

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

14 July 2009

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Robbie Payne (Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer
Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
Mike Ward, Chief Financial Officer
Liz Crookston, Principal Strategy and Research Officer
Richard Teece, Development Control Manager
David Dockree, Estates Manager
Joanne Burnley, Senior Environmental Health Officer
Jane Tindall, Planning Officer
Philip Timmins, Estates and Valuation Officer
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

1. Land at Orwell Walk, Hartlepool *(Estates and Valuation Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to seek the Portfolio Holder's approval in respect of the proposed acquisition of land at Orwell Walk and the change in use of an area of public open space to car parking.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report highlighted previous arrangements with Housing Hartlepool for the development of the site and outlined requirements in relation to car parking.

Details of the proposals were set out in an exempt appendix to the report. The appendix contained exempt information under 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)

It was acknowledged that there had been issues with car parking in that area in the past and this scheme should alleviate this. The land would not be adopted highway although the Local Authority would be liable for repair and maintenance of the area.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved:-

- the acquisition of the land on the terms outlined.
- the use of the area of public open space cross hatched on the plan be changed to a public car park.

2. Annual Diversity Report *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to report equality and diversity achievements during 2008/9 and actions planned in 2009/10 to progress towards achieving 'Excellence' status in the new Equality Framework for Local Government and to obtain the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the Annual Diversity Report.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided details of the Council's achievements and planned actions for the next year in respect of equality and diversity issues, including the Annual Diversity report. Each department has a working group to manage, plan and monitor diversity and equality issues and there is a human resources group to monitor employment issues.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- endorsed the Annual Diversity report
- noted the achievements and progress made in 2008/9 and actions planned for 2009/10

3. Employee Attendance Annual Report 2008/9 *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to update the Portfolio Holder on the Council's performance in 2008/9 in relation to employee absence, future targets and to receive endorsement of actions proposed to achieve the targets.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided details of employee absence in 2008/9, future targets and the actions proposed to meet the targets. The Chief Personnel Officer stated that a report would be brought quarterly to the Portfolio Holder. The current sickness levels were much improved on figures for previous years although the whole time equivalent figure (wte) was not yet available. The introduction of the HR Payroll System should make it easier to collate these figures.

The Portfolio Holder asked for a more detailed breakdown of the figures to be made available i.e. whether figures were made up of long term sickness or shorter term.

The Portfolio Holder requested that members of staff who had not taken any time off sick for a year or more be sent a letter from him acknowledging this and that it would be looked into providing an incentive for staff members who achieved this.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- Noted the employee absence in 2008/9
- Endorsed the proposed actions for 2009/10

4. Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2008/09 – End of Year Monitoring Report – Finance, Legal and Procurement *(Chief Financial Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made against the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2008/09.

Issues for Consideration

The report contained details of the progress against the actions contained in the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2008/09.

45 of the 55 actions identified in the Departmental Plan had been achieved and those which were still ongoing or had been achieved after the target date were outlined in the report. The Chief Financial Officer outlined the current homeworking arrangements within the department, He gave details of the failure to reach the target of appeals submitted to the Benefits Tribunal Service within 4 weeks and stated that the department attempted to resolve these cases before they actually reached the Tribunal stage.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services highlighted the two actions which had not been achieved on target and said that these should be addressed now that a Strategic Procurement Manager had been appointed. The Portfolio Holder stated that he valued the work of the Procurement Department.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- noted the achievement on actions
- agreed new target dates on actions

5. Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2009/10 (Assistant Chief Executive)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to notify the Portfolio Holder of the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan containing the key outcomes and actions for 2009/10.

Issues for Consideration

The Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2009/10 set out the key outcomes and actions within an Action Plan that showed what was to be achieved by the department in the coming year. The plan also described how the department contributed to the Organisation Development outcomes as identified in the 2009/10 Corporate Plan which was to be published in July 2009.

The Plan included proposals from all four divisions within the Chief Executive's Department, as well as procurement issues falling within the remit of the Procurement and Property Services Division within the Neighbourhood Services Department.

The document would be used as the basis for the quarterly monitoring reports to the Portfolio Holder.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the plan for distribution.

6. General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Sub Committee – Appeals Procedure Amendment *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to request approval for the recommendation clarifying the role of the Chief Personnel Officer or Human Resources representative at General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Sub Committee within the employment appeals process.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the amendments recommended and comments received from Trade Union representatives as a result of consultation.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether the Trade Unions were in agreement with the new procedure and was informed that as agreed by the previous Performance Portfolio Holder, this procedure had been trialled during a number of meetings and that no specific instances of concern had been raised by the Trade Unions.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the recommendation clarifying the role of the Chief Personnel Officer or Human Resources representative at the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Sub Committee within the employment appeals process.

7. Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2008/09 – End of Year Monitoring Report – Corporate Strategy and Human Resources *(Assistant Chief*

Executive and Chief Personnel Officer)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made against the key actions identified in the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2008/09 for the period up to 31 March 2009.

Issues for Consideration

The report contained details of progress against actions contained in the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2008/09. The Assistant Chief Executive stated that most actions had been achieved although a number pertaining to ICT had been put on hold until the new departmental structures were in place. A number of performance indicators had to be amended after Audit but arrangements were now in place to address this.

The Chief Personnel Officer outlined those Human Resource Actions which had not achieve target included the Corporate Customer Services Strategy but this had been postponed until the conclusion of Business Transformation. The plans to promote healthy working would now work well as funding had been secured. The Portfolio Holder asked about the postal services review. The Chief Personnel Officer advised that the review had been postponed while the new TNT contract was established and that savings will be monitored. She advised the Portfolio Holder that she should be informed of any complaints with the service so that they can be investigated and resolved quickly.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- Noted the achievements on actions
- Agreed new target dates

8. Governance Arrangements for the Registration Service *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to update the Portfolio Holder on the options for the governance of the local Registration Service and to seek approval to negotiate new governance arrangements with the Registrar General.

Issues for Consideration

The report described the current governance arrangements of the Registration Service, the alternative new arrangements and the potential benefits to the Council option of adopting the new arrangements.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether change was necessary but the Assistant Chief Executive said that the new arrangements provided a number of benefits to the local Authority. It was estimated that it would take 4 – 6 months for the changes to take place.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- Gave agreement for the Registration Service to apply for a new governance scheme to come into effect from 1 April 2010
- Agreed the Adoption of the Registration Service Code of Practice
- Committed the Council to meeting the National Standard in the Registration Service Good Practice Guide

9. Revenues and Benefits Service Update *(Chief Financial Officer)*

This item was deferred until a future meeting.

10. North East Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NERIEP) – Construction and Asset Management Programme *(Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to update the Portfolio Holder on the various workstreams in the North East Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and Asset Management Programme.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the activities of workstreams in relation to the achievement of regional improvement and efficiencies in asset management.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services outlined the current workstreams in relation to the partnership. The Portfolio Holder asked what the benefit of the partnership work was and was informed that it provided a sub regional as well as a regional attitude to procurement so that neighbouring authorities did not have a different approaches. The Portfolio Holder asked that a further report be brought to him in March.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the area of activity of the North East Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership Construction and Asset Management Programme.

11. Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman in 2008/09 *(Principal Strategy and Research Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to inform the Portfolio Holder on the annual review by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Issues for Consideration

The report covered the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review of complaints received about Hartlepool Borough Council in 2008/09. The Principal Strategy and Research Officer stated that there had been 25 complaints in the previous year and none were as a result of maladministration by the Authority. The complaints deadlines had been adhered to and there were no recommendations for action.

The Portfolio Holder congratulated departments on the way that complaints had been dealt with promptly.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the report.

12. Counter Benefit Fraud Report 2009/10 *(Chief Financial Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to provide accountability to the Portfolio Holder on the performance and effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for discharging its benefit counter fraud responsibilities.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided details of the Council's benefits fraud responsibilities, the framework of controls and operational activities that the Council deployed and evidence of the range of counter fraud activity and outcomes including formal sanctions that the Council has achieved.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether there was any partnership work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Local Authority and was informed that the DWP were working within a national framework and as such were unable to give information to other bodies.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the report.

13. Viewpoint – Citizen's Panel Results *(Principal Strategy and Research Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to inform the Portfolio Holder of the results of the 28th phase of Viewpoint, Hartlepool Borough Council's citizen's panel that was distributed in April 2009.

Issues for consideration

The latest Viewpoint questionnaire covered; Cleveland Police – listening to local people; Highways Management; Adult Education; Council owned public toilets; E-Safety and Young People; and the Future of Viewpoint.

Key findings from the questionnaire were outlined in the report.

The Portfolio Holder referred to comments on the cost of adult education and stated that prices had been increased despite these

comments. The Principal Strategy and Research Officer said that details of the results were fed back to the department and that a newsletter was also sent out to those on the Viewpoint panel. The Portfolio Holder was pleased that feedback was given to those involved.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the results of the survey.

14. Single Status Agreement Appeals *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to provide an update on progress on appeals received.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided a background to the Appeals Procedure together with an update on the number and progress of appeals received. The Chief Personnel Officer stated that it was expected that appeals would start being heard in September and panels would have an independent Chair. The Portfolio Holder said that he expected that Panels would have been trained at an earlier date but was informed that training would be done just before the appeals would be heard.

The Portfolio Holder queried why more resources could not have been obtained to process the appeals more quickly and was informed that there had been additional resources but there had been other issues which HR staff had become involved with.

The Portfolio Holder expressed concern at the length of time it was taking to get to the appeals panel hearings and was informed that all who currently had salary protection would have their appeals resolved before the protection ended and the Chief Personnel Officer would continue to respond to individual employee's queries.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress on appeals received.

15. 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 16 – 45 Lancaster Road - This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Para 3)

Minute 17 – Blakelock Day Centre, Blakelock Gardens, Hartlepool This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Para 3)

Minute 18 – Transfer of School Land Following change of Status to Foundation School This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Para 3)

Minute 19 – Proposed New Life Centre, King Oswy Drive, Hartlepool This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Para 3)

Qualification Based Training Applications – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006) namely (para 1) information relating to individuals

Minute 20 – Closure of Brierton School - This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely 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 (paragraph 4)

16. 45 Lancaster Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8LR (para 3)
(Estates and Valuation Officer)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to update the Portfolio Holder on developments with these premises.

Issues for Consideration

These were outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

This is contained within the exempt section of the minutes.

17. Blakelock Day Centre, Blakelock Gardens, Hartlepool *(para 3) (Estates and Valuation Officer)*

Type of Decision

Key

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to update the Portfolio Holder on developments with these premises.

Issues for Consideration

These were outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

Details of this are outlined in the exempt section of the minute.

18. Transfer of School Land Following Change of Status to Foundation School *(para 3) (Estates Manager)*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to inform the Portfolio Holder of the three secondary schools that have changed status to become Foundation Schools, the effect of which requires the local Authority (Transferor) to transfer ownership of the land and buildings to the Governing Body of the Foundation School (Transferee).

Issues for consideration

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

19. Proposed New Life Centre, King Oswy Drive, Hartlepool *(para 3) (Estates and Valuation Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order gain approval on issues surrounding the proposed disposal of land adjoining St Hild's School, King Oswy Drive for the purposes of a performing arts centre.

Issues for consideration

These were outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

This is detailed in the exempt section of the minutes.

20. Qualification Based Training Applications *(para 1) (Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

This was presented to seek approval for an application for qualification support from the Neighbourhood Services Department.

Issues for consideration

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes

Decision

This was detailed in the exempt section of the minutes.

21. Closure of Brierton School *(para 4) (Chief Personnel*

Officer)

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

The report provided the Portfolio Holder with an update on the staffing implications of the final states of the closure of Brierton School.

Issues for consideration

These were contained in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

The meeting concluded at 11.35 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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