

# **CABINET**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

31 March 2008

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am in the Avondale Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health 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  
Tony Brown, Chief Solicitor  
Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services  
Mike Ward, Chief Financial Officer  
Alan Dobby, Assistant Director, Adult and Community Services  
Paul Briggs, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Geoff Thompson, Head of Regeneration  
Graham Frankland, Head of Procurement and Property Services  
Joan Chapman, Principal Strategy Development Officer (E Government)  
Alison Mawson, Head of Community Safety and Prevention  
Steve Hilton, Assistant Public Relations Officer  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **Also Present:**

Edwin Jeffries, Malcolm Sullivan, Trade Union Representatives

## **255. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Pam Hargreaves and Cath Hill.

## **256. Declarations of interest by members**

None.

## **257. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2008**

Confirmed.

## **258. Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – Further Proposed Changes by the Secretary of State** *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

To agree Hartlepool's response to the Secretary of State's further proposed changes to the revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East.

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

The Mayor reported that the Secretary of State had issued for consultation further proposed changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy. The deadline for responses on the further proposed changes was 2 April 2008. The main issues from a Tees Valley and Hartlepool perspective were outlined in the report. These representations included in particular making the case for :

- Higher net housing provision in the region as a whole based on recent population and migration changes, and economic growth;
- A net housing provision in the Tees Valley of 35,700 dwellings over the RSS period to give the local authorities more flexibility and allow progress on the housing element of major regeneration schemes;
- Recognition of the Tees Valley's role as a location for logistics investment and distribution facilities, and
- Stronger support for the future development of Teesport

From a Hartlepool perspective, as well as supporting the representations outlined above, especially in relation to housing numbers, issues were also raised about :

- The need for the retention of Wynyard in Policy 19 as a prestige employment site
- The need to ensure any onshore wind energy development at Teesside / Tees Estuary does not adversely impact upon the integrity of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area.

The Secretary of State had accepted the Assembly's view on the future

housing requirements for the region. The net housing figures in the further proposed changes were summarised in the tables set out in the report.

With regard to employment land, the revised Policy 18 had amalgamated the total area of Victoria Harbour into the general employment land allocation for Hartlepool, however, not all of the Victoria Harbour area would be used for employment uses and this may need to be rectified.

Within Policy 19 in the RSS Wynyard has been effectively retained unchanged. Whilst the continued inclusion of Wynyard within this policy could be welcomed, the policy still sought to minimise the B1 (a) potential of this site despite the currently existing planning permissions for such office uses. Consequently further representations may need to be made to ensure clarification of the current planning position at Wynyard. The original heading of this policy – “Prestige Employment Sites” had also been amended to that of “Key Employment Locations”.

It was pointed out that in the course of an ongoing scrutiny investigation into the regeneration of Seaton Carew, concern had been raised regarding the lack of reference within the RSS to this Hartlepool tourism destination with a request that this be rectified. The officer view was that the text of Policy 7.2 (g) under the heading Economic Prosperity – which currently reads: “concentrating major new tourism developments related to the coast in Hartlepool and Redcar” – could be interpreted to include Seaton Carew and the Headland by virtue of it being part of the coast within Hartlepool. This is particularly the case given the distinct, and relatively compact nature of Hartlepool and the fact that all the regeneration action zones within Hartlepool were deemed to fall within the designated “Coastal Arc” spatial area which was, in its entirety, reflected as a priority for regeneration within the Tees Valley City Region Policy No 7 (Appendix 1 refers).

In relation to the issue concerning the lack of reference to Seaton Carew and the RSS, Members considered the relevant merits of requesting the Secretary of State to include reference to Seaton Carew within policy 7 as opposed to not referring to Seaton Carew because it was, by definition, included in the reference to Hartlepool. Whilst recognising the importance of the regeneration of Seaton Carew, Members on balance, decided not to include specific reference to Seaton Carew within the response due to the strategic nature of the document.

A brief summary of further proposed changes were provided, as detailed in the report. In conclusion, the further proposed changes were to be generally welcomed both from a Tees Valley and from a Hartlepool perspective and reflected many of the representations made at the first stage consultation.

## **Decision**

That Hartlepool’s response to the Secretary of State’s further proposed changes to the revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East, be approved.

## **259. 2008 – 2011 Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan Highway Policy and Procedures** *(Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision Test (i) and (ii) applies

### **Purpose of report**

To present the 2008-2011 Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan for consideration and endorsement.

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

The Neighbourhoods and Communities Portfolio Holder presented the report which provided background information on the Capital Strategy, attached at Appendix A which sets out the way in which the Council determined and managed the Capital Programme, the linkages between the Capital Programme, the Council's Corporate Objectives and the Community Strategy. The Asset Management Plan, attached at Appendix B, was a tool and working document that highlighted the main achievements in terms of the performance of the Council's land and property portfolio since the last 2006 Asset Management Plan and also outlined the proposed asset management programmes.

The main developments in the Asset Management Plan included:-

- Moving to a 3 year plan with the objective of putting procedures in place to manage objectives, achieve outcomes and report on progress.
- Capital Programme – Project Management, Prioritisation Process and Option Appraisal
- Improved Suitability and Sufficiency Assessment Process
- Improved Planned Maintenance Prioritisation Process and New Whole Life Costing Property Evaluation Process
- New Brownfield Sites Register and Descriptions
- Inclusion of Case Studies
- Community Asset Transfer
- New Working Practices within the Council – Accommodation Review and Rationalisation
- Environmental Sustainability
- Measurement of property performance (Public Audit Office Indicators)

A Member commented on the need for corporate and joined up management plans and reiterated Cabinet's previous recommendation that empty properties which were in a state of disrepair should be demolished. The Head of Procurement and Property Services advised that as part of the business transformation process, Asset Management across the Council would be examined in conjunction with an Accommodation Review.

With regard to backlog and required maintenance relating to existing

portfolios, the importance of ensuring adequate funds were available for maintenance and repair of the remaining Council owned buildings was emphasised.

**Decision**

- (i) That the 2008-2011 Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan, be endorsed.
- (ii) That the comments of Members, as outlined above, be noted.

## **260. Contributions Towards Non-Residential Social Support** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

**Type of decision**

Key (Test i) applies

**Purpose of report**

- (i) Changes are proposed in contributions towards support in the community. The report provides the results of the consultation on the changes.
- (ii) To confirm the updated contributions policy

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

The Adult and Public Health Portfolio Holder presented the report which included background information to Cabinet's agreement in principle to the changes in the way that service users contributed towards the cost of the support they received. The report included a summary of the consultation exercise undertaken and the results obtained as detailed in Appendix 1. The Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum also discussed the issues on 4 March 2008 and responded to the consultation questions.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted some of the concerns expressed during the consultation process that whilst the least well off would still not be expected to contribute, the effect of the changes could be to increase the burden on those who had an ability to pay. It was therefore proposed that a subsidy be met by the Council, set initially at 25% of the assessed contribution. In addition, for those previously assessed under the former charging policy any increase in their contribution would be limited in the first year to a maximum of £30 per week. Taking into account these responses, an amended policy had been prepared and was attached at Appendix 2.

A Diversity Impact Assessment had been completed for the proposed changes which showed that there were no adverse impacts for the target groups.

With regard to the financial implications, as set out in the report, it was reported that the proposals were not designed to significantly increase income, however, people would receive financial assessments, which included help with maximising state benefits. In the past contributions had

been re-assessed each April when benefits were updated. With the new arrangements each individual's contribution would only be reviewed as and when their needs were re-assessed unless there was a significant change in circumstances.

Following a Member's concern relating to the potential financial burden placed on individuals as a result of these proposals, the Assistant Director stated that assessments would be undertaken, the outcome of which would be reported to the Portfolio Holder. Further discussion ensued following a Member's suggestion that the results of the assessments should be provided in advance of the policy being implemented. Following further debate, it was suggested that the contributions policy be agreed subject to regular reports on the outcome of the assessments being provided to the Portfolio Holder.

#### **Decision**

That the updated contributions policy be agreed subject to regular reports on the outcome of the assessments being provided to the Portfolio Holder.

### **261. A Strategy for Maximising Access to Low Level Support Services** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Key Test (ii) applies

#### **Purpose of report**

To update Cabinet about the development of a low level support strategy for the citizens of Hartlepool which has been produced to help ameliorate the impact of the introduction of revised eligibility criteria following the Fair Access to Care Services consultation.

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

The Adult and Public Health Portfolio Holder presented the report which outlined the strategic approach and objectives of the strategy which aimed to ensure that citizens had access to those low level support services which promoted their independence, to assist with the health and social care modernisation agenda and to complement new ways of funding services such as individualised budgets.

The report included details of consultation exercises that had been carried out together with a number of recommendations. To ensure that these recommendations were successfully implemented a co-ordinated corporate approach with the Council working with partners such as the PCT and third sector organisations was required.

## **Decision**

- (i) That the progress made to co-ordinate low level services, be noted.
- (ii) That the strategic direction outlined in the low level support strategy, be endorsed.

## **262. Concessionary Local Bus Travel** *(Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Key – Test (ii) applies

### **Purpose of report**

To report the proposed re-imbursement arrangements with local bus operators for concessionary fares to be implemented from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009 inclusive.

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

The Neighbourhoods and Communities Portfolio Holder provided background information on the current concessionary fares scheme operating within Hartlepool and costs negotiated with local bus operators as set out in the report. Given the complex nature of the proposals it had taken until Mid March to finalise the proposed costs. This had not left time to negotiate the proposed cost or agree the practical arrangements and proposed eligibility criteria for allowing carers to travel free of charge with registered disabled pass holders. It was anticipated that these additional negotiations would be completed by the end of April, the results of which would be presented to Cabinet.

In relation to agreements with operators, under the Transport Act 1985, the Council must ensure that operators were no better or no worse off than they would be if no concessionary fares scheme existed. The bus operators' justification for the increase in payments was based on a number of factors as detailed in the report. Table 1 provided a summary of the agreed expenditure for the current financial year and the proposed costs for 2008/09 negotiated with local bus operators. Appendix 1, attached as a confidential appendix outlined details of the proposed costs by local bus operators.

Discussion ensued regarding the financial implications for the Council once Government funding was no longer available, the need to allow free travel during peak times ie before 9.30 am and the lack of services available to certain areas of the town.

## **Decision**

- (i) That reimbursement arrangements with local bus operators for the 2008/09 concessionary travel scheme as detailed in the confidential appendix, be approved.
- (ii) That a future report be provided outlining the proposed costs and eligibility criteria for enabling carers to travel free of charge with disabled pass holders.

### **263. Adult Drug Treatment Plan 2008/09) (Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)**

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key

#### **Purpose of report**

To provide information and detail on the Safer Hartlepool Partnership Adult Drug Treatment Plan 2008/09 and seek the support of Cabinet to the activity and performance management framework in the Plan.

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

The Mayor presented the report which outlined the requirements to produce an annual Adult Drug Treatment Plan, attached at Appendix 1. The 2008/09 strategic summary in Part 1 of the Plan and the needs assessment confirmed that heroin continued to be the adult primary illegal drug of choice. There was an increase in the use of crack and cocaine but not at a pace that other areas had experienced. Increasingly there was misuse of alcohol with only limited funding to address alcohol related need.

The report included details of the financial and performance arrangements and priorities for 2008/09 to deliver an effective treatment service.

Members raised concerns in relation to the budget underspend in 2006/07 to which the Head of Community Safety and Prevention advised had been carried forward to 2007/08. Members also recalled that last year (2007/08) there had been cuts in funding and queried how much this had been and what impact there had been on services. The Head of Community Safety and Prevention advised that officers had worked with service providers to reduce their costs, which had resulted in efficiency savings being achieved. There had been no impact on the level of service provided. Clarification was sought on how much funding had been lost the previous year to which the Head of Community Safety and Prevention agreed to provide details following the meeting.

The Mayor referred to the lack of funding nationally to tackle alcohol related problems which was the root cause of crime and anti-social behaviour and indicated a need to continue to highlight this issue with central government.



## **Decision**

That the activity and performance management framework of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership Adult Drug Treatment Plan 2008/09 be received and supported.

## **264. ICT Provision – Future Arrangements** *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To report back to Members on completion of Phase 1 of the work leading up to the end of the current contract for ICT provision for the authority.

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

The Assistant Chief Executive provided background information to the process leading up to the end of the current provision of ICT support to the Council which had been agreed by Cabinet in October 2007 as detailed in the report.

The report provided details of what had been done at phase 1 together with the results of that work, evaluation of current arrangements and details of a benchmarking exercise. The benchmarking exercise compared HBC information with other local authorities in a number of areas and also identified some comparisons of HBC/Northgate against other local authorities with similar arrangements.

The current arrangements were implemented following a Best Value Review during 2000/2001. Consideration was given to the provision of ICT services at Resources Board and Cabinet at various stages during the review. The main issues which these reports highlighted as being required to be addressed by the new arrangements were:

- The opportunity to identify capital investment required
- Improve the council's communication with it's customers
- Increase users satisfaction with the service
- Address the issue of staff retention/training/skills

Further details relating to evaluation of progress against the original expectations were set out in the report. Annual scorecarding and user surveys were used to measure satisfaction levels of end users, the results of which fed into a Service Improvement Plan to address any issues raised. These results illustrated a year on year improvement in end user satisfaction. A survey carried out in 2002 (shortly after the current arrangements began) showed that only 36% of users were either fairly or very satisfied overall. This contrasts with the results from the 2007 survey which showed that 82% of users fell into these categories. The 2007 survey results were shown at Appendix 3.

One of the benefits that had been anticipated to arise from the current

arrangements was the added value that an external organisation would bring to the Council, a number of examples of which were included in the report. The recently implemented Managed Print Service was a good example whereby Northgate assisted with the investigation and consequent negotiations, resulting in savings to the authority of approximately £100,000 per annum on printing costs. Another example of Northgate adding value was in relation to the costs for re-cabling for ICT during the recent refurbishment of the civic centre. Through negotiations it was possible to come to an agreement whereby they carried out the re-cabling at no cost to the Council.

Details of the legal contractual arrangements were provided as set out in the report. Progress to date on this project had provided a full picture of the current ICT support and in order to progress successfully to the next stage consideration was required in relation to future requirements which included technological advances and the need to define a broad set of principles and intended outcomes. The links to other programmes and policies, potential risks, the results of a recent Gateway Review, the next steps as well as key decision points of the process were detailed in the report.

A Member congratulated the Assistant Chief Executive and his team for their hard work and contribution to the improvements in ICT provision across the authority.

#### **Decision**

- (i) That progress to date, be noted and the information submitted be accepted as completion of Phase 1.
- (ii) That update reports be provided at key points in the process.
- (iii) That a report be provided upon completion of Phase 2 in March 2009 outlining the results of an evaluation of the various options for the future delivery of the ICT service.

### **265. Tees Valley Growth Point Status Proposal** *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key

#### **Purpose of report**

To seek endorsement of the progress made with the Tees Valley Living submission regarding Growth Point Status.

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

The Mayor referred to the Government initiative Growth Point Status aimed at supporting the work required to meet the Government's aim of delivering 3 million new homes by 2020. The initiative would support local authorities willing to accelerate housing development on existing sites and to bring forward new ones. Those successful in their bids would also have priority access to the Community Infrastructure fund which would offer financial assistance for infrastructure works that were needed to facilitate the increase and acceleration of housing development. The report considered

the background to the development of the submission for Growth Point Status, the content of the submission and the remaining steps in the submission process.

Discussion ensued regarding which sites Members considered were a high priority and could be utilised to meet the increased housing provision and when a decision was likely to be received from the Government. The Head of Regeneration advised that all of the suggested local sites would be subject to the Local Development Framework (LDF) requirement to prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The viability and development potential of this schedule of sites, as detailed in Appendix 1, would need to be developed further if the Growth Point bid was successful. Arrangements could be made for sites to be removed or added as part of the consultation process.

### **Decision**

That the approach to the Tees Valley Growth Point Proposal, be noted and endorsed.

## **266. Local Government Access to Information**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were 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 detailed below in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 267 – Para 4 (information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority).

## **267. Single Status Agreement** *(Chief Financial Officer and Chief Personnel Officer)*

### **Type of decision**

Key

### **Purpose of report**

To purpose of the report is set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

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

The issues considered by Cabinet are set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

**Decision**

The decision is set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

**P DEVLIN**

**ACTING CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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