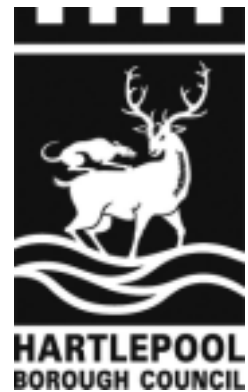


REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO DECISION SCHEDULE



Friday 26th March 2010

at 2.30 pm

in Committee Room C, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Councillor P Hargreaves, Cabinet member responsible for Regeneration and Economic Development will consider the following items.

1. KEY DECISIONS

No items

2. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

2.1 Empty Shops Fund – *Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration)*

3. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

No items

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

Report To Portfolio Holder
26th March 2010



Report of: Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration)

Subject: EMPTY SHOPS FUND

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Portfolio Holder on the use of Empty Shop Fund Resources.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The report provides an update on the development of projects relating to a funding allocation aimed at mitigating the impact of empty shops within the town centre.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

The regeneration of the central area and use of regeneration resources lies within the remit of the Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-Key

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio meeting on the 26th March 2010.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

The Portfolio Holder is requested to:

- Note the progress of the projects identified within the report.
- Endorse the use of the reserve funds from the vacant shop fund, to contribute towards vacant shopfront visual improvements on York Road.

Report of: Assistant Director (Housing and Regeneration)

Subject: EMPTY SHOPS FUND

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Portfolio Holder on the use of Empty Shop Fund resources.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Hartlepool is one of 57 local authorities to benefit from a £3 million fund made available by the Department for Communities and Local Government to address empty shops in town centres, which have increased in number due to the economic recession. The award for each area is £52,631. The funding is unringfenced revenue grant and can be used at the discretion of the Council.
- 2.2 As reported to the Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder on the 27th November 2009, officers have identified a number of projects for the funding that aim to reduce the impact of vacant shop units within the town centre.
- 2.3 The projects identified include an expansion of the indoor market initiative, a Multi-Use Drop-in Unit at Middleton Grange Shopping Centre and smaller scale initiatives aimed at improving the appearance of vacant shops.
- 2.4 Following the 27th November Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio meeting the initial ideas outlined above have been developed and match funding sought in order to maximise the impact and opportunities arising from the vacant shop unit funding award.

3.0 MULTI-USE, DROP-IN, “SHIP IN A SHOP” INITIATIVE

- 3.1 The Multi-Use Drop-In project will comprise a number of elements that are designed to enhance the vibrancy of Middleton Grange Shopping Centre, bring a vacant shop unit back into use for 6 months and provide complementary activities in the lead up to the Tall Ships event in August 2010. The project has been designed to run from the 6th April – 27th August 2010.

- 3.2 The shop will contain a variety of components including a “Ship in a Shop” interactive art feature which involves the construction of a glass and steel ship by a local artist in association with local groups, a community art gallery, and an information centre where voluntary and public sector organisations will be able to promote their services.
- 3.3 A professional artist will be appointed to develop and build a major piece of art work within the shop. The making of the “Ship in a Shop” will be carried out in full public view, with the artist engaging with the public through talks and workshops, so that the public will be involved in the design and creation of the art work. Preliminary workshops will be held, focusing on creative writing and glass design techniques.
- 3.4 The shop unit will also incorporate an exhibition space where there will be a programme of community exhibitions to showcase work of community groups and schools. An information centre to inform the public of Tall Ships related events, activities, and information will also be established.
- 3.5 Following discussions with Middleton Grange Shopping Centre the former Jonathan James unit, on level one, has been identified as the location for the project. Middleton Grange Shopping Centre have offered to waive costs for the duration of the project subject to the project paying utility costs. A licence agreement will be drawn up between Hartlepool Borough Council and Middleton Grange Shopping Centre for the use of the unit.
- 3.6 At the 27th November 2009 Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio meeting a contribution of £10,000 was agreed for the Multi-Use Drop-in project from the vacant shop unit fund. As a result of this allocation, significant levels of match funding have been secured towards the project from both the Arts Council and the Social Care Reform Grant Fund. £27,000 has been awarded from the Arts Council's Grants for the Arts fund and £31,314 has been secured from the Social Care Reform Grant fund, which will contribute towards staffing and marketing costs.

4.0 INDOOR MARKET INITIATIVE

- 4.1 As previously reported to the Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio meeting on the 27th November 2009, the Indoor Market Initiative was established in partnership with One NorthEast, Middleton Grange Shopping Centre and Hartlepool College of Further Education to refurbish the indoor market within Middleton Grange Shopping Centre to increase usage and occupancy, and provide an opportunity for potential new businesses to test their products with the provision of a 6 month rent free period, to see if they can create a sustainable

business. £35,000 was set aside from the Empty Shops Fund to support this project.

- 4.2 The Empty Shop Fund has supported the development of the Indoor Market Initiative by contributing towards the ongoing revenue costs of the project, such as utility costs. The Empty Shops fund has also increased the sustainability of the project by funding extensive marketing and publicity, raising people's awareness of the project and attracting shoppers to the indoor market stalls.

5.0 VACANT SHOPFRONT VISUAL IMPROVEMENTS

- 5.1 A reserve fund of £7,631 was set aside from the Empty Shops Fund to allow some flexibility to support other beneficial schemes that meet the criteria of reducing the impact of vacant shop units within the town centre, such as window dressing/display schemes.
- 5.2 A project is currently being developed to target six vacant shop fronts on York Road. The intention is to attach either Tall Ships promotional material or alternative designs to the front of security shutters or shop windows in the identified vacant shops. The feasibility and costs of the project are currently being explored.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council. The funding is in the form of a grant which is unringfenced, revenue grant to be used as considered appropriate by the Council.
- 6.2 There is limited risk to the Council in relation to financial management as the grant is flexible in terms of what it can be used towards. There are no restrictions on timescales or spend. In terms of project delivery, the focus on the indoor market should help to minimise any unforeseen risks given that the existing initiative is up and running, and potential problems should have previously been identified. In relation to the Multi-Use Drop-in Unit close liaison with the shopping centre management team and other partners should help minimise the risk to delivery.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder is requested to:
- Note the progress of the projects identified within the report.
 - Endorse the use of the reserve funds from the vacant shop fund, to contribute towards vacant shopfront visual improvements on York Road.

8.0 CONTACT OFFICER

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