

# **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD**

9<sup>th</sup> January 2006

**Present:**

Councillor Peter Jackson (Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive  
Mic Bannister, Principal Procurement and Finance Officer  
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager  
Steve Carroll, Estates and Assets Manager  
Graham Frankland, Head of Procurement and Property Services  
Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Services Officer  
John Morton, Assistant Chief Financial Officer  
Peter Spires, Superintendent Registrar  
Pat Watson, Democratic Services Officer

## **22. ‘Second and Third-Tier Officer Salary and Grading Review’ Scrutiny Referral - Request for Extension to Prescribed Timescale** *(Scrutiny Manager)*

**Type of decision**

Non Key

**Purpose of report**

The report was submitted on behalf of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, to request an extension to the prescribed timescale of the Scrutiny Referral entitled ‘Second and Third Tier Officer Salary and Grading Review’.

**Decision**

The Portfolio Holder agreed to extend the prescribed timescale for the undertaking of this referral to 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2006.

## **23. Council Tax Base 2006/7** (Chief Financial Officer)

### **Type of decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of report**

The report sought approval to the calculated Council Tax Base for 2006/07 which would be used for council tax billing purposes.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report provided details of the Council's responsibilities for determining the council tax base, explained the tax base calculations and showed details of the calculations for 2006/07. The Portfolio Holder was advised that following amendment to the Local Government Finance Act 1992, a Full Council meeting was not required to adopt the council tax base and the Chief Solicitor had confirmed this was a matter for the relevant cabinet member.

A statement showing the calculation of the Council Tax Base was provided as appendix 1 to the report. Appendices 2 to 9 showed the statement of calculation of the Council Tax Bases for the various Parishes who levy precepts on the collection fund. At the meeting the Assistant Chief Financial Officer circulated an amended sheet in respect of one of the Parishes and advised the Portfolio of the reason for amendment. The report indicated that the calculations follow the same principles as those adopted in the calculation of the Council Tax Base for the whole Borough. As it was necessary to request details of precepts from the Parishes, the tax base calculations had been transmitted, on a provisional basis, to the various Chairpersons of the Parishes in advance of the meeting.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder approved:

- (a) the Council Tax Base for 2006/07 of 27,369, and
- (b) a Council Tax Base for those Parishes capable of levying a precept upon the Council's General Fund – as follows:

Brierton	12.0	Hart	222.9
Claxton	14.5	Headland	1007.7
Dalton Piercy	106.1	Greatham	670.4
Elwick	368.2	Newton Bewley	30.0

## **24. Revenues and Benefits Anti-Poverty Strategy** (*Chief Financial Officer*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of report**

The report sought adoption of the Revenues and Benefits Anti Poverty Strategy which sets out a framework for assisting those that are disadvantaged and for helping individuals to manage their indebtedness.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report gave background information and indicated that the Strategy marked the conclusion of work by a cross organisation working group which sought to:

- Provide a framework for effective, consistent and fair debt recovery whilst minimising the risk of hardship to individuals
- Improve awareness, accessibility and take up of Housing and Council Tax Benefit
- Promote partnership and integration with other agencies
- Encourage ownership and self management of debt
- Evaluate opportunities to amend procedures, processes and policies to minimise hardship for individuals and prevent debt occurring in the first place.

The strategy, a copy of which was appended to the report, provided details of the Council's current arrangements many of which embody best practice and also identified a number of initiatives and opportunities to develop the Council's arrangements for the future.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder approved the Revenues and Benefits Anti Poverty Strategy.

## **25. Introduction of Nationality Checking Service** (*Assistant Chief Executive*)

### **Type of decision**

Non Key

### **Purpose of report**

The report outlined the proposed introduction of the Nationality Checking Service for Citizenship applications, at the Hartlepool Register Office.

The report also sought permission to nominate officers to carry out the duties and to set the initial level of fee for the service.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report briefly described the current Registration Service and advised that, following a successful pilot programme with six authorities the Home Office were looking to other local authorities to set up a local Nationality Checking Service to improve the efficiency of the application procedure and reduce the waiting time and the communication difficulties for the applicants. The Home Office would provide full training for the nominated checking officers.

The report described how the service would be introduced locally and the proposed charges. The Superintendent Registrar gave a verbal update following the receipt of new information from the Home Office. The initial fees, inclusive of VAT and subject to annual review were proposed as follows:

<b>Type of application</b>	<b>Total Chargeable fee Inclusive of VAT</b>
Adult single application	£45.00
Husband and wife applying at same time	£60.00
Husband and Wife and up to 2 children applying at same time	£70.00
Additional children on parent's application	£15.00 per child
One or more children under 18 who apply Separately from parents	£15.00 per child

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder approved:

- (a) that a Nationality Checking Service be introduced at Hartlepool Register Office;
- (b) that the Superintendent Registrar and one full time Registrar be nominated as Nationality Checking Officer, and
- (c) that the initial fees for the service be set as indicated above.

## **26. Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme** (*Head of Procurement and Property Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non Key

### **Purpose of report**

To advise on the application made to the National Energy Foundation for accreditation under the Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder was advised that an application had been made for accreditation of the Borough Council under the Energy Efficiency Scheme which is managed by the National Energy Foundation on behalf of the Carbon Trust.

The report described in detail:

- what the Accreditation Scheme is;
- the Benefits of Accreditation;
- who can be accredited;
- how the assessment is made;
- how the award can be displayed, and
- the Accreditation and Assessment procedure.

The cost of accreditation would depend upon the total energy bill, in Hartlepool's case this would be £4,300, and the cost of re accreditation every three years would be £1,500, funded from within existing budgets in Neighbourhood Services.

The Portfolio Holder noted that regular update reports would be presented at appropriate times in the accreditation and assessment process.

### **Decision**

The Accreditation application was endorsed by the Portfolio Holder who was happy to note that the evaluations would be carried out by independent, experienced assessors. Also that advice, support and assessments will be available from professional Energy Engineers to support the Authority and these services would more than outweigh the costs shown in the report.

## **27. The North East Centre of Excellence (NECE) Project on LM3 - The Benefits of Procurement Within the Local Economy** *(Head of Procurement and Property Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non Key

### **Purpose of report**

To provide a progress report on the NECE project for regional delivery of LM3 the benefits of procurement within the local economy and seek Portfolio Holder endorsement of the Council's involvement in the project...

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder was reminded that, at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2005, Cabinet had approved the revised Procurement Strategy for the Council and the Portfolio Holder had endorsed an updated version of the Strategy on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2005.

The report highlighted the significance and purpose of the LM3 project and the NECE's progress to date. Attached at Appendix A to the report was a paper on the Strategy for Establishing and Calculating the NECE and Local Authority specific LM3 Benchmarks. The NECE had produced a project initiation document on the Regional Delivery of LM3 and this was attached as Appendix B.

The Portfolio Holder agreed to receive further update reports.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the NECE'S project and progress to date, endorsed the Council's involvement in the project and commented on the need to put as much as possible back into the local economy..

## **28. Land between 3 and 4 Winchester Walk** (*Head of Procurement and Property Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non Key

### **Purpose of report**

To seek Portfolio Holder approval to the proposed disposal of land between 3 and 4 Winchester Walk.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report contained background information and the financial implications of the scheme were detailed in an appendix which contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services (para 9). A plan of the area was provided.

## **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder approved the sale of the land in the terms outlined in the report.

## **29. Local Authority Collaboration** (*Head of Procurement and Property Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non Key

### **Purpose of report**

To request consideration of the potential of collaboration with other local authorities and other organisations for the procurement of goods, services and works.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report referred to the National Procurement Strategy and the Gershon Efficiency Agenda which had provided drivers for local authorities to jointly procure services, supplies and works with other local authorities. The Portfolio Holder was advised that some authorities had entered into a procurement process on their own and had later realised the potential benefits for joining in with other contracting authorities.

The detailed report contained sections covering the following:

- Effective Joint Procurement
- The Council acting as lead Authority
- Financial arrangements
- Capturing requirements
- Governance and risk
- Current collaboration
- Potential future collaboration – including work with the Tees Valley Authorities was assisting in this process with some projects that require progressing:
  - Civic Engineering materials
  - Building Cleaning materials
  - Fire Extinguishers
  - Stationery (possibly via an e.auction)

The Portfolio Holder was advised that as the North East Centre of Excellence, NEPO and the Tees Valley Procurement Group develop there will be further opportunities in the future. The Portfolio Holder was requested to endorse involvement in future collaborations where they are in line with the Council's procurement strategy.

## **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder

- (a) noted the report and approved future collaboration as proposed within the report where it is in line with the Council's procurement strategy.
- (b) approved the future collaboration exercises outlined above.

## **30. Civic Centre - Capital Maintenance Programme and Corporate Contact Centre Development** *(Head of Procurement and Property Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non Key

### **Purpose of report**

To provide details of the status regarding proposed major works to be undertaken at the Civic Centre comprising a programme of maintenance works over the next three years and the development of accommodation for the Corporate Contact Centre.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report contained background information and listed meetings where previous consideration had been given. The report contained sections relating to the following:

- Design of Contact Centre
- Design of Capital Maintenance
- Procurement Strategy

The financial implications were also outlined.

The report gave an overview of progress to date and the Portfolio Holder's attention was drawn to the procurement strategy to manage the construction work.

The Portfolio Holder noted that this matter had been examined through the scrutiny process and some recommendations had resulted

## **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder:

- (a) noted the progress;
- (b) accepted the proposed procurement strategy in Section 3 of the



- report; and  
(c) gave approval for Officers to proceed with the arrangements for works and tender packages also detailed in Section 3 of the report.

### **31. Employee Monitoring - Half-Yearly Report 2005/6** (*Chief Personnel Services Officer*)

#### **Type of decision**

For Information

#### **Purpose of report**

To update the Portfolio Holder on the Council's performance in relation to the profile of the current workforce and applicants for jobs in the first six months of 2005/06, actions taken during the period and planned future actions.

#### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report provided details of the Council's performance in relation to the profile of the current workforce and applicants for jobs in the first six months of 2005/06, actions taken during the period and planned future actions.

Detailed sections and tables relating to the following, covering the first six months of 2005/06, were included in the report:

Employee Monitoring arrangements;  
Best Value Performance Indicators;  
Performance;  
Ethnicity Performance;  
Disability Performance;  
Gender Performance;  
Age Performance;  
Actions undertaken;  
Actions Planned;

Four sets of appendices were attached, in the form of tables and graphs, to further illustrate the findings

#### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the report.

### **32. Local Government Pension Scheme Update** (*Chief Personnel Services Officer*)

#### **Type of decision**

For Information

### **Purpose of report**

To update the Portfolio Holder on the Government's proposals for the Local Government Pension Scheme and initial responses from the Local Government Association and Unions.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report provided details of the Government's proposals for the Local Government Pension Scheme and initial responses from the Local Government Association and Unions. The following were also appended to the report:

- A written statement to Parliament by Phil Woolas, Minister for Local Government;
- Press Release issued by Unison;
- Statement issued by GMB;
- Copy of letter from the Head of Local Government & Firefighters' Pensions Schemes Division (including Annex A, B, C & D)
- Copy Statutory Instrument;
- Copy of letter from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister;

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the report and agreed to discuss the matter further with the Chief Personnel Services Officer to determine the Council's response.

## **33. E Billing of Energy Invoices** (*Head of Procurement and Property Services*)

### **Type of decision**

For information and comment

### **Purpose of report**

To provide an update on progress towards e.billing.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report contained background information and details of software development in the implementation of E Billing.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the report and was supportive of the scheme as it was hoped it would bring savings.

### **34. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

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 referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Minute 35 – Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely terms proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services (para. 9).

### **35. Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate** – (Head of Procurement and Property Services and the Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development)

#### **Type of decision**

Non Key

#### **Purpose of report**

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the current status of Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate.

#### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder was reminded that the Council owned Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate is held by the Council's Economic Development Section to help generate employment within the Borough. The report contained background information and outlined financial implications under the following headings:

- Vacancy Rates
- Refurbishment
- Rent Roll
- Arrears
- Rent Review
- Rent Concessions

An outline of recent refurbishment of areas of the estate, summary of lettings and current rent roll. A review of current rental rates and improvements to management procedures on the estate was outlined.

The Estates and Assets Manager gave a verbal update of the current position indicating that the units were now 100% occupied.

**Decision**

That Portfolio Holder noted the report.

**J A BROWN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 13<sup>th</sup> January 2006**