

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

4 September 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
Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer
David Dockree, Temporary Estates Manager
Paula Bass, Revenues Manager
Sylvia Pinkney, Consumer Services Manager
Paul Hurwood, Climate Change Officer
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

42. Tender for a Printing and Mailing Service for Local Taxation Demands and Benefit Notifications *– Revenues Manager*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report sought to advise the Portfolio Holder that the Council would be inviting tenders for the provision of a printing and mailing service for council tax/business rates bills and council tax/housing benefit notifications in September 2009

Issues for Consideration

The report provided the background to the Council's local taxation billing and benefit notifications and explained the need for the tender of the contract. The report went on to detail the key features of the tender, such as the nature and recommended length of the contract, as well as the principles behind the evaluation of the tenders. The report also listed the key recommendations that required the agreement of the Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder queried the need to go out to tender as the current provider was giving such a good service to the Authority and was reminded that under the Contract Procedure Rules, contracts of this size were required to be advertised. However, tenders were to be invited on a restricted basis from those firms with the expertise to carry out this work.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder agreed the following:-

- The Council's print and mail service for council tax/business rates bills and council tax benefit notifications, be subject to tender procedures in September 2009.
- Tenders would be invited on the basis of an initial contract period of 3 years with the option to extend for a further 2 twelve month periods
- The tender would be conducted on a 'restricted' procedure basis
- The tender would be evaluated on a price and performance/quality basis with the ratio between price and performance/quality being 60:40

43. Primary Capital Programme – Procurement of Works – Rossmere Primary School – Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the suggested options for the procurement route for the Rossmere Primary School works.

Issues for Consideration

The report gave a detailed overview of the recommended procurement strategy and requested approval for a way forward for the work on Rossmere Primary School. The required work to the school as a whole would cost in the region of £5 million but there was not that currently that amount available. However prioritisation of the necessary work had been done in consultation with the school and governors, and a project of approximately £1.5 million - £2 million was being proposed. It was hoped to commence the initial work in November or December 2009 although planning consent had not yet been sought. A number of

options for processing the works were outlined in the report, including the use of the in-house team and the Portfolio Holder's views were sought. The Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection highlighted key risks of value for money, capacity, capability and governance / contract management which would be addressed. The Portfolio Holder was informed that the in-house team had made assurances that they had the capacity to carry out the work and mitigate the risks.

The Portfolio Holder was informed that although the master plan of the work required on the school would cost in the region of £5 million, there was no guarantee that funding for this would be available in the future and therefore the work had to be prioritised. The Portfolio Holder asked whether it would be possible for the technical fees for the whole build to be combined together and the Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection stated that he would look to maximise the monies available on the build rather than overhead costs in fees.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder agreed to give the construction delivery role to the in house team by negotiation which would include the agreement of costs that represent best value to the Council, on the understanding that they would be the principal contractor and oversee specialist sub-contract recharges in a similar way to the Civic Centre improvement works.

44. Seaton Carew Sports and Social Club – *Temporary Estates Manager*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek Portfolio Holder approval in connection with the extension of the existing lease of the premises.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the background to the lease arrangements and how a written application had been received requesting a 20 year extension to the existing lease.

The Portfolio Holder was unhappy that the club had not yet been approached regarding any changes to the rent and asked that discussions commence as soon as possible and report back to him.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder asked that a further report be presented to him regarding the negotiations.

45. Extended Career Grade Scheme for Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers – *Consumer Services Manager*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To review the extended Career Grade Scheme for Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and Trading Standards Officers (TSOs)

Issues for Consideration

The report reviewed the progress of the scheme as agreed by the Portfolio Holder in September 2005 and updated the Portfolio Holder on the current position with regards to retention and recruitment of EHOs and TSOs within Public Protection. The Portfolio Holder had considered reports on the subject on 27 November 2006, 22 June 2007 and 28 June 2008 and had requested a further review be undertaken after June 2009.

It was outlined how there were still national shortages of EHOs and TSOs although the Extended Career Grade Scheme was going some way to addressing this issue in Hartlepool Borough Council. An advantage of this was that it is performance based and not just a flat rate market supplement payable to all staff.

The Portfolio Holder queried the temporary downgrading of a TSO post as outlined in the report and was informed that as there had been no applicants for this post, the salary point was temporarily reduced to allow a student to fill this (rather than the post being down graded). Once the student was qualified the post would then be set at the higher salary grade. This post was attractive to a student as students normally only received bursaries rather than a salary.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether this scheme could be extended to blue collar workers and was informed that it was similar to an apprentice working their way up to a charge hand. It is a performance related scheme as opposed to a market supplement. The scheme was due to be reviewed every 12 months to take account of any market changes.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- Noted the position as regards the recruitment and retention of Environmental Health and Trading Standards officers
- Approved the continuation of the Extended Career Grade Scheme
- Authorised the scheme to be reviewed after a further 12 months when a report would be prepared for the consideration of the Finance and Performance Portfolio Holder.

46. Salix Funding for Energy Efficiency Projects – *Climate Change Officer*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To outline the principles of funding options available from Salix Finance, in order that Hartlepool Borough Council can apply for funding for energy efficiency projects.

Issues for Consideration

The report highlighted the requirement to introduce energy saving measures in order to reduce running costs, reduce carbon emissions and meet the Authority's obligations under the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC). Salix Finance Ltd was to distribute funding loans to Local Authorities and as these did not require any match funding, local authorities could borrow 100% of the cost of projects and a further 15% could be borrowed to cover operational costs resulting from the delivery of projects. Salix provided a Project Compliance Tool which would assess whether any proposed projects met the criteria for the loans which would be allocated on a first come first served basis.

It was proposed that the Council would utilise its loan to implement Voltage Optimisation which typically gives energy reductions of approximately 10% and had a payback period of around 2 – 3 years.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether energy prices would affect any savings and was informed that if energy prices rose then this would affect savings, but the project was based more on energy use than energy prices.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder agreed to the submission of an application for approximately £100,000 for the energy efficiency improvement projects, such as the installation of Voltage Optimisation equipment in those buildings that would benefit most. The next deadline for funding was 1 October 2009.

47. Employee Attendance 2009/10 – 1st Quarter – Chief Personnel Officer

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To update the Portfolio Holder on performance up to the first quarter of 2009/10 and actions taken in relation to employee sickness absence.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided details of employee sickness absence for the first quarter of 2009/10 and actions taken across Council departments.

The Chief Personnel Officer outlined the potential impact of the HR payroll system would be implemented shortly. This would produce more information on sickness absence for management levels so that targeted action can be taken.

The Portfolio Holder was informed that although there was a variety of long term absences, management would attempt to compromise on phased return or reduced hours if possible in order to allow the member of staff to return to work. The Portfolio Holder asked what contact would be made to staff who were on sickness absence and was informed that it was up to the individual and the nature of the absence, but every effort would be made to accommodate the needs of the individual. However if the individual was unable to return to their position, redeployment opportunities would be considered.

The Portfolio Holder congratulated departments on their efforts to reduce sickness absence levels.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted employee absence in the first quarter of 2009/10 and actions taken or planned.

48. 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 49 – Land at Wells Street, Headland, 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 50 – Officer Holidays - 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)

49. Land at Wells Street, Headland, Hartlepool (para 3) - Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To advise the Portfolio Holder about the current situation and proposals to resolve outstanding issues.

Issues for Consideration

The report detailed the background of the case and current recommendations.

Decision

This was detailed in the exempt section of the minutes.

50. Officer Holidays (para 3) - Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To request the Portfolio Holder's permission to consider additional holidays.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the reasoning behind the case and why approval was sought.

Decision

This item was deferred.

The meeting concluded at 11.05 am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 9 September 2009