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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-

- (a) **Overview of Housing** - At our meeting held on 10th January, 2012, we received a comprehensive overview of Housing Services with particular emphasis made in relation to Housing Options including Choice Based Lettings and the Key Point of Access, Housing Revenue Account and Asset Management Strategy and Tenancy Enforcement and Support. We were informed of the Government's plans to reinvigorate the Right to Buy scheme and one for one replacement proposals that were out for consultation at present, which sets out the Government's intention and commitment to increase the caps on Right to Buy discounts, to encourage more tenants to take up the Right to Buy. It was also highlighted that 75 per cent of the sale of each home sold under the Right to Buy scheme had to be given to Central Government and that only the remaining 25 per cent of the sale could be retained by the Council. Concerns were raised in relation to the impacts on this Council if the proposals were to be approved.

We were extremely grateful for the interesting and informative presentations given by officers and found this a useful tool in developing our work programme.

In addition to the presentations we questioned the current position in relation to the recommendations of the North East Regional Review of Health Needs of the Ex-Service Community that relate to housing matters and it was pleasing to note that all recommendations specific to this Council had been addressed, although, the majority of the recommendations were regional issues and that Gateshead Council were leading on these. We have requested that once Authorities had met regionally we receive an update on the recommendations.

- (b) **Work Programme** - Following the presentation we then gave consideration to and discussed the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2011/12 and possible review topics and in doing so, we have taken into account the reduced resources available and ensured that, in recommending our work programme to Monitoring and Co-ordination Group, that any work we undertake will have demonstrable outcomes and contribute to the work of the Council and its strategic aims and objectives. The pieces of work that we intend to scrutinise over the next few months are Personal Budgets, the impacts on carers and their roles in terms of the budget proposals and audit of the recommendations from the Director of Public Health's report 2009/10 'Keeping Older People Healthy in Darlington'. In relation to the Housing Benefit Reforms Review Group it was suggested that a report is submitted to this Scrutiny Committee in April so we can scrutinise the impacts of the reforms.

(c) **Medium Term Financial Plan** – We considered and approved the recommendations of the Task and Finish Review Group that was established by this Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the four budget proposals contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2012/13 to 2015/16 within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee and the future impact on services. These recommendations will be submitted to the Special meeting of the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee together with the recommendations of the other Scrutiny Committees.

2. Since the last meeting of Council I have attended :-

- (a) Housing Benefit Reforms Briefing Session;
- (b) Joint Chairs Briefing with Councillor Newall; and
- (c) Various meetings with officers.

**Councillor Bryan Thistlethwaite**  
**Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee**