

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Thursday 18th January 2007

at 10.00 am

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

MEMBERS: REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors R W Cook, S Cook, Gibbon, Laffey, London, A Marshall, J Marshall,
Richardson, Wallace, D Waller and Wright.

Resident Representatives:

Ted Jackson, John Lynch and Iris Ryder

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2006.

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

No items.

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

No items.

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

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

- 7.1 Railway Approaches – Evidence from External Agencies – Covering Report – Scrutiny Support Officer
- 7.2 Railway Approaches – Draft Final Report – Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum
- 7.3 Youth Unemployment – Scoping Report – Scrutiny Support Officer

8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of Next Meeting – Friday 23rd February 2007 commencing at 10.00am in the Central Library, York Road, Hartlepool.

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM MINUTES

7 December 2006

Present:

Councillor: Stephen Wallace (In the Chair)

Councillors: Shaun Cook, Steve Gibbon, Pauline Laffey,
Frances London, John Marshall and Edna Wright

In accordance with Paragraph 4.2(ii) of the Council's Procedure
Rules Councillor Sheila Griffin attended as a substitute for
Councillor Rob Cook and Councillor Gerard Hall as a substitute
for Councillor Ann Marshall

Resident Representatives:

Ted Jackson, John Lynch and Iris Ryder

Officers: Richard Waldmeyer, Principal Planning Officer (Policy Planning
and Information)

John Lewer, Public Transport Co-ordinator

Ian Jopling, Transportation Team Leader

Jonathan Wistow, Scrutiny Support Officer

Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Also present

Martin Green, Coastliners

51. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rob Cook, Ann Marshall and Carl Richardson.

52. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

53. Minutes of the meetings held on 29 September 2006, 2 November 2006 and 13 November 2006

Agreed.

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

No items.

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

No items.

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

No items.

57. Railway Approaches – Position Paper *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the report outlined the draft findings of the railway approaches investigation so far and to identify a number of areas for potential recommendations. The overall aim of the investigation was to examine the railway approaches into Hartlepool and develop suggestions for improvement.

Members were advised that there was no single or unifying government policy in relation to railway approaches. A fairly complex set of arrangements existed between private companies, national regulators and local government through which the responsibility for this issue was divided. A summary of the key responsibilities was outlined in the report.

With regard to roles and responsibilities for the appearance of railway approaches, it was reported that the national rail network infrastructure was owned and operated by Network Rail. When Network Rail had attended the Scrutiny Forum they stated that they operated a 'No messin' programme which was geared towards young people and focused on issues like trespassing, graffiti and vandalism. The representative of Network Rail indicated that they were willing to bring this programme to Hartlepool to which Members of the Forum supported. Network Rail had a graffiti budget to improve visual views and had indicated that they would be open to developing a proactive approach with the authority to which Members of the Forum

supported. Further details of Network Rail and Northern Rail's roles and responsibilities were outlined in the report together with the impact of the railway approaches into Hartlepool on the town's image, particularly in terms of the ongoing regeneration of the town.

It was reported that as part of the overall city region policy development a Green Infrastructure Strategy was currently being developed through the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit. The Strategy focused on making improvements to the green infrastructure in the Tees Valley. The Government had acknowledged that the sub-region lagged behind the national average and this could be a barrier to economic development. This strategy was being developed to enhance the appearance of the infrastructure within the Tees Valley. Members of the Forum had expressed a desire to link the sites identified in the scrutiny investigation, wherever possible, into the Green Infrastructure Strategy and its associated site specific schedules. The findings from the site visit to explore the railway approaches into Hartlepool was outlined in Appendix A to the report. Details of key problem spots, areas of good practice, the condition of Hartlepool and Seaton railway stations, suggestions in relation to station improvements and accessibility issues were provided. The views of Coastliners were included in Appendix B and Appendix C outlined the potential of community and voluntary sector involvement.

Members discussed the recommendations as outlined in the report and suggested the following:-

- (i) The college of art be approached to assist with the design work.
- (i) With regard to the suggestion that Hart Station be reopened, a Member sought clarification with regard to estimated costs to which the Transportation Team Leader advised that a feasibility study had been carried out, a copy of which could be provided to Members on request. It was noted that one of the reasons the costs were high was as a result of the disability access regulations. A Member highlighted that there were no disabled access facilities at Middlesbrough station. Following discussion with regard to the high level of costs to reopen the station, it was agreed that further discussions take place at the next meeting of the Forum when Network Rail and Northern Rail would be in attendance.
- (ii) Network Rail be persuaded to reopen the second platform on Hartlepool Station to assist with the Grand Central route to London. The Transportation Team Leader indicated that the station currently had sufficient capacity to meet the increased demand of the Grant Central contract.
- (iv) An action plan be prepared to clarify if works were on target. The Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that the recommendations in the report formed the basis for an action plan. Once the Forum submitted its final report to Cabinet an action plan would be produced in response.

to the Forum's recommendations, which would be brought back to the Forum for consideration.

- (v) With regard to structural improvements, Members considered that paragraph 4.44 be included in the recommendations.
- (vi) That the Forum should identify what it deemed to be 'minimum' and 'maximum' standards for the railway approaches into the town. The Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that the position paper did this by identifying 'key problem spots' on the railway approaches, whilst identifying a variety of approaches for improvement. However, additional wording around the notion of minimum and maximum standards would be incorporated to the draft final report

Decision

Members agreed the content of the draft position paper subject to the above comments being included for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum.

58. Railway Approaches – Evidence from External Agencies *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

This item was deferred for consideration at the next meeting due to representatives from Northern Rail and Network Rail's inability to attend the meeting due to an accident on the A19.

Decision

That Network Rail and Northern Rail be invited to attend the next meeting of the Forum.

59. Railway Approaches – Access for All Small Schemes Funding *(Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

In October 2006 the authority's Transportation Team were awarded £150k from the Department for Transport towards a total project cost of £300k. The funding was for internal changes to the waiting room and ticket office facilities as an integral part of the £2.5 million Hartlepool Transport Interchange Project. The project would improve accessibility of the station by providing new accessible toilet facilities, suitable lighting, seating and surfaces, installation of new automatic external doors, low-height ticket counter, new customer information screens and upgrading of external/internal signage, audible communication system and counter loop system. A new pedestrian walkway would provide level access between the rail platform and bus station facility.

The Transportation Team Leader was in attendance at the meeting and provided a detailed presentation in relation to this project.

A discussion followed in which the following issues were raised:-

Following discussion in relation to security issues at Hartlepool station the Forum suggested, as a preventative measure, that signage be installed to highlight that a CCTV system was in operation. The Transportation Team Leader pointed out that a potential upgrade of the CCTV system had been discussed with Northern Rail as part of the Interchange budget.

A Member suggested that tourist information leaflets be displayed in the station waiting room. Members discussed the need to improve pedestrian and vehicle signage around the stations and make connections to the town centre. In particular, the enhancement of 'brown signage' around the stations had been advocated by the Forum.

A Member queried what plans were envisaged to improve the station wall to which the Transportation Team Leader advised that access for all monies could not be utilised for visual improvements.

Members discussed the reasons for lack of use of Seaton Carew Station and it was suggested that this may be as a result of inadequate facilities ie no car park, taxis or bus services. It was suggested that these issues be investigated.

Some Members considered that a project manager should be appointed to oversee the overall project to which the Chair advised that this was a matter for consideration by Cabinet.

Decision

That the contents of the report and the comments of the Forum, be noted.

STEPHEN WALLACE

CHAIRMAN

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

18 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the opportunity for the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum to consider the Regeneration and Planning 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 Regeneration and Planning 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 Regeneration and Planning 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 £10,000 saving from reducing the Economic Development Marketing budget which this Forum asked Cabinet to reconsider. 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) Community Strategy/LAA costs £40,000
- (b) Housing needs survey £30,000
- (c) Housing Condition survey £50,000

Proposals to be funded from Capital Resources

- (a) Seaton Bus Station £150,000
- (b) Owton Lane shops £50,000

- 2.6 To assist Members of this Scrutiny Forum in the consideration of the Regeneration and Planning Services departmental proposals, arrangements have been made for the Director of Regeneration and Planning 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 Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum:-
- (a) considers the Regeneration and Planning 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 Coordinating 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:- Jonathan Wistow – Scrutiny Support Officer
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Appendix ARegeneration and Planning Services Department – Comments/Observations

- (a) It was argued that the Special Needs Housing Team Pressure should be supported and moreover that additional funding should be sought to enhance the service further to the benefit of vulnerable individuals and communities;
- (b) It was argued that the Landlord Registration Officer (LRO) Second Level Priority should not only be met but additional funding should be identified for this scheme. Members argued that the enhanced powers available through this scheme should be supported with additional funding so that the Council could fully utilise these to the benefit of vulnerable individuals and communities;
- (c) Members discussed the potential Proposed Savings for the Economic Development Marketing Budget and argued that reductions here should be avoided and, therefore, not be used for savings due to the importance of this activity to achieving inward investment, in-migration and tourism, and the economic benefits that this brings into the town;
- (d) Members argued that the Economic Development Business Grants potential Proposed Saving (which were identified as a 'Red Risk' amongst the potential Proposed Savings) should be avoided and, therefore, not be used for savings, due to the importance of this to the economy and well-being of the town and recognising the importance of economic development to the community;
- (e) Members discussed the potential Proposed Savings for Development Control through an increased target for fee income from the volume of planning applications processed. It was argued by Members that the higher target carried a high risk given the property market and economic cycle and they would not want to see any cuts in related services if the proposed increased fees target could not be achieved;
- (f) The loss of staff as part of the potential Proposed Savings was not considered appropriate and was not supported; and
- (g) Members also wanted the Department to explore the possibility of using the Council's Printing Services (if there was sufficient capacity to do so) to contract-in investment to the Council.

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
<p>Single Programme Funding (Coastal Arc Co-ordinator).</p> <p><i>Joint post shared with Redcar & Cleveland. HBC is the employing authority.</i></p>	<p>YES – desirable as provides coordination and basis for Coastal Arc – and for sub-regional single programme funding. Subject to 50% contribution from Redcar and Cleveland.</p> <p>100% Single Programme funding is confirmed for 2006/7. In principle support for 2007/8 subject to funding availability. Situation unclear thereafter.</p>	17	<p>34</p> <p>(plus other revenue expenditure, excluding oncost). 50% relates to HBC.</p>	0.5 (within Hartlepool)	0.5 (within Hartlepool)	Presumably minimal as employment length would be less than 2 years	nil

APPENDIX B

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
Safer Stronger Communities Fund	Yes –post created is essential to the team. The ASB unit did not function as effectively prior to support officer being appointed. Members complained they were unable to contact staff in the unit.	25	17.4	1	1	Nil to date (only 1 years service)	nil
Total Grant Regimes Terminating		42					

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>
Planning Policy & Regeneration: Local Development Framework	Increased costs arising in relation to the statutory Local Development Framework within Planning have so far been funded entirely from a reserve. This reserve is residual balance of an amount set aside for the Local Plan Inquiry. This is expected to be exhausted in 2007/08 and a more permanent funding solution is required.	Red Failure to establish funding would prejudice the council's ability to fulfil its statutory duty. An adverse effect on development and improvement of the town may occur. The ability to properly involve local people in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement would reduce.	50	
Housing Advice (Statutory)	Provide statutory homeless advice to vulnerable people in the community. Team relatively under- resourced and 1.5 posts are required.	Red Essential to ensure that targets for preventing homelessness are maintained.	40	
Special Needs Housing Team	<u>Statutory duty to ensure advice and assistance and provide grants for Disabled.</u> Funding from SP reduces from March 2007. This was funded through SP on stock transfer as insufficient money was	Red Statutory function of administering Disabled Facilities Grants and other functions of special needs housing will be put at risk. Grants will not be processed in reasonable time, waiting lists for disabled	40	

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>
	identified for the team. However, following the completion of review of all SP contracts, much of the work relating to the statutory functions, such as processing, disabled facilities grants, is now ineligible for SP funding	adaptations will increase, hospital discharge times will increase, underspend of grant funding will result in future grants being reduced, and disabled accommodation will not be adequately allocated		
Strategic Housing Officers	Due to inadequate funding of retained housing services following stock transfer and the loss of a housing specialist at Director level, current workloads cannot be sustained. Since stock transfer, workloads have increased e.g. preparation of bidding and monitoring documents for new housing capital regimes, performance management monitoring of partnership, increased social and private housing enabling role (encouragement for new build due to needs highlighted by SP and reduction in social	Red Further delays in workload completion, including responses to complaints, completion of returns Inadequate contribution to sub regional issues Missed opportunities for further funding These posts are likely to form part of the report on the future of housing services prepared by the Director of Regeneration and Planning	30	

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>
	houses numbers), the increasing regional and sub-regional housing agenda (regeneration strategy and sub-regional housing strategy), increased role in regeneration of houses in town centre etc. Current Strategic Housing Manager role is divided between substantial strategic duties as indicated above, and daily management of housing team. This has resulted in substantial slippage.			
Choice Based Lettings (Statutory)	New statutory obligation to provide system of choice for lettings	Red New statutory obligation to have in place and operating. This assumes a sub regional system with shared costs	27	

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>
Homelessness Strategy Officer	Currently a temporary full time post, funded by various agencies and the Homelessness Grant. Successful in reducing homelessness, particularly young persons, by implementing housing policy, liaising with landlords, probation, rent officer, housing benefits and funding suitable 'settled' accommodation. Funding agencies, particularly Action Team for Jobs unable to fund post after March 2007. Whilst grant funds half the post, funding requested would ensure full time post	Red Increased homelessness, particularly youth homelessness – landlords less likely to house potential homeless tenants, youths will drift into unsuitable accommodation (leading to rent arrears, evictions and homelessness) Reduces the impact of the Council's successful Housing Advice Team (Hartlepool is currently "Regional Champions for Homelessness") Post is likely to form part of the report on the future of housing services being prepared by the Director of Regeneration and Planning	17	
		Total Budget Pressures	204	

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>
Anti Social Behaviour Unit: Respect Agenda	Additional resources are required to implement and effectively respond to the Government's new Respect Agenda. In particular, the following will need to be addressed particularly in disadvantaged communities: Increase capacity of Anti Social Behaviour case investigators to 1 per North/South/Central neighbourhood areas and admin support in order to co-ordinate increased workload from Neighbourhood policing referrals etc. and provide feedback to residents. A review of aspects of this service is underway.	RED - Unable to meet demands from residents, Members and MPs to tackle anti social behaviour which are increasing with the introduction of Neighbourhood Policing.	65	

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>
Housing	Tenant referencing scheme, linked to voluntary accreditation scheme and licensing scheme	RED - Risk of continuing to place unsuitable tenants in disadvantaged areas where significant numbers of privately rented accommodation units exist	40	
		Total of Top Priorities	105	

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>
Landlord Registration Officer (LRO)	This is a successful scheme currently being funded until March 2007 by VAT Shelter money (HH) (previously funded via NRF and NDC). The Landlord Registration Officer works in partnership with Housing Enforcement Team, Tenancy Relations Officer and Anti-Social Behaviour Team. Seen as 'good practice' and is included in Audit Commissions Key Lines of Enquiry for Excellent Authorities. The success of this post resulted in Hartlepool being selected to run the pilot scheme for low demand private sector housing, which contributed to the Governments approach to Licensing.	Red Increased tenancy problems e.g. anti-social behaviour in private housing section. Reduced housing standards in private rented accommodation. Increased homelessness – potentially homeless people are currently signposted to suitable accredited landlords Seen as backward step by GONE	28	

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>
	Should a licensing scheme for landlords be introduced (which is area specific), the accreditation scheme would compliment the licensing scheme and also be the only town-wide scheme for landlords			
		Total of Second Priorities	28	

PROPOSED SAVING AT 3%, 4% AND 5%**REGENERATION AND PLANNING 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
Youth Offending Service	E - Reduce operational support budgets for Youth Offending is proposed	GREEN RISK - It is suggested that this could be achieved with little risk and only minimal impact to the service	None	4		
Management and Administration	E - Reduce costs against some departmental management and administrative related budget headings.	GREEN RISK - It is anticipated that this saving could be achieved at low risk by ensuring a number of small expenses - currently absorbed within this heading but which could be legitimately charged to externally funded projects - are passed on. Increased effort would be required to record, calculate and transfer these costs	None	10		
Community Strategy	S - Reduce a variety of budget lines across the Division relating to printing, room hire, staff training and exhibitions	GREEN RISK - A reduction in opportunities to promote the work of the Hartlepool Partnership would occur. Direct impact on quality of services and impact on community engagement and awareness.	None	4		
Planning & Economic Development	S - Reduce running cost budgets for Building Control, Development Control, Economic Development and Landscape Planning and Conservation is suggested	GREEN RISK - Various small scale savings in materials, equipment, printing etc would be made which may result in service level reduction	None	8		
Economic Development	E - Seek to increase income from managed workspace (ie Brougham Enterprise Centre, Newburn Bridge)	GREEN RISK - Increasing licence fee income as a result of improvements to premises, increasing occupancy and reviewed fees should be achievable	None	20		
Community Safety	S - Reduce several administration and maintenance headings in the Community Safety budget	AMBER/GREEN RISK - Small reductions to Safer Hartlepool Partnership support budgets would lead to less printing (eg leaflets) and less awareness raising campaigns. The assurance to communities would be reduced affecting perceptions and fear of crime. Less budget for maintenance of 8 Church St and local police offices would also occur	None	9		
Planning Policy & Regeneration	S - Reduce a variety of budget lines across the Regeneration, Planning Policy and Housing Market Renewal Teams (approx £2k per team)	AMBER/GREEN RISK - Reducing printing, copying, staff training, administration and other running costs would occur. The amount shown is considered to be the maximum achievable without incurring serious service level reductions	None	6		
Economic Development	S - Reduce the Sub-Regional Tourism promotion budget	AMBER RISK - Reducing the contribution to Tees Valley-wide tourism marketing and promotion may limit the new Area Tourism Partnership's marketing activity	None	5		
Economic Development	S - Reduce the Marketing budget	RED RISK - This move would impact on marketing/ promotion aimed at businesses/developers/ other investors, at a time where there is an improving "product" to sell. Adverse impact on economic investment and employment opportunities	None	10		

Community Safety	S - Reduce the Safer Hartlepool Partnership publicity budget	RED RISK - Only two editions of current quarterly newspaper (Hartbeat) could be produced per annum instead of 4 editions. Factual information and advice are important to provide reassurance to communities. Less funding would be available to publicise good news stories. Direct impact on services and fear of crime	None	13		
Development Control	E - Seek to increase fee income from volume of applications processed, with no increase in staff	RED RISK - The proposal would be to revise the planning application fee target based on high end projections from current levels. This is however a budget that could be subject to a fall in income, eg. as a result of unfavourable economic conditions. Given the economic and property cycle, a significant risk would apply to the achievement of this savings target. If there were to be a shortfall it has been agreed that this would be met corporately.	None	18		
3% LEVEL				107		
Development Control	E - Seek to increase fee income from volume of applications processed, with no increase in staff (Continued)	RED RISK - As above - higher risks as higher target		12		
Economic Development	S - Reduce the Business Grants budget	RED RISK - This reduction would impact on support available to new businesses and inward investments. An element of match funding would also potentially be lost. This would be unpopular with Partners and contrary to DCLG/NRU and Hartlepool Partnership policy priorities and could adversely affect future funding bids, eg LEGI	None	20		
Departmental Staffing - yet to be identified	S - Reduce Staffing budgets	See below		4		
4% LEVEL				143		
Departmental Staffing - yet to be identified	S - Reduce Staffing budgets (Continued)	RED RISK - The removal of up to 2 posts would be required to achieve a 5% saving target. This would involve either redundancy or removing newly vacated post(s) from the establishment. No specific posts are identified as yet. Redundancy Implications.	-2 depending on grade	36	Redundancy or other costs may arise depending on the post(s) identified- which are not quantified or allowed for in the savings	0
5% LEVEL				179		

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM REPORT

18 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: RAILWAY APPROACHES – EVIDENCE FROM
EXTERNAL AGENCIES – COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Forum that representatives from Network Rail and Northern Rail (subject to confirmation) will be in attendance at today's meeting.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 29 September 2006, representatives of these two external agencies gave evidence in accordance with the original Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Following further evidence gathering over the course of the investigation some Members of the Forum have indicated that they would like a further opportunity to question Network Rail and Northern Rail about their roles in 'Railway Approaches'.
- 2.3 In order to assist Members in their questioning of these bodies a brief background to their responsibilities has been reproduced and a number of references to the Draft Final Report, attached at Item 7.2 of today's agenda, have also been included below.

Network Rail

- 2.4 Network Rail will be in attendance at today's meeting to provide verbal evidence in relation to their role in terms of Railway Approaches. The national rail network infrastructure (track, signalling, bridges, tunnels and stations) is owned and operated by Network Rail. As such, Network Rail is a key organisation in terms of the railway approaches into Hartlepool. Members may want to question representatives from Network Rail in relation to their responsibilities for these areas. In particular, recommendations a), f-iii), f-iv) and o) of the Draft Final Report have some relevance to Network Rail and, therefore, Members may want to question the representative of Network Rail in relation to these.

Northern Rail

- 2.5 Whilst Network Rail owns all of the railway stations in the country, with the exception of a number of 'principal' stations, which it operates itself, Network Rail leases the stations to whichever train operator is the principal user. The principal train operator in Hartlepool is Northern Rail. The Forum may want to question Northern Rail about its responsibilities in relation to this issue. In particular, recommendations b), l-i), l-ii), l-iii), l-iv) and o) of the Draft Final Report have some relevance to Northern Rail and, therefore, Members may want to question the representative of Northern Rail in relation to these.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of the external agencies and question them accordingly.

CONTACT OFFICER

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 Hartlepool Borough Council
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 Email: jonathan.wistow@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (a) Scrutiny Investigation into Hartlepool's 'Railway Approaches' – Scoping Report (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 13.07.06
- (b) Railway Approaches – Position Paper (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 7.12.06
- (c) Railway Approaches – Draft Final Report (Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum)

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM REPORT

18 January 2007



Report of: Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum

Subject: RAILWAY APPROACHES – DRAFT FINAL REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the draft findings of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into Railway Approaches.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 20 April 2006 the Forum suggested that the 'entrance into Hartlepool by train from both South and North' could be explored in detail during the 2006/7 Municipal Year. Furthermore, at a meeting to suggest potential scrutiny items for this Municipal Year between the Chair of this Forum, the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services, and the Mayor (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Liveability and Housing) the issue of 'Railway Approaches' was again suggested as a Scrutiny topic. Subsequently, on 16 June 2006 Members of this Forum selected this topic as its first choice Scrutiny investigation for the 2006/07 Municipal Year.



2.2 From Members comments at this Forum's meetings on 20 April and 16 June a number of key issues emerged in relation to this inquiry:

- (a) Condition of the railway verges;
- (b) Development sites, derelict land/buildings, and landscaping;
- (c) The condition of Hartlepool Station given its role as part of the new Transport Interchange; and
- (d) Impact of railway approaches on the continued regeneration of the town.

2.3 These issues were further developed into the 'Overall Aim of the Scrutiny Investigation' and the 'Terms of Reference' which are outlined in sections 3 and 4 below.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

3.1 To examine the railway approaches into Hartlepool and develop suggestions for improvement.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1 The following Terms of Reference for the review were agreed by the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 13 July 2006:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of key government policy areas relating to 'Railway Approaches';
- (b) To gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in Hartlepool who have some responsibility for the appearance of the railway approaches into the town (i.e. commercial operator(s), regulators, private landowners, and the Council);
- (c) To consider the impact of the railway approaches into Hartlepool on the town's image, particularly in terms of the ongoing regeneration of the town;
- (d) To explore the railway approaches into the town from the north and the south;
- (e) To identify key 'problem spots' and areas of good practice on the railway approaches into the town;
- (f) To explore the condition of Hartlepool and Seaton Carew railway stations;

- (g) To consider issues of accessibility, particularly in terms of pedestrian access to Hartlepool Station from the Marina; and
- (h) To seek the views of the public in relation to the railway approaches into Hartlepool.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

5.1 Membership of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum for the 2006/7 Municipal Year:-

Councillors R W Cook, S Cook, Gibbon, Laffey, London, A Marshall, J Marshall, Richardson, Wallace, D Waller and Wright.

Resident Representatives:

James Atkinson / Ted Jackson, Mary Power / John Lynch and Iris Ryder

6. METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

6.1 Over the course of the investigation Members have considered evidence from a wide variety of sources, including:

- (a) Hartlepool Borough Council Officers;
- (b) The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Liveability and Housing;
- (c) The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation;
- (d) MP for Hartlepool
- (e) Network Rail;
- (f) Northern Rail;
- (g) Grand Central;
- (h) Chair of the Economic Forum;
- (i) Representative from 'Coastliners'; and
- (j) Written submission on behalf of the Community and Voluntary Sector

6.2 In addition, Members of the Forum undertook a site visit on the railway to explore the approaches into the town from the north and the south and to

compare them with neighbouring towns. At a later meeting of the Forum Members also viewed video footage taken during the site visit, which further informed discussions of the railway approaches.

FINDINGS

7. Key Government Policy

- 7.1 There is no single or unifying government policy in relation to Railway Approaches. Instead a fairly complex set of arrangements exist between private companies, national regulators and local government through which the responsibility for this issue is divided. A summary of the key responsibilities is provided below.
- 7.2 Following the privatisation of British Rail its functions were divided into two main elements. The first element consists of the national rail network (track, signaling, bridges, tunnels, stations and depots) and the second being the operating companies whose trains run on that network. In simple regulatory terms, the Office of Rail Regulators (ORR) is responsible for regulating the national rail network operator (Network Rail), while the Department for Transport looks after passenger and train-related matters. The focus of this Scrutiny investigation is concerned with the first element.
- 7.3 According to guidance from the ORR, Network Rail is a private sector monopoly owner and operator of a national asset of considerable public importance and as such is accountable to the public interest. It is, therefore, unable to operate, maintain and develop that asset according to purely commercial criteria, and is subject to regulation in a number of ways, primarily by the independent ORR. Consequently, ORR's principal function is to regulate Network Rail's stewardship of the national rail network. Representatives of the ORR were invited to attend the Scrutiny Investigation but felt it was more appropriate to provide guidance to the Scrutiny Support Officer for information gathering purposes.
- 7.4 The Local Authority has a role in relation to this issue through its responsibilities for Planning and Development Control. Indeed, the adopted Local Plan 2006, which forms part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, has a number of policies that are relevant to this issue, which are outlined in the next sub-section.
- 7.5 A further role for the Local Authority in relation to this issue, under Government policy, stems from its community leadership role and well-being powers. Indeed, the topic selection and subsequent evidence gathering of this Scrutiny Investigation have demonstrated enthusiasm amongst Members and officers to seek to drive this issue forward and foster partnerships in this respect. More recently the Local Government White Paper 2006 has identified a role for local authorities as 'place-shapers'

through supporting and working with other agencies and services to solve local problems / issues.

8. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in Hartlepool who have responsibility for the appearance of the railway approaches into the town.

- 8.1 The national rail network infrastructure (track, signalling, bridges, tunnels and stations) is owned and operated by Network Rail. As such, Network Rail is an important organisation in terms of the railway approaches into Hartlepool.
- 8.2 When Network Rail attended the Scrutiny Forum to provide evidence they indicated that they operated a 'No Messin' programme / event, which is geared towards young people and focuses on issues like trespassing, graffiti, and vandalism. The representative of Network Rail indicated that they would be willing to bring this event to Hartlepool. Subsequent discussions amongst Members of the Forum have suggested support for this.
- 8.3 Network Rail also has a 'graffiti budget' to improve visual views. Their representative at the meeting on 29 September 2006 indicated that they would be open to developing a proactive approach here with the Authority. Again Members of the Forum have been supportive of developing this proposal.
- 8.4 In addition, Network Rail have a 24 hour national helpline (tel: 08457 11 41 41) for people to call in relation to any issues they may have with the railway infrastructure. The representative from Network Rail indicated that if they do not know about particular problems then they cannot respond to them. Consequently, the Forum has expressed a desire to publicise this number through its final report and through other mechanisms such as Hartbeat.
- 8.5 More generally, Members of the Forum have identified a number of locations where they would like to see some form of screening of key 'problem spots' from the views from the railway. These locations are discussed in more detail below. However, it is necessary to recognise that Network Rail has strict safety guidelines for work carried out near railway lines and there are also restrictions on planting schemes that may encroach on the railway or lead to leaves falling on the track.
- 8.6 Whilst Network Rail owns all of the railway stations in the country, with the exception of a number of 'principal' stations, which it operates itself, it leases the stations to whichever train operator is the principal user. The principal train operator in Hartlepool is Northern Rail.
- 8.7 During the evidence gathering session with Northern Rail they highlighted that they are a 'community railway' and as such they see themselves having

a major role in working with local stakeholders including local authorities and were keen to engage in partnership. Northern Rail have a police and schools liaison officer who can become involved in initiatives geared towards preventing vandalism. Members of the Forum have indicated that such an arrangement should be extended to Hartlepool if possible.

- 8.8 The Council, through Objective C4 of the recently adopted Local Plan 2006, is committed to encouraging a high standard of design and the provision of a high quality environment in all developments and particularly those on prominent sites, including along the main rail corridors. Consequently, this commitment will relate to all new planning applications along the railway approaches. Network Rail is normally consulted on all planning applications in the vicinity of the railway line.
- 8.9 It is also emphasised in the Local Plan that it is important that a good first impression is given to potential investors and tourists and other visitors to the town traveling along the main roads and the railway. Consequently General Environmental Principles Policy GEP7 requires a particular high standard of design to improve the visual environment along, amongst other locations, the Middlesbrough to Newcastle Railway line.
- 8.10 The Local Plan also includes a number of policies relating to untidy sites and environmental improvements and the need to consider the visual appearance of the main approaches including the railway line. In addition, Hartlepool Railway Station is located within the Church Street Conservation Area which is subject to policies which seek to enhance the area (Policy HE1). Adjacent land parcels are subject to a variety of policies and land allocations. Some areas are subject to regulations to enforce planning conditions and other environmental controls. During the investigation the Forum has indicated that planning and development powers should be used proactively to enhance the railway approaches into the town.
- 9. To consider the impact of the railway approaches into Hartlepool on the town's image, particularly in terms of the ongoing regeneration of the town;**



- 9.1 During the initial topic selection and scoping of the investigation Members of the Forum were particularly keen to explore the issue of 'Railway Approaches' from a regeneration perspective and from the impact of these approaches on the vision of the town. The (at that time) pending award of the 2010 Tall Ships event was an important factor motivating Members' interest in this issue. Indeed, on a number of occasions the award of the Tall Ships event has been likened to being Hartlepool's equivalent of the Olympics. The Tall Ships' Race will bring development opportunities to Hartlepool. The Newcastle/Gateshead event in 2005 brought 1.5 million visitors and a reported £48 million in economic value. Furthermore, the recent award of the Grand Central contract to operate a direct rail link to London has also been highlighted as a significant development that enhances the potential for tourism and regeneration in the town. Consequently, maximising the impression that the Railway Approaches create of the town has been identified as particularly significant at this time.
- 9.2 The image and reputation of Hartlepool has changed radically over the last 15 years with the development of the Marina and associated visitor attractions, such as the Historic Quay, HMS Trincomalee and the Hartlepool Museum, and the ongoing regeneration of areas such as the town centre and the Headland.
- 9.3 Furthermore, Hartlepool's ongoing regeneration fits into a number of broader regional and sub-regional strategies such as:
- (a) The Northern Way;
 - (b) The Regional Spatial Strategy;
 - (c) The Tees Valley Vision;
 - (d) Tees Valley City Region Business Case (TVCRBC); and
 - (e) City Region Development Programme (CRDP)
- 9.4 Through the Northern Way, Hartlepool is recognised as an integral part of the Tees Valley City Region and as an integral part of accelerating growth in the North of England. Under the Northern Way a Tees Valley City Region Business Case (TVCRBC) and City Region Development Programme (CRDP) are being developed, which are geared towards providing a coherent economic analysis of the City Region and identifying how the City Region can improve its economic performance and how the Government can help it to do so. The Northern Way Growth Strategy aims to reduce the output gap between the North and the rest of the UK by accelerating economic growth through a variety of investment priorities. Consequently, much of the implementation work around the above strategies is very much economic performance and job creation driven. However, a Green Infrastructure Strategy is currently being developed as part of the overall City Region policy and this focuses on improvements to the green infrastructure. Further details on this strategy are outlined in paragraph 9.7 below.
- 9.5 The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East will complement the aims and objectives of the Northern Way Strategy. It will

help the North East to focus on key issues for the region and how its potential can be realised. The RSS will replace the existing Regional Planning Guidance and will provide a broad framework for spatial planning. It will form part of the Development Plan for Hartlepool and will set levels for key land use issues such as housing and industrial development.

- 9.6 At the sub-regional level the Tees Valley Vision has been brought together by the Tees Valley Partnership in association with a wide number of organisations including the five Tees Valley Local Authorities. The vision aims to improve the economic performance of the Tees Valley and the quality of life its people. It provides a case to justify public expenditure, setting a long term strategic vision and programme for development for the Tees Valley. Through this vision it is envisaged that by 2020 Hartlepool will be, “fully developed as a business and commercial centre, a major waterfront location and a focus for shared services centres and short holiday breaks.”
- 9.7 As part of the overall City Region policy development a Green Infrastructure Strategy is currently being developed through the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit. This strategy focuses on making improvements to the green infrastructure in the Tees Valley. The Government has acknowledged that the sub-region lags behind the national average in this respect and that this can be a barrier to economic development. Consequently, this strategy is being developed to enhance the appearance of the infrastructure in the Tees Valley. Members of the Forum have expressed a desire to link the sites identified in the Scrutiny Investigation, wherever possible, into the Green Infrastructure Strategy and its associated site specific schedules.
- 9.8 The Council is committed to taking an integrated and partnership based approach to maximise the social and economic benefits delivered through regeneration. Indeed the Council will drive forward existing and future regeneration schemes across the Borough in order to deliver the changes necessary to realise the Community Strategy Vision:

Our Vision is that Hartlepool will be a prosperous, caring, confident and outward looking community, in an attractive environment, realising its potential. We will therefore promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the town, taking into account the needs of future generations.

- 9.9 The Community Strategy (which is currently under review) is in effect a ‘grand plan’ agreed by the Hartlepool Partnership, which is the town’s Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and brings together all of the town’s partnerships delivering local services. Through the Community Strategy process the Partnership looks at what local services and developments are needed, the best way of providing them and involving people further in the way services are delivered. The Railway Approaches investigation makes a number of contributions to the objectives in the Community Strategy, such as to *Jobs and the Economy* Priority Aim Objectives 1, 3 and 6:

- 1) To improve the local transport infrastructure to encourage business investment and productivity and enable local people to access employment opportunities;
 - 3) To promote Hartlepool as a destination of choice for inward investors; and
 - 6) To invest in environmental improvements in industrial and commercial areas that encourage additional private investment in infrastructure improvements.
- 9.10 Hartlepool Tourism Strategy is a thematic study that was undertaken in order to establish a strategic framework to stimulate regeneration economically, socially and physically. Consequently, the Tourism Strategy examines the intrinsic strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Hartlepool in terms of developing its visitor economy. This strategy identifies ways of supporting and enhancing the tourism infrastructure of Hartlepool, thus raising the profile and perceptions of Hartlepool as a visitor destination within and beyond the region. A key consideration of this Forum when selecting this topic was how do the railway approaches into the town contribute to this vision and how can they be improved.
- 9.11 The Tourism Strategy highlights the importance of the Marina to the town's economy and the concept of 'Hartlepool Quays' has emerged as central theme through which a collection of projects are being developed. Over time the combined Hartlepool Waterfront area will evolve to provide a single experience that will draw in new sources of demand and economic activity. Hartlepool Quays is a regional priority for regeneration and is the main regeneration zone in Hartlepool. It comprises the flagship Tees Valley Regeneration site of Victoria Harbour, the Marina, Hartlepool town centre, and the Historic Hartlepool Headland. Investment in the Quays will provide a regionally significant critical mass of facilities that will be catalyst to creating new demand and stimulating further investment to the benefit of Hartlepool and the Tees Valley City Region.
- 9.12 It has been highlighted above that Members of the Forum, in their Scrutiny topic selection and throughout the course of the inquiry, have been concerned with maximising the impact of the railway approaches into Hartlepool to further enhance the town's regeneration and growth. Consequently, the Forum's investigation can usefully encourage the Authority to make connections (particularly in light of such developments as the Tall Ships and a direct rail link to London), where appropriate, to the regional, sub-regional and local strategies described above, to seek to improve the rail corridors into Hartlepool.

10. Exploration of Railway Approaches

- 10.1 On 16 October 2006 Members of the Scrutiny Forum undertook a site visit to explore the railway approaches into Hartlepool. The visit was made possible by funding from Northern Rail. Members travelled between Hartlepool and

Seaham (to the north) and from Seaham to Middlesbrough (in the south). The site visit also allowed Members to make comparisons with other towns and, in particular the condition of their approaches and their stations.



10.2 During the site visits Members discussed the following issues:

- (a) What are the key 'problem areas' Members identified during the visit?
- (b) What impression did Members gain of the railway stations at Hartlepool and Seaton Carew?
- (c) How did the railway approaches into Hartlepool compare with the approaches into the other towns passed through during the visit?
- (d) What impression did the railway approaches create on the overall image of the town?

10.3 The findings from the site visit are attached at **Appendix A**. In addition, Members viewed a video presentation of the site visit at the meeting of the Forum on 2 November and held further discussions about the findings from the visit at this meeting. These findings have been disseminated throughout this Position Paper.

11. **Key 'problem spots' and areas of good practice on the railway approaches.**

11.1 It has been recognised during the site visit, and in the evidence provided by witnesses such as the Chair of the Economic Forum, that railway lines tend to go through industrial areas of towns. This largely relates to the historical development of railways and their connections to industry. Indeed, Hartlepool and the North East have a strong industrial heritage, which has been connected to railways. Given these factors it has been argued that comparatively the railway approaches into Hartlepool are not as bad as anticipated and with the exception of the Steetley site the northern approach was felt to be particularly striking during the site visit.



11.2 Nevertheless, the section above on the 'image' of Hartlepool has highlighted how the town is changing. Indeed, the issue of the 'Railway Approaches' into the town has arisen in response to maximising the potential for the regeneration of the town. Consequently, over the course of the Scrutiny investigation a number of 'problem spots' have been identified as giving particularly negative impressions of Hartlepool. During the site visit Members were able to explore the Railway Approaches at first hand and confirm / adapt their impressions of these. Following further discussion of the site visit and viewing a video presentation of footage taken during the site visit the following sites were identified as key 'problem spots':

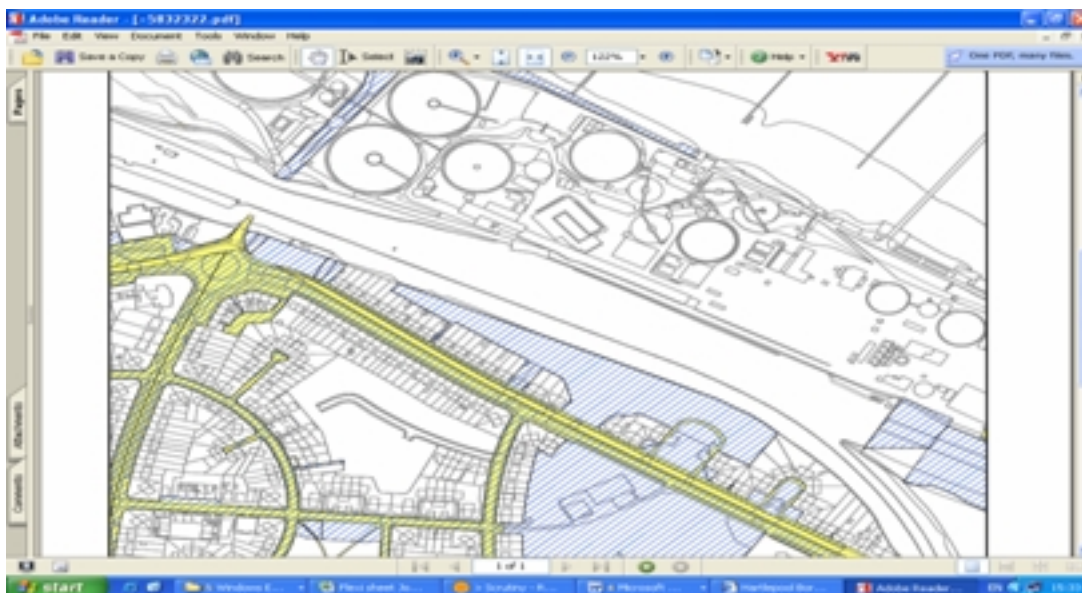
- a) Steeley/BritMag (site and adjacent sidings);
- b) Allotments around Bruntoft Avenue;
- c) SWS in Stranton;
- d) Newcombe Recycling; and
- e) Niromax.

11.3 During discussions about the Railway Approaches into the town it has been suggested that minimum and maximum standards for these approaches should be identified by the Forum. Consequently, it is possible to view the identification of the 'problem spots' in the paragraph above as falling below what the Forum has deemed to be a minimum standard for the approaches into the town. A number of methods for improvements have been identified by the Forum (and are outlined in the remainder of this section and in the recommendations of the report), which can be interpreted as seeking to develop a maximum standard for the Railway Approaches into the town.

11.4 Members will be aware, following their evidence gathering session with the Mayor that a list of untidy / derelict land and buildings has been developed and action has been taken to make improvements to them. Consequently, Members of the Forum acknowledged that the ongoing improvements to untidy/derelict land and buildings could provide a potential way forward for making improvements to the key 'problem spots' identified through the Scrutiny Investigation. Consequently, it was considered during an informal meeting of the Forum on 21 November 2006 (and again during the meeting of the Forum on 7 December 2006) that, where appropriate, the sites identified through this investigation should be incorporated onto this list.



- 11.5 It has been suggested by Members that advertising along the trackside could be developed as good practice on the Railway Approaches, in particular for screening the biggest 'problem spots'. This could be developed in three ways; firstly, to allow businesses to advertise and secondly, for the Council to advertise the town (through posters of key attractions). The latter point was felt to be especially significant in the build-up to the Tall Ships event. A third possibility would be to recommend a programme, in partnership with Network Rail, of tree planting to shield selected problem spots along the railway corridor. Given the varied ownership of the land and the responsibilities of the Council and Network Rail it has been suggested to the Forum that technical advice is sought on the most appropriate combination of these three approaches for screening 'problem spots' along the rail corridor.
- 11.6 Since attending the site visit the Neighbourhood Manager (North) has identified an area of unused land running parallel to the railway line (on the opposite side of the railway embankment to the old Steetley site) between Brus Tunnel and the Touchdown Pub. The land has previously undergone some demolition by Housing Hartlepool. Whilst the Authority proposes to clean-up the site it is felt that there is considerable potential to develop it further as a 'Community Forest' or 'Woodland Area'. The area could also act as a diversionary route away from traffic through linking this area into the Linear Park Strategy. Members discussed this development during an informal meeting of the Forum on 21 November 2006 and were keen to support and incorporate it in the findings of the investigation. This matter was considered again at the meeting of the Forum on 7 December 2006 and was supported.



11.7 During the informal meeting of the Forum on 21 November 2006 there was further discussion of the North Hartlepool Linear Park Feasibility Study, commissioned by the North Hartlepool Partnership and 'Pride in Hartlepool'. Members asked for further information on this development to be incorporated into the findings of the Railway Approaches Investigation. The study area covers the Headland and Central Estate, as far west as a line drawn from the BritMag works along the railway line to Victoria Harbour. The linear park will be a community-based project, through which community groups could develop and manage areas of green space within an overall agreed framework. By linking existing green spaces attractively and imaginatively the intention is to encourage greater use of them, make the area more attractive, exploit underused recreational and heritage potential, encourage more informal physical activity, and make them part of the local travel network for walking and cycling. Through integrating regeneration, tourism, transport, health and recreation objectives joined-up service delivery will be achieved across a range of policy agendas, as well as addressing local concerns and aspirations. Members present at the informal meeting on 21 November indicated that the scheme should be supported through the Forum's recommendations. This was later supported by the Forum on 7 December 2006.

11.8 Since attending the site visit representatives of the Regeneration & Planning Services department have met with Tees Forest (North East Community Forests) to discuss a broad programme of planting to create green fingers of woodland extending into the urban area along the railway. The Local Plan has already identified a number of recreational sites in the south of the town stretching from Newburn Bridge to the former Greatham Station area which could be planted. The Tees Forest is supportive of the overall aim to link and enhance these sites as part of a comprehensive woodland scheme. The opportunity could also be taken to screen some of the uses at Newburn Bridge and Sandgate. During the informal meeting of the Forum on 21

November 2006 Members discussed this issue and indicated their support for it.

- 11.9 An assessment of all the sites (mentioned in paragraphs 11.6 – 11.8) is being made by the Council's ecologist to ensure that they are appropriate for woodland planting.
- 11.10 During discussions about the allotments at Bruntoft Avenue Members suggested that the Council needs an allotments policy. It was argued that allotments can, and should, add to the character of an area. Allotments that fall into disrepair not only create a poor impression of the railway approaches into town but have a negative impact on the more proactive allotment users. Members also argued that the Authority should consult with allotment users around the development of an allotments policy.

12. Condition of Hartlepool and Seaton Railway Stations

- 12.1 During the site visit Members compared the condition of Hartlepool and Seaton Station with those in neighbouring towns. It was argued that neither of these stations compared favourably with, for example, Stockton and Middlesbrough Stations in the case of Hartlepool Station and Seaham Station in the case of Seaton Station. It was also argued that investment was needed to improve both of these stations.



- 12.2 A number of approaches to station improvements have been discussed by the Committee over the course of the investigation and these are outlined below.

Station Adoption

- 12.3 Currently Hartlepool Station has a Level One Station adoption scheme in place, which consists of one person helping to maintain the station. Given the interest in the inquiry from Members, rail user groups such as

Coastliners and the CVS it has been suggested that Hartlepool seeks to extend its adoption scheme to the next level, which is to develop a 'Partners Scheme'. Indeed, Northern Rail suggested that they have some monies available to support an extended station adoption scheme. However, it was also suggested that enhanced adoption of the station may undermine the staff's ownership of the station. Nevertheless, the Forum has remained keen to pursue further (enhanced) adoption of Hartlepool Station and some adoption of Seaton Station. It has been stressed that the staff on the Hartlepool Station should be involved in this process, if they wish to be, and that pursuing this development is not a negative reflection on the job the station staff are doing. Furthermore, the Forum has suggested it would be beneficial to make connections to Pride in Hartlepool as part of any scheme seeking to improve the appearance of the stations.

Station Improvements

- 12.4 Again a number of matters have been discussed in relation to this issue. Firstly, it has been suggested that both Hartlepool and Seaton Stations should be improved cosmetically. Potential areas for improvement range from placing hanging baskets and flower tubs on the station to improving the signage and timetabling displays on the stations. A number of these improvements could be achieved through enhanced station adoption and involving interested parties such as the Community and Voluntary Sector in this. It has also been suggested during the investigation that it might be possible to make connections to English Heritage and Railway Trusts when seeking to make improvements to Hartlepool Station. Members have also indicated that it is important to retain the Victorian character of the station if any structural improvements are made as a result of this investigation.
- 12.5 It has also been argued that cosmetic work on the stations will only improve them so far and may, in fact, mask the need for larger structural improvements. It was, therefore, suggested to Members that the need for structural improvements to the stations was greater and that it would be prudent to use the opportunity that the Tall Ships event was providing to recommend that the Authority lobby the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Northern Rail to make structural improvements to Hartlepool and Seaton Stations, prior to improving the cosmetic appearance of these.
- 12.6 However the town's MP highlighted that the structure of rail franchise agreements are not necessarily conducive to securing station improvements. The length of franchises and companies being charged with making economies are, in particular, problematic. The government is not encouraging longer-term improvement programmes due to the structure of rail privatisation.



- 12.7 It has been suggested during the investigation that Hart station should be reopened as it would provide a good connection for the North of the town and also to tourism in Crimdon Dene. Council officers have been involved in lobbying for this station to reopen. However, this is likely to be a very costly undertaking, which has limited progress in the past. Indeed detailed scheme designs and costings were undertaken circa 2002 and the cost for reopening Hart station was estimated at more than £2 million. It is likely that the costs will have risen since then. Nevertheless, the Local Plan continues to allow for the future development of a station halt where the disused Hart station is located and the Forum has strongly indicated that it would be desirable for the Authority to continue lobbying for Hart station to reopen. It has also been suggested by Members that Hart Station should act as the equivalent to Seaton Station for the north of the town.
- 12.8 During discussions it has been suggested that Network Rail should be persuaded to reopen the second platform on Hartlepool Station to assist with the Grand Central route to London. However, evidence gathered during the investigation has indicated that the Station currently has sufficient capacity to meet the increased demand of the Grand Central contract.
- 13. To consider issues of accessibility, particularly in terms of pedestrian access to Hartlepool Station from the Marina;**
- 13.1 Over the course of the Scrutiny investigation Members have focused on the issue of accessibility to Hartlepool Station on a number of occasions. The Town Centre Strategy has highlighted the need to address the physical linkages into the town centre and look at ways of making the area more permeable. Consequently, Members have discussed the need to improve pedestrian and vehicle signage around the stations and make connections to the town centre. In particular, the enhancement of 'brown signage' around the stations has been advocated by the Forum.
- 13.2 During the evidence gathering session with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation it was argued that adequate access to rail facilities is vital in terms of allowing growth in rail transport, and enabling

modal shift. The Transport Interchange will bring a step improvement to the railway approaches in the area of Hartlepool Railway station. Spin off improvements at the station include new toilet facilities, retail units, improved access to the new bus facilities, improved parking and changes to the ticket hall layout and passenger waiting area. The interchange will bring significant improvements to public transport in Hartlepool, while regenerating an, at present, derelict area.

- 13.3 Furthermore, given the financial and legal constraints on extending access from Hartlepool Station to the Marina via a footbridge or underpass, accessibility between these areas can be improved through enhanced connections via Church Street. In particular, improved signage, the development of the Transport Interchange and the proposed development of a large piece of currently unused land between the Historic Quay and Hartlepool Station should enhance pedestrian access between the Marina and station via Church Street.

14. To seek the views of the public in relation to the railway approaches into Hartlepool

- 14.1 Members of the public have been encouraged to take part in the Scrutiny process through a number of press releases throughout the investigation. In particular, the meeting of the Forum on 2 November 2006 was tailored towards gaining public involvement in the investigation. However, no members of the public attended this meeting. Nevertheless, 'Coastliners' a local rail users group have been active throughout the investigation, and a representative of which attended most of the meetings, including the site visit. Coastliners were given a more formal opportunity to feed their views on railway approaches into the Forum on 2 November (see **Appendix B**). Consequently, the Forum has indicated that 'Coastliners' should have a continuing involvement in implementing the outcomes of this investigation.
- 14.2 HVDA submitted a response to how the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) could become involved in improvements to the town's railway approaches, and its stations in particular. A number of potential options for involvement are outlined in **Appendix C**. The Forum has indicated on a number of occasions that the CVS has a number of contributions it can make in the actions flowing from this report. In particular, working towards improvements to the station/s.
- 14.3 During the Investigation a Member suggested it is very important to keep up the momentum generated through the Scrutiny process. It was suggested that a 'Railway Approaches Forum' could be established for this purpose. This forum could provide a valuable mechanism for furthering partnership working between the Authority, the rail operators, rail user groups, the CVS, and the disabled access group. The conduct and findings of this inquiry suggest that the latter should include both improvements to the railway corridors and stations. In addition, Members raised the possibility of including groups such as young offenders in improving railway approaches.

15. CONCLUSIONS

15.1 Over the course of this Scrutiny Investigation the Forum has reached the following general conclusions about Railway Approaches:

- (a) That there is no single or unifying government policy in relation to Railway Approaches. Instead a fairly complex set of arrangements exist between private companies, national regulators and local government through which the responsibility for this issue is divided.
- (b) That the topic selection and evidence gathering by this Forum during the Scrutiny Investigation have demonstrated enthusiasm amongst Members and officers to foster partnerships and drive this issue forward. Particularly in light of the 2010 Tall Ships event coming to Hartlepool. Indeed the Tall Ships event has been likened to Hartlepool's equivalent of the Olympics.
- (c) Consequently, it has been stressed that the impression created by the Railway Approaches into the town will be particularly significant at this time. It has also been argued by the Forum that improvements to these need to begin now to be in place by 2010 and that the Tall Ships event should also be fully utilised as an incentive to make improvements Railway Approaches.
- (d) It has been recognised by Members of this Forum during the site visit that the Railway Approaches tend to go through industrial parts of towns. Indeed it was felt that Hartlepool was comparable with neighbouring towns in this regard during the site visit.
- (e) However, in seeking to maximise the potential for the regeneration of the town a number of 'key problem spots' along the railway approaches have been identified during the Scrutiny Investigation. A number of strategies / approaches for improvements have been suggested throughout this report and are highlighted more specifically in the recommendations below.
- (f) It has been argued by the Forum that the condition and appearance of both Hartlepool and Seaton Stations do not compare favourably with Middlesbrough / Stockton and Seaham Station respectively. Consequently the Forum has expressed a desire to see improvements (both cosmetically and structurally) to these stations.
- (g) That the Forum wishes the Authority to continue lobbying for Hart Station to be redeveloped and reopened.
- (h) That given the pressures and opportunities the 2010 Tall Ships generates for improvements to the railway approaches into the town it is important that the momentum that this Forum has generated around this issue is maintained. Consequently, it has been suggested that a variety of

interested and responsible stakeholders should meet as part of a 'Railway Approaches Forum' to discuss and implement the methods for improvement recommended in this report.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 That Members note the contents of the draft final report and agree / amend the following recommendations:

- a) That in relation to Network Rail:
 - i. The Authority seeks to develop a proactive approach with Network Rail around combating graffiti, and in particular through making connections to Network Rail's graffiti budget.
 - ii. That Network Rail's 24 hour helpline number (08457 11 41 41) is publicised through the dissemination of the Forum's final report, associated press releases and through the Authority's Hartbeat magazine.
 - iii. That the Authority invites Network Rail to bring the 'No Messin' scheme to schools in Hartlepool in the interests of reducing trespassing, graffiti and vandalism around the railway lines.
- b) That the Authority invites Northern Rail's police and schools liaison officer to attend Hartlepool schools.
- c) That the Authority uses its Planning and Development Control powers proactively to enhance the Railway Approaches into the town.
- d) That the Authority seeks to maximise the regeneration benefits of the 2010 Tall Ships event, the development of 'Hartlepool Quays', and the direct rail link to London by linking, where appropriate, prospective improvements to Hartlepool's Railway Approaches into the regional, sub-regional and local strategies described in the main body of this report.
- e) That the 'key problem spots' sites identified in the Railway Approaches Scrutiny Investigation, are incorporated, wherever possible, into the Green Infrastructure Strategy and its associated site specific schedules.
- f) That the area of unused land identified in paragraph 11.6 of this report is developed as a 'Community Forest' or 'Woodland Area' and as a diversionary route away from traffic.
- g) That the Authority supports the development of the North Hartlepool Linear Park strategy.

- h) That discussions between representatives of the Regeneration and Planning Services Department and Tees Forest (North East Community Forests) around the development of a broad programme of planting to create 'green fingers' of woodland extending into the urban area along the railway corridor is supported.
- i) That the Authority develops an 'allotments policy' and consults allotment users in the development and implementation of this policy.
- j) That the 'key problem spots' identified during the Scrutiny Investigation are incorporated, where appropriate, into the list of Untidy / Derelict Land and Buildings.
- k) That the Authority develops a strategy geared towards screening the 'key problem spots' identified during the Scrutiny Investigation based on the approaches outlined in paragraph 11.5.
- l) That in relation to Stations in Hartlepool:
 - i. The Authority pursues enhanced adoption of Hartlepool Station to a 'Partners Scheme' in conjunction with Northern Rail and that involvement from the CVS, 'Coastliners' and Pride in Hartlepool is sought in this.
 - ii. That the Authority pursues the development of a station adoption scheme at Seaton Carew Station in conjunction with Northern Rail and that involvement from the CVS, 'Coastliners' and Pride in Hartlepool is sought in this.
 - iii. The Authority maximises the opportunity that the Tall Ships event provides to lobby the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Northern Rail to make structural improvements to Hartlepool and Seaton Stations, prior to improving the cosmetic appearance of these.
 - iv. That the Authority continues to lobby the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Northern Rail for a station halt to reopen at Hart Station.
 - v. That pedestrian and vehicle signage (including further development of brown signage) around Hartlepool Station is improved, especially in relation to the town centre.
- m) That 'Coastliners' have a continuing involvement in implementing the outcomes of this investigation. In particular in improvements to Hartlepool and Seaton Carew Stations and in the development of a 'Railway Approaches Forum'.
- n) That the CVS has a number of specific contributions it can make to improvements to Railway Approaches, as outlined in Appendix C, and

that the Authority considers how best the adoption of these options can be supported.

- o) That the Authority helps to establish a 'Railway Approaches Forum' in partnership with the CVS to ensure that the momentum for this issue is maintained around improvements to both the railway corridors and stations. In addition to the Authority and the CVS, the rail operators, rail user groups and the disabled access group should be involved in this forum.
- p) That the recommendations from this report are reflected, where appropriate, in actions contained in Departmental / Service Plans.

17. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

17.1 The Forum is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of the Scrutiny Inquiry. We would like to place on record our appreciation for all those witnesses who attended the Forum. In particular the Forum would like to thank the following for their co-operation during the Scrutiny Investigation:-

Kathryn O'Brien – Northern Rail (for her co-operation and for providing the Forum with free rail travel on the Site Visit)

Denise Thompson – Network Rail

Thomas Brand – Network Rail

Ian Yeowart – Grand Central

Martin Green – Coastliners

Ray Priestman – Chair of the Economic Forum

Iain Wright – MP for Hartlepool

Lesley Hall – HVDA

Peter Gowland – HVDA

Hartlepool Borough Council

The Mayor Stuart Drummond – Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Liveability and Housing

Cllr Victor Tumilty – The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation

Geoff Thompson – Head of Regeneration

Richard Waldmeyer – Principal Planning Officer (Policy Planning & Info)

Richard Teece – Development Control Manager

Matthew King – Principal Planning Officer

Simon Lamplough – Economic Development Assistant

Alastair Smith – Head of Technical Services

Ian Jopling – Transportation Team Leader

John Lewer – Public Transport Co-ordinator

Karen Oliver – Neighbourhood Manager (North)

David Frame – Neighbourhood Manager (South)

Denise Ogden – Head of Environmental Services

Phil Dale – Resources, Information and Technical Officer (

**COUNCILLOR STEPHEN WALLACE
CHAIR OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM**

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (a) Scrutiny Investigation into Hartlepool's 'Railway Approaches' – Scoping Report (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 13.07.06
- (b) Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum Minutes 13.07.06
- (c) Railway Approaches Departmental Presentations – Covering Report (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 17.08.06
- (d) Railway Approaches – Evidence from the Authority's Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 17.08.06
- (e) Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum Minutes 17.08.06
- (f) Railway Approaches – Evidence from the MP for Hartlepool – Covering Report (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 29.09.06
- (g) Railway Approaches – Evidence from the Authority's Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Liveability and Housing (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 29.09.06
- (h) Railway Approaches – Evidence From External Agencies – Covering Report (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 29.09.06
- (i) Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum Minutes 29.09.06
- (j) Railway Approaches – Position Paper (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 7.12.06
- (k) Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum Draft Minutes 7.12.06

Appendix A – Notes from Member Discussions during Railway Approaches Site Visit 16/10/06

Comments from discussions on Seaham Station

1. Having explored the northern approach into the town Members commented that the Steetley/Britmag site was the big issue on this approach. It was acknowledged by some Members that some improvements had been made here. The site is heavily polluted and there are problems with erosion from the sea. It would take millions of pounds to clear the site. A planning application is in process and it was argued that allowing market forces to clear the site was (through housing development) key to moving forward with this issue.
2. Members commented that Seaham Station compared very favourably to Seaton Station and they would like to see something similar at Seaton. In particular, the transparent shelters were popular with Members.
3. Members thought planting could be used to shield the view over the allotments.
4. The signage at Hartlepool Station was deemed to be poor. A sign on the main building (as opposed to either end of the platform) indicating that you had arrived in Hartlepool would be useful.

Comments from group discussions on Middlesbrough Station

- **Group 1 – Problem areas identified on the site visit.**

Key 'problem areas':

1. Former RHM site in Greatham – questions about pollution here.
2. Allotments generally and fly-tipping in adjacent areas.
3. It was felt that Network Rail's housekeeping can be poor in terms of contractors leaving scrap metals by the trackside and surrounding areas.
4. Fly-tipping around Lancaster Rd. area.
5. Allotment sites are a blight. Numerous plots are overgrown and/or have items dumped in them. The cabins in the allotments make them look like shanty towns.
6. Mainsforth Terrace new builds – roads partly complete, weeds etc. poorly maintained areas. Also derelict walls near here.
7. Steetley, Niromax, and Newcombe recycling are key problem areas.

8. Hartlepool Station platform requires weeding and the brickwork is 'shabby', the structure is generally poor. It could do with a repaint and hiring out spaces for advertising hoardings. The signage is also poor.

- **Group 2 – Impressions of Hartlepool and Seaton railway stations.**

Hartlepool Station:

1. Poor signage to, and in, the station.
2. The infrastructure is disgusting e.g. the roof etc.
3. The toilets have poor facilities.
4. Investment is urgently needed.
5. There is a lack of seating and there are no floral displays.

Seaton:

1. The station looks old.
2. The station needs investment to bring it up to the standard of Seaham.

- **Group 3 – Comparisons with other towns on the visit.**

1. Strong feeling that the railway station/s need improving.
2. Stockton was cited as a good example of an attractively designed station.
3. Landscaping on Hartlepool station would be beneficial e.g. raised flower beds on the unused platform.
4. Over the course of the visit it was evident that the planting around the railway had matured and generally worked well.
5. Need to work with the community around planting schemes the Newcombe and Stranton SWS sites were cited as places where this could take place.
6. Comparing Hartlepool with the other towns that were passed through on the visit created a generally favourable impression.

- **Group 4 – impressions from the railway approaches on the overall image of the town**

1. It was commented that the houses/buildings facing the railway could be improved. However, it was also recognised that they tend to be the backs of buildings and (naturally) more attention is spent on the appearance at the front of these.
2. It was acknowledged by Members that railways tend to pass through industrial parts of towns. Consequently, they do not always go past the most attractive parts of towns.

3. It was felt that hedging could be used to cover unattractive places like the recycling / scrapyard in the south of the town.
4. Members felt that the northern approach to the town was generally pleasant and a good approach into town. With the exception of the Britmag site.
5. The area between Hartlepool and Seaton station was deemed to be particularly nasty. However, there was some optimism that this area would improve between now and 2010 through the conditional use of planning permission, which would require landscaping improvements.
6. The west side of the southern railway approach, in particular, could be easily 'shielded' through landscaping/planting.
7. It was also commented that a combination of the features of Stockton and Middlesbrough stations would provide a good model for Hartlepool station.
8. It was also felt that it would be possible, and beneficial, to create a community feeling on Seaton station, and, therefore, it would police itself around vandalism etc. in the future.

COASTLINERS - *a voice for rail users*

Sunderland – Seaham – Hartlepool – Seaton Carew – Billingham – Stockton – Thornaby – Middlesbrough

Who are we

“Coastliners” is the name of the Rail Users Group representing passengers who use the railway between Sunderland & Middlesbrough – the Durham Coast Line. It is an informal group with links to Transport 2000, but is recognised by the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) (eg Northern Rail & Grand Central,) and Passenger Focus, the national body representing rail passenger interests.

It currently consists of a relatively small number of active members and meets around six times per year – usually in Hartlepool, as the mid point on the line.

What do we do

Coastliners has primarily been a campaigning group. Its main objective has been, and remains, to ensure a satisfactory service along the Durham Coast, with adequate and convenient links to the rest of the rail network.

We have campaigned for the following:

a) On a local line level:

- To restore the half hourly service between Hartlepool & Newcastle
- **To provide an early morning commuter train from Hartlepool to Newcastle
- **To adjust the timetable to make better connections at Thornaby
- To improve the format of the Durham Coast passenger timetable leaflet
- For later evening trains (the last train from Newcastle is now 30 minutes later, but we would like to see trains until 10 or 1030pm)

b) On a national level to benefit the Region by improved travel opportunities to & from the Durham Coast & the rest of Britain

- Restoration of through services between the Durham Coast & York (since the split between Northern Rail and Trans Pennine Express)
- **Support for Grand Central trains between Sunderland and Kings Cross

- Input to the Cross Country Franchise negotiations to get :
 - a) some Cross Country trains diverted from Northallerton via the Coast Line
 - b) Trains from the North East to the South Coast and South West maintained as through trains and not curtailed at Birmingham or Reading as proposed by the Department for Transport (DfT.)

We have had some successes (**) but we continue to campaign on the other fronts. This is primarily through correspondence and meetings with the TOCs, the DfT, the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) and Passenger Focus.

Improving the Passengers Lot

Other areas in which we have interests include:

- a) Improvement in publicly displayed information at all stations
- b) Improvement in passenger facilities
- c) Improved rolling stock, ie:
 - New or refurbished trains
 - Condition of trains

Where do we fit with the present Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) Initiative

Apart from the obvious need for a coat (or several coats) of paint at Hartlepool, we have been very interested in a variety of improvements not only at Hartlepool Station, but also at Seaton Carew & Billingham. Though we cannot offer masses of manpower, we can offer a variety of suggestions, and have already done so in many cases – not always with any success,

Many of our ideas need co-operation from Northern Rail and/or Network Rail, and may only be achieved with support from initiatives such as that currently being taken by HBC.

Uppermost of these is to investigate further the formation of Station Adoption Groups. Under existing schemes, Northern Rail will often supply materials if groups supply manpower. It was in fact a Coastliners suggestion that a large Tall Ships mural be painted on the facing wall at Hartlepool Station – an initiative now taken up by the Mayor, the College of Art and Network Rail.

In conclusion we would like to work with and support the present HBC initiative.

Hartlepool Railway Approaches – Potential of Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) Involvement

In relation to 'The condition of Hartlepool Station given its role as part of the new Transport Interchange.'

There are a number of ways the Voluntary and Community Sector could potentially impact on the work for the improvement of the Hartlepool Railway Station.

a) Working with established Groups:

- Civic Society
- Greatham in Bloom
- Hartlepool Local History Group
- Railway Users Group
- Possibly members of the 50+ Forum

('Soundings' have been made with the above groups and they have expressed an interest)

It may be possible to explore with these groups the idea/s of forming a consortium group/committee to work up an action plan/funding strategy working in partnership with statutory organisations such as those below:

- Environmental Partnership – Built and Natural Environment Sub-group
- HBC
- Network Rail
- Grand Central

HVDA Project Development Worker could provide assistance in 'working up' this project.

b) Establishing a new Friends of Group:

This will be just as time consuming as working with the established groups but again is possible with the assistance of the HVDA project development worker.

c) Establishing a Heritage group;

As above but perhaps involving Museum services Heritage development worker.

Possibilities could also be explored around the engagement of a 'labour force' either through the HBC ILM Initiative or through working with OFCA through the VIP project or Kirklevington project.

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

18 January 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: Scrutiny Investigation into Youth Unemployment –
Scoping Report

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To make proposals to Members of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum for their forthcoming investigation into Youth Unemployment.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 16 June 2006 Members considered potential work programme items for the 2006/07 municipal year. During this meeting Members of this Forum selected the 'Youth Unemployment' topic as its second main Scrutiny investigations for the current municipal year.
- 2.2 Members selected the topic from an appendix attached to the 'Determining the Work Programme' report submitted at the Forum's meeting on 16 June 2006. This appendix contained a list of the Authority's Performance Indicators of relevance to the remit of this Forum. Under the Corporate Plan Objective JE9, "To support young people to gain suitable employment," Members identified the *Local Area Agreement (LAA) target 2.5*, which focuses on the Youth Unemployment rate in Hartlepool, as an issue they wished to investigate. The outturn figure for issue in 2005/06 was 36% (Nov 05) against a 2006/07 target of 31% and a 2008/09 LAA target of 30%.
- 2.3 Youth Unemployment is one of the key economic targets included in the Hartlepool Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and Best Value Performance Plan. The long term target established in 2002 is to reduce the overall rate to 29% in 2012 from a baseline of 30.7%. The target is measured

by the proportion of Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) Claimants who are aged 18-24 years old, where the overall claimant count is 100%.

- 2.4 At a macro level youth unemployment was identified as a key economic issue by the current Government and in 1998 the New Deal for Young People was introduced to provide a series of cohesive and integrated interventions that aimed to improve the skills and employability of young people.
- 2.5 The New Deal is delivered by Job Centre Plus, an executive agency of the Department of Work and Pensions and elements of the programme are sub-contracted to external public, private and voluntary sector organisations that provide training, work placements and personal development support. Each person is provided with a Job Centre Plus Personal Advisor who is responsible for supporting the claimant through the New Deal journey to the point whereby employment is secured. The New Deal is a mandatory programme, and JSA claimants are expected to participate in programmes that will meet the objectives of individual job seeker agreements. Benefit entitlement can be affected if the young person fails to adhere to the requirements of the programme in relation to attendance and timekeeping.
- 2.6 Locally Hartlepool Borough Council's Economic Development Service has worked closely with a number of agencies contracted by Job Centre Plus to deliver elements of the New Deal. This includes Nacro Tees Valley who are responsible for delivering the Environmental Task Force. This offers New Deal participants training, work experience and personal development, using environmental projects as the basis for improving employability. Hartlepool Borough Council developed a funding scheme to provide this as a waged option, so that young people are employed directly by the Council and the Neighbourhood Services Department has provided significant work activities to develop individual skills. In addition the Economic Development Service have used a variety of area based funding schemes to develop employment schemes such as; *Jobs Build*, *Targeted Training*, *Opportunities for Women*, *Work Route* and *Progression to Work* that add value to mainstream New Deal provision and also support those people who are not eligible due to their benefit entitlement.
- 2.7 To measure the effectiveness of these additional interventions new performance indicators were introduced into the Best Value Performance Plan during 2003-4, which measure the proportion of young people being supported into training and employment by Council assistance. To date (2003-2006) 379 young people have been assisted into employment and 427 young people assisted into training. Some examples of the support provided to young people by the Council are attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.8 **Appendix 2** outlines the progress in reducing youth unemployment since 1996. Overall between 1996 and 2000 the overall number of young people in receipt of JSA reduced from a high of over 1400 to fewer than 800, whilst the overall rate remained constant at around 27% as the overall number of Hartlepool residents claiming JSA fell at a similar rate. From 2001 the total number of young people fluctuated between 900 and 670; however the rate,

measured as a proportion of overall JSA claimants rose to over 35% during the same period. **Appendix 3** provides a graphical explanation for this increase, where the overall number of Hartlepool residents claiming JSA declined at a greater rate than that of the 18-24 year old age group. Recently there has been a steady increase in the overall numbers of young people claiming JSA, from under 700 in January 2005 to nearly 900 by September 2006, although during the last two months this figure has reduced by 10% to 805 in November 2006.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 To gain an understanding of the issues around Youth Unemployment and to suggest areas for improvement.

4. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The following Terms of Reference for the review are proposed:-
- (a) To gain an understanding of why the level of Youth Unemployment has risen as a percentage of the overall unemployment level;
 - (b) To gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in Hartlepool who have some responsibility for tackling Youth Unemployment;
 - (c) To examine the role of the Authority as a non-statutory service provider in relation to Youth Unemployment, and in particular its role in Economic Development;
 - (d) To gain the views of young people who are unemployed in relation to this issue; and
 - (e) To identify suggested areas for improvement in relation to the Youth Unemployment rate.

5. POTENTIAL AREAS OF INQUIRY / SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- 5.1 Members of the Forum can request a range of evidential and comparative information throughout the Scrutiny review .
- 5.2 The Forum can invite a variety of people to attend to assist in the development of a balanced and focused range of recommendations. Members may wish to include the following in their investigation:-
- (a) Representative from Connexions;

- (b) Representative from Job Centre Plus;
- (c) Representative from the Learning and Skills Council;
- (d) Elected Mayor – Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Housing and Liveability; and
- (e) Representatives from Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) – potentially seek involvement of HVDA as ‘umbrella’ organisation.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the Scrutiny process. However, the Forum has a limited amount of remaining time available in the current municipal year. Consequently, it is suggested that a focus group with young people is conducted at some point in late January / early February 2007 with a group of young people that are unemployed. Through this mechanism the views of the section of the community most affected by this issue can be fed back to the Forum and into the Scrutiny process. Members may want to consider specific issues they would like the focus group to consider.

7. PROPOSED TIMETABLE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 7.1 Detailed below is the proposed timetable for the review to be undertaken, which may be changed at any stage:-

18 January 2007 – ‘Scoping and Setting the Scene of the Scrutiny of the Topic’

Late January / early February 2007 conduct focus group with a group of unemployed young people.

23 February 2007 – Evidence from key witnesses, including:

- (a) Portfolio Holder;
- (b) Connexions;
- (c) Job Centre Plus;
- (d) Learning and Skills Council;
- (e) CVS; and
- (f) Feedback from the focus group.

Early March 2007 – schedule an informal meeting of the Forum to consider contents of a Draft Final Report.

22 March 2007 – Agree Draft Final Report.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Members are recommended to agree the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's remit for the Scrutiny investigation as outlined in section 4 of this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

“Determining the Work Programme” – Scrutiny Support Officer, Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum 16 June 2006.

Case Studies – Supporting Young People into Employment

Stuart is 22 and had worked for a local company but was made redundant due to lack of contracts. When work picked up the company approached Stuart and offered him further employment but owing to a change in the law he needed his counterbalance licence to return to work. The Council provided financial assistance to Stewart so he could obtain his licence and accept employment after being unemployed for 3 months.

Paul is 24 and been unemployed for 3 weeks although he has been in and out of work as a labourer for the last year with nothing permanent. He was offered a job as asbestos operative with a local firm but required funding for £450. The Council provided funding and Paul also contributed to this by purchasing his personal equipment. He is now employed with a company that is expanding and look like he will have a secure job.

Alan has been unemployed for 11 months and attended and passed a Site Safety Passport and Forklift Truck Training course provided by the Council. He is now employed full time at as a Production/Warehouse Operative with a local company.

Daniel is an ex-offender who has been unemployed for 6 months. He participated in a Retail/Hospitality training course including Food Hygiene, First Aid and Customer Care Training. He is now employed full time at a local restaurant.

Paul's work history was mainly low skilled manufacturing work in between periods of unemployment. He was placed on the Work Route Intermediate Labour Market project with the Council and achieved New Roads and Street Works qualifications. He secured a placement with Hartlepool Water with the assistance of the Council which has led to permanent employment.

Craig wanted to become a Health and Safety Officer in the offshore industry and was already working towards a NEBOSH qualification. He needed up to date work experience and with the support of the Council secured a placement at Heerema. He has undertaken a range of short training courses provided by the Work Route Team and Heerema have offered him an apprenticeship to commence January 07.

Colin had previous employment in I.T support but wanted to re-train in engineering. The Council gave advice and guidance to Colin in order to identify an appropriate pathway. Project staff worked with a local company for a placement, and Colin was supported with a manufacturing engineering course at Hartlepool College. He made such an impression with the placement provider they offered him a permanent employment contract.

Nicky had previous experience in beauty therapy and was interested in exploring this option further. The Council found a suitable placement and identified and financed a range of courses for her to attend. Nicky is now a qualified nail technician, and expects to remain with the placement provided as a permanent employee.

