

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

27 October 2008

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

Present:

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: 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)
Peter Devlin (Chief Solicitor)
Dave Stubbs (Director of Neighbourhood Services)
Nicola Bailey (Director of Adult and Community Services)
Paul Briggs (Assistant Director, Resources and Support)
John Morton (Assistant Financial Officer)
Geoff Thompson (Head of Regeneration)
Alistair Rae (Public Relations Manager)
Joan Chapman (Principal Strategy Development Officer, e-Government)
Penny Garner- Carpenter (Strategic Housing Manager)
Fiona Riley (Regeneration Officer)
Christine Armstrong (Central Services Manager)
Denise Wimpenny (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

124. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Pamela Hargreaves, Deputy Mayor.

125. Declarations of interest by members

None.

126. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2008

Confirmed.

127. Minutes of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee held on 22 September 2008

Received.

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

Type of decision

Key (Test (i))

Purpose of report

To update Members on the outcomes of discussions with Northgate in relation to the possible extension of the current ICT support agreement for the authority and obtain a decision on whether or not to agree an extension.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Chief Executive referred to a number of reports that had been agreed by Cabinet over the last year in relation to arrangements for future ICT support when the current arrangements with Northgate came to their natural end in 2011. The report to Cabinet on 7 July identified that one of the options was to extend the current arrangements with Northgate for two years from 2011. It was noted that if the decision was made to extend, this could only be an interim solution with a maximum addition of two years to the current contract term.

The proposal for extension covered a number of key areas as outlined below, details of which were set out in the report together with the financial elements of the proposal as detailed in a confidential appendix to the report.

- A reduction in the base service annual fee
- Topping up the Investment Fund to provide capital funding for ICT investment
- The introduction of new services at no cost to the authority
- Proposals to address the Green Agenda

One aspect of the proposal would produce a cumulative reduction in contract payments for the period 2009/10 to 2013/14, details of which were included in the confidential appendix. It would not be possible to take the whole of these annual reductions as an efficiency, as part of these reductions would be needed to offset the contractual increases in the contract which are based on the retail price index which exceeds the budget

strategy provision for inflation of 2.5% for all areas.

The Investment Fund was established by Northgate at the beginning of the current contract in 2001 to provide capital funding for ICT developments which the authority wanted to take forward. The proposal included the topping up of this investment fund with two lump sums in 2009/10 and 2011/12. This was money that would be provided by Northgate.

Members were advised that as part of the proposal, Northgate had agreed to provide some new services at no additional cost to the authority which included:-

- Provision of a robust service continuity capability to ensure rapid availability of critical Council systems following any main system hardware failure.
- Provision of a new SAN Storage Solution to provide adequate medium term storage capacity.
- Extended service desk hours.
- Facility to allow users to reset passwords themselves thereby reducing time users were without access.

Members were advised of the issues that needed to be taken into consideration, benefits, opportunities and risks and the next steps in the process.

Agreeing to an extension would provide cashable and non-cashable efficiency savings, provide access to capital funding for new ICT initiatives and provide new services to resolve some of the current issues. Using the information available and taking everything into account, it was recommended that the decision be taken to agree to an extension of the current arrangements with Northgate for a period of two years up to September 2013.

Decision

- (i) That the proposals contained within this report to agree a two year extension to the current ICT contract arrangements, be approved.
- (ii) That delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Chief Executive to conclude any negotiations and variations to the contract with the agreement of the Performance Portfolio Holder.

129. The Hartlepool Compact Review (*Director of Regeneration and Planning Services*)

Type of decision

Key – Test (ii)

Purpose of report

To present the final version of the Hartlepool Compact to Cabinet and agree to endorse the document.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Neighbourhoods and Communities Portfolio Holder presented a progress report on the work that had been undertaken on the Hartlepool Compact since this was last reported to Cabinet in March 2008. The documentation presented to Cabinet in March 2008 had been sent to all delegates who attended the consultation event in January for further comment. Details of consultees, methods of consultation together with results of the consultation process were provided, as set out in the report.

The final version of the Hartlepool Compact was attached at Appendix 1. The Hartlepool Compact had been presented to, and was endorsed by, the Hartlepool Partnership on 24 October 2008. Once the document had also been approved by Cabinet it would be reformatted and produced as a 'glossy' final document and also made available in PDF format. An action plan intended to provide a set of agreed actions linked to promoting the use, recognition and implementation of Hartlepool Compact would also be produced, the progress of which would be reported to and monitored by the Community Network and reported to the Partnership. It was envisaged that the final action plan would be reported to the Hartlepool Partnership in the spring of 2009.

Whilst some Members expressed concerns regarding the costs of producing a glossy final document, the Mayor stated that this was a separate budgetary issue. The Head of Regeneration stated that it would be beneficial to redesign the final document particularly from a promotional point of view to help raise its profile amongst partner signatories but also to provide a more attractive and positive image when viewed on the Internet and in comparison with others on the National Compact Website. Following further discussion the Mayor agreed to provide details of costs in relation to the production of the document prior to the next meeting.

Decision

- (i) That the Hartlepool Compact, attached at Appendix 1, be endorsed.
- (ii) That the next steps outlined to produce a glossy and PDF version of the Hartlepool Compact and production of the Hartlepool Compact Action Plan, be noted.

130. The Way Forward – Business Transformation Programme *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To clarify the governance arrangements for The Way Forward - Business Transformation Programme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Chief Executive presented the report which included the background to the development of the Business Transformation Programme. A Programme Board had been established for the programme based on the decisions of Cabinet on 11 February, with decision making on the programme retained by Cabinet. A subsequent report to Cabinet on 15 September 2008, which dealt with the outline Business Transformation Programme and the next stages of its implementation, amended the membership of this Board to increase the Trade Union representation from one to two.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was Membership and Terms of Reference for the Programme Board which had been prepared to ensure that the governance arrangements for the programme were clear.

In response to a Member query, the Assistant Chief Executive agreed to provide clarification of the union representation following the meeting.

Decision

That the Membership and Terms of Reference of the Programme Board, be agreed.

131. Consultation Response: - Transforming Places, Changing Lives – A Framework for Regeneration *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To consider and respond to the consultation document issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government entitled “Transforming Places, Changing Lives – A Framework for Regeneration.”

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Mayor reported on the background to the framework for regeneration document. The framework signalled a shift in emphasis away from output

delivery to achievement of priority outcomes. Proposals were included, in particular, around how best to measure regeneration outcomes towards improving economic performance in deprived areas, work and enterprise in deprived areas and creating sustainable places where people wanted to live and work and where businesses wished to invest. It also explained how the framework should aid the devolution of more decisions to regional and local level.

The consultation proposed the development of Regional Regeneration Priorities Maps. These would provide an evidence based approach to align central government investment that would also improve private sector confidence in the priority areas. Regional Development Agencies and partners would need to provide indicative regional regeneration priorities maps as part of their regional funding advice by early 2009.

The deadline for consultation responses was Friday 31 October 2008. Officers had considered the consultation from a Hartlepool perspective and fed views through to the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit who were preparing a joint response on behalf of Tees Valley Local Authorities. Hartlepool's comments had been incorporated into the proposed draft response, the latest version of which was attached at Appendix 1. Included within the response and useful from a Hartlepool perspective was the welcome given to the framework's recognition of a needs-led approach to regeneration and Hartlepool's suggestion of the vital contribution that housing made to regeneration.

A summary of the Framework for the Regeneration Consultation Document was set out in the report which included a definition of regeneration, what should regeneration deliver, how and where to target regeneration investment and what a new framework for regeneration might mean for different agencies.

A Member commented upon and queried the ability of bringing regeneration schemes forward given the current state of the economy. The Head of Regeneration advised that ongoing discussions were taking place with One North East and other agencies on such issues to promote economic regeneration activity and preserve projects in an attempt to influence and raise the priority of schemes in Hartlepool. The Mayor stated that the issue of how the government would address this issue was yet to be determined. The Chief Executive made reference to a reduction in regional development agency budgets and added that it was a matter for the agencies to determine how to address the reduction in regeneration funding.

Decision

That the contents of the report, be agreed as the basis of a joint Tees Valley response to the consultation document, Transforming Places, Changing Lives – A Framework for Regeneration.

132. Housing Strategy Supplement 2008 *(Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To present a supplement to Cabinet, to be read alongside the existing Housing Strategy 2006 to 2011.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Housing Strategy 2006-11, a “fit for purpose” housing strategy was still relevant. However, since the strategy was produced a number of important factors had occurred locally and nationally which resulted in the strategy requiring review. The most important locally was the completion of a Housing Needs Assessment, which reflected the changing situation of social housing in the town. Very much tied in with this was the significant requirement for ‘affordable’ housing. An updated Housing Strategy was critical in supporting changes to planning policy.

The Housing Strategy supplement reflected existing priorities and strategies already approved by Cabinet. Consultation on the supplement had been undertaken through the Housing Partnership. The Housing Strategy gave support and ‘authority’ to funding bids etc particularly by housing providers to the Housing Corporation. The supplement would reflect changes since the approval of the Housing Strategy 2006-2011.

Members discussed the lack of affordable housing, how to encourage development and the need to address the number of empty properties in the town. The Mayor indicated that a number of empty homes were part of the housing regeneration programmes, for example, Housing Hartlepool’s properties in Easington Road and Belle Vue. With regard to empty properties in other areas, it was reported that this issue was currently being examined, details of which would be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet for consideration.

A Member queried the likelihood of the Growth Point Bid being successful and the types of units that were envisaged to which the Mayor advised that this information would be provided under separate cover following the meeting.

Decision

That the Housing Strategy Supplement 2008, be approved and be read alongside and form part of the Housing Strategy 2006-11.

133. Council Election by Thirds *(Chief Solicitor)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

At a meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 22 August 2008, a report was presented by the Chief Solicitor which allowed for changes to Council electoral cycles as part of the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The report included the approximate costs of consulting with registered electors on the most appropriate electoral scheme and Members requested a report be submitted to Cabinet to seek its views on the proposed consultation and the possible identification of an appropriate budget.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chief Solicitor provided background information and details of various reports which had been submitted to the General Purposes Committee in respect of changes to an electoral cycle. The reports had advised the General Purposes Committee of the processes that needed to be followed to make a change to electoral cycles from elections by thirds to “all out” elections once every 4 years and approximate costs. It was noted that any move to alter the current arrangements would require other considerations other than matters of cost. Following a request of the General Purposes Committee, a report was submitted on 22 August 2008 which included indicative costs of consultation, details of which were attached at Appendix 1.

Changes to the electoral cycle was within the remit of Council, however, Cabinet's views were sought in relation to the carrying out of a consultation exercise and the possible identification of an appropriate budget.

Cabinet were of the view that any consultation should include all electors. However, concerns were expressed regarding the level of costs in conducting such an exercise and questioned the value of changing the existing system of election by thirds. Discussion ensued on the various alternative methods of consultation as well as anticipated costs. The Assistant Financial Officer suggested that such a consultation exercise could be assimilated with the normal council tax billing arrangements, although this would need to be explored as well as the likely costs. It was suggested that any changes to the electoral system should include the issue of whether there should be ‘Single Member Wards’.

Decision

Cabinet did not support the proposed consultation exercise due to the high level of costs involved and the value of conducting such an exercise.

134. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform Cabinet of the fundamental change in the approach of the public service inspectorates towards inspecting the Council and its partners and identify the implications for the Council

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Chief Executive reported on changes with the introduction of CAA along with the proposed timetable. This was a fairly radical approach for the auditing body and one which had been tried before without much success. The seven inspectorates, referred to in the report, had developed the main principles and overall approach. The final consultation had taken place and closed on 20 October 2008. CAA was due to be introduced in April 2009.

CAA aimed to focus on:-

- Areas not just organisations
- Likelihood of future delivery not just performance in the past
- Outcomes for communities and, in particular, those most in need, rather than outputs and process
- Local priorities as well as national targets

It was proposed that CAA would reduce the assessment and inspection burden on organisations. As far as possible, it was proposed that CAA would be carried out in the background to keep any disruption to a minimum.

Members were advised of the key elements of CAA, how the Audit Commission believed each of the local organisations would be assessed, the range of available evidence to be used, the main questions the assessment intended to focus on, the use of red and green flags to identify significant issues arising from the area assessment, self evaluation as well as the implications for the Council and partners as set out in the report.

The report outlined the frameworks to be implemented, process for compilation of annual self assessment, organisational assessment and an assessment of the implications and current position for the authority.

Members were referred to the conclusions included in the report which highlighted that this was a new and currently untested inspection. The Chief Executive had met with Hartlepool's designated CAA lead inspector to establish likely requirements, feedback from which would be provided to partners possibly via the senior officer group.

In response to a query, the Assistant Chief Executive provided clarification on how the red and green flag system would operate. Members also commented on the effects the new system may have on partnership working.

Decision

- (i) That the implications of the change to a CAA inspection process, be noted.
- (ii) That arrangements and proposals suggested for preparing for CAA, be agreed.

The meeting concluded at 10.10 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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