

# CABINET

## MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

29 October 2007

The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. in the Avondale Centre, Hartlepool

### Present:

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: Pam Hargreaves (Deputy Mayor),  
Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder),  
Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder),  
Robbie Payne (Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder),  
Peter Jackson (Neighbourhoods & Communities Portfolio Holder),  
Victor Tumilty (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder).

Officers: Paul Walker (Chief Executive),  
Andrew Atkin (Assistant Chief Executive),  
Adrienne Simcock (Director of Children's Services),  
Dave Stubbs (Director of Neighbourhood Services),  
Graham Frankland (Head of Procurement and Property Services),  
Sylvia Tempest (Environmental Standards Manager)  
Adrian Hurst (Principal Environmental Health Officer)  
Stuart Green (Assistant Director (Economic Development and Planning))  
Geoff Thompson (Head of Regeneration),  
John Mennear (Assistant Director (Community Services)),  
Graham Jarritt (Borough Librarian),  
Alistair Rae (Public Relations Officer),  
David Cosgrove (Principal Democratic Services Officer).

### 112. Apologies for Absence

None.

### 113. Declarations of interest by members

None.

### 114. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2007

Confirmed.

## **116. The Hartlepool Compact Review** *(Director of Regeneration and Planning)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision – test (ii) applies.

### **Purpose of report**

To update Cabinet on progress made towards revising the Hartlepool Compact and agree the way forward.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Neighbourhoods and Communities Portfolio Holder reported that an initial draft of a revised Hartlepool Compact was attached to the report as Appendix A for Cabinet approval. This has been prepared jointly between Council officers and the Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency (HVDA), primarily for broader consultation and involvement purposes.

In terms of structure and content, the draft Compact puts forward for consideration a series of “codes” providing ground rules of good practice for all signatories to strive to achieve, including:-

- 1) Funding
- 2) Consultation and Policy
- 3) Children and Young People
- 4) Minority and Small Community Groups
- 5) Representation
- 6) Volunteering

In contrast with the original Hartlepool Compact agreed in January 2003, which was essentially a Memorandum of Understanding between Hartlepool Borough Council and local voluntary organisations, the potential list of partners now extends way beyond the Council to include a variety of other public sector agencies.

This reflects both the strong “partnership approach” that now exists in Hartlepool, which exhibits itself in the way the Council and the voluntary sector do business, and also is designed to be consistent with the Regional Compact developed in 2006 by Government Office NorthEast (GONE).

Cabinet questioned how the Compact would inter-relate to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities commented that the Council would be seeking public agencies involved in the LSP to sign up to the new Compact, though the level of ‘buy-in’ to the various codes by different agencies may require a further review depending on the outcome of the consultation exercise. At this point Cabinet’s guidance was sought to the direction of the draft Compact.

In discussion, there was concern that the wider membership of the Council

had not been involved in the development of the Compact until now, though it was pointed out that the first stages of consultation process for revising the Compact included sending a letter to all elected members to update them on progress and inviting their comments.

It was commented that there was a large number of voluntary groups in Hartlepool and concern was expressed that the Compact was being developed on a top down rather than bottom up approach. Many smaller voluntary groups had commented how they felt they were being squeezed out due to government changes in funding and costs issues such as CRB checks and insurance. The Mayor commented that the comments showed that there was a need to ensure extensive consultation in the Compact review process.

#### **Decision**

1. that the Draft Hartlepool Compact be approved as the basis for wider consultation with the Hartlepool voluntary and community sector and other public sector partners.
2. that the provisional time-table and intended approach to wider consultation towards further development of the Draft Compact be approved.

### **117. Developing a Strategic Approach to the Voluntary and Community Sector in Hartlepool** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

The report sought Cabinet approval for the proposal to develop a strategic approach in relation to future work with the voluntary and community sector, in the town, and the development of the sector.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder reported that the draft submitted as an appendix to the report outlined the context for developing a strategic approach to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Hartlepool. The proposal had already been considered by the Local Strategic Performance Management Group on 31st August 2007. It was agreed to present the report to a future partnership meeting on the basis of developing the strategy (and Compact) more broadly than just the council by extending the strategy to the wider partners of the Local Strategic Partnership.

The strategic approach within the Council proposed in the report needed to be seen in the context of the Compact previously considered by Cabinet. The Compact would operate within the strategic approach, though the

development of both was being undertaken side by side.

Cabinet members were concerned at the comments set out by the consultants within the brief appended to the report that indicated that the Council had no coordinated strategic view of the funding it controlled for local voluntary groups. It was commented that there was control within the individual departments but an overall corporate strategy was needed to ensure best use of resources across the Council and with external partners and this work would provide that strategy.

Cabinet members were concerned that the total costs of the work to be undertaken by the consultants were not set out within the report. Members wished to ensure that work was not being duplicated and that the consultants took account of the work and information already available with the Council rather than repeating it.

The Mayor stated that there was no concern in supporting the approach being used in principle but requested that a further report be submitted to Cabinet addressing the concerns of Members, particularly the costs of the work and the budget allocation to meet those costs.

#### **Decision**

1. That the approach set out within the report and in the submitted proposal by the consultants be approved.
2. That a further report be submitted to Cabinet addressing the concerns of Members.

### **118. Annual Library Plan** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

The Annual Library Plan described the priorities and actions of the library service during 2007/8 and how they contributed to delivery of the Departmental and Corporate plans.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder reported that the Annual Library Plan promoted three principal service areas for public libraries: -

- The promotion of reading and informal learning,
- Access to digital skills and services including E-Government
- Measures to tackle social exclusion, build community identity and develop citizenship.

Extensive consultation with the public and with stakeholders had been part of the development process of the plan, including through the

Neighbourhood Consultative Forums, scrutiny, library-based consultations and consultation with stakeholders. The library will also seek increased involvement of the community in development and delivery of services. The two principle comments that had come back through the consultation was the over-whelming support for the library service and the welcoming of the development of a 'friends of' group.

#### **Decision**

That Cabinet approve the draft Annual Library Plan for submission to Council for formal adoption.

### **119. Hartlepool Climate Change Strategy** *(Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

To present Cabinet Members with a final draft of a Hartlepool Climate Change Strategy for their endorsement and seek comments on the Climate Change Action Plan.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Mayor reported that in March 2007 Defra published a draft Climate Change Bill, the first of its kind in any country. This bill provides a legal framework to manage future emissions. The Climate Change Bill makes challenging carbon dioxide reductions targets for 2020 and 2050 legally binding. This Bill requires the UK to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through domestic and international action by 26-32% by 2020 and 60% by 2050 against a 1990 baseline. In response to the threat of climate change, the Hartlepool Partnership signed the Hartlepool Declaration on Climate Change in October 2004. By signing the declaration, the Partnership agreed to commit to taking action and develop a climate change strategy across all elements of, and sectors within, the Partnership. This would involve establishing a baseline of greenhouse gas emissions for Hartlepool to enable comparison and producing an action plan to reduce emissions and develop actions to adapt to and mitigate against, climate change.

The Hartlepool Climate Change Strategy adheres to the overarching aims and targets of the Tees Valley Climate Change Strategy, the aim of which is to achieve a minimum 8.75% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions below 2000 levels from 2006-2012. This equates to an annual 1.25% reduction target for this period. For 2012-2030, the minimum target will be 27% (an annual target of 1.5%).

Cabinet commented that as well as the environmental benefits, the economic benefits needed to be promoted as well, as the savings people could make might be more persuasive. It was suggested that the schools and colleges in the town should be asked to buy into the strategy. It was

indicated that schools have been consulted on the Strategy and will be approached further to ensure 'buy in' during development of the Climate Change Action Plan.

**Decision**

That Cabinet note and endorse the final draft of a Climate Change Strategy and the draft Climate Change Action Plan.

**120. Corporate Driver Training Scheme** (*Director of Neighbourhood Services*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key.

**Purpose of report**

The report sought approval to implement a Corporate Driver Training Scheme to all Council Departments where members of staff are required to drive on official business.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Neighbourhoods and Communities Portfolio Holder reported that nationally, it is estimated that up to a third of all road traffic accidents involve somebody who is at work at the time. This may account for over 20 fatalities and 250 serious injuries every week. Regionally, it is estimated that over a quarter of all road traffic collisions occur on the region's roads where a driver is driving as part of their work duties. Many local authorities' insurers are now endorsing driver-training programmes as they recognise the positive effect they have on driving skills, accident reduction, claims history etc. In many cases, this can result in reduced insurance premiums. A reduction in incidents should also result in a reduction in uninsured losses that are paid directly by the Authority, and a reduction in lost output via accident-related sickness.

The Corporate Driver Training Scheme can ensure that, should a blameworthy accident occur as a result of the actions of an employee driving on Council business, the Council can demonstrate that driver policies and procedures are in place to negate officers from criminal prosecution.

The driver training pilot scheme involves three key elements, they are: -

- Checking/validation of driver documents
- On-line assessments
- Driver training

The total cost per person to complete the full course is £75 – this includes the checking/validation of driver documents, the completion of an on-line driver assessment and each person completing the theory/practical driver training programme. The Technical Services pilot scheme is being funded through existing budgets. In the pilot scheme, 165 members of staff will

undergo the full training programme at a cost of £12,375.

The cost of delivering a full Driver Training Scheme to a division comprising of 150 employees is approximately £11,000 – this includes the checking/validation of driver documents, completion of an on-line assessment and undertaking of a theory and practical training programme for all staff. However if only 45% of staff are required to undergo theory/practical training this estimate is approximately £7000.

The total cost per person to complete the full course is £75 – this includes the checking/validation of driver documents, the completion of an on-line driver assessment and each person completing the theory/practical driver training programme.

There were a number of safety, financial, efficiency and environmental benefits of adopting a Corporate Driver Training Scheme, they were: -

- Reduction in incidents/collisions involving staff driving on Council business.
- Reduction in uninsured losses, which are paid directly by the Authority.
- Reduce lost output via accident-related sickness.
- Improved efficiency of the Council fleet
- Reduced operating costs
- Reduced emissions and efficient use of vehicles
- Improved environmental performance.

In the last five years, the Councils fleet have been involved in over 770 incidents requiring repair of our own vehicles or a third party vehicle. In claims over £500,000 has been paid out to repair vehicles (no figures are available for casual and essential car user collisions). This figure does not take into account the hidden costs of lost time due to sickness, vehicles being off the road, hired in vehicles/drivers or the administration time in processing claims and dealing with repairs etc. This scheme, if adopted across all Council Departments, will seek to make a reduction, in operating costs of approximately 15%. In monetary terms, this equates to a saving of £15,000 per year in claims alone and does not include other cashable savings of vehicle consumables such as tyres, clutches, oil etc. In addition, the fuel-efficient driving module, when directed at those driving Council supplied vehicles, will seek to save an average of 15% in fuel savings in addition to consumable items.

Cabinet Members expressed their surprise at the large number of incidents that council vehicles were involved in, one every other day, and commented that this needed to be addressed. The scheme was, therefore, welcomed by Cabinet members, particularly in light of the benefits in the reduction of accidents/incidents and the reduction in insurance costs and claims.

Cabinet Members referred to incidents of drivers of Council vehicles blatantly flouting the law by using mobile phones while driving. The Director of Neighbourhood Services indicated that if incidents were reported, they

would be dealt with. Through this scheme, it was intended to introduce through consultation with the Chief Personnel Officer and the Trade Unions additions to the disciplinary procedure that would deal with breaches of driving laws and the Council's own policies. The Director highlighted that as well as the consequent reductions in insurance costs, there was also the potential reduction in fuel costs and the costs associated with vehicles being off the road while being repaired.

Members welcomed the scheme as an 'invest to save proposal'; however, it was proposed by Cabinet that the costs of the scheme should be met from the insurance fund rather than departmental budgets.

#### **Decision**

1. The Cabinet approves in principle the introduction of a Corporate Driver Training Scheme to be adopted by all Council Departments where staff are expected to drive on official Council business.
2. That the costs of the scheme be met from the savings the scheme will produce in the Council's insurance fund.

### **121. Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Strategy** *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

Further to the report to Cabinet in September 2007, the Report provided information on the development of the Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, and sought endorsement to the final version, which has recently been published and submitted to the North East Housing Board (NEHB).

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Mayor reported that the NEHB produced its first Regional Housing Strategy in 2003 and an updated version in 2005. Alongside the development of a revised Strategy in 2007, it has requested that sub-regions across the northeast submit detailed sub-regional strategies that would assist in informing resource allocations and commissioning decisions in respect of 2008-11 housing capital allocations. The NEHB has moved away from traditional formulaic allocations of housing capital resources through the Single Housing Investment Pot (SHIP) in favour of allocations based on agreed strategic priorities. It has stated that identified sub-regional housing priorities will be used to inform future SHIP investment decisions.

The primary objectives of the Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Strategy are to draw together housing issues that have a common thread across the sub-region, to facilitate partnership working between local authorities and housing providers, and to inform in a better way other strategic plans such



as the Regional Housing Strategy. The Strategy also aims to assist the economic regeneration of the Tees Valley through the delivery of a step-change in the type and quality of housing on offer, making the sub-region a more attractive place to live.

In the context of Hartlepool, officers had endeavoured to ensure that the key priorities identified in the Hartlepool Housing Strategy, the Housing Regeneration Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, Private Sector Renewals Policy and other strategic and policy documents are reflected in the priorities of this document. The Sub-Regional Housing Strategy and Action Plan therefore, for instance, recognised central Hartlepool as a core priority for HMR investment and the importance of partnerships between the Council, Housing Hartlepool and Hartlepool Revival.

Members questioned whether involvement in the Tees Valley Strategy meant Hartlepool would be more or less likely to gain the funding it needed. Over the years, Hartlepool had proved itself able to bring significant investment into the area for housing improvements. Cabinet was concerned that this strategy would mean there would be less investment in the town. The Mayor stated that the strategy gave the Tees Valley a better chance of gaining its share of the regional investment in housing standards. Tees Valley was now seen as a pathfinder in this area and within the Tees Valley, Hartlepool had shown its ability to gain more than its fair share of the money available. It was always the case that there was never enough money but the Mayor considered that this strategy was a good deal for Hartlepool.

#### **Decision**

That the Tees Valley Sub –Regional Housing Strategy be endorsed.

## **122. Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: A Framework for Implementing Geological Disposal. A Public Consultation by Defra, DTI and The Welsh and Northern Irish Devolved Administrations** *(Director of Neighbourhood Services / Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

To advise Cabinet of the Government consultation paper, “Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: a framework for implementing geological disposal” and a potential response based on the comments of the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLeAF), the collaborative forum for local authorities with nuclear interests.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Assistant Director (Economic Development and Planning) indicated that the report referred to the background of work undertaken by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) and the Government's response in agreeing in principle to an option of long-term geological disposal of waste. The current Government consultation document was summarised in Appendix 1 to the report. It sets out proposed arrangements for the identification of sites for such disposal, including consultation and regulation procedures. Cabinet's attention was drawn to a briefing paper prepared by NuLeAF, which was suggested as the basis for a response to the Government's consultation paper. Whilst many aspects of the consultation paper's proposals are welcomed, NuLeAF raise various queries requiring further consideration and detail, particularly in relation to the definition of potential host communities and the assessment criteria for site selection.

There had been discussion as to what constituted a 'community' in terms of an expression of interest in the scheme. It was clear that this would include the local authority as the local decision making body. A further NuLeAF meeting had been held recently and a formal response had been prepared for submission to government. There was concern that the consultation document had been vague on what was considered a geologically suitable site. It appeared that the government was likely to await expressions of interest and then clarify the suitability of the particular geology of the area concerned. The government was, however, confident it would receive expressions of interest. Cabinet Members commented that one was highly unlikely from this area.

### **Decision**

That Cabinet endorses a response being submitted to the consultation document by Defra, DTI and The Welsh and Northern Irish Devolved Administrations, based on the NuLeAF briefing document set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

## **123. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 124 Hartlepool College of Further Education / Albert Street Car Park (Para 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

**124. Hartlepool College of Further Education / Albert Street Car Park** (*Director of Neighbourhood Services / Director of Regeneration and Planning Services*)

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**Type of decision**

Non-key.

**Purpose of report**

To confirm support in principle for the Hartlepool College of Further Education as part of their “approval in principle” submission for the new College complex to be submitted in January 2008, and to consider the potential sale of land at Albert Street car park to the College.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Mayor indicated that the report outlined the background to the proposals for the development of the new College complex and the request from the College to purchase the Albert Street car park site. Valuations of the site and the re-provision of car parking were outlined in the report.

**Decision**

1. That Cabinet confirms its support for the new College complex.
2. That the sale of Albert Street car park as outlined in the report and subject to the Heads of Terms proposed be approved.
3. That the reservation of the capital receipt for future car park provision, to be identified in a feasibility study and approved by Cabinet, be approved.

**J A BROWN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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