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**OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND  
COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. The following were the main areas of work under The Portfolio Holder for Community and Public Protection.

**Private Sector Housing – The Housing Renewal Team**

2. The Housing Renewal Team continues to be engaged in a wide range of activities across Private Sector Housing. The work has been particularly concentrated in the privately rented sector but has also covered owner occupied properties and some registered social landlords.
3. Demand for the Housing Renewal Service over the first quarter to date is illustrated in **Appendix 1**. Despite an increase in the volume of requests for assistance by 50% the Housing Renewal Team under its new structure of three dedicated Housing Renewal Officers with specialist expertise (empty properties, houses in multiple occupation and landlord accreditation and liaison) have continued to respond and perform to a high level to meet public expectations.
4. The performance of the Housing Renewal Team over the first quarter to date of 2008/09 is recorded in Table 1 and 2, below.

Table 1 - Number of requests resolved over specified time period

<b>Number of requests resolved between 1st April 2008 to 18th June 2008</b>				
<b>Number resolved same day</b>	<b>Number resolved 1 - 5 days</b>	<b>Number resolved 6 - 10 days</b>	<b>Number resolved 11 - 14 days</b>	<b>Number resolved over 14 days</b>
11	17	4	7	10

5. This illustrates that 22% of requests are resolved within the same day and 57% are resolved within five days or less.

Table 2 - Number of requests responded to over specified time period

<b>Number of requests responded to between 1st April 2008 to 18th April 2008</b>		
<b>Number responded to same day</b>	<b>Number responded to within 1 day</b>	<b>Number responded to greater than 1 day</b>
16	13	11

6. This illustrates that 72.5% of requests are responded to within one day of receipt.

7. Targeted enforcement has remained a key priority and there has been a considerable increase in the number of legal actions taken using the powers introduced by the Housing Act 2004. This included one house in multiple occupation closed down to protect the health and safety of the occupiers. Landlord accreditation remains a popular choice for private landlords with nearly 50 accredited landlords becoming members and over 400 accredited properties.

### **Housing Renewal Strategy 2008-12**

8. The Housing Strategy and Renewal Team have reviewed and updated the Housing Renewal Strategy. The strategy focuses on Private Sector Housing and has been updated to meet national and local requirements and recent legislative changes. Providing an overview on housing and population statistics in Darlington it also updates on housing conditions across the borough. The strategy also provides a useful update on local, regional and national housing issues. The emphasis of the strategy is to inform and direct housing investment in Darlington and target service provision where it is required. The strategy also directs the services provided by the Housing Renewal Team and updates its regulatory requirements. It is also an invaluable tool to promote and encourage regional and sub regional activities within private sector housing.

### **Partnership Management Framework**

9. During 2007/08 the Council entered into a Framework Management Arrangement for the delivery of a range of work. Today this is mainly related to work on the Housing stock and a recent Partnering Management Board was held to review the previous years progress in the following categories:
  - (a) Internal Planned Maintenance as undertaken by the Council's Building Maintenance Team and Wates Living Space. When the Partnership with Wates was first established they were working an average of 15 days in each property compared with Building Services who are considerably more experienced and completed the work in five days. With the benefit of shared learning Wates have reduced the time period to between five and seven days. Both Wates and the Council employ Tenant Liaison Officers to support and assist tenants throughout the process. And both teams have benefited from sharing best practice. By having two partners we have been able to work more flexibly and vary the programme to include void property more effectively.
  - (b) External Painting is undertaken by MITIE who have responded well to being a pilot for mystery shopping undertaken by the Tenants Board. MITIE have also donated surplus paint to a range of voluntary organisations including the Women's Refuge, Darlington CAB and Skerne Park Community Centre. This is seen as an ongoing initiative.
  - (c) External work has been undertaken by Seymours who have responded flexibly in suggesting improvements such as installing ramps to bungalows as part of footpath replacement works and incorporating additional work to existing programmes, such as improving the area to the rear of Holgate Moor Green and Westminster Road as part of the Firthmoor programme.
10. All partners are committed to using local labour where possible and have already had some success, particularly with MITIE who have employed six local people.

## **New Supporting People Service for Ex-offenders and People at Risk of Offending**

11. During 2007/08, the Supporting People Team undertook a review of the service for ex-offenders and people at risk of offending, currently operated by Norcare. As part of this review, an opportunity was explored to jointly commission a new service with Durham County Council, for the following reasons:
  - (a) The key stakeholder for this service is Probation, who operate over both the geographical areas of Durham and Darlington.
  - (b) Durham and Darlington both hold contracts with Norcare, which are due to expire in 2008.
  - (c) It was identified that significant efficiency savings could be achieved from a jointly commissioned service.
  
12. Consultation over a new service delivery model was undertaken with service users and key stakeholders. Some of the key outcomes of this review were:
  - (a) To provide a service that can operate across boundary, to allow more flexible provision of services, including working with offenders before release from prison.
  - (b) To provide an increase in service users who can benefit from the service, from 55 to at least 70, for the same contract value (an increase from 23 to 35 in the Darlington area).
  - (c) To move away from hostel type accommodation towards a wider range of accommodation options offering a more inclusive approach and better outcomes for service users, as part of the national agenda for offender management.
  
13. A joint procurement exercise (the first in the North East region for Supporting People contracts) has recently been undertaken by Durham and Darlington to select a provider for the new service. Following a formal tendering process, the successful provider is Foundation Housing Association. Although Foundation HA is a new support provider in the region, they have considerable experience of working with this client group, mainly in Yorkshire. Foundation HA currently operate seven services for ex-offenders and people at risk of offending, supporting over 1100 service users. Once contracts have been issued, Foundation HA will be in negotiation with the current provider, Norcare over the transfer of the service.

## **Street Scene**

14. A review of Street Scene has recently been undertaken as the service approaches its two-year mark. As a result it is proposed that changes be made to the management structure within Street Scene, to improve performance and efficiency. The review also incorporates changes following the transfer of services from the former Department of Development and Environment.
  
15. Street Scene has now been in place for just under two years and the review builds on what has worked well and adapts, or changes, those things that have not worked so well. In addition, the Council has undergone a major restructure, which provided the opportunity to review the overall structure in Environmental Services and that of Street Scene. As a result of the review, the following changes have been proposed and are currently being consulted on:

- (a) Two Area Street Scene Managers overseeing a number of geographical areas and generic services, providing support to Team Leaders and consistency of approach.
- (b) The provision of Team Leaders, although at a lower lever, operating in each area but working as part of a team out on the ground.
- (c) The provision of a Crematorium and Cemetery Manager, who will have overall responsibility for the crematorium and cemeteries, with a team of staff dedicated to those services.
- (d) Ward members, residents and Street Champions will still be able to have regular contact with their respective Area Manager and Team Leader and Street Scene will also continue to be heavily involved in community consultation and engagement.

## **Darlington Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership**

### **Community Safety Plan 2008-2011**

- 16. Following recommendations arising from the review of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the CDRP is now required to carry out an annual assessment of crime, disorder and the harm caused by substance misuse to inform the development of a three year Community Safety Plan, refreshed annually.
- 17. This is Darlington's first Community Safety Plan produced in accordance with the new recommendations.
- 18. Consultation on the Plan was completed as part of the development of the borough's Sustainable Community Strategy; One Darlington : Perfectly Placed.
- 19. The Plan was agreed by Cabinet and Council in March 2008.
- 20. The priorities identified within the Plan are:
  - (a) Anti Social Behaviour
  - (b) Reducing Offending
  - (c) Violent Crime and Disorder in the Night Time Economy
  - (d) Domestic Abuse
  - (e) Public Reassurance
- 21. Reducing the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol cuts across all priorities.
- 22. Delivery plans for each of the priority areas are in development and targets are being set as part of the development of the boroughs second Local Area Agreement.
- 23. A Domestic Abuse Strategy for 2008/11 is also currently being developed.

### **National Drugs Week**

- 24. The Partnership took part in National Drugs Week between 19 - 23 May 2008. The week was aimed at educating people about the dangers of taking drugs and raising awareness that those who continue to sell drugs in Darlington will not be tolerated. The DAAT held two events in the week; a FRANK event and a Battle of the Bands competition. As part of the week the Police also carried out ten house raids, which resulted in 11 arrests.

## **Tackling Violent Crime Programme**

25. The Tackling Violent Crime Programme has recently ended with the following initiatives been rolled out:
- (a) Polycarbonate glasses introduced at 16 pubs and clubs.
  - (b) Bottle bins installed outside 13 premises to encourage people to dispose of drinks their safely.
  - (c) Door staff have been equipped with metal detection wands to allow them to search revellers entering pubs and clubs.
26. A full evaluation of the programme continues to be carried out.

**Councillor Bill Dixon**  
**Cabinet Member with Portfolio for**  
**Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety**