

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

7 June 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 & Procurement Portfolio Holder)
Pam Hargreaves (Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder)
Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder)
Hilary Thompson (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder)
Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Marjorie James (Chair Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee)
Councillor Chris Simmons (Chair Children's Services Scrutiny Forum)
Councillor Kevin Cranney (Chair Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum)
Councillor Stephen Akers-Belcher (Chair of Health Scrutiny Forum)

Officers: Paul Walker (Chief Executive)
Andrew Atkin (Assistant Chief Executive)
Alyson Camen (Legal Services Manager)
Chris Little (Chief Finance Officer)
Dave Stubbs (Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)
John Mennear (Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)
Sue Johnston (Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)
Steve Hilton (Public Relations Officer)
Laura Starrs (Scrutiny Support Officer)
James Walsh (Scrutiny Support Officer)
Angela Hunter (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

261. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cath Hill and Peter Jackson.

262. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

263. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2010

Received.

264. Final Report – Hartlepool's Business Incubation System *(Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To outline the findings and conclusions of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Hartlepool's Business Incubation System'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chair of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum presented the report which outlined the overall aim of the scrutiny investigation, terms of reference, methods of investigation, findings, conclusions and subsequent recommendations.

In response to a question, the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that funding was available for the expansion of UK Steel Enterprise who had already developed the 27,000 square foot Innovation Centre at Queens Meadow. In addition, further development of incubator units within the centre of the town was being examined, particularly around the Crown House site in Whitby Street and empty properties within York Road. Members were keen to see the right mix of businesses developed without flooding the market too soon with too many units.

Members were pleased to note the recommendation in relation to encouraging local schools to embrace incubator business opportunities and provide students with an insight into entrepreneurial activities through linking into local business representatives and local authority support.

A Member commented on the positive comments and reactions received from the Council's actions to support the business sector through speeding up invoice payments and introducing business rates relief. To further expand this support, it was suggested that the provision of short term loan finance from the local authority to local businesses be explored.

Decision

- 1) Cabinet accepted the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's recommendations in their entirety with an additional recommendation as detailed below:-
 - (a) That due to long-term sustainability problems of the Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) and the increasing pressure placed on the Council budget, that the Department:-
 - (i) Reviews where gaps are in financial provision with the aim of prioritising grant support aid; and
 - (ii) Seeks innovative ways of attracting sustainable income to support and develop the Business Incubation System in Hartlepool.
 - (b) That in order to provide more premises for business incubation and move-on accommodation, that:-
 - (i) Where empty properties exist in the Town, investment is sought to convert them into appropriate facilities; and
 - (ii) The feasibility of utilising Section 106 Agreements for the development of appropriate facilities is investigated.
 - (c) That local schools are encouraged to embrace incubator business opportunities through:-
 - (i) Invitation to businesses to link with local schools providing students with an insight into entrepreneurial activities; and
 - (ii) Investigating the role of local business representatives as e-mentors.
 - (d) That a feasibility study be undertaken into promoting the support available through Hartlepool's Business Incubation System via exhibitions / stands in vacant shops.
- 2) That the provision of short term loan finance from the local authority to further support local businesses be explored.

265. Action Plan – Hartlepool's Business Incubation System *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To agree an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The report provided brief background information into the 'Hartlepool's Business Incubation System' Scrutiny Investigation and provided a proposed Action Plan by way of appendix in response to the Scrutiny Forum's recommendations.

Decision

The Action Plan attached at Appendix A in response to the recommendations of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into the 'Hartlepool's Business Incubation System' was approved.

266. Final Report – Climate Change and Carbon Management *(Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To outline the findings and conclusions of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Climate Change and Carbon Management'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Forum who had chaired the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum during the investigation into Climate Change and Carbon Management presented the report which outlined the overall aim of the scrutiny investigation, terms of reference, methods of investigation, findings, conclusions, and subsequent recommendations. The Chair commented that the investigation had proven to be a very positive exercise showing that Hartlepool Borough Council was at the forefront of climate change and carbon management reduction. It was noted what strong ambassadors young people were through delivering

messages to their parents and taking up green issues. Although the recommendations demonstrated the positive work and leadership already undertaken by the Council, the Forum suggested that further work be done within schools including the opportunity to develop schools through the schools transformation programme.

In addition to the recommendations, it was suggested that officers explore the feasibility of requesting firms who submit tenders to include information on the carbon footprint of the works being tendered for.

In response to a Members' question, the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that the Local Transport Plan did include a number of cycling initiatives, including an increase in cycle ways.

There was an enormous amount of positive information contained within the report and some challenging recommendations in what was a continuously changing area. It was therefore suggested that a report be submitted to Cabinet in 6-12 months time to provide Members with an update on the progress made and any further developments.

Decision

- (1) Cabinet accepted the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's recommendations in their entirety with an additional recommendation as detailed below:-
 - (a) That the Council lobby Central Government for additional funding to enable further energy saving initiatives to be delivered locally;
 - (b) That the Council continue to work with schools and businesses to support and encourage them to reduce their energy usage;
 - (c) That the Council explore further ways of working with children and young people to continue to promote climate change and its effects;
 - (d) That the Council explore further ways to publicise climate change and work with the Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency and the wider voluntary and community sector to identify the most appropriate local forums and groups to communicate the effects of climate change to;
 - (e) That the Council publicise their climate change targets along with how the public can help to achieve these targets;
 - (f) That the Council continue to educate the public and the Council's workforce on how to help reduce energy costs;
 - (g) That the Council, wherever possible, hold meetings in appropriate size rooms to accommodate the number of people in attendance;

- (h) That the Council encourage developers to install electric charging points for electric vehicles as part of any new developments;
 - (i) That the Council continue to promote cycling initiatives to the public and the workforce; and
 - (j) That the Council explore the feasibility of constructing additional cycling storage facilities in key locations across Hartlepool to encourage people to cycle.
- (2) That officers explore the feasibility of requesting firms who submit tenders to include information on the carbon footprint of the works being tendered for.

267. Action Plan – Climate Change and Carbon Management *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To agree an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Climate Change and Carbon Management'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The report provided brief background information into 'Climate Change and Carbon Management' Scrutiny Investigation and provided a proposed Action Plan (Appendix A) in response to the Scrutiny Forum's recommendations.

Decision

The Action Plan attached as **Appendix A** in response to the recommendations of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Climate Change and Carbon Management' was approved.

268. Interim Report – Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Hartlepool *(Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To outline the findings and conclusions of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee investigation into 'Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Hartlepool'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum presented a report which outlined the overall aim of the scrutiny investigation, terms of reference, methods of investigation, findings, conclusions and subsequent recommendations. Members were asked to note that although this report was referred to as a final report, there continued to be areas for improvement to achieve the aim of eradicating child poverty. The key areas to eradicate child poverty was the provision of additional funding to enable families to move away from the cycle of debt and the need for a change in the culture of using loan sharks and high interest credit to solve problems.

The Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee referred to recommendation d) the provision of both new and second hand household items to be explored for vulnerable families and individuals. There was concern from Members that no provision had been made within the departmental action plan for the provision of new items. The action plan referred to the re-use of furniture and other items from the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centre and Bulky Waste Collection Service. It was noted that as part of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's consideration of the Corporate Plan, it was suggested that the Council become involved in schemes to enable the provision of white goods and furniture to vulnerable families or individuals be explored. In view of this, it was suggested that an update on the viability of this suggestion be reported back to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.

In addition to the above, the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee referred to the Service Delivery Options (SDO) which formed part of the Business Transformation Programme and noted that the overview and scrutiny function would welcome being fully involved in this process. Although it was acknowledged that an excellent advice service was provided by the Citizen's Advice Bureau and West View Advice and Resource Centre, it was noted that there was limited capacity for appointments for individuals and this service could be expanded through

local authority in-house provision of face to face advice to increase the availability of appointments.

The importance of ensuring a flow of information was maintained between utility providers, the local authority, local schools, General Practitioners and other agencies to ensure that families facing financial difficulties can be identified at an early stage to ensure they received the support they need in a timely manner was discussed. It was noted that Connected Care had played a huge part in ensuring that people were aware of their benefit entitlement and identifying those people who may be in need of additional support to secure receipt of those benefits.

It was acknowledged that eradicating child poverty was a complex issue with a number of areas to be addressed including housing, health, education, culture etc. The importance of breaking the cycle of financial instability within families was discussed and encouraging young people to get into the habit of saving. Members felt that the report was a positive step towards tackling child poverty and included a number of very good suggestions as a way forward.

A Member referred to the courses and support which examined parental skills and questioned the take up of those courses. The Assistant Director (Child and Adult Services) confirmed that take up of the courses was good with over 70% of families identified and referred completing the course. There were also courses provided within Sure Start Centres that were open access rather than requiring referral, although they may not be specifically identified as parental skills courses.

A note of caution was given that although schools, GP surgeries etc can be helpful and supportive to families suffering from financial instability, the key was to ensure those families were signposted to the most appropriate competent advisors who were specially trained in giving financial advice.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring child poverty was tackled and the Council's pledge to reducing child poverty within 2010/11 was testament to this commitment. The target for Hartlepool is expressed as the gap between Hartlepool and other north east authorities and a local inspirational target of 4.3% has been set. It was acknowledged that there were some big challenges to be faced, including the prioritisation of investment. A Member suggested that all partners and agencies involved should focus on one or two areas to tackle in the first instance to ensure a defined and co-ordinated effort.

Decision

- 1) Cabinet accepted the recommendations of Scrutiny co-ordinating Committee in their entirety with two additional recommendations as detailed below:

- a) That a 'mapping' exercise of services be undertaken to ensure that all organisations are aware of the services available;
 - b) That given ANEC's role as the lobbying and advisory body in relation to this issue, the Council should utilise the skills and knowledge it has to assist in linking into the work of other authorities to share best practice;
 - c) That ways of working with utility providers, benefits agencies and other bodies be explored to facilitate the transmission of information to the Council where families are in need of assistance and at risk of falling in to poverty;
 - d) That the capacity of the Council to become involved in schemes for the provision of things such as household items, both new and second hand, at a reasonable cost to residents should be explored as a means of helping prevent vulnerable families and individuals from being drawn into high cost finance deals;
 - e) That updates be presented to Scrutiny on progress in tackling child poverty at regular intervals;
 - f) That in ensuring that the impact of child / family poverty is reflected in all aspects of the Council's decisions and work:
 - g) reference to 'child poverty' be included as a standard item on all Council reports; and
 - h) a review of the Commissioning of Services should be undertaken to ensure that 'child poverty' is considered as a separate clause within any contract.
 - i) That the recommendations of the ANEC Child Poverty Task and Finish Group be supported and taken forward wherever possible.
- 2) That the expansion of face to face financial advice and support be explored through local authority in-house provision to increase the availability of appointments already provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the West View Advice and Resource Centre.
 - 3) That the local authority and all partners co-ordinate and work together to focus on one or two issues affecting child poverty in the first instance to ensure a defined and co-ordinated effort.

269. Scrutiny Investigation into 'Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Hartlepool' – Action Plan

(Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To agree an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee investigation into 'Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Hartlepool'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The report provided brief background information into the 'Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Hartlepool' scrutiny investigation and provided a proposed Action Plan (Appendix A) in response to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

Decision

The Action Plan attached as **Appendix A** in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's investigation into 'Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Hartlepool' was approved.

270. The Way Forward – Business Transformation Programme

(Assistant Chief Executive)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To review the Governance arrangements for The Way Forward – Business Transformation Programme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Portfolio Holder for Performance presented a report which identified

that Cabinet had received a number of reports as part of the development of the Business Transformation Programme and the Membership of the Programme Board and other related issues were due for review

A Programme Board was established for the programme, based on the decisions of Cabinet with decision making on the programme retained by Cabinet.

Attached at Appendix A was the current Membership and Terms of Reference for the Programme Board which had been put in place to ensure the Governance arrangements for the programme were clear. It was noted that following the recent election, the portfolio responsibilities had changed and Cabinet were requested to review the membership of the Programme Board. As Members were aware, as a result of recent changes the previous arrangements for the Board would mean that two Members would be appointed to the Board as group leaders, despite also being portfolio holders. A number of suggestions were made on the potential make up of the Programme Board and the Portfolio Holder for Performance suggested that a standard membership be agreed and when individual Service Delivery Options were considered, the relevant Portfolio Holder and Scrutiny Chair should be invited for their input and views, therefore making the membership more fluid rather than prescriptive.

A discussion ensued during which Members suggested that the membership of the Board should be discussed informally prior to any decisions taking place. The Assistant Chief Executive highlighted that the report contained a number of options for consideration in relation to the possible membership of the board but that ultimately the membership of the Board was a Cabinet decision.

Decision

That a further report on the potential make up of the Programme Board be submitted to the next Cabinet meeting after further discussions.

271. Government Announcement of £6.2bn saving in 2010/2012 and Impact on Local Government (*Chief Finance Officer*)

Type of decision

None.

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the Government's announcement to implement £6.2bn of savings in 2010/2011 and the impact on Local Government.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Procurement presented a report which provided details of the in-year savings announced by the Chancellor on 24th May, 2010, which total nearly £6.2bn. Local Government's share of these savings is £1.2bn. Local Government savings will be achieved by cuts in grants. The Government will be consulting on which grants will be cut over the next few weeks.

An initial assessment of the impact on Hartlepool indicates the in-year grant cuts will be in the order of £2m. A detailed strategy will need to be developed to implement the necessary actions at a local level as soon as details of the actual grant cuts are known. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the detailed grant figures were awaited and would be reported to Members as soon as they were available.

Members acknowledged that whilst business transformation had begun to realise the budgetary savings required by the Government, the recent change in Government and the announcements of further cuts in public spending had compounded the severity of the situation.

Decision

The report was noted.

The meeting concluded at 10.33 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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