

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

24 July 2007

The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. in the Red Room, Avondale Centre,
Dyke House, Hartlepool

Present:

Stuart Drummond (The Mayor, Regeneration and Liveability Portfolio Holder)
- In the Chair

Councillors: Pam Hargreaves (Deputy Mayor, Performance Portfolio Holder)

Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder)

Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Robbie Payne (Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Paul Walker (Chief Executive)
Andrew Atkin (Assistant Chief Executive)
Dave Stubbs (Director of Neighbourhood Services)
Peter Scott (Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)
Nicola Bailey (Director of Adult and Community Services)
Geoff Thompson (Head of Regeneration)
Tony Brown (Chief Solicitor)
Mike Ward (Chief Financial Officer)
Julian Heward (Assistant Public Relations Officer)
Angela Hunter (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

42. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Jackson.

43. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

44. Inquorate Meeting

It was noted that the meeting was not quorate. The Mayor indicated that (as permitted under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Constitution) he would exercise his powers of decision and that he would do so in accordance with the wishes of the Members present, indicated in the usual

way. Each of the decisions set out in the decision record were confirmed by the Mayor accordingly.

45. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2007.

Confirmed.

46. Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2007-2008
(*Director of Neighbourhood Services*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

To consider the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan for 2007/08, which is a requirement under the Budget and Policy Framework.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities, the Director of Neighbourhood Services sought consideration of an updated version of the Food Law Enforcement Plan revised to reflect performance in 2006/07. A copy of the Food Law Enforcement Plan 2007/08 was attached at Appendix 1 and a summary provided of the main issues contained within it.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance joined the meeting at this point resulting in the meeting being quorate.

A Member sought clarification on what mechanisms were in place to re-inspect premises when a change of ownership took place. The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the Tees Valley Environmental Health Officers' Group were examining this situation. In response to Member questions, the Director of Neighbourhood Services indicated that officer support and advice was provided to owners of premises with low star ratings on how best to improve and that inspections were carried out on an annual basis with reviews available after six months if requested.

Decision

That the Food Law Enforcement Plan 2007/08 be forwarded to Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum.

47. Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – Secretary of State Proposed Modifications *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

To advise Cabinet of the proposed modifications by the Secretary of State (SoS) to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and outline the main issues from a Tees Valley and Hartlepool perspective, together with suggested comments to make through the formal consultation process, to ensure the best interests of Hartlepool are secured.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability presented an in-depth report which indicated that the draft RSS was submitted to Government by the North East Assembly in June 2005 followed by an Examination in Public in March/April 2006. The report of the Panel was published in August 2006 and recommended a number of changes to the submitted draft. These changes were subject to a two stage consultation process, the first round would run until 6 August 2007 during which time the Secretary of State would seek supplementary information from the North East Assembly. This supplementary information concerned housing allocations and major employment sites and this was detailed within the report.

Officers from each of the Tees Valley local authorities had been working closely with the Joint Strategy Unit (JSU) to consider the proposed changes that contained much that was to be welcomed. However, there were a number of concerns and issues that required a more detailed response and these were considered within the report.

The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services gave a detailed presentation on the Hartlepool specific considerations contained within the report including:

- Employment Land
- Housing Distribution
- Wind Energy
- Tees Valley Conurbation

It was acknowledged that since the very early drafts of this document, Hartlepool was recognised with more clarity, emphasis and priority. Members were keen to ensure that Hartlepool featured prominently within

the development of sustainable transport for the Tees Valley Region, including the proposed rail based metro system currently being investigated. It was generally accepted that at this stage Hartlepool would not pursue further claims to be part of the conurbation.

Members also noted the need for a greater mix of different types of housing and the need to identify future development of high density/social housing.

Decision

- (i) Members noted the proposed modifications to the Regional Spatial Strategy by the Secretary of State and the intention of the JSU to submit a detailed response on these proposed changes based on the comments and concerns set out within the report.
- (ii) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services, in consultation with the Mayor, the responsibility for submitting formal written representations in relation to housing numbers, employment land/Wynyard, Wind Energy (and potentially the Tees Valley City Region Conurbation definition) by the Council.
- (iii) That the Authority's response be made jointly with the Local Strategic Partnership.

48. Resident Permit Costs *(Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to explain the current resident permit costs. The report looked at the current revenue generated from permit charges and examined the financial cost this provision had on the Parking Service.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities the Director of Neighbourhood Services presented a report which gave the background to when parking charges were introduced within the town centre car parks. This had resulted in the introduction of resident permit controlled parking zones which were created to protect residents living on the fringe of the town centre. Over the years, the scheme and geographical boundaries of the zone had increased significantly. The costs for residents' permits had remained static at £1 since the inception of the scheme.

The cost of this service was calculated based on an annual renewal and it

was estimated that a manual payment costs the authority about £8.00, where an on-line payment was estimated at 36p. An annual audit had been undertaken and the report recommended that the costs of the residents' permits should be costed to be self-financing. Budget pressures had also forced a further review along with other chargeable aspects of the service.

The estimated costs of providing the residents parking scheme currently equated to £80,000 per annum. Included within the report were details of some possible charge options. Attached by way of Appendix was a table showing the various zones within the town where residents only parking exists and the various expiry dates. Also attached was a table which identified zones A-C which could be classified as truly town centre which totalled some 2700 permits. Suggested charging options were included within the report for this approach.

In response to Members questions, the Director of Neighbourhood Services indicated that consultation had been undertaken with the Parking Permit Consultation Group set up to examine residents parking charges, although there were no residents in attendance at this meeting. This issue was due to be reported back to this Group at their next meeting next week. Members were keen to ensure that as many members of the public were informed about next week's meeting to enable a wide range of views were received. Members questioned the definition of the boundary of the town centre. The Director of Neighbourhood Services responded that this was difficult to determine but the boundaries would be re-examined for clarification.

It was noted that some Members had been approached by residents requesting the restrictions around residents' parking be extended until 10.00pm or 11.00pm. The Director of Neighbourhood Services indicated that the operating hours of residents parking zones were being examined including the possibility of including Sunday enforcement. One suggestion made by a Member was the introduction of higher charges for large 'gas guzzling' vehicles as undertaken in Richmond on Thames. The Director of Neighbourhood Services responded that the strategy would be reported back to Cabinet and would include options based on the suggestions received.

Members welcomed the opportunity for residents to apply for a permit on-line although acknowledged that not all residents had access to this facility. The Director of Neighbourhood Services responded that as well as the on-line facility, home-visiting to residents wishing to purchase a permit could also be considered.

Decision

- (1) That the following be agreed subject to a further report by the Director of Neighbourhood Services to be submitted to Cabinet with clarification on the town centre boundaries and the results of

further consultation with residents:

- (i) That the residents permit charge for the town centre schemes be increased to £5 per annum.
 - (ii) That the residents parking charge for the non-town centre schemes be increased to £20 per annum.
 - (iii) As a means of efficiency saving, permits be renewed biennially and therefore offered at a cost of £10 or £40.
- (2) That staff car parking charges be increased by 10% (rounded up to the nearest 50p/month) and those staff who park in the Civic Centre underground pay an additional charge of £50 per annum.
- (3) That these charges be increased annually in April at the rate of inflation and the scheme be reviewed after 12 months..

48. Proposed New Parking Zones – Church Street/Huckelhoven Way *(Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key.

Purpose of report

To consider the responses received from businesses, commuters, residents and students following a consultation to introduce new parking controlled zones between Church Street and Hucklehoven Way.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities, the Director of Neighbourhood Services presented a report which outlined the background to the proposed new parking zones. Consultation letters had been sent to all businesses located in the area and letters were also distributed to every vehicle parked in the zone. The results of the consultation exercise were attached at Appendix B to the report and included the identification of a lack of long-stay parking provision in the area. A number of residents had also responded that the proposed restrictions did not include an allowance for residential parking.

A significant number of responses were from HBC staff concerning operational and contractual concerns, however the proposed scheme would be open to the public and as a result these specific concerns could not be considered in isolation.

As a result of the consultation responses, several amendments had been

made to the original proposed scheme and these were detailed within the report. The financial implications were detailed within the report and included the purchase of pay and display ticket machines and some constructional work to the highway.

A Member commented that consideration should be given to purchasing pay and display machines that give change. Members were mindful of the small business in the area and requested that full consideration be given to short stop spaces outside some of the businesses. The Director of Neighbourhood Services indicated that as shown in Appendix C, there was provision for this facility in Church Street and there would be provision for permits for businesses within the Whitby Street area also.

Decision

- (i) The amendments to the original scheme be approved.
- (ii) Officers proceed with the necessary advertising of legal orders.
- (iii) That any objections received as a result of the advertising process be reported to the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities for consideration.

49. Local Housing Assessment (*Director of Regeneration and Planning Services*)

Type of decision

Non Key.

Purpose of report

To inform members of the completion of the 2007 Hartlepool Local Housing Assessment and provide members with an overview of the key findings.

The assessment provides a full analysis of the Hartlepool housing market and focuses on current dwelling profile, market trends, market drivers, current need, future requirements for affordable housing and market housing and the requirements of householder groups with particular needs e.g. families, older people and people with specialist needs. The aim of the assessment was to inform the production of future Housing and Supporting People strategies and to provide a robust and defensible evidence base to support Local Development Framework (LDF) preparation.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability presented a report which gave an overview of the key findings of an extensive consultation

exercise undertaken into the Local Housing Assessment. In summary, the consultation identified that Hartlepool would have a short-fall of almost 400 affordable dwellings per year for the next 5 years. The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services outlined the drivers for the increased need for affordable housing including a projected increase in population due to the demographic changes in Hartlepool and the region and the fact that people were living longer. The Portfolio Holder added that the shortfall in housing needed examining in detail and responses to the need identified should involve a measured approach whilst taking into account what has happened elsewhere.

Members were concerned that the current schemes being undertaken to demolish some town centre older terraced housing and replace with modern lower density housing added to this problem. The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services reassured Members that the type of housing being demolished did not reflect the type of housing that met housing aspirations. This was being replaced by good quality modern housing of a type which would better meet the communities needs, although it was acknowledged that this requirement could change over time. The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services added that the Authority needed to look radically at the availability of land and buildings in the town for social and affordable housing and it was probable that higher density housing would be a requirement in the future. It was noted that Hartlepool, unlike other areas, had never had a significant under-use of social housing stock and there had not been extensive clearance creating potential brownfield sites. Housing Associations including Housing Hartlepool together with the Council were being pro-active in putting forward bids for more resources to go some way to meeting the housing needs of residents of the town. Members suggested that a shared-ownership scheme could be considered to enable residents to purchase properties as opposed to renting.

Members had some concerns about some residents being displaced from their mortgage-free homes and relocated to homes where a mortgage was required. The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services indicated that residents were offered the market value for their property and that relocation packages were available beyond the minimum statutory requirement to enable a move to a suitable property in the interests of the wider community.

Decision

That the report and results of the consultation were noted and would be used to guide the Authority when setting policies on the future housing provision for the town.

50. Town Centre Management *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key.

Purpose of report

The report seeks Cabinet agreement to the establishment of a town centre management structure and to the participation of Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability in the initiative, including representation on the proposed Steering Group.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability presented a report which detailed the background to the initiative but was concerned that this initiative might result in the Authority taking on the workload and financial implications resulting from the end of the New Deal for the Communities (NDC) programme. The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services advised that the aim of the proposed steering group would be to simply co-ordinate the needs of the town centre and suggested that a relevant ward member be included also if practicable.

Members were concerned at the creation of another steering group and the possibility of duplication with groups already in existence. The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services responded that many towns had much more ambitious arrangements in place to co-ordinate the management of their town centre areas. A number of ways were suggested for dealing with this issue including the co-ordination of existing groups or a task group from the Local Strategic Partnership.

Decision

The Portfolio Holders for Regeneration and Liveability and Neighbourhoods and Communities meet with relevant officers to discuss a way forward.

51. Hartlepool Core Strategy Group *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key.

Purpose of report

To advise Cabinet that work is progressing on the preparation of the Core Strategy of the Hartlepool Local Development Framework (LDF). It is important that Members and others key partnership participants are fully involved in the process. It is considered the best way forward would be to set up a group comprising members and others to act as a sounding board and to assist in bringing forward key issues and possible alternative options. Agreement is sought to the establishment of such a group.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability presented a report which detailed the purpose of the LDF. The key document of the LDF was the Core Strategy which set out the vision and spatial strategy for Hartlepool. Once the Strategy was adopted it would replace many of the general policies set out in the Hartlepool Local Plan (April 2006). Members were informed that work had already commenced on the Core Strategy with the gathering of relevant evidence and baseline information on which to formulate the Strategy's issues and options. The overall programme for the Core Strategy was set out in the Local Development Scheme, March 2007, an extract of which was attached at Appendix 1.

The report suggested that a Core Strategy Group be established to act as a sounding board and to assist in bringing forward key issues. The proposed membership of this Group was outlined within the report and it was also noted that it would be beneficial for the Group to liaise with chairs of the LSP chaired partnerships from time to time.

Members supported the idea in principle and noted the importance of including as many people as practical including back-bench Members. However, it was acknowledged that it would be difficult to include all representatives at all meetings due to busy schedules. It was noted that the support for this Group would be funded from existing budgets.

Decision

It was agreed that taking into account Members comments as detailed above, a Group be established to comprise principally Members and others to act as a sounding board in the preparation of the Core Strategy.

52. Friarage Manor House and Surrounding Land *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key.

Purpose of report

The report informs Cabinet of the findings of the recent feasibility study into the refurbishment of the Manor House for community use and requests Cabinet's views on the study recommendations.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability presented a report which detailed the history of the Friarage site. It was noted that the Friarage Manor House, a Grade II listed building was the subject of an 'in principle' grant of £200,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund under the Headland Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). However, it was highlighted that this grant would only remain available until March 2008 subject to satisfactory progress being made towards developing a sustainable development solution for the building. In terms of operational costs, the study identified a need for £21k to support a part-time building manager and running costs. The report concluded that although some income would be generated through lettings etc, a subsidy of £10k-£11k would be required and it was suggested that the Authority could be a contributor towards this.

Members were asked to note that there had been some difficulties encountered as the building and associated land were owned by two different Trusts. A meeting was to be held later today with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability and the Chairs of these two Trusts with the aim of resolving these difficulties and discussing a way forward.

Members requested that in light of the difficulties encountered, discussions be held with both Trusts and a report outlining proposals be submitted for consideration at a future meeting.

Decision

That the Director of Regeneration and Planning Services submit a report to a future meeting outlining proposals for the site after discussions with the Trusts involved.

53. Programme Management Requirements *(Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non Key.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to advise Cabinet of the need for programme management capacity within the Council and request approval to address this issue.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chief Executive presented a report which detailed the background to the need for significant increases in the level of efficiencies to prepare a future Business Transformation Programme arising from the Local Government white paper and support the Building Schools for the Future Programme. It was noted that Business Continuity was also a key issue for the Council and although this was progressing within the Council's departments, further development was needed to extend cover to the Council's major partners, particularly in relation to elderly care. The areas of work and timescales for the requirements of the above projects were detailed within the report.

The Chief Executive indicated that the Council currently had no capacity for corporate programme management and often relied on expertise of individual officers within departments. However, given the scale, complexity and importance of these issues this was not a tenable solution. It was therefore suggested that two temporary appointments be made for a minimum of 6 months to meet the various critical paths. This approach had recently taken place in relation to the Tall Ships and Building Schools for the Future and it was suggested that a similar format be followed with a similar level of grading. On this basis, the funding for two six-month appointments would be £60,000 inclusive of on-costs and advertising. It was noted that this would be funded from the remaining uncommitted balance from the way forward budget which was currently £80,000. An outline summary of the suggested responsibility areas for each Programme Manager was detailed within the report.

A comprehensive and detailed discussion took place with a number of issues being raised. In response to Members questions, the Chief Executive indicated that the Authority had to produce efficiency returns to the Government on an annual basis. It was added that most other Authorities had programme managers and Members were keen that an effective management system was put in place. The Chief Executive

indicated that a brief for the Programme Managers was to be established and that each Programme Manager would be expected to prepare a project plan, including timescales.

One Member questioned the appointment of two temporary programme managers for this purpose and suggested that the Authority had in-house employees capable of undertaking such a role. Other Members felt that the majority of employees currently did more than their job title expected and were concerned about putting additional pressures on them. It was highlighted that Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) was identified as a criticism within the CPA inspection results and that this needed to be addressed in order to continue to operate as an excellent 4 star authority. The Chief Executive added that BPR involved improving the way the Authority operated to ensure the needs of the community were met and this could be undertaken more efficiently with two allocated programme managers.

Members requested that a vote be undertaken on this issue as follows:

In favour – 3
Against – 1
Abstain – 1

Councillor Robbie Payne requested that his vote against was noted.

Decision

- (i) The appointment of two temporary programme managers in line with paragraph 4.5 and 4.6 of the report be agreed.
- (ii) The funding of the appointments from the Way Forward Reserve to a maximum of £60,000 be agreed.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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