to pressure from social services etc
- Government quangos living off anti-social behaviour
- Landlords should carry out more checks on suitability of tenants
- Some privately rented properties were unsafe and not adequately maintained
- Tenants had reported problems to landlords/collection agents and no action was taken. It was suggested that it should be easier for tenants to contact landlords and more assistance/information should be available
- Residents unhappy with current process of boarding up properties
- Unable to contact social services after 4.00 pm
- Bond Scheme was suggested
- Response from Neighbourhood Police is patchy and difficulty addressing noise/nuisance problems
- Why does the Council pay rent without inspecting the properties
- Council should publicise emergency contact number
- Poor police response to be addressed
- Enforcement powers should be used to address problems
- Speed of enforcement should be addressed

The Chair and the Scrutiny Support Officer provided a summary of the main issues raised. The Scrutiny Manager added that the content of this Focus Group session would be considered at the next meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum scheduled for Wednesday 10 January 2007 commencing at 2.00 pm at Owton Manor Community Centre to which residents were welcome to attend. A brief summary of the information collated would be distributed to all attendees together with a copy of the Scrutiny investigation's

final report.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and stated that their attendance and contribution had highlighted the strength of feeling in relation to their neighbourhoods. The comments of the Focus Group would be included in a final report with a series of recommendations for consideration by Cabinet on how to improve the situation. This type of public participation was welcomed and attendees were encouraged to attend future meetings of the Scrutiny Forums.

Decision

That the comments of the Group, be noted and discussions be used to assist the Forum in completing the scrutiny investigation.

GERARD HALL

CHAIR

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

10 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES DEPARTMENT:
BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK
CONSULTATION PROPOSALS 2007/08

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the opportunity for the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum to consider the Neighbourhood Services departmental pressures and priorities, grant terminations and proposed savings as part of the Budget and Policy Framework consultation proposals for 2007/08.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At a meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 27 October 2006, consideration was given to the Executive's Initial Budget and Policy Framework Consultation Proposals for 2007/08. At this meeting it was agreed that the initial consultation proposals would be considered on a departmental basis by the appropriate Scrutiny Forum. This occurred during November 2006.
- 2.2 The comments/observations of each Forum were fed back to the additional meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 17 November 2006 and were used to formulate the formal Scrutiny response to Cabinet on 4 December 2006. Details of the comments/observations made by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum are outlined in **Appendix A**.
- 2.3 The comments/observations made by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee were taken into consideration by Cabinet during the finalisation of its finalised Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2007/08 on 18 December 2006. The Executive's finalised proposals were considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 19 December 2006 and repeating the process previously implemented have again been referred to the appropriate scrutiny Forum for consideration on a departmental basis.

2.4 As such attached as **Appendices B to E** are the Neighbourhood Services grant terminations, departmental pressures and priorities, and proposed savings as part of the Budget and Policy Framework consultation proposals for 2007/08. Cabinet has not proposed any changes to the departmental grant terminations, pressures or priorities referred for Scrutiny in October. In terms of the initial savings Cabinet is now proposing to only implement the 3% items previously identified, but not the £90,000 saving from increasing Resident Only car parking charges, which this Forum asked Cabinet to reconsider. Cabinet is proposing an alternative strategy for achieving this savings which consists of the following package:

- (a) an increase in resident parking charge to £5;
- (b) introduce Monday to Friday contract charging and pay and display car parking charge at Maritime Experience Car Park with exemptions for visitors to Maritime Experience;
- (c) increase staff car park charges;
- (d) introduce car parking charges to Church Street;
- (e) introduce pay and display/permit parking on Whitby/Tower/Surtees Streets; and
- (f) introduce permit parking in Scarborough Street.

For Members information the full list of potential savings identified by Cabinet are detailed at **Appendix E** and the items this Forum previously requested Cabinet to reconsider are identified by shading.

2.5 Cabinet has also identified one-off proposals to be funded from the LPSA Reward Grant and available capital resources and the issues affecting your Committee are summarised below. For a number of potential capital proposals work is still ongoing to quantify the costs of these works and these details will be included in the final budget proposals which will be referred to Council in February.

Proposals to be funded from LPSA Reward Grant

- (a) Tree works after tree survey £40,000
- (b) Verge maintenance tree works £60,000
- (c) Repair costs of Incinerator £50,000

Proposals to be funded from Capital Resources

- (a) Highways issues - cost not yet known
- (b) Drainage works to Cemetery £171,000. Costs to be funded from Prudential Borrowing which will be funded from an increase in cemetery and crematoria fees. Details **Appendix F**.

2.6 To assist Members of this Scrutiny Forum in the consideration of the Neighbourhood Services departmental proposals, arrangements have been made for the Director of Neighbourhood Services to be in attendance and an invitation to this meeting has also been extended to the relevant Portfolio Holder (attendance subject to availability).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum:-

- (a) considers the Neighbourhood Services departmental pressures and priorities, grant terminations and proposed savings as part of the Budget and Policy Framework consultation proposals for 2007/08; and
- (b) formulates any comments and observations to be presented by the Chair of this Scrutiny Forum to the additional meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to be held on 19 January 2007 to enable a formal response to be presented to the Cabinet on 5 February 2007.

Contact Officer:- Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523 087
Email: joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Appendix A

Neighbourhood Services Department – Comments/Observations

- (a) Car Parking (£90,000 saving) – Concern was expressed regarding this proposed saving and the impact it would have on residents. The Forum suggested that an alternative option be explored to avoid the need for the increase by either moving savings with a green risk, as identified in the 4% or 5% savings, to be included as part of the proposed 3% savings or exploring other ways of identifying resources from motorists;
- (b) Concern was expressed that the Residents and Business Panel, which was established as a result of the Parking Permits Scrutiny Enquiry undertaken by the former Resources Scrutiny Enquiry, appeared to have not participated in the recommendations presented to Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum. It was also noted that the requested review of the Panel's findings had not been reported to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee as agreed.
- (c) Closure of all public conveniences (£110,000 saving) – Members were strongly opposed to this proposal and asked that Cabinet examine the proposals put forward within the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's report on Public Convenience Provision in Hartlepool, with emphasis on improving provision in tourist areas;
- (d) Grant Regimes Terminating during 2006/07 (ERDF Community Environmental Action Initiative - £59,000) – Whilst the Forum supported the mainstreaming of this grant for this year it was felt that sponsorships should be looked into for future years;

In addition it was noted that this service could also be delivered under contract with the CVS.

- (e) Second Level Budget Priorities 2007/08 (Environmental Protection – Development of Pest Control Service - £20,000) – Considerable concern was expressed regarding increasing pest numbers and in particular pigeons and sea gulls. Members suggested that Cabinet explore further strategies for the reduction of pigeon and sea gull numbers in Hartlepool.

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE OF GRANT REGIMES TERMINATING DURING 2006/2007

| Grant Title | Does Council need to consider mainstreaming the grant? Please state Yes/No and provide brief justification. | Value of Grant in 2006/2007 £'000 | Value of 2006/2007 Grant spent of staff costs (include NI and Pension) £'000 | Number of staff funded from Grant FTE's | Number of staff on fixed term contract FTE's | Estimated cost of making staff redundant £'000 | Funding available to fund redundancy costs £'000 |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Regional Transport travel advisor | Y – risk of loss of LPT monies | 15 | 15 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Travel Planning assistant | Y – risk of loss of LPT monies | 15 | 15 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| ERDF Community Environmental action initiative | Y – project unlikely to go ahead without mainstreaming of salaries and additional support for community projects – Pride in Hartlepool | 59 | 59 | ? | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Grant Regimes Terminating | | 89 | | | | | |

SCHEDULE OF BUDGET PRESSURES 2007/2008

| Budget Heading | Description of Budget Pressure | Risk Impact of Not Funding Pressure | Value Budget Pressure <u>2007/2008</u> <u>£'000</u> | Value of additional Budget Pressure in 2008/2009 (only complete this column if value shown in 2007/2008 column is part year pressure) <u>£'000</u> |
|----------------|--|--|---|---|
| Environment | The roll out of recycling kerbside collection/alternative weekly collections, was partly funded from temporary grant funding which has now ceased, without this money the new increased recycling project will fail and the authority will not achieve the government targets set. | Red Redundancy of two operatives @ £25k each per annum, however this is not the full saving as the central overhead will continue to require funding | 53 | |
| | | Total Budget Pressures | 53 | |

APPENDIX D

SCHEDULE OF RED BUDGET PRIORITIES 2007/2008
TOP LEVEL PRIORITIES

| Budget Heading | Description of Budget Priorities | Risk Impact of Not Funding Priorities | Priorities Value Budget Priorities <u>2007/2008</u> <u>£'000</u> | Value of additional Budget Priorities in 2008/2009 <u>£'000</u> |
|------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Environment LPSA | The loss of this budget will have a negative impact on street cleansing. The LPSA fund has bolstered the council's revenue budget and been used to fund two operatives per year as the existing budget is insufficient. (£53k). | Red Failure to maintain cleansing standards. | 53 | |
| School Catering | Implement nutritional standards. Restrictions in types of foods being served to children will impact greatly on the cost of ingredients, i.e. all children to be given bread with a meal if they choose to take it, will increase cost and the replacement of squash with milk or fruit juice as a drink with the meal will further increase the food cost. | Red Failure to follow Government guidelines and legislation. Ofsted inspector would adversely report. | 35 | 3 year programme of implementation of new standards will have knock-on effect. |

| Budget Heading | Description of Budget Priorities | Risk Impact of Not Funding Priorities | Priorities Value Budget Priorities <u>2007/2008</u> <u>£'000</u> | Value of additional Budget Priorities in 2008/2009 <u>£'000</u> |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Environment Marina – Navigation Point Cleaning | The council is in the process of adopting Navigation Point/the Marina because of its high profile to the town, especially in light of the Tall Ships event in 2010 and its strategic link to Victoria Harbour. Income has been generated from stakeholders however this will cease once adopted. The Maintenance of this asset has had a detrimental financial effect on the Cleansing service and other parts of the town have received a reduced service as a consequence. | Red High profile asset in light of Tall ships 2010 and strategic link to Victoria Harbour. Funding will enable the area to receive a cleansing service seven days a week whereas at the moment it operates Monday to Friday. | 30 | |
| | | Total of Top Priorities | 118 | |

SCHEDULE OF RED BUDGET PRIORITIES 2007/2008
SECOND LEVEL PRIORITIES

| Budget Heading | Description of Budget Priorities | Risk Impact of Not Funding Priorities | Priorities Value Budget Priorities <u>2007/2008</u> <u>£'000</u> | Value of additional Budget Priorities in 2008/2009 <u>£'000</u> |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Unscheduled Highway Maintenance | The UHM budget is currently inappropriate for need. A year on year reduction has seen this budget diminish to a point where the provision of Highways Maintenance and Gulley cleansing is below acceptable standards. The increased requirement for winter maintenance is also placing a severe strain on this budget. | Red Town's infrastructure deteriorating. Failure to meet BVPI | 150 | |
| Environment Dog Foul/Litter Bins – Emptying | The demand for additional litter bins and dog foul bins has increased substantially over the last two years. Whilst we are enforcing littering and dog foul incidents resident feedback is the bins are not being emptied enough. Originally there were 47 dog foul bins, it is now approaching 200, we have around 850 litter bins, all of which need emptying a minimum of twice per week. | Red Impact on BVPI199, cleanliness of the highway indicator, customer satisfaction with the frequency of dog foul bin emptying is low | 40 | |

| Budget Heading | Description of Budget Priorities | Risk Impact of Not Funding Priorities | Priorities Value Budget Priorities <u>2007/2008</u> <u>£'000</u> | Value of additional Budget Priorities in 2008/2009 <u>£'000</u> |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Environmental Protection Development of Pest Control Service | <p>Funding is required to develop the service (due to increase in number of complaints and increasing inability to reach targets and provide an effective service) and potentially to include control of feral birds.</p> <p>If the service were to be extended this would include offering contracts to businesses in the town which would offset some of the additional costs. Approx 5k income is expected in the first year.</p> | <p>Red</p> <p>Responsive times will increase beyond current two days, which will be unacceptable to the public.</p> <p>Unable to action increasing demand for seagull/pigeon control measures</p> <p>No development of private contract work (fee earning)</p> | 20 | |

| Budget Heading | Description of Budget Priorities | Risk Impact of Not Funding Priorities | Priorities Value Budget Priorities | Value of additional Budget Priorities in 2008/2009 |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | | | <u>2007/2008</u> <u>£'000</u> | <u>£'000</u> |
| Dial-a-Ride – Transport controller | <p>The Dial-a-Ride service will be brought in-house during the summer of 2006 and will be operated alongside the Local Authority's Community Transport Service. This will assist in enhancing the Dial-a-Ride service at specific times of the day. The Community Lynx bus will be funded through the Rural Bus Challenge scheme until April 2007.</p> <p>The service will be operated alongside the Dial-a-Ride service after that date and offer support to the Dial-a-Ride service in its quiet periods. The post of Transport Controller is funded through the Rural Bus Challenge Scheme until April 2007. The post is integral to the provision of the in-house Dial-a-Ride service.</p> | <p>Red</p> <p>Dial-a-Ride service may not be able to be enhanced. The Community Lynx bus will have to cease. The Transport Controller post would be lost – this would have a major impact on the in-house provision of the Dial-a-Ride service.</p> | 25 | |

| Budget Heading | Description of Budget Priorities | Risk Impact of Not Funding Priorities | Priorities Value Budget Priorities <u>2007/2008</u> <u>£'000</u> | Value of additional Budget Priorities in 2008/2009 <u>£'000</u> |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| | | | | |
| Supported Bus Service | The reintroduction of the Number 5 supported bus service was recently approved by the Mayor and subsequently tendered. The service is required to allow patients from the new doctors surgery on the Headland who live in the West View part of the town to gain access to this health facility. The Mayor had allocated an additional £75,000 to this budget for the service but the lowest tender was £87,000 leaving a shortfall of £12,000. As the service was restarted part way through the year the £75,000 will be sufficient this financial year but there will be a shortfall next year. The number 5 supported bus, or one or more of the other supported services, may have to be withdrawn next year if the budget shortfall is not met. | Red | 12 | |
| | | Total of Second Priorities | 247 | |

APPENDIX E

PROPOSED SAVING AT 3%, 4% AND 5%**NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

| Budget Heading | Description of Efficiency/Saving | Risk Assessment of implementing efficiency/saving | Impact of efficiency/saving on staffing levels | Value of efficiency/saving £'000 | Description of One off cost of achieving efficiency/saving | One off cost of achieving efficiency/saving £'000 |
|--|--|---|--|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Car Parking | E - Increase resident only parking charge from £1 to £20 per annum | Amber Risk: Political and public dissatisfaction with some residents leaving the scheme. | Increased enforcement | 90 | | |
| Car Parking | E - Introduce Monday-Friday contract parking at the Maritime Experience (100 bays), together with the introduction of charging for staff in Church Street. | Green Risk: Some public and political resistance. | Increased enforcement | 100 | | |
| Trading Account Administration | E - Reduce by two posts | Amber Risk: Potential impact on services delivery. Efficiencies expected to come from introduction of new costing system. Unable to identify which two posts will be redundant until costing system fully installed and operating. | 2 redundancies | 40 | redundancy payment | ?? |
| Financial Support | S - Reduce by half post | Green Risk: Low impact on services delivery. New system should enable remaining team to pick up this element of financial control. | .5 redeployment | 22 | Redeployment | ?? |
| Consumer Services Contractor Payments | S - Non renewal of existing contract with the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide consumer advice service | Green Risk: Government have recently introduced a regional 'Consumer Direct' telephone service to advise public on consumer matters. This overlaps significantly with the service provided by CAB. Non renewal of existing contract may result in reduction of service provided by CAB. Government may impose charge for the 'Consumer Direct' service at some future date | Some increase in number of enquiries to the Trading Standards section may result, but not expected to be significant | 14 | | Nil |
| Buildings Management and Maintenance | E - Cut one post from a group of 6 posts involved to differing degrees in this service to the Civic Centre, in particular, but also other Council Buildings and Schools | Amber Risk: Potential impact on Service delivery to occupiers/building managers. Impact on remainder of team to provide services. | 1 redundancy | 35 | Redundancy payment | |
| Emergency Call Out | S - Revision of call-out arrangement | Amber Risk: Potential impact on delivery of service and reduction in employees willing to undertake call-out. | | 10 | | |
| Section 38 Income - developers contribute to the inspection regime necessary | S - A one-off payment of £100,000 can be justified on the basis that the annual requirement for TOS and material testing is in the order of £90,000. The current balance is £256,572, which will leave approximately one and a half years funding for Technical Officer salaries and testing | Amber Risk: The current budget for Section 38s has increased over the past few years due, in the main, to the development at Middle Warren. This has generated a disproportionate surplus which may not be sustained in future years, particularly when Middle Warren is complete. TOS for two members of the Asset Management Team is paid for from this budget, supporting the overall Transportation and Traffic Management account. The future ability to cover this TOS will be dependant upon new developments which cannot be guaranteed with the possibility of budget pressures in subsequent years. | Staffing levels will be dependent upon income generated by new developments in future years. If the income is not sufficient it is possible that one or two members of staff cannot be sustained by existing staffing budgets. | 100 | N/A | N/A |
| TOTAL 3% | | | | 411 | | |

| Budget Heading | Description of Efficiency/Saving | Risk Assessment of implementing efficiency/saving | Impact of efficiency/saving on staffing levels | Value of efficiency/saving £'000 | Description of One off cost of achieving efficiency/saving | One off cost of achieving efficiency/saving £'000 |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Cemeteries & Crematorium | S - Raise charges for burials and cremations by 10% above existing levels, and that required for inflation, drainage improvements, etc. | Amber Risk: Liable to create public criticism. Hartlepool fees would probably become highest in the region. May result in need to abandon further drainage improvements to both Stranton and West View Cemeteries (otherwise yet further increases would be required). May impact on our future ability to repay loan charges for new cremator needed in 2011 (capital cost approx £750k). | Nil | 49 | Nil - see risk assessment | Nil - see risk assessment |
| Asset Team Leader Post | S - Vacant Post in Transportation and Traffic Section, Asset Management Team | Green Risk: The Council have a requirement to prepare an Asset Management Plan to direct future spending on all highway assets. This plan is currently under development in conjunction with the other Tees Valley Highway Authorities. An Asset Team Leader would be required to co-ordinate the development of this plan and its evolution into a Hartlepool document rather than a generic Tees Valley document. At present the Asset Management Team do not have a senior officer and report directly to the Transportation and Traffic Manager. Failure to complete and implement the Asset Management Plan could have a detrimental effect on future LTP allocations. | Asset Management Team would not have a direct line of management putting more pressure on the Transportation and Traffic Manager. | 40 | N/A | N/A |
| Waste Management | E - Household Waste Recycling Centre and Waste Transfer Station - servicing of both sites using two vehicles and two staff | Amber: outsourcing of this provision may result in two redundancies, but can probably redeploy. | Redeployment of two staff/redundancies | 35 | | |
| Service Development | E - Reduce by two posts | Green risk on service impact, however highly likely to lead to IT claim. Low impact on service delivery. Post currently being utilised in support of fleet function. History of problems in previous posts and now undertaking ad-hoc work where and when required. | 1 redundancy | 26 | Redundancy payment - potential IT claim | ?? |
| TOTAL 4% | | | | 561 | | |
| Service Development | S - Reduce by half post | Green Risk: Potential impact on service delivery/workforce development. Postholder currently on long-term sick. Reduced service being provided to managers. | Postholder may be leaving on early retirement due to ill health | 15 | Early retirement settlement - will be paid in any event | |
| Service Development | S - Reduce by half post | Green Risk: Minor impact on service - postholder currently acting up in role mentioned above. | Postholder may be leaving on early retirement due to ill health | 10 | | |
| Grounds Maintenance | S - Increase in Income from Unscheduled Works | Red Risk: At present approximately £300k is realised from works carried out for one-off landscape and other unscheduled works to clients. This subsidises the core funding for maintenance to areas in the borough. An increase of 10% in this unscheduled income would allow a £30k reduction in the maintenance budgets received. | Only achievable using existing staffing and resources so therefore a drop in the maintenance standards would inevitably occur. Also assumes that extra work can be identified and won in an even more competitive environment. | 30 | | |
| Waste Management | S - Closure of all public conveniences | Red Risk: The Cabinet and Scrutiny Forum are currently considering a report recommending some closures but also investment. Considerable public concern at total closure. | Redundancy of two staff | 110 | | |
| TOTAL 5% | | | | 726 | | |

APPENDIX F

DRAINAGE AT STRANTON GRANGE AND WEST VIEW CEMETERIES

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Stranton Grange Cemetery

On 11th July 2003, the Environmental Stewardship and Regeneration Scrutiny Forum initiated a series of meetings to consider the issue of flooding in Hartlepool which included Stranton Grange Cemetery.

A drainage survey which identified the necessary works to the existing site and the Western extension of Stranton Cemetery was undertaken following approval by the Town Management Portfolio Holder on 1st August 2003.

The Environmental Stewardship and Regeneration Scrutiny Forum focused on the issue of Stranton Cemetery at their meeting of 30th March 2004 following which, a report was submitted to Cabinet on 4th May 2004 and the necessity for the works identified was agreed.

Funding for the first phase of works was secured through prudential borrowing and the works are now completed.

The numbers of complaints which are received concerning the drainage at the cemetery has reduced considerably. However, there are still problems at the site which will only be remedied by instigating the second phase of works.

A substantial amount of the funding secured previously was to prepare the Western Extension for burials. This work was a priority to enable the drainage to be in place prior to interments being undertaken.

The majority of complaints now being received are concerning the existing burial sites where the bereaved are visiting graves of loved ones.

A report has been prepared by the Engineering Consultancy and identifies the need to undertake works to provide land drains to the existing burial site, drainage to existing access ways and necessary gully works.

1.2 West View Cemetery

Following reports of flooding at the South Eastern corner of the cemetery, initial investigations were undertaken and proved the existing system to be substantially blocked and manholes surcharging following periods of heavy

rainfall. Extensive ponding (200mm deep) was also observed both on the roadway and adjacent burial plots.

Some works have been undertaken to alleviate the situation but it is estimated that a further £12,500 is required to complete remedial works which include cleaning blocked gullies and installing a new manhole.

Over the last few years, 180 internments have been undertaken on the cemetery extension, an area which has not been provided with access or drainage. In order for future burials to take place further works are needed to provide a Topographical Survey, drainage system and access roadways.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated total cost for a second phase of works at Stranton Grange Cemetery is £71,000 (including prelims, contingencies and fees).

The estimated total cost for the works at West View Cemetery is £100,000 (including prelims, contingencies and fees).

It is therefore proposed that the works to the cemetery be funded from "prudential borrowing" and the resulting annual loan repayments funded from increased cemetery and crematoria fee income.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

10 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND LANDLORDS IN HARTLEPOOL – FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To facilitate a discussion amongst Members of the Forum in relation to the focus group session held on 13 December 2006 with residents, tenants, landlords and letting agents in connection with their ongoing investigation into the 'Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation, and Landlords, in Hartlepool'.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 25 October 2006, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Consequently in order to seek the views of a sample of residents, tenants, landlords and letting agents on the operation and performance of private sector rented accommodation, and landlords, in Hartlepool a focus group session was arranged. The event was publicised in local newspapers, on local radio and on the Council's website and notice board.
- 2.3 The Focus Group meeting was well attended by a mix of residents, tenants, landlords and letting agents who, following a presentation from the Scrutiny Team on the role of scrutiny and the aim of this investigation, were given the opportunity to submit evidence on:
- i) Problems experienced as a result of problem landlords or tenants?
 - ii) Help received with your problem and how effective was it?
 - iii) What more it was felt could be done by the Local Authority to address individual problems and the greater overall issue of problem landlords and tenants in Hartlepool?

- 2.4 Members of the Forum noted the comments made and concerns raised by those who attended the focus group session. A summary of the issues discussed are outlined below :-

(a) Problems experienced as a result of problem landlords or tenants?

Problems experienced by tenants and residents.

- (i) Anti-social behaviour of all types, from loud noise to threatening behaviour, over a sustained period;
- (ii) Landlords in the Raby Road/Perth Street and Stephen Street areas are renting properties to unacceptable tenants i.e. drug dealers resulting in anti-social behaviour problems;
- (iii) Some privately rented properties are unsafe, and not adequately maintained, and their appearance creates an adverse impression of the area;
- (iv) Tenants have reported problems to landlords/collection agents regarding the condition of properties and no action is taken. Alternatively some tenants are afraid to make complaints;
- (v) Residents find it difficult to contact landlords to pass on information directly to them regarding problems with vacant properties and problem tenants. In most instances residents have to go through the Local Authority to pass on this information and in some instances this has resulted in the boarding up of property when it is not really needed;
- (vi) Responses from Neighbourhood Police is patchy and slow with difficulty addressing noise/nuisance problems;
- (vii) The phrase 'anti social behaviour landlords' was used frequently in that it was felt that some landlords felt it was acceptable to rent properties to individuals with an ASB background;
- (viii) That there was clearly sub-standard properties placed on the rental market by landlords who felt it was acceptable to do so;
- (ix) That the majority of landlords lived out of the area or in fact the country, which resulted in rented properties becoming neglected/in a state of repair, although it was felt that the agents were not managing/dealing with the condition of such properties with a degree of urgency. In fact it was actually questioned whether some agents were actually fulfilling their role in an honest way;
- (x) That poor repairs were undertaken on rental properties although it was acknowledged that this was improving;

- (xi) The rental of properties to individuals with ASB quickly effects the owner occupier market within the area, resulting in properties being left empty which are then subject to acts of vandalism etc; and
- (xii) Void properties encourage ASB resulting in the neighbourhood deteriorating.

Problems experienced by landlords.

- (xiii) From a landlords perspective references and the requirement of guarantors is not always effective in weeding out problem tenants. Problems have been experienced with:
 - Parents acting as guarantors for their children who then go on to create problems; and
 - Poor/inaccurate references from the Bond Scheme and Smart Move Scheme.
- (xiv) In instances where responsible private landlords serve eviction notices they can feel pressured by organisations such as the Council and Social Services not to do so.

(b) Help received with your problem and how effective was it?

- (i) Whilst residents with problems go through various routes to seek solutions it is often felt that nothing really happens to deal with the problem. Also, that the needs of the tenant are seen as more important than rights of neighbours to live without disturbance;
- (ii) Where problems are experienced with vacant private rented properties often action taken is too much too soon, in terms of the installation of shutters. This can be detrimental to the image of even the best area and promote its degeneration;
- (iii) Police response times to complaints;
 - Neighbourhood Policing has made a real difference; although there was also mixed feelings in relation to the response time from the police. Some felt that there was no urgency from the police in fact on occasions responses received were 'it was not a police matter its a council matter – sorry' with no further assistance being provided;
- (iv) Contact with Hartlepool BC and Housing Hartlepool was satisfactory although any action undertaken in terms of enforcement was felt to be extremely slow;

- (v) The formation of Resident Associations was proving to be very effective and should be encouraged across the town;
- (vi) On occasions it was felt that the letting agents choose to ignore tenants concerns, with no feedback or action being undertaken; and
- (vii) In general it was felt that the powers available to the Council weren't enough to deal with ASB issues associated with rented properties.

(c) What more it was felt could be done by the Local Authority to address individual problems and the greater overall issue of problem landlords and tenants in Hartlepool?

Suggested actions for landlords:-

- (i) Landlords should carry out more checks on the suitability of tenants;

Suggested actions for the Local Authority:-

- (ii) It should be easier for tenants to contact landlords directly should they wish. This would reduce the need for the Local Authority intervention;
- (iii) In terms of the transmission of information on tenants:
 - The concept of a tenant referencing scheme was supported, however, it was felt that the best way to do this would be through a 'Tenant Passport'. Landlords would be required to complete this document and tenants required to produce it when applying for a new tenancy;
 - It was suggested that a tenant referencing, or 'Passport', scheme needs to be operated on a regional basis if it is to work effectively; and
 - It was suggested that existing channels of communication between Residents Associations and some landlords (i.e. almost an informal referencing service) need to be formalised and made available to all landlords.
- (iv) Increased enforcement action should be undertaken and the length of time it takes addressed;
- (v) The Council should publicise an emergency contact number for residents and tenants with problems;
- (vi) Increased information needs to be made available to residents, tenants and responsible landlords to ensure that they know the most appropriate course of action to deal with problems;

- (vii) A way of dealing with irresponsible landlords and in particular those who live out of the town needs to be found;
- (viii) In respect of tenant complaints to landlords/collection agents regarding the condition of properties it was suggested that a process/service should be provided:
 - To assist tenants in making complaints to their landlords. This could add weight to complaints and assist in getting something done;
 - Whereby the Council could make complaints for tenants who are perhaps unable to do so for themselves, for whatever reason; and
 - To enable tenants to make anonymous complaints to the Council without fear of retribution. The Council should then pursue the landlord through the avenues open to rectify the problems.
- (ix) Arrangements need to be put in place to provide a system that provides alternatives to the boarding up of vacant private rented properties by both the Council and landlords. Boarding up should be the last alternative;
- (x) Co-ordination between Council departments and other organisations needs to be improved and the implementation of enforcement action speeded up;
- (xi) Residents, agents, tenants and landlords in attendance weren't aware of the Council's emergency out of hours number and it was felt that this would be widely publicised;
- (xii) The Police's response to ASB issues in rental neighbourhood needs to be addressed and where the police say it's a council matter, further signposting of key services/contacts should be provided;
- (xiii) The Council should both exercise and publicise its enforcement powers more widely; and

Suggested actions for other agencies:-

- (xiv) The rate at which police respond to complaints needs to be improved and the gravity of the impact of anti-social behaviour on neighbours acknowledged.

(d) General comments.

- (i) The primary problem with the private rented sector is that good tenants tend to go to registered social landlords leaving the less well behaved tenants to move into private rented accommodation;

- (ii) Enforcement action by registered social landlords results in the displacement of problem tenants into the private rented sector;
- (iii) Many problem tenants are 'serial movers'. This makes them difficult to deal with and even less inclined to behave in a responsible manner towards the property they occupy and the community around them;
- (iv) Concern was expressed that Government quangos are living off anti-social behaviour with little incentive to really solve the problem;
- (v) That not all problem tenants are on housing benefit. Those in employment can also create problems so in this sense the withholding of housing benefit payments to landlords would not completely address the problem;
- (vi) There was a clear difference of opinion between those landlords and residents present in terms of whether a landlord should be held responsible for the actions of their tenant; and
- (vii) Concern was expressed that the operation of a selective licensing scheme could create a negative image for the areas selected (a ghetto).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the issues raised at the focus group meeting outlined in section 2.4.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

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

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

10 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE
SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND
LANDLORDS – EVIDENCE FROM HOUSING
HARTLEPOOL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Forum that the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation and landlords.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 25 October 2006 the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Consequently, the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool has been invited to attend this meeting to provide the Forum with additional information on:-
- a) What Housing Hartlepool does and how it manages its tenancies;
 - b) How Housing Hartlepool interfaces with the private sector, the Local Authority and other agencies, i.e. the police; and
 - c) Best practice and if any exhibited by Housing Hartlepool could be implemented as part of a landlord licensing scheme.
- 2.3 During this evidence gathering session it is suggested that questions asked should include clarification as to:-
- a) What are your views on the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation in Hartlepool?
 - b) Do you feel that the action available to Hartlepool Borough Council to protect tenants and surrounding residents is being undertaken effectively? If not how do you feel things can be improved?

- c) Do you have any examples of best practice in the way you deal with problem tenants which can be implemented as part of a landlord licensing scheme (Mandatory and Discretionary)?
- d) What do you feel are the main issues/problems being experienced by local residents, tenants and landlords?
- e) What do you feel would be the benefits and/or disadvantages of compulsory Landlord Registration and Tenant Referencing schemes?
- f) How do you feel that the use of shared ownership schemes (i.e. part rent/part buy) can assist in improving the availability of good quality private rented accommodation?
- g) Taking into consideration the current and possible future options for the regulation of the private rented sector, how do you feel the 'knock on' effects of enforcement action against landlords and tenants and the subsequent displacement of problems can be dealt with?
- h) What are your views on working relationships between the Local Authority and its partners (i.e. the police) in dealing with problem tenants and landlords?
- i) Do you feel that sufficient information/advice is available for new landlords, to ensure that they provide good accommodation, and tenants to ensure that they know the options available to them?
- j) What impact has past and present exclusion/suspension policies of Registered Social Landlords had on the private rented sector? If tenants can't be supported and helped by Registered Social Landlords can they by private landlords?

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool in relation to the questions outlined in section 2.3.

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

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

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

10 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE
SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND
LANDLORDS – EVIDENCE FROM THE NEW DEAL
FOR COMMUNITIES (NDC)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Forum that the Programme Director, New Deal for Communities (NDC) has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation and landlords.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 25 October 2006 the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Consequently, the Programme Director, New Deal for Communities (NDC) has been invited to attend this meeting to provide information on how the NDC interfaces with the private sector, the Local Authority and other agencies, e.g. the police.
- 2.3 During this evidence gathering session it is suggested that questions asked should include clarification as to:-
- a) What are your views on the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation in Hartlepool?
 - b) Do you feel that the action available to Hartlepool Borough Council to protect tenants and surrounding residents is being undertaken effectively? If not how do you feel things can be improved?

- c) Do you have any examples of best practice in the way you deal with problem tenants which can be implemented as part of a landlord licensing scheme (Mandatory and Discretionary)?
- d) What do you feel are the main issues/problems being experienced by local residents, tenants and landlords?
- e) What do you feel would be the benefits and/or disadvantages of compulsory Landlord Registration and Tenant Referencing schemes?
- f) How do you feel that the use of shared ownership schemes (i.e. part rent/part buy) can assist in improving the availability of good quality private rented accommodation?
- g) Taking into consideration the current and possible future options for the regulation of the private rented sector, how do you feel the 'knock on' effects of enforcement action against landlords and tenants and the subsequent displacement of problems can be dealt with?
- h) What are your views on working relationships between the Local Authority and its partners (i.e. the police) in dealing with problem tenants and landlords?
- i) Do you feel that sufficient information/advice is available for new landlords, to ensure that they provide good accommodation, and tenants to ensure that they know the options available to them?

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of the Programme Director, New Deal for Communities (NDC) in relation to the questions outlined in section 2.3.

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 paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

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

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

10 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE
SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND
LANDLORDS – EVIDENCE FROM THE
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PREVENTION UNIT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Forum that the Head of Community Safety and Prevention has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation and landlords.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 25 October 2006 the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Consequently, the Head of the Community Safety and Prevention has been invited to attend this meeting to provide:-
- a) Information on the role of the Anti-social behaviour Unit (ASBU) in relation to privately rented accommodation
 - b) The range of enforcement options available to the ASBU and
 - c) Details of liaison and co-ordination with other agencies, such as Police, Landlord accreditation scheme and residents groups.
- 2.3 During this evidence gathering session it is suggested that questions asked should include clarification as to:-
- a) What are your views on the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation in Hartlepool?

- b) Do you feel that the action available to Hartlepool Borough Council to protect tenants and surrounding residents is being undertaken effectively? If not how do you feel things can be improved?
- c) What do you feel are the main issues/problems being experienced by local residents, tenants and landlords?
- d) What do you feel would be the benefits and/or disadvantages of compulsory Landlord Registration and Tenant Referencing schemes?
- e) How do you feel that the use of shared ownership schemes (i.e. part rent/part buy) can assist in improving the availability of good quality private rented accommodation?
- f) Taking into consideration the current and possible future options for the regulation of the private rented sector, how do you feel the 'knock on' effects of enforcement action against landlords and tenants and the subsequent displacement of problems can be dealt with?
- g) What are your views on working relationships between the Local Authority and its partners (i.e. the police) in dealing with problem tenants and landlords?
- h) Do you feel that sufficient information/advice is available for new landlords, to ensure that they provide good accommodation, and tenants to ensure that they know the options available to them?

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of the Head of the Community Safety and Prevention Unit in relation to the questions outlined in section 2.3.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

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