

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

10 December 2010

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond (Community Safety and Housing Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Denise Ogden, Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning)
Sylvia Pinkney, Public Protection Manager
Sarah Scarr, Landscape Planning and Conservation Manager
Jeff Mason, Head of Support Services
Lynda Igoe, Principal Housing Advice Officer
Amy Waller, Principal Housing Regeneration Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

20. Fees for High Hedge Applications – *Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the current fees for high hedge applications and to put in place a procedure for reviewing these fees.

Issues for Consideration

In June 2005 Local Authorities were given power to deal with complaints about high hedges under Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. The role of the Council is to adjudicate on whether the hedge is adversely affecting the complainant's reasonable enjoyment of their property. Since the introduction of the legislation 163 enquiries had been received by the Council, resulting in 8 formal complaints. The current fee level was set in 2005 based on the estimated officer time it would take to process an application. However it was now clear that this estimate was now out of date and it was proposed to increase the level of fee from £100 to £150. It was also proposed that the fee for this service be reviewed every 2 years.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether payment of the fee was means

tested. The Landscape Planning and Conservation Manager advised that it was not. She noted that it would bring the fee for high hedge complaints applications to the same level as that charged for planning applications. It was still lower than that charged by authorities both neighbouring and nationwide. The Assistant Director for Regeneration and Planning indicated that the fee charged was based on cost recovery rather than profit.

Decision

That fees for dealing with high hedge complaints be increased from £100 to £150 and that the level of fees be reviewed on a biennial basis.

21. Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009 – Assistant Director (Community Safety and Protection)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the findings of the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009.

Issues for Consideration

The Housing Act 2004 requires Local Authorities to keep private sector housing conditions under review by carrying out periodic surveys to provide a snapshot of the state of private housing. This would enable assessment of the condition of stock and help identify new or existing key issues for action. The 2009 survey was carried out in conjunction with Darlington and Stockton Boroughs and a copy of the full survey report was appended for the Portfolio Holder's attention. The Public Protection Manager gave brief details of the findings which showed standards below the national average in the decent homes, reasonable repair, reasonably modern and thermal comfort criteria. The number of households in fuel poverty were also higher than the national average and there were £1200 potential adaptations needed over the next 5 years.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether there continued to be grants available for loft and cavity wall insulation. The Public Protection Manager confirmed that the Council had provided some grant funding. There were also obligations on the energy providers. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the promotion of energy saving schemes the previous year and asked if this could carry on. The Assistant Director for Regeneration and Planning advised that private landlords could be approached regarding the use of solar power as a means to reduce energy costs, possibly linking this with selective licensing. The Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services also highlighted the Green Deal loan whereby

resident cost borrow money to fund energy efficiency improvements and payback an amount based on the energy savings they make.

Decision

- I. That the Private Sector House Condition Survey be noted and accepted
- II. That officers consider the findings of the report in the development of the Borough's next Housing Strategy
- III. That the implications for future capital funding be noted, particularly in relation to meeting the Decent Homes Standard for homes in the private sector, households suffering fuel poverty and adaptations needs for residents with disabilities.

22. Deprived Areas Perception Project – Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To advise on the Keep Britain Tidy Deprived Areas Perception Project Study (DAPP) carried out in 2009/10.

Issues for Consideration

A recurring theme in Local Government research has been the gap between perceptions of place and the reality of local environmental quality issues on the ground. In order to understand what could be driving resident perceptions of place in 2009/10 Defra commissioned Keep Britain Tidy to undertake a significant piece of work to enhance understanding of the factor that affect environmental quality, how perception relates to standards, why gaps in perception exist and how perception data can be used to make more effective improvements. Hartlepool Borough Council was one of 4 local authorities selected for inclusion in the survey, the results of which identified that perceptions were heavily influenced by living in an area, community relationships and their description of living in an area to other people. Seven key drivers of perception were identified along with 5 key factors which were shown to shape and perpetuate residents' perceptions of Hartlepool as a place to live. These were modelled in the Keep Britain Tidy Perceptions Wheel, the use of which was recommended as a tool for consultation and in awareness raising.

Decision

That the findings of the Deprived Areas Perception Project Study be noted and the Keep Britain Tidy Perception Wheel applied locally.

23. Changes to Housing Benefit Subsidy for Temporary Accommodation – *Assistant Director (Community Safety and Protection)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the financial impact to the changes to Housing Benefit subsidy for the provision of homelessness temporary accommodation.

Issues for Consideration

In April 2010 Housing Benefit reform was implemented reducing the level of housing benefit subsidy which could be claimed for clients placed in certain types of temporary accommodation. The effect of these changes was passed onto the Housing Advice Service from 1st October 2010. The new scheme links the level of subsidy to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). This is set in January every year and is a fixed rate according to the size of the property. The weekly subsidy calculation is 90% of the LHA plus £60 management fee for those in self contained licensed and short term leased accommodation. For customers in board and lodging or licensed accommodation the subsidy is limited to the 1 bedroom self-contained LHA rate based on the property location. These changes would lead to an increase in the shortfall between the amount the Council pay to bed and breakfast providers and the amount recouped through housing benefit subsidy of approximately £30,000. Providers of temporary accommodation were being contacted with a view to negotiating a decrease in their prices.

The Portfolio Holder suggested that local authorities join forces to lobby the Government on this issue. The Principal Housing Advice Officer reported that this was the first in a series of changes aimed at dramatically reducing the national housing benefit bill. The use of bed and breakfast accommodation could only be used as a last resort for a maximum of 6 weeks however there was sometimes no other option, particularly given the recent severe weather.

Decision

That the potential for an overspend on the temporary accommodation budget in the region of £30,000 be noted.

24. Hartlepool Housing Strategy 2011-2015 Timetable –
Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To provide information to the Portfolio Holder on the draft timetable for developing a new Housing Strategy for Hartlepool for 2011-2015.

Issues for Consideration

Hartlepool's current 5-year Housing Strategy was adopted in 2006. It was updated in 2008 and due to be refreshed in 2011. Online consultation would take place before the development of the first draft. It was anticipated that the final draft for 2011-2015 would be approved by Cabinet in September 2011.

Decision

That the timetable and key dates for the Hartlepool Housing Strategy 2011-2015 be noted.

25. Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan Monitoring Report – April to October 2010 –
Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made against the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan 2010/11 over the period April to October 2010.

Issues for Consideration

The report described the progress of key actions and performance indicators contained in the Departmental Plan 2010/11 over the period April to October 2010. Of 55 actions 15 had been completed while 33 were on track to achieve target or progressing within acceptable limits. However 7 actions had been identified as requiring intervention and the due dates had been revised. Reasons for this were detailed within the report. Of 26 indicators 5 had been completed while 19 were on track or progressing within acceptable limits. Two indicators were below target,

reasons for this were given within the report.

Decision

That the progress of key actions and the latest position with regard to risks be noted and that the proposed Action date change be approved.

26. 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 27 –. Developer Selection Process – Raby Road Corridor Housing Regeneration Scheme. This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

27. Developer Selection Process – Raby Road Corridor Housing Regeneration Scheme – *Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder to appoint a preferred developer to take forward the redevelopment of the Raby Road Corridor Housing Regeneration Scheme.

Issues for consideration

The report provided a summary of the developer selection process and the proposals put forward for the redevelopment of the Raby Road Corridor Scheme as part of the Councils Housing Market Renewal programme.

Decision

That the appointment of the preferred developer for the Raby Road

Corridor housing regeneration site be agreed and the development and signing of the developer agreement be approved.

The meeting concluded at 10:35 am

PETER DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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