

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Thursday, 25 November 2010

at 3.00 pm

in Committee Room B, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors Barclay, Cook, Cranney, Gibbon, James, A Lilley, London, Rogan and Wells

Resident Representatives:

Ted Jackson, John Maxwell and Angie Wilcox

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**
 - 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2010
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No items.
- 5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

No items.

6. **CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY
FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

No items.

7. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Scrutiny Investigation into 'Working Neighbourhoods Fund'

7.1 Evidence from the Regeneration and Planning Department

- (a) Covering Report - *Scrutiny Support Officer*
- (b) Presentation on the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the WNF - *Economic Development Manager and Employment Development Officer*

7.2 Evidence from Working Neighbourhoods Fund Providers

- (a) Covering Report - *Scrutiny Support Officer*
- (b) Evidence from WNF providers

8. **ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM FORWARD PLAN**

9. **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

**Date of next meeting:- Thursday, 20 January 2010 at 3.00 pm in
Committee Room B, Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

14 October 2010

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Kevin Cranney (In the Chair)

Councillors: Allan Barclay, Rob Cook, Steve Gibbon, Marjorie James, Alison Lilley,
Frances London, Trevor Rogan and Ray Wells

Resident Representatives:

Ted Jackson and John Maxwell

Also present: Councillor Pamela Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and
Economic Development

Keith Bayley, Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency

Tracy Jeffries, Hartlepool Carers

Officers:

Antony Steinberg, Economic Development Manager

Patrick Wilson, Employment Development Officer

Elaine Hind, Scrutiny Support Officer

James Walsh, Scrutiny Support Officer

Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

29. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor Trevor Rogan, although he joined the meeting later.

30. Declarations of interest by Members

Councillors Allan Barclay, Rob Cook, Kevin Cranney and Marjorie James declared personal interests in minutes 35 and 36.

31. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2010

Confirmed.

32. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this Forum

None.

33. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

None.

34. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents

None.

35. Scrutiny Investigation into “Working Neighbourhood’s Fund” – Evidence from the Authority’s Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development
(Scrutiny Support Officer)

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development had been invited to the meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the ‘Working Neighbourhoods Fund’ (WNF). A number of suggested questions to the Portfolio Holder were included within the report and the following includes a summary of the responses received:

- (a) *What are your views on the reduction and potential withdrawal of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and how do you think this will impact on the worklessness agenda in Hartlepool?*

The Portfolio Holder commented that the new Government’s announcements to withdraw funding appeared to be affecting areas that experience particular high levels of deprivation. This type of funding was relied upon to help and support the harder to reach communities. The withdrawal of this funding would have a profound effect on the town including the service provision from the local authority, community and voluntary sectors which was supported by WNF. It was noted job losses would be a factor in the short term, however the longer term effects on the community have yet to be identified.

A Member commented that at the recent party political conferences, it had been intimated that the funding currently provided through the WNF would still be available although via another route. The Portfolio Holder commented that some local authority services may be mainstreamed but with local authorities also facing dramatic cuts in funding this was

questionable. In addition, the reductions in the regional partnerships would also result in less funding available for the north east area.

The Government's recent announcement in relation to the creation of a Big Society was referred to. The Portfolio Holder indicated that the detail of what the Big Society would include was not available yet which means that opportunities still exist for local authorities and groups to influence the Government in defining the Big Society. It was noted that Hartlepool already had thousands of volunteers who were the lifeblood of the community. However, understandably at the end of the day they were volunteers who may at times have other priorities.

- b) *How effective do you feel the current provision of WNF services is with regard to the worklessness agenda?*

The Portfolio Holder indicated that she was aware that there were several initiatives in the town encouraging organisations to work together on this issue and all initiatives funded through the WNF were reported to the Portfolio Holder to monitor whether they were meeting their objectives. The Portfolio Holder reported that the majority of the services funded through the WNF were meeting their objectives and undertook an incredible job working with some of the hardest to reach individuals through intensive support.

- c) *What are your views on how services currently provided by the WNF could continue to be provided within the resources available in the current economic climate?*

The Portfolio Holder indicated that it would be worthwhile examining how services were currently provided, how they were structured and how different organisations work together. One option that may be considered would be the provision of one uniform service across the town as there appeared to be several across different areas in the town but providing the same service. This may result in cost efficiencies and possible streamlining of service provision for the user. It was noted that Economic Development were currently undertaking a review of projects funded through the WNF although it may be necessary for a more radical approach to ensure services were provided by the most appropriate and effective providers.

A Member sought clarification on the innovative approaches already used in Hartlepool to tackle unemployment. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) had been very successful in the town and had been recognised as the best in the country. This itself was testimony that this kind of initiative works well for the benefit of the people who live in the town.

- d) *Do you have any views as to how current or future services can be delivered more effectively and efficiently?*

The Portfolio Holder commented that not one person has the answer to this question but that the level of debate should be raised and co-ordinated to ensure that the information gathered as part of this inquiry would inform Members to deal with the bigger crisis' ahead of us.

It was noted that all organisations need to work together and look at sustainable ways of working to ensure that any relevant grant funding was secured.

A discussion ensued which included the following issues:

- (i) A resident representative questioned how value for money was measured on the output achieved through WNF? The Portfolio Holder confirmed that all projects funded by WNF were subject to evaluation on a regular basis with support provided to organisations who were not achieving their objectives. Members were asked to note that around 40% of WNF funding is allocated to voluntary organisations with the remaining funding being used by statutory providers to deliver vital services. The Employment Development Officer confirmed that the cost of someone being on an unemployment benefit for a year was approximately £8,000. The schemes provided through the WNF enabled people to achieve qualifications and employment with continued support.
- (ii) Apart from the creation of jobs one of the key benefits was the positive impact having a working role model in the household had with 2nd and 3rd generation families suffering unemployment.
- (iii) The Portfolio Holder commented that the Government were currently looking for ideas to shape the future and the importance of contributing and influencing this was stressed. The local authority, community and voluntary sector organisations were encouraged to think innovatively to create solutions in the case of the withdrawal of the WNF.
- (iv) A Member commented on the need to be mindful of the economic situation in the town and to think of ways of encouraging business to set up and locate here, possibly through funding initiatives such as business rate relief. In addition to this, the Portfolio Holder commented that a lot of voluntary organisations act as social enterprises and re-invest any profit generated.
- (v) It was noted that the burden of the national debt should lie with the Government, however, there was a social enterprise opportunity here to change the way the local authority, community and voluntary sectors work for ever for the better of Hartlepool.
- (vi) A Member questioned how the FJF would impact on the future? The Portfolio Holder commented that the FJF had a hugely positive effect through enabling young people to secure six month work experience opportunity although this initiative was to end. In general, the employment figures had been maintained although there was a slight decrease at one point, which was a real achievement and a credit to the Economic Development Team and work undertaken by Hartlepool Works in view of the number of big companies closing in the town.
- (vii) The Portfolio Holder added that through the emerging sector of wind

energy and the green economy there was as lot of potential for developing skills and employment opportunities. To achieve this and attract investors it was necessary to ensure that the area was marketed effectively whilst ensuring that young people have the relevant skills.

- (viii) A Member acknowledged that there was a significant amount of work undertaken by the voluntary and community sector and it should be recognised that closer partnership working would only enforce this and help achieve the best for people of Hartlepool.

The Portfolio Holder was thanked for her attendance and contribution to what had proved to be a very interesting discussion.

Recommended

The comments of the Portfolio Holder and the discussion that followed were noted.

36. Scrutiny Investigation into “Working Neighbourhood’s Fund” – Evidence from Voluntary Organisations (Scrutiny Support Officer)

As part of the ongoing investigation into the ‘Working Neighbourhoods Fund’ (WNF) Voluntary Sector Organisations had been invited to attend this meeting to give evidence. Representatives from Hart Gables, an organisation set up to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people for people living in and around Hartlepool, had been invited but unfortunately were unable to attend. However, they had provided a presentation for Members along with an overview of the WNF funding the organisation had received in 2009.

The Manager from the Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency (HVDA) was in attendance and provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation which examined the Voluntary and Community Sector WNF Projects in Hartlepool. In addition, details were provided of the number of volunteers involved with the HVDA including the training and coaching provided for them. It was noted that WNF had provided £2,152,258 in 2010/11 to the Voluntary and Community Sector. A list of WNF outputs achieved for jobs and the economy theme 2009/10 was circulated.

A discussion ensued which included the following issues:

- (i) One of the projects referred to in the presentation was the Introduction to Construction – Community Campus and clarification was sought on the age range this was available to. The Employment Development Officer confirmed that this scheme was available for 16-24 year olds but the majority of young people who participated in the scheme were 16-18 year olds looking for entry to employment programmes with local providers. It was mainly aimed at young people who had fallen through mainstream provision who were not entitled to claim with the job centre.
- (ii) In response to further questions on this scheme it was noted that after

completing the Community Campus scheme there were multiple programmes available including the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) and Future Jobs Fund (FJF) which offered 26-52 weeks of employment with the Council or other private sector employees. In addition to the above there were expert careers advisors available both from the Council and Voluntary and Community Sector.

- (iii) The demand for apprenticeships in trades was referred to with over 400 applications recently received for four apprenticeships within the Council. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that the schemes offered to young people helped them become job ready and in a good position to progress through the recruitment processes.
- (iv) In relation to value for money, the Manager of the HVDA commented that although all employment training was verifiable and scrutinised by the Council it was difficult to measure the changes on people's lives as over 19% of the population undertake voluntary work of some kind (though they may not recognise it as such). In addition the Employment Development Officer confirmed that value for money was also provided through guiding and assisting people into employment.
- (v) The information circulated by the Manager of the HVDA referred to the number of clients sustained in employment and this figure was questioned. The Employment Development Officer confirmed that this figure only refers to clients undertaking the ILM project as 95% of projects did not ask for a report of the level of sustained paid employment.
- (vi) A Member questioned the reach of the HVDA across the whole town. The Manager of the HVDA commented that all the residents counted in the figures were WNF residents and totalled around 55% of Hartlepool residents. However the HVDA did operate across the whole town.
- (vii) A Member sought clarification on what Business Assists entailed. The Economic Development indicated that this was not funding based but involved meaningful intervention including advice on HR and current legislation.
- (viii) The level of financial assistance available to businesses was questioned. The Economic Development Manager commented that they worked closely with the Finance Division looking at potential hardship claims, small medium enterprise business rate relief and possible rate holiday periods which were to be considered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Procurement.
- (ix) A resident representative questioned what would happen once the Neighbourhood Action Plan (NAP) funding ceased. It was suggested that residents could form a group which would enable them to draw on grant aid from the Lotteries Commission etc but this would depend on the needs in that particular area. In addition it was noted that the local authority would work towards ensuring that mainstream funding would be targeted in line with residents' priorities.
- (x) Where financial relief was offered to businesses by the local authority it was questioned whether this was recoverable once the business was financially stable and in profit. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that this would be dependent on the type of assistance provided and the individual circumstances of the company.
- (xi) It was acknowledged that in the current financial climate, it may be difficult

for the local authority to provide significant financial assistance to local companies. However the Economic Development Manager confirmed that the regional growth fund may possible provide grant aid to businesses investing and locating in certain areas. The option of making grant packages more sustainable through a combination of loans and equity was currently being examined.

The representatives from the Economic Development Team and voluntary organisations in attendance were thanked for their attendance and contribution to some very thought provoking discussions.

Recommended

That the presentation and following discussions be used to inform the investigation.

37. Forward Plan

None.

38. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay:-

The Chair confirmed that there will be representatives from the Child and Adult Services Department in attendance at the meeting on 25 November 2010 to provide a presentation on feedback from the Tall Ships Event held in August this year.

Meeting concluded at 4.55 pm

CHAIR

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

25 November 2010



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE 'WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND' – EVIDENCE FROM THE REGENERATION AND PLANNING DEPARTMENT – COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that the Economic Development Manager and the Employment Development Officer have been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF).

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 12 August 2010, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry / Sources of Evidence for this Scrutiny investigation were approved by the Forum.
- 2.2 Consequently the Economic Development Manager and the Employment Development Officer from Hartlepool Borough Council have agreed to attend this meeting to provide a presentation outlining the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announcements on the WNF, in particular the future of the jobs and the economy themed programmes.
- 2.3 The presentation will also provide details of the work carried out by the Regeneration and Planning Department prior to the CSR announcement. Groups in receipt of WNF, delivering jobs and the economy themed programmes, were invited to attend workshops to determine how the programmes could continue to be delivered as a result of the in year cuts and potential that WNF funding would be completely withdrawn. The presentation from the Department will highlight any options identified by those groups in relation to the following areas:-

- Continuation of service provision through specialisation;
- Continuation of service provision at a reduced level through economy and efficiency savings and mergers with other providers;
- Exit strategies due to a lack of funding.

The presentation will also detail the impact on the local community identified through this work.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum consider the evidence of the Economic Development Officer and the Employment Development Officer in relation to the evidence provided and seek clarification on any relevant issues where required.

Contact Officer:- Elaine Hind – Scrutiny Support Officer
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Hartlepool Borough Council

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer entitled 'Scrutiny Investigation into the Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Scoping Report' Presented to the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum on 12 August 2010.

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

25 November 2010



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE 'WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND' – EVIDENCE FROM WNF PROVIDERS – COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that representatives from 'jobs and the economy' themed Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) programmes have been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing WNF investigation.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 12 August 2010, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry / Sources of Evidence for this Scrutiny investigation were approved by the Forum.
- 2.2 Consequently representatives from all jobs and the economy themed programmes in receipt of the WNF have been invited to either submit written evidence and / or attend today's meeting to present to the Forum how they will to continue to provide their WNF funded service, or what plans / support for exit strategies are in place / required to close the programme down.
- 2.3 In accordance with the Authority's Access to Information Rules, it has not been possible to include written evidence from WNF providers within the statutory requirements for the dispatch of the agenda and papers for this meeting, any written evidence received in advance of the meeting will be circulated under separate cover as appendix A.
- 2.4 During this evidence gathering session it is suggested that Members should seek responses to the following questions:-

- (a) What is the expertise of organisations and are they able to exploit this to become a stand alone provider able to obtain funding from other sources or sell on their services to alternative providers?
- (b) If it has been determined that a programme and/or organisation can continue but at a reduced capacity, what assistance with managing any required economy and efficiency programmes, mergers with other organisations or the reassessment of aims and priorities would be required?
- (c) For those programmes which are able to continue, what action is being taken to ensure sustainability in the future?
- (d) If it has been recognised that the programme and/or organisation is unable to continue without WNF funding what support in relation to employment legislation and human resources would be required to assist with possible redundancies?
- (e) How well have Hartlepool Borough Council prepared providers in planning for the 'worse case scenario' at the outset of a project and ensured that effective exit strategies are in place?

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum consider the views of the representatives of the jobs and the economy themed WNF programmes in relation to the evidence provided and the questions outlined in section 2.4.

Contact Officer:- Elaine Hind – Scrutiny Support Officer
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