

# **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD**

14 August 2009

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

## **Present:**

Councillor Robbie Payne (Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Graham Frankland, Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection  
Mike Ward, Chief Financial Officer  
David Dockree, Acting Estates Manager  
Philip Timmins, Estates and Valuation Officer  
Christine Armstrong, Central Services Manager  
Liz Crookston, Principal Strategy and Research Officer  
Philip Hornsby, Strategic Commissioner – Older People  
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Manager

## **22. Internal Alterations and Additions to the Education Development Centre for the Pupil Referral Unit Decant – Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection**

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To request the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the decision to make an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the procurement of the proposed construction works at the Education Development Centre (EDC).

### **Issues for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

In order to meet the required decant date of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) of October half term 2009, it was necessary that construction works to the EDC were completed by this time. The in house construction team would be unable to carry out this work because of other commitments and therefore under the Contract Procedure Rules, the scheme would normally go out to tender. However, because of the

tight timescale the Portfolio Holder was asked to make an exception to these rules.

The Portfolio Holder stated that he was unhappy at having to make an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules and that it would have been helpful if the in house team could have given an earlier indication that they were unable to carry out the work. He said that he preferred to let other businesses have the opportunity to tender for the work rather than just those on the LEA and Minor Works Partnership. He asked for a report to be brought to the meeting outlining how the procurement process could be improved.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder endorsed the decision to make an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules in this respect and the project to be procured through the LEA and Minor Works Partnership Contract.

## **23. Proposed Internal Alterations to Form a New Changing Village and Reception at Mill House Sports Centre – Head of Procurement Property and Public Protection**

### **Type of Decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of Report**

To request the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the decision to make an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the procurement of the proposed construction works at Mill House Sports Centre.

### **Issues for Consideration**

Funding had been obtained from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in order to create a modern changing village and remodel the office and reception facilities at the Mill House Leisure Centre and the funding was required to be spent before the end of March 2010. It was hoped that this work would begin in September after the school holidays and take approximately four months. Normally tenders would be invited in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules but because of the strict timescales with regards to the spending of the funding, an exception was sought to procure the works through the LEA and Minor Works partnership.

The Portfolio Holder questioned how long the Council had known that the grant money had been available and was informed that this had

gone through in March, but match funding had to be obtained after that. He said that he was unhappy with the delay in starting the work, thereby having to ask for an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules and consequently debarring local companies from being invited to submit tenders for the work. The Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection said that he would take these comments back to the Adult and Community Services Department.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder endorsed the decision to make an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules in this respect and allowed the project to be procured through the LEA and Minor Works Partnership Contract.

## **24. Land Adjoining 2 Kingsley Avenue – *Acting Estates Manager***

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To obtain the consent of the Portfolio Holder to proceed with the sale of a small parcel of land adjoining 2 Kingsley Avenue and adjacent to the main entrance to the Sixth Form College

### **Issues for Consideration**

Hartlepool Borough Council owns a small piece of land next to the main entrance of the Sixth Form College. A small triangle of land within this area was sold to the Sixth Form College in 2000 and since that time the remainder of the land has remained untended and become a target for litter. There is no development worth in the land because of its size and the Sixth Form college have asked to purchase the land in order to widen and improve their access. The terms and conditions of this sale were set out in a confidential appendix to the report.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether this would mean better access to the college and was informed that it would. He said that this was very welcome as the current entrance was very narrow.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder approved the provisional terms of disposal as set out in the appendix to the report.

## **25. Throston Grange Elderly Persons Home, Monmouth Grove – *Acting Estates Manager***

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To seek Portfolio Holder approval in connection with the sale of premises at Throston Grange, Monmouth Grove

### **Issues for Consideration**

Throston Grange Elderly Persons Home, Monmouth Grove had been previously used by Community Integrated Care (CIC) as an elderly persons' home but was no longer financially viable and was to close. No other HBC departments wished to use these premises and therefore was surplus to requirements. The site presented an opportunity for housing development. The financial implications of ensuring the site was secure and demolition were set out in the confidential appendix to the report.

The Portfolio Holder queried who was currently paying for the security of the building and was informed that it was now the Local Authority following CIC giving up the lease. It was felt that it was necessary to have the security on the site because of the threat of anti-social behaviour during school holidays. The Portfolio Holder expressed a wish that in future where there were financial implications with security on a site, the lease should not be surrendered as speedily.

A letter had been received from Ward Councillors thanking Officers for keeping them informed about the site and suggesting that consultation could take place with residents in the immediate vicinity. Ward Councillors had also suggested utilising part of the green area in front of the Conway Walk bungalows to supplement the site of the proposed social housing development.

The Acting Estates Manager indicated that a number of parties had already shown an interest in the site for housing development.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder approved the demolition of the building and the subsequent sale of the cleared site on the open market and asked that the demolition work start by 1 October 2009 at the very latest.

## **26. Replacement of Stolen Chains of Office – Central Services Manager**

### **Type of Decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of Report**

To consider and agree the procurement process for replacing the stolen Chains of Office.

### **Issues for Consideration**

The Portfolio Holder submitted apologies to the meeting from the Chief Personnel Officer and wished her son a speedy recovery.

Cabinet at its meeting held on 18 August 2008 agreed that new Chains of Office should be commissioned for the settlement agreed with the Council's insurers. The report detailed the process to be undertaken to replace the Chains of Office based on the Council's Contract Procedure Rules with a maximum budget of £45,000.

The Portfolio Holder queried what the Vice-Chair of the Council had used since the Chains of Office had been stolen and was informed that Medallions had been worn. He suggested that local schools could be involved in the design of new chains of office and the Central Services Manager agreed to investigate this possibility and bring a report back to the Portfolio Holder.

### **Decision**

The decision was deferred pending a further report to the Portfolio Holder.

## **27. Tender for External Printing Support – Central Services Manager**

### **Type of Decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of Report**

To consider and agree the procurement process for provision of external printing support.

### **Issues for Consideration**

The majority of general printing requirements were met by the internal Print Unit utilising the services of local printing firms to cover peaks in service and specialised work when appropriate. However in 2008-09 the amount of outsourced work equated to approximately £40,000 and under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, goods and services totalling that amount must be supported by a contract. Local small and medium enterprises would be encouraged to bid for the contract which would allow printing jobs to be collected or delivered quickly meaning that there should be no additional time taken to produce jobs and existing time frames for completion of printing work could be adhered to.

The Portfolio Holder queried how many external printing firms would be involved in the contract and was informed that it was expected to be three or four local firms who would be selected as to their ability to deliver quality work in the time frame required. The Central Services Manager said that help would be given with the tender process to encourage smaller local firms to apply.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder agreed to the procurement route outlined in the report.

## **28. Cheque Encashment Service – *Chief Financial Officer***

### **Type of Decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of Report**

To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to discontinue the cheque encashment service from the Civic Centre's Cash Office facility from 1 December 2009. If approved this decision would potentially release administration savings for the Council, and present the Council with an opportunity to proactively encourage residents to manage their personal finances.

### **Issues for Consideration**

The report provided some background to the Council's encashment service and detailed the current costs associated with administering the service. The report then highlighted how the proposal would support the council's wider financial inclusion policies of maximising disposable income for the Borough's residents whilst empowering individuals to manage their own finances. The report also detailed a 'wind down' strategy to effectively manage the exercise and ensure that customers

were guided to affordable alternative encashment services. The Chief Financial Officer said that he hoped individuals would utilise the services of establishments such as the Credit Union. A pilot scheme to encourage the use of the Credit Union had taken place previously resulted in 200 housing benefit recipients opening accounts with the Credit Union.

The Portfolio Holder pointed out the fees and costs currently charged by encashment providers in the borough, notably one charging 10% of the value of the cheque and said that he was unhappy that people may have to resort to using these providers. He asked the Principal Strategy and Research Officer to conduct a survey with housing benefit claimants to elicit whether they would utilise the Credit Union and what impact it would have on their life. He asked that a report be brought back to him in October regarding this.

### **Decision**

This item was deferred pending a further report.

## **29. Corporate Complaints – April to June 2009 –** *Principal Strategy and Research Officer*

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To report to the Portfolio Holder on corporate complaints performance for the first quarter of 2009/10.

### **Issues for Consideration**

The report covered performance information on numbers of complaints, timescales for investigation and outcomes of investigations for formal complaints dealt with in the first quarter of 2009/10. A total of 11 formal complaints was received in the quarter. Nine of these were responded to within the Authority deadlines. Four out of 11 complaints were upheld in part. Complainants were provided with explanations, apologies if necessary and in one case financial compensation. The Authority aimed to learn from complaints, and where upheld, departments provided information how the procedures would be rectified so that mistakes did not recur.

The Portfolio Holder asked about the complaints which had not been responded during the required timescale and was informed that some complex complaints took longer to resolve but the complainant was kept informed throughout.

### **Decision**

The report was noted.

## **30. Audit Commission Review of Strategic Asset Management in Local Government – Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection**

### **Type of Decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of Report**

To update the Portfolio Holder on a recent review of Strategic Asset Management in Local Government.

### **Issues for Consideration**

The report outlined the Audit Commission's findings in their review of Strategic Asset Management and highlighted steps that central and local government should take to improve including taking a more strategic approach to the management of its estate if it was to maximise potential savings. The Council's actions in addressing these requirements via Business Transformation were highlighted in the report.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the report.

## **31. Hartlepool Connect – Review of 2008-09 – Central Services Manager**

### **Type of Decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide the Portfolio Holder with an update on Hartlepool Connect's performance and key achievements during the year April 2008 to March 2009.

### **Issues for Consideration**

The report detailed performance and key achievements by Hartlepool Connect during 2008-09 and included information on preferred contact routes, customer satisfaction, service transfers and future plans.



The Portfolio Holder asked what timescales were for people waiting in reception prior to being seen. He was informed that just over half had been seen in under 10 minutes, although the average queue time from October to March was 17 minutes. The longest waiting time had been an hour. The Portfolio Holder asked what measures were being taken to combat this and was informed that all members of staff had received training so they could multi-skill within the department and be moved to busy areas.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder asked for a further report to be submitted to him outlining how much it cost to run the Contact Centre, how staffing had increased since its initial concept, current staffing levels and information on how long callers were on the telephone.

## **32. 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

Minute 33 - Cabin Owners, Ferry 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 34 - 45 Lancaster Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8LR - 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 35 - Northgate Lease Extension, Level 1, Civic Centre, 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 36 - Sale of Freehold of Land at Belle Vue Way, Longhill Industrial Estate - 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 37 - Sale of Land at Bruntoft Avenue - 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 38 - Land to the Rear of Tees Bay Retail Park - 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 39 - Proposed Sale of Land at Cobb Walk - 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 40 - Hartlepool Interchange Car Park Lease - 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 41 - Qualification Based Training Application - This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to any individual (Para 1)

### **33. Cabin Owners, Ferry Road** (para 3) – *Acting Estates Manager*

#### **Type of Decision**

Non key.

#### **Purpose of Report**

To update the Portfolio Holder with regard to the relocation of the Cabin Owners at Ferry Road.

#### **Issues for Consideration**

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes.

#### **Decision**

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

**34. 45 Lancaster Road, Hartlepool** (para 3) – *Estates and Valuation Officer*

**Type of Decision**

Non key.

**Purpose of Report**

To update the Portfolio Holder on the latest developments with this property.

**Issues for Consideration**

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes

**Decision**

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes

**35. Northgate Lease Extension, Level 1, Civic Centre, Hartlepool** (para 3) - *Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection*

**Type of Decision**

Non key.

**Purpose of Report**

To update the Portfolio Holder in respect of the Northgate lease extension.

**Issues for Consideration**

These were outlined in the exempt section of the minutes

**Decision**

This was contained within the exempt section of the minutes.

**36. Sale of Freehold of Land at Belle Vue Way, Longhill Industrial Estate** (para 3) – *Acting Estates Manager*

**Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to the sale of freehold reversion in a parcel of 2.5 acres at Longhill Industrial Estate.

### **Issues for Consideration**

These were outlined in the exempt section of the minutes

### **Decision**

This is detailed in the exempt section of the minutes

## **37. Sale of Land at Bruntoft Avenue** (para 3) - *Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection*

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To obtain Portfolio Holder consent to proceed with the sale of land to the rear of Bruntoft Avenue.

### **Issues for Consideration**

These were outlined in the exempt section of the minutes

### **Decision**

This was detailed in the exempt section of the minutes.

## **38. Land to the Rear of Tees Bay Retail Park** (para 3) – *Acting Estates Manager*

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To update the Portfolio Holder in respect of the transfer of a parcel of land to the rear of Tees Bay Retail Park further to the report of 19 February 2009

### **Issues for Consideration**

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes

### **Decision**

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

## **39. Proposed Sale of Land at Cobb Walk** (para 3) - *Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection*

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To obtain Portfolio Holder consent to proceed with the sale of land at Cobb Walk for the erection of garages.

### **Issues for Consideration**

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes

### **Decision**

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

## **40. Hartlepool Interchange Car Park Lease** (para 3) – *Estates and Valuation Officer*

### **Type of Decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of Report**

To update the Portfolio Holder regarding the Hartlepool Interchange car park lease

### **Issues for Consideration**

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes

### **Decision**

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

## **41. Qualification Based Training Application** (para 1) – *Central Services Manager*

**Type of Decision**

Non key

**Purpose of Report**

To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder for 1 application for qualification support from an employee in the Neighbourhood Services Department and 2 applications for qualification support from employees in the Children's Services Department.

**Issues for Consideration**

These were detailed 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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