

REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

11 March 2011

The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development)

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Alastair Smith, Assistant Director (Transport and Engineering)
Derek Gouldbum, Urban and Planning Policy Manager
Antony Steinberg, Economic Development Manager
Jeff Mason, Head of Support Services
Peter Frost, Traffic Team Leader
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

Also present: Councillor Jonathan Brash
Councillor George Morris
Mr and Mrs Brown
Coral Finken

45. Blakelock Gardens Puffin Crossing Update *(Assistant Director (Transportation and Engineering))*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To review the decision to install a puffin crossing on Blakelock Gardens.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The installation of a puffin crossing was approved by the Transport and Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder in April 2010. Part of the scheme included a left turn ban preventing traffic turning from Brinkburn Road into Blakelock Gardens. Work started on the scheme in December 2010 and since then objections to the left turn ban had been raised by members of the public. A proposal was made to relocate the puffin crossing outside 57 Blakelock

Gardens, something which the owners formally objected to. Objections to this were also received from a local business. Formal consultation subsequently took place, the results of which showed 6 in favour of the original location, 9 in favour of the alternative location (outside 57 Blakelock Gardens) and 6 not in favour of either location.

The Assistant Director advised the Portfolio Holder that there were 2 options available for the way forward, either to proceed with the original location and left turn ban or to move the crossing 15 metres east and allow the left turn to remain in place. It was inevitable that one group of people would be left dissatisfied with the outcome however the consultation had shown a small majority in favour of relocating the puffin crossing. Motorists would inevitably be against the left turn ban.

A number of interested parties were in attendance and spoke on this issue. Residents spoke against the proposal to relocate the crossing saying it would leave their drive increasingly blocked and lead to horrendous bottle necks due to the high volume of traffic using that road. The proximity of the brewery and the need for large wagons to negotiate their way into this building would only increase these problems as would the status of Blakelock Gardens as a bus route. Motorists regularly parked their cars on the back street at the other side of Blakelock Gardens, something which would increase this congestion. They suggested that traffic lights be installed at the corners of Brinkburn Road and Blakelock Gardens.

Ward Councillor Jonathan Brash agreed that there was currently a high volume of traffic on Blakelock Gardens and felt that a crossing was needed to enable children and older residents to cross safely. There had also been a lot of concern from councillors and residents regarding the effect the left turn ban was having on traffic elsewhere and he commented that by removing this ban the needs of motorists would also be taken into account.

The owner of a business in the area spoke against the proposal to move the puffin crossing. She said it would have a detrimental impact upon her dog grooming business as her more elderly and infirmed clients would struggle if unable to park directly in front of the premises. Her plans for the premises to become a grooming training centre and competition venue could not proceed if there were no available parking. She also had concerns regarding health and safety at the premises due to the increase in noise which would be caused by the proximity of the puffin crossing and the impact this would have on the dogs being groomed or trained.

Councillor George Morris spoke against the left turn ban saying this would only increase the levels of traffic on Elwick Road. Councillor Brash supported these comments however a resident felt that the speed of the traffic was greater on Blakelock Gardens than on Elwick Road or Oxford Road. The Portfolio Holder indicated that speeding traffic was the reason that the crossing was being installed. The resident suggested speed humps as a means to slow down traffic however the Assistant Director advised that the emergency services had objected to the installation of

speed humps on Blakelock Gardens.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether double yellow lines could be used to prevent motorists parking near residents' gates and driveways. The Traffic Team Leader advised that this would already be covered by the zig zag markings near to the crossing. A resident commented that by moving the crossing further people would be less inclined to use it and would instead cross diagonally at the junction. The Portfolio Holder felt children might do this but not the elderly.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether a 4 way traffic light junction had been considered. The Traffic Team Leader advised that it had but had been discounted due to the high costs involved. Attempts had been made to do this in previous similar circumstances without any particular success. The safety issue related to pedestrians ability to cross the road rather than the need to stop traffic.

The Portfolio Holder had originally asked that the decision made by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Neighbourhoods be reconsidered due to a number of complaints she had received from people on both sides of the argument. She appreciated all the concerns which had been raised but noted that the consultation had come out in favour of moving the crossing, albeit by a small majority. This was a difficult decision and there would be criticism whatever was approved but given the consultation results she felt the best option would be to move the crossing 15 metres from the original location and retain the left hand turn from Brinkburn Road into Blakelock Gardens. She asked that officers look at what could be done to ease the problems of excessive parking on Blakelock Gardens

Decision

That the location of the proposed puffin crossing be moved east along Blakelock Gardens and that the left turn manoeuvre be permitted.

46 Economic Regeneration Strategy *(Assistant Director (Planning and Regeneration))*

Type of decision

Key – tests i and ii apply

Purpose of report

To advise on the development of a new Hartlepool Economic Regeneration Strategy and seek comments and agreement on the proposed process and timetable.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill places a statutory duty with local authorities to complete an Economic Assessment by April 2011. Hartlepool's would be considered by Cabinet on 21st March prior to publication in April. It would give a 10 year vision with a detailed 3 year action plan identifying all key actions, milestones, outputs and key responsibilities. It was proposed that business development and support form the main themes, with issues such as financial inclusion and child poverty incorporated. These key themes would be subject to consultation prior to being finalised. Consideration was also being given as to whether the proposed Skills Strategy would form part of the main strategy or stand alone with clear links. The development process would be overseen by an internal Steering Group and would report regularly to the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet. Final endorsement would come from Cabinet. A chart giving the timescale and key milestones for the strategy development was appended to the report. This was subject to change however.

The Portfolio Holder referred to previous discussions around a stakeholder group. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that they intended to set up key stakeholder groups and workshops when the final key themes had been confirmed. The Portfolio Holder asked that she be given the opportunity to attend some of these meetings and workshops in order to hear first hand from stakeholders. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that the availability of the Portfolio Holder would be factored in and a number of key update meetings apart from these workshops would be set up to keep the Portfolio Holder fully apprised. The Portfolio Holder also referred to the timescales being subject to change and asked officers to ensure that the October publication deadline be adhered to as far as possible. The Economic Development Manager commented that the completion of the Skills Strategy might necessitate the final publication being moved to November but this could be reconsidered. The Portfolio Holder asked that she be kept informed of any major changes in timescales.

Decision

That the development of Hartlepool's Economic and Regeneration Strategy be endorsed.

47. Crown House – Managed Workspace Feasibility Brief *(Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To seek endorsement for the Crown House Managed Workspace Feasibility Brief and the proposed funding arrangements.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

In November 2010 the Portfolio Holder endorsed the preparation of design and feasibility works for a managed workspace development on the Crown House site with the agreement that the feasibility works be undertaken externally. A brief had been prepared in order to guide the development of the feasibility works. This was appended to report. It specified the objectives of the feasibility work, giving specific tasks for completion, procurement details for the selection of a suitably qualified consultancy team, fee limits and anticipated timescales for the completion of works. It was anticipated that the feasibility works would be completed within 3 months of commission using revenue funds from the Council's Major Regeneration Projects budget not exceeding £20,000.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether the feasibility study would come back to her Portfolio. The Urban and Planning Policy Manager confirmed that she would be asked to consider the findings and options for delivery at a later date. The Portfolio Holder requested more information on the personnel forming part of the Project Management Group. The Urban and Policy Manager advised that this would comprise officers from his team and the Economic Development Manager's team. The Portfolio Holder requested that the successful consultancy team be instructed to be aspirational in their considerations, making every effort to change and learn.

Decision

- I. That the Managed Workspace Feasibility Brief for the Crown House site be endorsed
- II. That the use of revenue funds from the Council's Major Regeneration Project budget to cover the costs of the study be endorsed.

48. Department for Work and Pensions – Work Programme *(Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To comment on and endorse the proposed actions for Economic Development to become a subcontractor and deliver the new Work

Programme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Coalition Government's Welfare to Work Agreement sets out a number of major welfare to work reforms. The main reform is the introduction of the Work Programme replacing all other DWP funded programmes including Flexible New Deal and Pathways to Work. Providers would be given longer to work with individuals and greater freedom to decide the appropriate support for them. Payment would be based on results with the emphasis on getting clients into sustained employment. The Work Programme was scheduled to commence in June 2011 and in August 2010 organisations were invited to send expressions of interest to become Prime Providers in delivering the new Work Programme. Approximately 80 were received in the North East, 9 of which were subsequently invited to bid to deliver the Work Programme. Following this Economic Development had submitted expressions of interest to these 9 Prime Providers to become a sub-contractor. Following further negotiation Economic Development had been accepted as an in-principle subcontractor with 6 of the 8 providers (1 provider having withdrawn from the process) and were named in their final Work Programme applications. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that more detailed negotiations would take place when confirmation was received as to which prime providers had secured the contracts.

The Portfolio Holder commented on the proposals for payment upon results saying that could be problematic for smaller organisations in the current economic climate. She also queried whether the plans for staff to work collaboratively to assist long term unemployed adults into sustainable employment referred only to Council staff. The Economic Development Manager indicated that the submission had been made on behalf of the Hartlepool Works Consortium and that staff from all partners in this consortium would play their part. The Portfolio Holder cautioned against Council staff taking a disproportionate share of the work at the expense of other organisations with proven track records. She asked whether the consortium would be consulted before the specific contract details were agreed. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that they would be.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the request that she decide whether this be deemed a key decision, asking whether this was a constitutional issue. The Economic Development Manager indicated that while technically this covered both of the key decision tests so too did the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and that had been submitted as a non-key decision. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods suggested that the item be reported to Cabinet for information when the prime providers were known. The Portfolio Holder was happy to endorse this. She asked to be kept informed as to the identity of the prime providers and requested that officers keep the lines of communication open with the prime providers prior

to more detailed negotiations.

Decision

- I. That the proposed actions to enable Economic Development to deliver the Work Programme be approved
- II. That this opportunity be referred to Cabinet for information when the identity of the prime providers is known.

49. Targeted Vacant Buildings Grants Scheme *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the grant applications set out in this report and seek endorsement of the proposed delegation arrangements for future grant application approvals.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Key Vacant Buildings Grant scheme had allocated £200,000 for 2010/11 for improvements to business premises from the Council's capital fund. Grants of 60% were available up to a maximum of £15,000. The scheme had been focused on the Southern Business Zone and town centre with officers working proactively with agents and owners to encourage interest in the grant programme as a way to bring empty properties back into use and improve sites to encourage future use. 4 grant projects had received formal approval at a total cost of £57,224 while 2 further applications for £15,000 each had been submitted. Grants reports relating to these were appended to the report. Should these 2 applications be approved the total amount of budget allocated would be £87,224, leaving £112,776 remaining. 5 further applications were currently in progress however they were not at the stage to be considered for approval.

The approval arrangements previously agreed had involved a dual approval process by the Portfolio Holder and the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning). In order to streamline this process and improve responsiveness it was proposed that the Assistant Director be given sole responsibility to sign off the remaining grants providing they were in compliance with the grant scheme. Quarterly reports would be brought to the Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder could not recall approving 1 of the projects. The Urban

and Policy Manager would send confirmation of this approval to her. She asked what would happen to any monies remaining at the end of the financial year. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods gave his assurance that any funding remaining would be carried forward to 2011/12. The Portfolio Holder queried whether there would be any additional funding available for this scheme next year. The Urban and Planning Policy Manager advised that a bid had been put in for SCRAP money of £160,000 and some of this resource could be used to support this scheme.

Regarding the proposal to amend the approval arrangements the Portfolio Holder indicated that while she did not want to slow the process down she wanted to retain responsibility for decisions of this kind. She suggested that the Assistant Director make the recommendations but that she continue to formally approve applications. This was supported by the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods. Budget update reports would continue to come to the Portfolio Holder on a quarterly basis.

Decision

- I. That the previous approval of the grant projects detailed in the report be noted.
- II. That the approval arrangements for the Targeted Vacant Buildings Grants Scheme remain in place.

50. Update in respect of the “Buy Local” Campaign and Indoor Market Initiative - (Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To provide a progress report in respect of the Buy Local campaign and Indoor Market initiative.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Over 188 businesses had so far signed up to the Buy Local campaign with 1008 consumers registered. The initial intensive support for the Indoor Market had finished in Spring 2010 but ongoing support and a weekly prize draw had been effective in maintaining footfall at a reasonable level. Discussions had been taking place with the Manager of Middleton Grange Shopping Centre regarding a further phase of the Buy Local initiative. This would involve a week long event from Saturday 6th April in the Central Square of Middleton Grange promoting what is available in the Market Hall

and encouraging customers to look for themselves. Details were given of the key elements of the campaign, the aims of which were to support the Indoor Market and sign up a minimum of 500 further consumers. Following the event further proposals would be considered including advertising fees, membership fees, the development of a business directory and franchising of the Buy Local project to other areas.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her support for the promotional week and thanked Middleton Grange Shopping Centre. However she was concerned that Buy Local not be restricted to the Indoor Market and asked that businesses from other areas across Hartlepool take part as well. The Economic Development Manager acknowledged this saying officers were hoping to encourage more businesses and consumers to sign up to the campaign. He reported that the footfall figures, while not particularly strong, were improving steadily. The Portfolio Holder also made reference to plans to allow potential businesses to test their potential business skills at the Indoor Market. She reiterated the need to encourage businesses from across Hartlepool to sign up to Buy Local and asked officers to bring a report on how this could be developed to a future Portfolio meeting.

Decision

That the overall direction of the Buy Local Campaign be endorsed

That a further report outlining the various options for the development of the campaign in light of the April exhibition be brought to the Portfolio Holder

51. Hartlepool Enterprise Centre and Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate *(Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To provide a progress report in respect of Hartlepool Enterprise Centre and Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Hartlepool Enterprise Centre (HEC) and Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate (NBIE) are both considered important elements of Hartlepool's Incubation Strategy. HEC has 50 units, 85% of which are occupied by businesses such as marketing and recruitment agencies. This centre is the hub for business support within Hartlepool, benefitting from a project offering Enterprise Coaching to individuals considering self employment. NBIE is 90% occupied by businesses including a building company and lawnmower repairer. So far the economic climate has not affected occupancy levels at

either property however levels of occupancy have to be borne in mind in terms of the annual budget. Both properties are primarily service provision for the businesses community and not designed for income generation however set budget levels do need to be maintained. Rent levels are reviewed regularly and are currently being considered for HEC. A report would be presented to the Portfolio Holder upon completion of this review.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to note the high levels of occupancy in both buildings which she felt was a testament to the work of the team and the robustness of the economic model. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and the Economic Development Manager highlighted some of the problems inherent in the current rental system. The Director in particular noted that annual increases in rent targets set by the Council can create difficulties particularly in current market where it is difficult to increase rent revenues. The Portfolio Holder noted these concerns however she felt the forthcoming review of rent levels would tease out those issues. The key thing was that the initiative was helping business to start up and keep going through some very tough times. She also noted that she would like to see the initiative play a part in the development of Crown House.

Decision

- I. That the report be noted
- II. That a further report be received upon completion of the rent review in respect of the Hartlepool Enterprise Centre

52. Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan Monitoring Report – April to December 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 December 2010

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report detailed the progress against the key actions and performance indicators contained in the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan 2010/11 over the period April to December 2010. All actions had been, or were expected to be, achieved as were 6 performance indicators. However 7 performance indicators, 4 of which had been

reported previously, were not expected to achieve their targets. Details of the 3 performance indicators which had not been reported previously were given within the report. The Economic Development Manager highlighted that indicator RPD P055 referred to unemployment rates rather than youth unemployment rates. The Portfolio Holder noted the progress commenting that she was sure officers were doing all they could to achieve these targets. The Economic Development Manager confirmed this, indicating that some targets had been set 3 years previously and current economic conditions were having a major impact.

Decision

That the progress of key actions and the latest position in regard to risks be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4:40 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 17th March 2011