

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Wednesday 14th February 2007

at 2.00pm

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

MEMBERS: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

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

Resident Representatives: Ann Butterfield, Ian Campbell and Linda Shields

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

3.1 To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2007 (*attached*)

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

4.1 Portfolio Holder's Response to the Public Convenience Provision in Hartlepool
(*Joint Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Liveability and Housing*)

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

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

No items.

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

No items.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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

7.1 Feedback from Site Visit to Gateshead Council:-

- a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*); and
- b) Verbal feedback/findings from Members of the Forum in attendance at the Site Visit.

7.2 Evidence from Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB):-

- (a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*); and
- (b) Presentation of report by Joe Michna, Manager, Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau.

7.3 Results from the Private Landlords Licensing Consultation Exercise (*Strategic Housing Manager*)

8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

- i) **Date of Next Meeting Monday 19th February 2007, commencing at 3.00pm Training Room 3, Municipal Buildings, Church Square, Hartlepool**

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

10 January 2007

The meeting commenced at 12.00 pm in Owton Manor Community Centre,
Wynyard Road, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Gerard Hall (In the Chair)

Councillors: Rob W Cook, Geoff Lilley, Dennis Waller

Resident Representatives:

Ann Butterfield, Ian Campbell and Linda Shields

Also Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond
Ray Waller, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health
Angela Brough, Citizens Advice Bureau
Beryl Clark, Residents Association
Bob Farrow, Representative New Deal for Communities
Bryan Hanna, Partnership Chair, New Deal for Communities
Brian McBean, Observer
Andy Powell, Director of Housing Services, Housing Hartlepool
Cath Purdy, Chief Executive, Housing Hartlepool
Sue Thompson, Teesside Properties
Julie Rudge, Dent Street Residents Association

Officers: Joanne Burnley, Senior Environmental Health Officer
Claire Clark, Community Safety Co-ordinator
Brian Dixon, Programme Manager, New Deal for Communities
Sally Forth, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Penny Garner-Carpenter, Housing Strategy Manager
Alison Mawson, Head of Community Safety and Prevention
Ken Natt, Landlord Registration Officer
Denise Ogden, Head of Neighbourhood Management
Siobhan Rafferty, Homelessness Strategy Officer
Alistair Simpson, Tenancy Relations Officer
Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Malcolm Walker, Programme Director, New Deal for Communities
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

68. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Brash, Clouth and Gibbon.

69. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

70. Minutes of the meetings held on 15 November, 29 November and 13 December 2006

Confirmed.

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

No items.

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

No items.

73. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents - Budget and Policy Framework – Consultation Proposals 2007/08 *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

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

The comments/observations of each Forum were presented to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 17 November and were used to formulate the formal scrutiny response to Cabinet on 4 December 2006. Details of the comments/observations made by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum were outlined in Appendix A to the report.

The comments/observations made by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee were considered by Cabinet during the finalisation of its 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 19 December 2006 and repeating the process previously implemented had again been referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Forum for consideration on a departmental basis.

The Scrutiny Support Officer referred Members to Appendices B to E of the report and sought comments and observations in relation to the Neighbourhood Services departmental pressures and priorities, grant terminations and proposed savings. Cabinet had not proposed any changes to the departmental grant terminations, pressures or priorities referred to Scrutiny in October. With regard to initial savings, Cabinet was now proposing to implement only the 3% items previously identified and not the £90,000 saving from increasing resident only car parking charges which the Forum asked Cabinet to reconsider.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that Cabinet had proposed an alternative strategy for achieving the savings, details of which were as follows:-

- (a) an increase in resident parking charge to £5.00
- (b) introduce Monday to Friday contract charging and pay and display increase staff car park charges
- (c) introduce car parking charges to Church Street
- (d) introduce pay and display/permit parking on Whitby/tower/Surtees Streets
- (e) introduce permit parking in Scarborough Street

Members were pleased to note that their views had been taken into consideration and that Cabinet was now proposing to implement only the 3% saving items previously identified with the exception of the suggested £90,000 saving from increasing resident only car parking charges.

A Member queried whether the increase in resident parking charges to £5.00 would be utilised to generate income? The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that there was no budget provision to pay the wages of the Traffic Wardens and any income generated from fines was utilised towards the Traffic Warden's wages.

The Mayor added that the proposed increase in resident car parking charges was unlikely to be accepted by Cabinet and was currently being investigated by a Residents Business Panel, the outcome of which was awaited. Following further discussion in this regard, the Forum felt that an increase from £1.00 to £5.00 was not a viable option.

A Member requested further details in relation to the proposed increase in staff car park charges. Members were advised that the current contract charges were low in comparison to the £2.00 per day which members of staff without designated parking spaces were paying. A significant increase was therefore proposed, subject to approval by Cabinet. Members were keen that this issue should be discussed in detail with Cabinet and the Trade Unions

before any action was taken.

It was suggested that pay and display, in line with charges in other areas of the town, may be an appropriate option to which the Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the proposals would be considered by the Panel prior to Cabinet's final consideration in February.

In response to concerns raised by Members, the Director of Neighbourhood Services provided details of how the proposed contract charging and pay and display car parking at the Maritime Experience car park would operate.

Members discussed the current parking difficulties in Scarborough Street and suggested that pay and display options in line with charges in other areas of the town, be pursued.

A Member asked whether the current enforcement arrangements were cost effective and whether other local authorities were in a similar situation. The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that income from enforcement was utilised to employ more enforcement officers to tackle litter problems etc.

The Chair thanked the Mayor and the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health for their attendance.

Decision

That the following comments be presented to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 19 January 2007:-

- (a) In relation to the proposed increase in resident car parking charges, the Forum felt that an increase from £1.00 to £5.00 was not a viable option.
- (b) With regard to the proposed increase in staff car parking charges, Members were keen that this should be discussed in detail with Cabinet and the Trade Unions before any action was taken.

74. Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords in Hartlepool – Focus Group Feedback (Scrutiny Support Officer)

The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that in order to seek the views of a sample of residents, tenants, landlords and letting agents on the operation and performance of private sector rented accommodation, a Focus Group had been held on 13 December 2006. The Focus Group was well attended by a mix of residents, tenants, landlords and letting agents who, following a presentation from the Scrutiny team on the role of scrutiny and the aim of this investigation were given the opportunity to submit evidence on the following:-

- (i) problems experienced as a result of problem landlords or tenants
- (ii) help received with problems and how effective it was
- (iii) what more it was felt could be done by the local authority to address individual problems and the greater overall issue of problem landlords and tenants in Hartlepool

Members of the Forum noted the comments made and concerns raised by those who attended the Focus Group session, a summary of which was outlined in Section 2.4 of the report.

Discussion ensued in relation to the issues raised at the Focus Group meeting, in which the following comments were raised:-

- i) Positive and negative views were expressed in relation to the conduct and outcome of the Focus Group. Whilst Members were of the view that the session had been extremely valuable, with a considerable amount achieved in a short time, there was concern that quieter attendees might not have had the opportunity to fully contribute. Some concern was also expressed regarding the level of attendance at the session with the choice of venue perhaps being a contributory factor to this.

In response to these issues the Chairman advised that the session had been extensively advertised on local radio and in the press and that written invitations had been extended to residents association, landlords and letting agents across the town. It was, however, acknowledged that the timing of the session immediately before Christmas might have contributed to the level of attendance.

- ii) A Resident Representative observed that whilst the minutes of the Focus Group meeting and the Scrutiny Officer's report made reference to anti-social behaviour no reference or correlation was made to crime. In response, the Chair stated that crime was a matter for the police; however, those comments were noted.

The Chair advised that the session had been an extremely valuable meeting, despite the low attendance, and thanked everyone who attended.

Decision

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

75. Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords in Hartlepool – Evidence from Housing Hartlepool *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

As part of the Forum's ongoing inquiry into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation and landlords in Hartlepool, the Chief Executive and Director of Housing Services from Housing Hartlepool delivered a joint presentation outlining:-

- What is Housing Hartlepool
- Current housing stock (7000 properties – estimated 15,000 residents)
- Number of employees
- How Housing Hartlepool managed its tenancies
- Statutory responsibilities
- Regulations
- Organisational structure
- Supported housing
- Resident participation
- Regeneration
- Support services
- Links with other organisations
- Service delivery
- Monitoring/liaison
- Performance and operation of the private rented sector
- Registered Social Landlords Best Practice and Landlord Licensing

In addition to the areas outlined above, attention was drawn to the differences and relationships between registered social landlords and private landlords with emphasis on the role of housing associations in the provision of affordable social housing.

Following completion of the presentation the following issues were raised:-

- i) **It was recognised that tenants often had difficulties accessing mainstream financial services and Members queried if there were any plans to expand financial assistance for tenants?** In response to this query it was confirmed that Housing Hartlepool had last year undertaken 50 evictions on the grounds of rent arrears. It was, however, Housing Hartlepool's view that this figure was unacceptable and efforts were being made to increase tenant access to mainstream financial services. A considerable amount of work had been undertaken on the development of a strategy for financial inclusion, including an 'Away Day' scheduled for March 2007.
- ii) **With a huge variation between rents charged by Housing Hartlepool and the private sector how does supply and demand compare?** The Chief Executive confirmed that there was a stark difference between rents

charged by private and registered social landlords. Whilst efforts were being made through a convergence plan to narrow the gap it was acknowledged that there would always be a difference due to market forces.

It was noted that right to buy sales and demolition for regeneration purposes had resulted in a year on year reduction in Housing Hartlepool's housing stock. A greater factor in the supply and demand issue was, however, the increase in house prices which had removed the option of becoming an owner occupier for many individuals.

- iii) **How do you intend to increase housing stocks as the majority of new build properties are not affordable for many people?** It was noted that whilst the number of properties purchased under the right to buy scheme was decreasing it was unlikely that the number lost would ever be replaced.

The Chief Executive indicated that a variety of options were being explored in an effort to increase Housing Hartlepool's supply of properties. These included:

- The buying back properties purchased under the right to buy scheme;
- The purchase of privately owned properties. Their cost and the standard of properties required was, however, an issue;
- The purchase of a number of new build properties;
- Shared ownership (Current plans for 20 properties); and
- Build for sale with profits to be used to reinvest in new housing stock.

Members expressed concern in relation to the lack of affordable housing in Hartlepool and were assured by the Chief Executive that increased provision was a high priority for the Housing Hartlepool Board. In relation to the build for sale option it was highlighted that this was a route being taken by other registered social landlords and one which Housing Hartlepool would like to pursue further. Support from the Council was, however, necessary for this to occur.

- iv) **A possible role for Housing Hartlepool in helping private sector landlords manage their tenancies.** Members discussed the number of evictions, how they were managed and the transfer of problem tenants to the private sector as a result. It was suggested that the experience of Housing Hartlepool could play an important role in supporting private landlords to manage their tenancies. The possible involvement of Housing Hartlepool through the provision of such a service to the private sector was welcomed.

The Housing Strategy Manager stated that there was insufficient affordable housing to accommodate families on low incomes. A Housing Needs Assessment would be carried out to identify the needs of the town, what people could afford and to secure funding for the future. The importance of householders returning the questionnaires to facilitate this

was highlighted.

The Chair acknowledged the importance of the above mentioned issues and drew particular attention to a possible role for the Council as a partner to Registered Social and Private Sector landlords to assist in the sharing of experience and best practice.

Decision

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

76. Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords in Hartlepool – Evidence from New Deal for Communities *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

As part of the Forum's ongoing inquiry on the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation the Programme Director, New Deal for Communities (NDC) had been invited to attend the meeting to provide information on how the NDC interfaced with the private sector, the local authority and other agencies.

During the course of his presentation the Programme Director focused on the following issues:-

- Geographical area included within NDC
- Funding investments between 2001 - 2011
- How funding was utilised
- NDC Resident priorities
- NDC Housing Strategy
- NDC Community Safety Strategy to reduce crime and the fear of crime
- Housing market studies
- Review of Anti-Social Behaviour
- NDC Projects - Community Housing Plan, Environment Task Force, Voluntary Landlord Registration, Tenant Support, Community Safety Initiatives and Neighbourhood Management
- Structure of Neighbourhood Management Problem Solving Team

Particular attention was drawn to how a sustainable community could be achieved. Members were advised that whilst the Community Housing Plan aimed to rebalance the housing market, the private rented sector would continue to be a major player in the area. A better managed private rented sector was key to a sustainable community and it was important to work closely with landlords and tenants to bring together agencies and residents. With a voluntary landlord licensing/registration scheme already in operation in the NDC area the Programme Director expressed support for compulsory landlord registration within the NDC area. Support was also expressed for the

introduction of a tenant referencing scheme, effective tenant support and emphasis placed upon the importance of a neighbourhood management approach as a way forward for the future.

During the course of discussions the following issues were raised:-

- i) Concern was expressed by a representative from the Teesside Landlords Association that it was apparent from previous meetings and discussions that residents needed to be licensed. Any reference to anti-social behaviour was linked to private sector tenants. It was pointed out that an analogy between anti-social behaviour, lifestyles and unemployment had not been undertaken and if unoccupied people were more likely to indulge in anti-social behaviour. Concerns had been raised at the Focus Group relating to bad landlords, however, there was no reference to professional landlords who were different. Tenants who transferred to the private sector as a result of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour was a major concern for landlords and anti-social behaviour was not the responsibility of landlords.
- ii) Concerns were reiterated that the Rent Officer Service was setting rent levels that are not equivalent to reasonable rents. This leaves a shortfall and forces tenants who cannot make up the difference into cheaper private rented accommodation.
- iii) In relation to new build properties within the New Deal area, a Member queried whether existing tenants would take priority. The Programme Manager advised that there was an initiative in place to enable people to remain in the area and limited funding was available to support this.
- iv) The Chair advised that if a compulsory landlord registration scheme was introduced it would be ineffective if not supported by a tenants referencing scheme. As such emphasis was again placed upon the importance of the delivery of a package of measures and partnership working.
- v) The Programme Director advised that NDC's most important strategy was to prevent anti-social and criminal behaviour and a recent study of anti-social behaviour in the NDC area had clearly demonstrated the link with the private rented sector. Whilst it was accepted that this was a complex issue, there was also a responsibility on the landlord which was only one component. A Licensing scheme would provide support to landlords.
- vi) The Forum discussed the responsibility of landlords, poor quality accommodation, behaviour of problem tenants and how to address these problems. A Member queried what support landlords received to address problem tenants to which the Landlord Registration Officer advised that under the current regulations there were no additional powers to allow landlords to evict tenants any faster or easier.

The Chair thanked the Programme Manager for an informative presentation and input to the meeting.

Decision

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

77. Scrutiny Investigation into the Performance and Operation of Private Sector Rented Accommodation and Landlords in Hartlepool – Evidence from Community Safety and Prevention Unit *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

As part of the Forum's ongoing inquiry on the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation, the Head of Community Safety and Prevention had been invited to attend the meeting to provide information on the role of the anti-social behaviour unit, the range of enforcement options available to the unit and details of liaison and co-ordination with other agencies such as the police, Landlord Accreditation Scheme and residents groups. The Chair welcomed the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator to the Forum.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator provided a presentation which included a definition of anti-social behaviour. Members were advised of a breakdown of Anti-Social Behaviour Unit cases in private rented sector accommodation as well as cases by ward for the period April to December 2006.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator gave details of the role of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, case progression, case management options, how cases were co-ordinated together with details of partner organisations. It was pointed out that all cases were reviewed every 14 days and monitored for 28 days of any incidents reported.

Members debated whether anti-social behaviour was caused by people living in the area or people from outside the area.

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

i) What are your views on working relationships between local authorities and its partners? Can they do any more and, if so, what?

The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator stated that for the unit to operate effectively it was necessary to work in partnership with landlords to develop good working relationships.

ii) Would selective licensing tackle anti-social behaviour? A representative from Teesside Landlords Association advised that selective licensing would not tackle anti-social behaviour and would alienate better landlords.

- iii) **How would improving landlords make a difference to anti-social behaviour?** In response, the Chair advised that there was an argument that if properties were in a better state of repair tenants may respond to that and take care of them.

The Chair thanked the Head of Community Safety and Prevention and Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator for their presentation and in conclusion stated that it was envisaged that partnership working would be developed to address some of the problems highlighted.

Decision

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

GERARD HALL

CHAIRMAN

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

14 February 2007



Report of: Joint Report of Director of Neighbourhood Services and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Liveability and Housing.

Subject: PORTFOLIO HOLDERS RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION IN HARTLEPOOL SCRUTINY REFERRAL

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum with feedback on the recommendations from the investigation into public conveniences, which was further considered by the Cabinet on 8 January 2007.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The investigation into provision of public conveniences in Hartlepool conducted by this Committee falls under the remit of the Neighbourhood Services Department and is, under the Executive Delegation Scheme, within the service area covered by the Regeneration, Liveability and Housing portfolio Holder.
- 2.2 On 8 January 2007 Cabinet further considered the implications of the proposed recommendations outlined within the Final Report of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum into public conveniences (initially considered on 25 September 2006). This report provides feedback from the Portfolio Holder following the Cabinet's consideration of, and decisions in relation to this Forum's recommendations.
- 2.3 In addition to this report a further progress report will be produced for Member's consideration six months after the Final Report was considered by Council to enable Members to monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

3. SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE DECISION

- 3.1 Following consideration of the Final Report, Cabinet approved the recommendations in their entirety. Details of each recommendation and proposed actions to be taken following approval by Cabinet are provided in the Action Plan attached at **Appendix A**.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Members note the proposed actions detailed within the Action Plan, appended to this report (**Appendix A**) and seek clarification on its content where felt appropriate.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's Final Report entitled 'Provision of Public Conveniences in Hartlepool' considered by Cabinet on 25 September 2006.
- (ii) The Decision Record of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 25 September 2006 and 8 January 2007

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
<p>(1) That in relation to each of the options and proposals put forward as part of the Cabinet Referral (as outlined in the report considered by Cabinet on the 12 April 2006) the Forum:-</p> <p>(a) Supports the proposals for the:-</p> <p>i) Closure of the Thorpe Street, Pilot Pier and Rocket House facilities and their securing with aesthetic materials;</p> <p>ii) Building of a new facility adjacent to the old Rocket House site and closure of the Clock Tower site;</p> <p>iii) Undertaking of only essential maintenance to Clock Tower facility to keep them functioning until the new facilities are up and running;</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>	<p>D Ogden / G Frankland</p> <p>D Ogden / G Frankland</p> <p>D Ogden / G Frankland</p>	<p>Summer 2007</p> <p>Summer 2007</p> <p>Summer 2007</p>

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
iv) Refurbishment and upgrade the Lighthouse (Heugh Battery) facilities; v) Undertaking of no work to the Albert Street facility; vi) Taking no action in respect of the Seaton Park facilities other than essential maintenance; vii) Demolition and making good of the site at the Ward Jackson Park facilities. The toilets at the café to be made available to all public during the opening hours of the park; viii) Maintenance and improvements to the facilities at Rossmere Park; ix) Demolition and making good the site in the Upper Burn Valley, with the	Agreed Agreed Agreed Agreed (subject to successful negotiations with café contractor and the availability of funding) Agreed Discussions are ongoing with the	DOgden / G Frankland DOgden / G Frankland DOgden / G Frankland DOgden / G Frankland / J Mennear DOgden / G Frankland / J Mennear	2007 2007 2007 ? 2007

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
<p>development of a policy for the provision of public conveniences in the Burn Valley to be looked into;</p> <p>x) Maintenance of the Lower Burn Valley facility;</p> <p>xi) Introduction of adequate heating, together with routine and planned maintenance to the Stranton Cemetery main facility;</p> <p>xii) Maintenance of existing facilities at West View Cemetery; and</p> <p>xiii) Demolition of the Hartlepool Maritime Experience facility and the marketing of the site with any capital receipt to be reinvested for the improvement of public convenience provision.</p>	Allotment Association to take this facility into the site	J Mennear	2007
	Minimal maintenance as facility incorporated into Bowls Club	D Ogden / G Frankland	2007
	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland / R Harrison	2007
	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland / R Harrison	2007
	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland / J Mennear	2007/2008

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
<p>(b) Disagrees with the proposed course of action for the former Seaton Baths site and recommends that the facility be improved in terms of its general condition and more specifically its disabled access externally and disabled facilities;</p> <p>(c) Agrees that all Council owned buildings should provide, wherever possible, toilet facilities for the public and that town centre landlords and other businesses need to be encouraged to make their facilities available to the public during normal, and extended opening hours.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>	<p>D Ogden / G Frankland</p> <p>D Ogden / G Frankland / R Harrison</p>	<p>2007/2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
<p>(2) That a policy be established for the future provision of public conveniences requiring:-</p> <p>(i) That the location of public conveniences in Hartlepool be concentrated in tourist areas, i.e. the Headland, Seaton and the Marina;</p> <p>(ii) That all public conveniences provided by Hartlepool Borough Council comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and where this is not possible facilities be closed and/or replaced;</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>	<p>D Ogden / G Frankland / J Mennear</p> <p>D Ogden / G Frankland</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>(3) That the location of public conveniences, and their opening times, be better advertised, in particular with improved signage on</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>D Ogden / G Frankland / A Smith / J Mennear</p>	<p>2007 / 2008</p>

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
	the Marina giving directions to the conveniences in Hartlepool Maritime Experience;			
(4)	That in relation to future provision on the Marina a study be undertaken to assess the most appropriate locations before any new facilities are provided;	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland / J Mennear	Ongoing
(5)	That options for the provision of public conveniences in the Burn Valley be explored further;	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland / J Mennear	Ongoing
(6)	That the feasibility of the provision of facilities through partnership working and the identification of resources through sponsorship funding, advertising in facilities, and charging be explored;	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland / J Mennear	Ongoing

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(7)	That any capital receipts that may result from the disposal of a public convenience be re-invested for improvements to the service;	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland / J Mennear	Ongoing
(8)	That the Hartlepool Access Group and the Councils Access Officer be fully involved in proposals for the adaptation/improvement of older, and building of new, facilities to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act;	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland	Ongoing
(9)	That as part of the Civic Centre Refurbishments Programme the feasibility of the installation of a hoist for disabled adults within the Civic Centre's public conveniences be explored;	Agreed	G Frankland	February 2007

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(10)	That there be a requirement as part of the planning process (Section 106 Agreements) for the provision of, or access to, public conveniences that meet the conditions of the Disability Discrimination Act;	Agreed to explore with planning department	R Teece	Ongoing
(11)	That Parish Councils should be given the opportunity to take over the provision of public conveniences for which closure is the proposed course of action, with a requirement that they meet the conditions of the Disability Discrimination Act;	Further debate needed		
(12)	That the use of small 'annex' facilities which can be attached to larger public conveniences and left open when the main facility closes be explored (para. 12.4 (a) refers);	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland	Ongoing

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Provision of Public Conveniences In Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: (Cabinet on 8th January 2007)

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(13)	That where public conveniences are closed and not demolished alternative uses for the buildings be explored;	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland	Ongoing
(14)	That the Council should look at innovative ways of delivering the service with higher quality facilities. The Forum supported the closure where necessary of some older, less accessible, facilities to make this possible; and	Agreed	D Ogden / G Frankland	Ongoing
(15)	That the prudential borrowing arrangement proposed be continued in the future to assist in funding public convenience provision in the longer term and that any savings identified from the revenue budget as a result of changes to public convenience provision be reinvested in the service.	Agreed	D Ogden / C Little	Ongoing

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

14 February 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND LANDLORDS IN HARTLEPOOL – FEEDBACK FROM SITE VISIT TO GATESHEAD COUNCIL

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To facilitate a discussion amongst Members of this Forum in relation to the Site Visit to Gateshead Council to observe and compare best practice.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 25 October 2006, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 In accordance with the approved timetable a Site Visit was made to Gateshead Council on the 29 January 2007 to observe and compare best practice.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- i) That Member's of the Forum discuss their findings from the Site Visit held on 29 January 2007.

Contact Officers:- Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523339

Email: joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

14 February 2007



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR RENTED ACCOMMODATION AND LANDLORDS IN HARTLEPOOL – EVIDENCE FROM HARTLEPOOL CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Forum that Joe Michna, Manager, Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau, has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the performance and operation of private sector rented accommodation and landlords.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 25 October 2006 the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 Consequently, the Manager of Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence on housing advice and tenancy support services offered by the CAB. The report to be presented by the Manager of Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau is attached at **Appendix A** for the Forum's attention.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of the Manager of Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and take into consideration the issues and comments made during the formulation of the final report.

Contact Officers:- Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy

Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523339
Email: joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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

THE HOUSING ADVICE AND TENANCY SUPPORT SERVICE

HARTLEPOOL CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

The Housing Advice & Tenancy Support service uses a variety of options and professional strategies to structure and provide help and assistance to clients who are homeless or potentially homeless and tenants with Housing/Tenancy related problems. This service has been operating for almost 10 years.

Funding for the service currently comes from the Hartlepool New Deal for Communities, The Big Lottery Fund the John Paul Getty Trust Fund. However, funding from the Hartlepool New Deal for Communities is scheduled to end on the 31st March 2007.

The aim of the service is to provide a housing advice and tenancy support service to both tenants and landlords. Referrals to the service come from a range of other agencies/organisations including:

- Housing Aid Section
- Probation Service
- Social Services
- Landlords
- Letting Agents
- Disc

The client is offered housing advice, which includes offering a full range of housing options – local authority, housing associations and the private rented sector.

We operate a weekly 'drop-in' service whereby clients can call into the bureau without an appointment to be seen by one of the housing advice caseworkers. The client's needs and requirements are assessed and at this stage brief details are taken.

At this first meeting the caseworker would discuss the client's housing options, provide details of current housing association accepting applications, and offer to assist the client to complete forms should this be needed, details of what the scheme can offer the client would also be discussed. The client would be asked to provide full details of their current income/benefits, if the client has any outside agencies involved, these will be contacted, with the client's consent and a referral/tenant assessment form will be sent to the relevant agency for further details, this information enables the caseworker to assess the client's application, the client is then given a further appointment were a detailed application form is completed.

The clients income/benefits, employment status and accommodation requirements are discussed, details are provided to the client of the current landlord & letting agents who currently work with the service, a property availability search is carried out and if possible we try to arrange some viewings, client's are advised to submit 'pre tenancy determination forms' so their ability to meet the rental commitment can be confirmed. We

advise client's that most of the letting agents require references and provided them with a reference form, client's are always reminded that the service guarantees the bond not the client and that they need to satisfy the landlord that they are a suitable tenant.

Most clients are accepted onto the scheme although there are areas whereby we would not be able to assist:-

- Any client with a 'schedule 1 offence'
- Convicted arsonist
- Convicted drug dealer
- In possession of an Antisocial Behaviour order
- Already entered into a tenancy

When the client has been accepted onto the scheme, they sign a 'client's agreement' which most letting agents usually ask to see.

Once they have found a suitable property we arrange with the landlord or their agent to carry out a full property inspection, and an inspection report is then sent to the landlord with recommendations in respect of any repairs required, once we have been notified that these have been carried out we arrange a moving in date with both the client and landlord.

The client is assisted to complete their housing benefit application and advised on all necessary evidence to support their claim, all forms are copied to the client's file for future reference.

Once the client has moved into the property we arrange to carry out an inventory of the property, the client and landlord/agent both agree and sign this. At this stage we issue the 'SmartMove guarantee bond' most clients have 12 – 18 months on the bond scheme and are supported throughout this time with regular 'home visits', the caseworkers' aims are to work with the client to create a stable, lasting and successful tenancy. All clients receiving a bond are encouraged to save towards their own bond, normally £2 - £5 per week, and as an incentive the scheme gives a £5 bonus for every £50 saved, this enables the client to become independent.

The service particularly supports clients on low income/benefits who, in some cases are excluded from local authority accommodation and who find themselves unable to secure a Bond/Deposit usually required by private rented landlords.

In summary, clients who use our service can expect the following:-

- **Homeless or potentially homeless:** work with client to create stable, lasting tenancies.

- **Difficulty in raising a Bond:** client assessed for SmartMove Bond scheme. Contact registered landlords to check availability. Properties inspected to ensure recognised Code of Standards are met. Inventories carried out, assist in completing housing benefit claim form.
- **Eviction or harassment issues:** Inform clients of their rights. Contact Anti Social Behaviour Unit on client's behalf, liaise with landlords/letting agents. Ensure client is aware of their options.
- **Problems with repairs:** negotiate with landlord on clients behalf – contact Environmental Health.
- **Rent Arrears:** contact relevant agencies to make payment arrangements, challenge arrears on client's behalf if in dispute.
- **Ongoing supporting Home Visits (SmartMove clients):** to suit client's needs, liaise with other outside agencies to ensure all aspects of support are covered.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

14 February 2007



Report of: Strategic Housing Manager

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum with the results of a consultation exercise to establish views of residents and landlords with regards to the licensing of private landlords and their properties.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Approximately 9500 resident consultation documents were distributed to residents living in the New Deal for Communities (NDC), North Central Hartlepool and Burn Valley areas. In addition to this documents were delivered to all Residents' Association representatives.
- 2.2 Landlord consultation documents were sent to 860 landlords, property owners and agents.
- 2.3 Twelve drop-in sessions were held for residents as part of the consultation exercise. In addition presentations were made at 13 Residents' Association meetings. The Residents' Association meetings were well attended, however the drop in sessions were poorly attended.
- 2.4 The consultation was publicised through the Hartlepool Mail and on local radio.
- 2.5 Both consultation documents were also made available on-line.

3. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

- 3.1 1352 completed consultation documents were received from residents, which represented 14% of those distributed.
- 3.2 175 consultation responses were received from landlords, representing a 20% return rate.

- 3.3 The responses from residents were broken down by area. The majority of responses came from NDC residents (55%). Table 1 shows the breakdown of responses by tenure and area of residence.

The majority of respondents (67%) were owner-occupiers and private tenants represented 15% of respondents. This indicates a higher response from owner-occupiers than expected in comparison to housing tenure statistics for the NDC and NCH areas and Hartlepool as a whole.

Table 1 – Tenure and place of residence of respondents

Tenure	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Owner Occupier	253	494	131	26
Private tenant	48	111	34	13
Living with family or friends	4	7	2	1
Housing Hartlepool tenant	15	52	7	4
Housing association tenant	15	74	6	3
Responding on behalf of a Residents Association	1	2	2	0
No response on tenure	37	4	1	5
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

- 3.4 Responses from landlords were broken down by landlord's address. More than half of the responses were received from Hartlepool-based landlords (51%). A further 17% of responses came from local agents based in areas such as Middlesbrough and Durham.

The majority of respondents were property owners (153), 11 were agents who managed properties and 8 acted as both property owner and agent.

- 3.5 The landlords responding to the consultation were responsible for 1285 properties in the town. 38% of these were in the NDC area, 25% in the NCH area.

4. RESULTS OF RESIDENTS' CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A full breakdown of results from the residents' consultation is attached in Appendix A.
- 4.2 Overall, 70% of residents who responded felt that there was high turnover of private tenants living in their areas.
- 4.3 Half of the respondents said that they were aware of owner-occupiers moving out as a result of problems in the area.
- 4.4 Residents were asked to rate a number of issues when considering their local area. The breakdown of responses is shown in Table 2. The categories of issues were adapted from those recommended by the Home Office and used

in the national one-day count of anti-social behaviour and the four response headings are taken from British Crime Survey Answer Categories.

Table 2 – Problems in Area (Residents)

ISSUE	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	A bit of a problem	Not a problem
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	35%	21%	21%	16%
Verbal abuse	22%	16%	24%	27%
Noisy neighbours	33%	16%	19%	25%
Rubbish dumping	32%	18%	25%	18%
Damage to property, e.g. vandalism & graffiti	23%	17%	26%	23%
Use of and dealing drugs	34%	16%	18%	19%

4.5 Around one third of respondents felt that a lack of consideration and respect, noisy neighbours, rubbish dumping and the use and of dealing drugs were very big problems in their areas.

4.6 Half of all residents said they had personally had a problem with a private rented house near them within the last two years. Examples of problems reported related to drugs, noise, anti-social behaviour, damage to property and verbal abuse. Residents who reported suffering some problems over the past two years have had problems ranging from 1 to 20 times, an average of just over two problems per year.

This may well be an under-representation as the majority of people reporting problems did not specify a number, quoting instead such things as 'too many times to count', 'numerous times', 'several', etc.

Some respondents claimed to have had problems with up to 25 tenanted properties in the two-year period.

4.7 Only 7% of residents taking part in the survey said they thought that most private landlords were taking reasonable and appropriate action to combat nuisance and anti-social behaviour. 30% said that they thought no landlords were taking appropriate action.

4.8 11% of residents said that they did not think that any landlords were taking reasonable and appropriate action to bring empty properties back into use as quickly as possible, whilst 18% thought that most landlords were doing so.

4.9 Nine out of ten residents agreed that landlords should be required to:

- a) Get references from a possible tenant before letting the house;
- b) Agree to, and operate a Code of Action on nuisance and anti-social behaviour; and
- c) Supply new tenants with a written statement of terms of the tenancy, including the above Code.

- 4.10 Residents were asked where they thought licensing would work best. The option most favoured was to introduce licensing in an area based on a ward boundary (36%), whereas, 27% favoured the introduction of a scheme in a much larger area, such as the NDC and NCH regeneration areas combined.

NDC residents favoured the former option whilst NCH residents preferred the latter. The option least favoured overall was to introduce a scheme in just one of those areas.

- 4.11 81% of all residents thought that the licensing of landlords and their properties would help to improve their area or reduce anti-social behaviour. Only 4% thought that the introduction would not have an impact.
- 4.12 An overwhelming majority (92%) of residents said that they wanted private landlords in their area to be licensed.

5. RESULTS OF LANDLORDS' CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A full breakdown of results from the landlords' consultation is attached in Appendix B.
- 5.2 Almost three-quarters of the landlords who took part in the consultation had portfolios of five or fewer properties. 45% owned or managed just one. 21 respondents had over 10 properties. The largest portfolio size was 227 properties.
- 5.3 83% of landlords responding said that they received some or all of their rental income through Housing Benefit payments with the amounts ranging from 10 to 100%. The average proportion of income from Housing Benefits was over 60%.
- 5.4 80% of landlords agreed with our definition of low demand which was '...a high turnover of tenancies is more than two per year.'
- 5.5 70% of the landlords said that more than half of their tenancies lasted more than 12 months. However, 8% reported that 50% of their tenancies lasted for less than three months. Of some concern, 23% of tenancies did not last longer than six months.
- 5.6 For tenancies that lasted less than six months, the most common reason for them ending was by mutual agreement. This often happens as a result of the tenant finding alternative accommodation. Surprisingly no landlords said that anti-social behaviour was a common reason for tenancies ending.
- 5.7 Landlords were asked to rate a number of issues when considering the areas where they owned or managed properties. The breakdown of responses is shown in Table 3. The categories of issues were adapted from those recommended by the Home Office and used in the national one-day count of anti-social behaviour and the four response headings are taken from British Crime Survey Answer Categories.

- 5.8 10% or less of landlords did not consider that there were any very big problems in the areas where they owned or managed properties, although around a quarter considered that there was a bit of a problem with these issues.

Table 3 – Problems in Areas (Landlords)

ISSUE	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	A bit of a problem	Not a problem
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	10%	9%	22%	46%
Verbal abuse	3%	7%	21%	53%
Noisy neighbours	5%	9%	23%	46%
Rubbish dumping	3%	5%	26%	50%
Damage to property, e.g. vandalism & graffiti	5%	10%	28%	46%
Use of and dealing drugs	7%	13%	29%	39%
Street Drinking	6%	10%	28%	42%

- 5.9 49% of landlords thought that these problems related to privately rented properties, 28% linked these problems to owner occupied properties and 47% believed that problems related to properties owned by Housing Associations.
- 5.10 41 landlords (23%) said that they had had problems with their tenants causing a nuisance or anti-social behaviour. Three quarters of landlords reporting problems said that it involved just one or two tenancies. The main reason reported was damage to property, e.g. vandalism or graffiti. The second most common problem reported was the use of and dealing of drugs.
- 5.11 88% of landlords considered that they took reasonable and appropriate action to deal with nuisance and anti-social behaviour in relation to their tenancies. 10% did not answer the question.
- 5.12 55% of landlords said that they considered that some or most other private landlords were taking reasonable and appropriate action to combat nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Five landlords said that they thought landlords were not taking suitable action.
- 5.13 When considering prospective tenants, 61% of landlords said they always demand references and a further 21% ask for them most of the time. 10% said that they hardly ever or never demanded references. The reasons given for this include knowing tenants personally or recommendations, mistrusting references or relying on tenants being able to pay a bond; some rely on their instincts. As one landlord put it: 'I think I am a good judge of (character) have only got it wrong once, references mean nothing...'
- 5.14 Two thirds of landlords agreed that landlords should be required to get references before granting a tenancy and agree to and operate a code of

action on nuisance and anti-social behaviour and 82% agreed that new tenants should be supplied with a written statement of terms of their tenancy.

- 5.15 30% of landlords said that they thought licensing would work best in a small area such as one or two streets and 27% thought it would work best in a much larger area such as the NDC and NCH regeneration areas combined.
- 5.16 42% of landlords did not think that the licensing of landlords and their properties would help to reduce low demand or anti-social behaviour. A quarter thought it would reduce anti-social behaviour and 14% said they thought it would help to reduce anti-social behaviour and low demand.
- 5.17 Only 39% of landlords thought that they should be licensed.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The results of the consultations provide a useful starting point in the consideration of the use of powers to license private landlords. However, it must be recognised that considerable further work is needed before a decision can be made about whether to proceed with an application to the Department for Communities and Local Government for approval.
- 6.2 Whilst the response to the consultation was pleasing, caution must be exercised when drawing conclusions from such small samples. For example, responses to the landlords' consultation may have come from the more responsible or professional landlords and residents who are not affected by issues in the private rented sector may consider that their views are not relevant.
- 6.3 Clearly, residents have identified a number of problems of great concern and this is reflected in their overwhelming desire for private landlords to be licensed.
- 6.4 Conversely, landlords do not appear to recognise that there are issues causing big problems in the areas where they own or manage properties. Only a small proportion of landlords actually reported to have had problems with their tenants' anti-social behaviour – the most frequently reported issue related to damage or vandalism to property. This may be a reflection of the lack of knowledge of the area or lack of communication between the landlord and tenant.
- 6.5 There does not appear to be a pattern to suggest that landlords who have had problems with nuisance tenants are more in support of licensing, nor does there appear to be a correlation between the locality of the landlord and their opinion on anti-social behaviour problems in the areas where they own or manage properties.
- 6.6 Whilst landlords recognised that not all landlords deal appropriately with nuisance or anti-social tenants, they did not consider that licensing would have an impact on this.

- 6.7 Residents suggested a number of action areas that they felt would improve their area. These included increased police presence/patrols, tenant vetting, more action to deal with rubbish/street cleaning and dog fouling and more action by landlords to improve the condition of their properties.
- 6.8 Should a licensing scheme be introduced in Hartlepool, it will be mandatory for landlords to demand references from prospective tenants. However, as some landlords have stated, they do not always demand references because there are issues with their validity. Individuals who may be unable to provide a satisfactory reference may also encounter problems.

Work is already in progress to develop a tenant-referencing scheme, which could operate whether or not a licensing scheme is introduced. Although, should landlord licensing be established, it is proposed that the use of a referencing scheme would be a condition of licences. It is recognised that this should be tied in with directing those tenants who may struggle to find a suitable tenancy, because of a poor housing history for example, to appropriate support.

- 6.9 There is a need to make it clear that licensing may not be the panacea for solving issues in the private rented sector. For example, it is not clear how landlords can be held accountable for the actions of their tenants, particularly as landlords have not actually been provided with any additional tools to deal with anti-social tenants. As one landlord put it, 'The private landlord is a housing provider not a law enforcer.'
- 6.10 Consideration must be given to the use of existing powers and initiatives.
- 6.11 It is proposed to report to Cabinet in March setting out the merits of introducing selective licensing and, if appropriate, to suggest proposed areas for its introduction. Should a decision be made to proceed, further consultation will be required once a suitable area has been identified.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Members are recommended to note the content of the report and where appropriate seek clarification.

- 8. CONTACT OFFICER:-** Penny Garner-Carpenter, Strategic Housing Manager
Regeneration & Planning Services
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel:- 01429 284117
Email:-penny.garner-carpenter@hartlepool.gov.uk

Results of Residents' Consultation

Question 1	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Owner Occupier	253	494	131	26
A private tenant	48	111	34	13
Living with family or friends	4	7	2	1
A Housing Hartlepool tenant	15	52	7	4
A housing association tenant	15	74	6	3
Responding on behalf of a Residents Association	1	2	2	0
No response	37	4	1	5
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Question 2	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Do you think there is a high turnover of private tenants in your local area?				
Yes	249	553	109	35
No	97	152	60	12
No response	27	39	14	5
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Question 3	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Are you aware of owner-occupiers moving out as a result of problems in your area?				
Yes	177	403	75	19
No	187	317	101	29
No response	9	24	7	4
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Question 4 -	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Thinking about your local area, how much of a problem are the following? (% of respondents answering a very big problem or a fairly big problem)				
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	60	60	38	35
Verbal abuse	42	42	22	29
Noisy neighbours	52	52	34	31
Rubbish dumping	51	55	33	44
Damage to property	42	44	23	38
Use of and dealing drugs	51	55	37	40

Question 5	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Have you personally had problems with a private rented house near you within the last two years?				
Yes	177	403	75	19
No	187	317	101	29
No response	9	24	7	4
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Appendix A

Question 7				
In your opinion, are private landlords taking reasonable and appropriate action to combat nuisance and anti-social behaviour?	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Yes, most of them	20	55	19	4
Only some	136	288	75	11
None	111	236	35	18
Don't know	83	139	42	14
No response	23	26	12	5
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Question 8				
In your opinion, are private landlords taking reasonable and appropriate action to bring empty properties back into use as quickly as possible?	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Yes, most of them	60	140	41	9
Only some	162	338	76	16
None	41	88	11	9
Don't know	88	159	45	14
No response	22	19	10	4
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Question 9				
Do you think landlords should be required to..?	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Get references from a possible tenant before letting the house	327	660	162	44
Agree to and operate a Code of Action on nuisance and anti-social behaviour	317	668	164	38
Supply new tenants with a written statement of terms of the tenancy, including the above Code	343	678	174	45

Question 10				
Where do you think licensing would work best?	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
In small areas such as one or two streets	49	141	30	8
In a larger area based on a ward boundary	92	294	80	16
In a larger area such as the West Central (NDC) or North Central (Dyke House) regeneration areas	78	69	8	3
In a much larger area such as the NDC and NCH regeneration areas combined	128	179	45	11
No response	26	61	20	14
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Appendix A

Question 11				
Do you think that licensing of landlords and their properties would help to improve your area or reduce anti-social behaviour?	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Yes	311	604	140	36
No	10	39	7	4
Don't know	47	91	29	9
No response	5	10	7	3
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Question 14				
Do you want private landlords in your area to be licensed?	NCH	NDC	Other	Unknown
Yes	355	689	162	39
No	4	23	6	4
No response	14	32	15	9
TOTAL	373	744	183	52

Question 12

What other action might help to improve your area?

The following is a random selection of comments made by residents.

- 'Landlords and tenant keeping the outside and any garden or fences etc in a dean and tidy order - scruffy rented houses let area down. Licenses would only work if all landlords had one. Safety certs for all rented property should be mandatory.'
- 'Have lived in area 23 years, have good neighbours, love my little house but tenants move in and just make street and lives hell, most don't work, drink and shout until early morning, we work and have to get up at 5am, please do something.'
- 'Landlords to get references & credit checks, also have access to criminal history of violence or unsociable behaviour.'
- 'More visible police, more council visits to check on areas.'
- 'Problem tenants should be evicted after 1 warning to discourage others & keep up standards.'
- 'Have a hotline we can ring so that someone will come round.'

Results of Landlords' Consultation

Question 1 - Are you	A property owner	An agent	Property owner & agent	No response
Hartlepool based	81	4	3	2
North-East based	19	7	3	0
Elsewhere in UK	24	0	1	0
Unknown	29	0	1	1
Total	153	11	8	3

Question 2			
How many properties do you own or manage? (Total Numbers)	NDC	NCH	Elsewhere in Hartlepool
Hartlepool based	289	145	247
North-East based	112	125	96
Elsewhere in UK	74	31	69
Unknown	19	16	62
Total Numbers	494	317	474

Question 2			
How many properties do you own or manage?	NDC	NCH	Elsewhere in Hartlepool
1 to 5	70	46	78
6 to 10	9	3	9
11 to 15	5	4	2
16 to 20	1	3	2
21 to 25	1	0	0
26 to 30	1	0	0
31 to 35	1	0	1
36 to 40	2	0	1
66 to 70	0	1	0
71 to 75	0	1	2
81 to 85	1	0	0

Question 3					
Approximately what % of your rental income is paid by Housing Benefit?	Number responding	Number receiving HB	Number not receiving HB	Range of HB payment %	Ave HB (all responses)
Hartlepool based	90	73	17	15 to 100	60%
North-East based	29	28	1	10 to 100	69%
Elsewhere in UK	25	23	2	15 to 100	63%
Unknown	31	22	9	40 to 100	57%
Total Numbers	175	146	29	10 to 100	61%

Question 4		
Do you agree with our definition of low demand?	Yes	No
Hartlepool based	80%	15%
North-East based	82%	17%
Elsewhere in UK	88%	8%
Unknown	75%	13%
Total	80%	14%

Question 5					
How long do your tenancies last? (No. Landlords)	Less than 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 9 months	9 to 12 months	More than 12 months
<10%	10	18	14	13	3
11 - 20%	3	4	5	11	1
21 - 30%	1	3	4	2	2
31 - 40%	0	0	1	4	3
41 - 50%	0	0	1	5	6
51 - 60%	1	0	0	0	1
61 - 70%	0	0	0	1	4
71 - 80%	0	0	0	0	11
81 - 90%	0	0	0	1	13
91-100%	0	0	1	1	91

Question 6					
For tenancies that last less than 6 months, could you tell us the most common reason for them ending?	Rent Arrears	Anti-social Behaviour	By Mutual Agreement	Tenant abandoned property	Other
Hartlepool based	7	0	15	5	8
North-East based	6	0	1	4	5
Elsewhere in UK	5	0	1	6	2
Unknown	2	0	7	2	2
Total	20	0	24	17	17

Question 7 - NDC Area					
Thinking about the areas where you own properties, how much of a problem are the following?	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	A bit of a problem	Not a problem	No response
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	5	2	11	18	8
Verbal abuse	2	3	11	20	8
Noisy neighbours	1	6	7	21	9
Rubbish dumping	0	4	12	19	9
Damage to property, e.g. vandalism and graffiti	2	5	11	19	7
Use of and dealing drugs	1	7	14	13	9
Street drinking	3	5	9	19	8

Question 7 - NCH Area					
Thinking about the areas where you own properties, how much of a problem are the following?	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	A bit of a problem	Not a problem	No response
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	1	3	3	8	3
Verbal abuse	6	12	36	93	28
Noisy neighbours	8	16	41	81	29
Rubbish dumping	6	9	45	88	27
Damage to property, e.g. vandalism and graffiti	9	17	49	80	20
Use of and dealing drugs	12	22	50	69	22
Street drinking	10	18	49	74	24

Question 7 - Rest of Hartlepool					
Thinking about the areas where you own properties, how much of a problem are the following?	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	A bit of a problem	Not a problem	No response
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	18	16	38	80	23
Verbal abuse	6	12	36	93	28
Noisy neighbours	8	16	41	81	29
Rubbish dumping	6	9	45	88	27
Damage to property, e.g. vandalism and graffiti	9	17	49	80	20
Use of and dealing drugs	12	22	50	69	22
Street drinking	10	18	49	74	24

Question 7 - All Responses					
Thinking about the areas where you own properties, how much of a problem are the following?	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	A bit of a problem	Not a problem	No response
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	18	16	38	80	23
Verbal abuse	6	12	36	93	28
Noisy neighbours	8	16	41	81	29
Rubbish dumping	6	9	45	88	27
Damage to property, e.g. vandalism and graffiti	9	17	49	80	20
Use of and dealing drugs	12	22	50	69	22
Street drinking	10	18	49	74	24

7.3
Appendix B

Question 8 – Do you consider that these problems relate to ...	Private rented properties	Owner occupied properties	Properties owned by a Housing Association
No.	85	49	81

Question 9 – Have you had any problems with any of your tenants causing a nuisance or anti-social behaviour	Yes	No
No.	41	131

Question 10 – How many of your tenancies has this involved?	No of tenancies
1	22
2	9
3	1
4	3
6	1
8	1
No response	4

Question 11					
What sort of problems have you had, and how big a problem was it?	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	A bit of a problem	Not a problem	No response
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	7	9	10	9	6
Verbal abuse	5	7	10	12	7
Noisy neighbours	7	8	14	5	7
Rubbish dumping	4	2	10	15	10
Damage to property, e.g. vandalism and graffiti	13	5	10	10	3
Use of and dealing drugs	9	4	7	16	5
Street drinking	3	6	7	15	10

Question 12			
In your opinion, do you consider that you take reasonable and appropriate action to combat nuisance and anti-social behaviour in relation to your tenancies?	Yes	No	No response
No.	154	4	17

Question 13				
In your opinion, are other private landlords taking reasonable and appropriate action to combat nuisance and anti-social behaviour?	Yes, most	Yes, only some	None	Don't know
No.	29	68	5	67

Question 14					
Do you always demand references?	Always	Most of the time	Hardly ever	Never	No response
No.	107	37	7	11	12

Question 16			
Would you be prepared to participate in tenant referencing scheme?	Yes	No	No response
No.	151	10	14

Question 17		
Do you think that landlords should be required to..	Yes	%
Get references before granting a tenancy?	121	69%
Agree to and operate a code of action on nuisance and anti-social behaviour?	115	65%
Supply new tenants with a written statement of terms of their tenancy?	143	82%

Question 18					
Where will licensing work best?	In a small area such as one or two streets	In a larger area based on a ward boundary	In a large area, e.g. NDC or NCH	In a much larger area, e.g. NDC and NCH	No response
Number	53	18	13	48	43
%	30%	10%	7%	27%	25%

Question 19				
Do you think that licensing of landlords and their properties would help to...	Reduce low demand only	Reduce ASB only	Neither reduce low demand or ASB	Reduce low demand and ASB
No.	4	44	73	24
%	2%	25%	42%	14%

Question 20			
Do you think private landlords should be licensed?	Yes	No	No response
No.	68	76	31
%	39%	43%	18%

Question 21

Have you any comments, suggestions or proposals that you would like to make relating to the problems of low demand anti-social behaviour, or the possibility of introducing selective licensing of private landlords?

The following is a random selection of the comments made:

Landlords not in Favour of Licensing

- 'Licensing will not help anti-social behaviour. These yobs and louts have to live somewhere. Police action is what is called for. The police appear to totally ignore the drug dealing in x street, for instance. The yobs and louts should also be pulled in and fined for drinking on the streets, etc. Licensing will not help.'
- 'Unfortunately I do know Hartlepool well enough to answer some of the questions. My general feeling on licensing is that I feel there is more than enough regulation in many walks of life which proves both time consuming and expensive.'

Landlords in Favour of Licensing

- 'The relevant authorities are aware of problem areas and tenants from whichever section of the community. If there were such problems with any of my tenants I would hope that I as a landlord would be informed and given the chance to speak to the tenants and if appropriate give warnings of termination notice should these problems persist.'
- 'I think that introducing selective licensing of private landlords will reduce anti-social behaviour, which I think in certain areas of the town is on the increase. All landlords need to be fit and proper and take good care of their property and only allow tenants who have good, valid references and comply with the tenancy agreement for the sake of your property and your neighbours.'

Undecided

- 'More work is needed to combat ASB for example an increasingly proactive approach by the council. Some tenants need support but also need intensive intervention if they are to sustain a tenancy without ruining communities. Licensing will allow landlords and statutory agencies to monitor anti social tenants, but it won't modify their behaviour.'