

# **REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO**

## **DECISION RECORD**

**27 November 2009**

The meeting commenced at 3.15 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development)

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Mick Emerson, Principal Economic Development Officer (Business)  
Bart Johnson, Principal Economic Development Officer (Europe)  
Rob Smith, Senior Regeneration Officer  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

## **7. Empty Shops Fund** *(Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration))*

### **Type of decision**

Non-Key

### **Purpose of report**

To request the Portfolio Holder's approval on the use of Empty Shops Fund resources.

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

Hartlepool had been identified as one of 57 local authorities to benefit from a £3 million Government fund to address problems of empty shops in town centres. The award was £52,631 and not ring fenced meaning it could be used at the discretion of the Council. Two potential schemes had been identified by officers: expansion of Indoor Market Initiative and Multi-Use Drop-In Unit. Work was still progressing in confirming ideas and costs however it was felt helpful if agreement could be secured in principle to the use of the Empty Shops Fund towards these schemes. There would be no financial implications for the Council

### **Decision**

That the use of the Empty Shops Fund resources on the basis set out in the report be approved.

## **8. Indoor Market** *(Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services) & Assistant Director (Planning & Economic Development))*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the 'Passions into profit' project to revitalise the Indoor Market and support local enterprise and to seek endorsement of the financial arrangement to fund electrical works associated with the project.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

Hartlepool's indoor market had been chosen as the location for a pilot of 'Passions into Profit', a national scheme to rejuvenate town centres by turning empty retail space into thriving businesses. Enterprise Insight had teamed up with Hartlepool Enterprise Centre to develop the project in partnership with the shopping centre management, Hartlepool College of Further Education and One NorthEast with the aim of putting disused retail spaces in the market to good use. Following a successful launch event in September 2009 23 stalls were occupied or would be soon and positive feedback had been received about early trading experience. However an area of unforeseen expenditure arose within the project, namely necessary electrical upgrading at a cost of £16,160. It was agreed that this cost would initially be met through the Empty Shops Funding Grant from Communities and local Government. The Council were allocated £52,631 due to their status as one of 57 authorities facing high levels of deprivation and high retail vacancy rates. Negotiations with the shopping centre landlords, PPG, were underway to enter into a debt-tracking arrangement to reclaim the cost of the electrical works, PPG being responsible for the repair and maintenance of the indoor market. PPG had acknowledged the need for this work to be completed however there were now concerns that attempts would be made to pay the Council reduced rent through the head lease as a way of recouping these costs. They had confirmed however that rental rates charged to stall holders would not increase.

The Portfolio Holder indicated she would like assurances that the £52,000 Empty Shops Funding would be utilised for its intended purpose. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed this saying that any reductions in rent would be covered through the central funding pot. Discussions were also ongoing regarding the succession plan.

### **Decision**

That the launch of the 'Passions into Profit' project at the indoor market be noted and the funding arrangements for the necessary electrical work

endorsed.

**9. Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan 2009/10 – Quarter 2 Monitoring Report** *(Head of Support Services)*

**Type of decision**

Non-key

**Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made against the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan 2009/10 during the first two quarters of the year

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The report showed details of progress against actions contained in the Departmental Plan and the second quarter outturn of key performance indicators. There were a total of 52 actions and 10 performance indicators assigned to this portfolio holder. Of these three actions were not expected to achieve target and would require a revision to their target dates. Three performance indicators were also not expected to achieve target. Full details were given within the report.

In response to a question on unemployment the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods highlighted the positive work being carried out in tackling unemployment saying the figures for Hartlepool in October remained constant despite an overall Tees Valley increase. The Portfolio Holder queried whether Enterprise Week had positively impacted the previous year and was advised that there tended to be improvements at this time of year and Enterprise Week was a factor. Officers were doing everything they could to improve employment rates.

**Decision**

That the progress on key actions and indicators in the first two quarters of the year be noted and the proposed revisions to target dates agreed.

**10. Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) – Quarter 2 Update** *(Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development))*

**Type of decision**

Non-key

## **Purpose of report**

To update the Portfolio Holder on the position of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) programme at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 2009/10 financial year and to update the Portfolio Holder on the changes to the programme management arrangements.

## **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

In February 2009 Council approved the 2009/10 budget and 2010/11 indicative budget for the WNF programme. There was currently £5,167,838 remaining from the 2009/10 allocation with an indicative allocation of £5,387,049 for 2010/11. At the March 2009 Regeneration and Liveability Portfolio meeting the Portfolio Holder agreed to some budget amendments to the forthcoming WNF programme and Cabinet had recently considered further WNF allocations. In total £5,343,168 was available to spend in 2009/10, including a carry-over of £175,330. Details of the final budgets were appended to the report taking account of over and underspends from 2008/09. Also appended was information on the financial position at the end of Quarter 2.

The Portfolio Holder was further advised that following the corporate restructure responsibility for WNF had transferred from the Community Strategy Division to the Planning and Economic Division of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods as of November 2009. Following a request from the Portfolio Holder a summary sheet giving information on outputs and detailing what the various projects encompassed was provided at the meeting.

The Principal Economic Development Officer (Europe) advised that two projects had reported back slippage. Mobile Maintenance had experienced problems with procurement which were expected to lead to slippage of at least half of the £46,000 originally agreed. A number of solutions to this problem were discussed including carrying out the work in two stages, thereby alleviating the need for corporate procurement.

Concerns had also been raised from the NAPs with regard to year end spends. Each area had quotes and contracts ready to be awarded but the work would probably not be completed and funding spent by the end of the financial year. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods however felt that this was achievable. The Portfolio Holder commented that the large number of meetings on these issues might be a factor in causing these delays. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that consideration was being given to combining Neighbourhood Consultative Forum meetings and NAP meetings in the future.

**Decision**

That the spend position of the WNF programme at the end of September 2009 and the changes to the programme management arrangements be noted.

The meeting concluded at 15:35pm

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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