
OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

Purpose of Report

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Community and Public Protection Portfolio:-

Floating Tenancy Support Scheme

2. Individuals and families who need support to enable them to maintain a Council tenancy can benefit from our Floating Tenancy Support Scheme. Currently 36 Council tenants receive support in their own homes for a period of up to two years. For the first time this year a Christmas party was arranged for them on 16th December 2005 at Firthmoor Community Centre, Maidendale House. Staff at the Centre prepared a three-course meal and provided an excellent service, whilst a volunteer kindly collected and donated a large selection of toys for the children. The event has also encouraged those who attended to arrange further social events.

Housing Enquiries on Council Website

3. Housing Services have made some significant improvements to their area of the Council's Web Site this year, which has resulted in considerably more people making use of this facility. In total from January to December 2005 there have been 106,858 visits to Housing related web pages with 34,059 during the last quarter of the year compared to 18,184 in the first quarter. Of most interest is Housing for the Elderly, followed by Finding a Home and Housing Repairs.

Oban Court

4. I officially opened the second of the Council's Extra Care schemes at Oban Court on 2nd December 2005. In terms of Extra Care provision Darlington is well advanced and has recently been selected by the Kings Fund for their on-going research project into the value of Extra Care. The scheme allows older vulnerable people to live in the community with support. The entire building is now accessible to people in wheelchairs, with on-site home care and warden services, a daily two-course meal and a wide range of community facilities for health and recreational purposes.

Local Housing Assessment

5. David Cumberland Housing Regeneration Ltd was commissioned in August 2005 to undertake a local Housing Assessment in Darlington and this work has now been completed. Overall the research aims to assess the future housing needs of Darlington; identify housing markets and understand their drivers; and provide robust evidence to support the development of the Council's Housing Strategy and Local Development Framework. Survey questionnaires were sent out to 35,161 dwellings and a total of 5,888 were returned, representing a 16.7% response rate. Afternoon and evening presentations of the outcome of the survey are currently being arranged to which all Members of the Council will be invited to attend.

Anti Social Behaviour/Warden Service

6. As reported to the last Council meeting, the new Anti Social Behaviour Team commenced employment on 7 November 2005. Ongoing training is taking place for officers and a caseload is starting to build. To date, the Anti Social Behaviour Officers are investigating six of the more persistent anti social behaviour problems within the Borough. This caseload will continue to increase as the Team hit the ground running and it is anticipated that once fully established, they will have a caseload in excess of 200 cases.

Darlington Drug & Alcohol Action Team

7. Darlington DAAT continues to perform well maintaining its' green light status. Numbers in treatment are now over target and are predicted to have increased further by April. Work is now focusing on consolidating progress to date, developing prevention services for young people and treatment effectiveness. The involvement of service users, parents, carers and community consultation being a core theme. The DAAT and Darlington Local Strategic Partnership are continuing to work together to implement the Darlington Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.
8. It is planned to hold a Member Briefing Session in the New Year on the role of the new Team and the powers available to tackle issues of anti social behaviour.
9. I intend to give a verbal update on the possible merger of the three North East Constabularies, events are gaining pace.

Councillor Bill Dixon
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Community
and Public Protection