

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

15 February 2010

The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: Robbie Payne (Deputy Mayor) (Finance & Performance Portfolio Holder),
Pam Hargreaves (Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder),
Gerard Hall (Adult Services Portfolio Holder).
Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder),
Victor Tumilty (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder),

Officers: Paul Walker (Chief Executive),
Andrew Atkin (Assistant Chief Executive)
Dave Stubbs (Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)
Alan Dobby (Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)
Geoff Thompson (Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration))
Richard Waldmeyer (Team Leader, Planning Policy and Information)
Adrian Hurst (Principal Environmental Health Officer)
Alastair Rae (Public Relations Manager)
Angela Hunter (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

188. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Jackson (Neighbourhoods and Communities Portfolio Holder)

189. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

190. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2010

The minutes were deferred to the next meeting.

191. Consultation Response – Draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (And Other National Policy Statements) *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To consider and respond to the consultation documentation issued by the Government in relation to the National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) – nominating a site in Hartlepool as a suitable location for the development of a nuclear power station by the end of 2025 – and other National Policy Statements.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Mayor presented a report which explained that the Department of Energy and Climate Change had published for public consultation a suite of six National Policy Statements (NPSs) on energy related issues, one of which (Draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation: EN-6) set out the need for nuclear power in the country's energy mix and included Hartlepool as a potential suitable location for a new nuclear power station.

The report (Appendix A referred) summarised the coverage of the National Policy Statements and some potential implications for Hartlepool and the wider Tees Valley. These had been identified in consultation with the Tees Valley JSU, and the agreement of other TV local authorities through the Tees Valley Unlimited Planning and Economic Strategy Board, as the basis of a formal response to the relevant Government department.

In particular however, the suggested formal response of Hartlepool Borough Council to the NPS for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) was considered in relation to the potential development of a new power station in Hartlepool. The report (plus associated Appendices B,C & D) outlined the results of the "communication strategy" previously agreed by Cabinet which had been undertaken in order to stimulate public debate and help inform the Council's position on the nuclear power proposals.

The Mayor added that the consultation undertaken was extremely comprehensive and involved a number of different methods. The Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration) summarised the results of the

consultation as detailed in the report and attached appendices and added that the Question Time event had resulted in a very balanced and worthwhile debate.

It was noted that there was a major inequality between the north and south of England in the cost to energy producing companies to use the national grid supply. It was felt that this hindered the production of any new power in the north due to the national grid tariffs companies had to pay.

The consultation responses had indicated that the vast majority of people in Hartlepool were in favour of a new nuclear power station being built in Hartlepool in view of the substantial regeneration and economic benefits that it would bring to the town. It was noted that although sites had already been identified for the first four new nuclear power station developments in the south of England, Hartlepool needed to be prepared and ready to step forward should a problem with one of the first four sites identified arise. Members were reminded that the current power station's 'life' was due to expire in 2014 and it was hoped that a smooth transition could be made to a new nuclear power station being built after 2014.

The Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration) commented that it was important to recognise that the response to this consultation involved other national Government policies including issues around fossil fuel, renewable energy and the infrastructure needed. Members were informed that the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (JSU) were providing a collective Tees Valley response to the consultation and would be including most of the comments included within the appendices to the report in the response.

A Member did have some concerns about nuclear power stations in general in terms of the safety and the cost associated with the operation of them. It was questioned whether the same cost associated with the operation of a nuclear power station would be better spent on renewable energy and therefore providing clean and environmentally safe energy.

The policies being consulted upon did highlight that the Government were trying to get the right balance of energy supply to enable a reduction in CO2 emissions and one of the advantages of nuclear power was that it did not provide the same CO2 problem that fossil fuel generation did. Members were generally of the view that Hartlepool should be ready and prepared to be at the forefront of the development of sustainable energy production in the north of England including the continuation of the provision of nuclear power through a new nuclear power station and the development of renewable energy alternatives, for example through sites for wind turbines.

A Member questioned whether 14-19 year olds had been included within the consultation. The Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration) confirmed that young people had been included in a number of ways including representatives from the Youth Parliament participating in the Question Time event. Feedback had been received from the Youth Service which indicated that the young people involved felt that their views were

taken on board and that they had received useful answers to their questions.

Should the decision be taken to build a nuclear power station in Hartlepool, Members were keen to see Hartlepool Council heavily involved from the start in relation to investment in local jobs and training to enable the younger generation to be at the forefront for jobs, including construction jobs.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) confirmed that the next stage in the process was for the Government to produce a finalised national policy statement. Any detailed proposals for the development of a new nuclear power station in Hartlepool would be subject to consultation with the local authority with the ultimate decision resting with the Infrastructure Planning Commission.

Members were informed that work was being undertaken with other Tees Valley authorities to look at low carbon economy and how to improve skills within that sector. In addition to this, discussions were ongoing with EDF with a view to bringing forward new entrants to the energy production profession and recognising the need to invest in skills and the infrastructure required to develop alternative energy generation.

A Member commented that employment within the nuclear power industry was an issue as around half of the students undertaking the S.T.E.M. subjects did not take up employment in that industry and the importance of developing local labour and skills was emphasised. It was accepted that this was a difficult decision to make taking into account of climate issues, the potential source of employment and regeneration, but as representatives of local people, it was recognised that Members should defer to the views of local people. As such, the extensive consultation undertaken had indicated that the majority of people in the town were in favour of the development of a new nuclear power station.

In conclusion, it was noted that a strong majority of residents who responded to the consultation supported the development of a new nuclear power station within Hartlepool and this needed to be reflected in the response to be forwarded to the Government and EDF. As part of the response, reassurances would be sought on the safety of the operation of a new power station in view of the new design being proposed. Work would continue on developing the benefits a new nuclear power station would bring to the town through regeneration and economic development including the provision of future employment and training. In addition, the response should include a strong message to the Government to ensure that the cost to companies associated with using the national grid was fair and equitable across the country.

The Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) confirmed that the national policy statement should be finalised towards the end of this year. The onus would then be on the companies involved to progress the

development of the new nuclear power stations with the individual local authorities concerned. A Member suggested that a representative from EDF be invited to discuss this issue with Members.

Members thanked all the officers involved in the comprehensive consultation undertaken as this had proven a very worthwhile and positive exercise.

Decision

- (i) The comments (at Appendix A) agreed with other Tees Valley local authorities on the National Policy Statements, including the proposed consultation responses to individual questions, for forwarding to the relevant Government department were endorsed.
- (ii) The contents of the report as the basis of a Hartlepool Borough Council response to the NPS for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) and in particular (Appendix G) the proposed consultation responses to individual questions, for forwarding to the relevant Government Department were approved.
- (iii) The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods, in liaison with the Mayor, was authorised to make any minor alterations to the proposed responses to individual questions, to allow further dialogue if necessary with the Tees Valley JSU in relation to the overall NPS consultation.

The meeting concluded at 9.37 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2010