

# **REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO**

## **DECISION RECORD**

**21st May 2010**

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

### **Present:**

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

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Jeff Mason, Head of Support Services  
Andrew Golightly, Senior Regeneration Officer  
Rob Smith, Senior Regeneration Officer  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

### **17. Single Programme Bids – Innovation and Skills Quarter Gateway Project** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

#### **Type of decision**

Key – test i applies

#### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the background to the Innovation and Skills Quarter (ISQ) Gateway project, to detail the development of the scheme and to seek approval for the funding arrangements, including the submission of a Single Programme application using HBC funds as match funding.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The Innovation and Skills Quarter Gateway is a distinct project that will contribute towards the development of an ISQ in the East Central Area of Hartlepool. This links to the recommendation made by the Hartlepool Central Area Investment Framework that one of the key Regeneration priorities for the Central Area of Hartlepool should be the creation of an Innovation and Skills Quarter promoting high quality small and new businesses and integrating with the activities of both Hartlepool College of Further Education and Cleveland College of Art and Design.

The Innovation and Skills Quarter Gateway has been defined as the compact central hub within the Central Area comprising the key educational institutions, shopping areas and transport hub.

The ISQ Gateway project is primarily designed to support the expansion of Cleveland College of Art and Design together with addressing connectivity issues within the Central area of Hartlepool through the remodelling of Church Square, based on the principles of pedestrian priority, and by improving pedestrian access between Church Square and Middleton Grange Shopping Centre. The viability of closing the Stockton Street underpass in conjunction with these improvements would be investigated..

A masterplan for the ISQ Gateway project will be prepared showing detailed designs for the remodelling of Church Square and proposed Stockton Street connectivity improvements. These will be completed in-house by HBC with external specialist engineering and traffic modelling input where appropriate. Public consultation would be a factor in the design process and final designs were expected to be completed by September 2010, allowing the implementation of the first phase to be completed by April 2011.

The Gateway had been identified as a reserve scheme within the Tees Valley Single Programme delivery plan. A notional amount of £600,000 had been identified for 2010/11 should Single Programme Funds be available. However their availability would not be known until later in the year. In addition HBC would be expected to provide match funding. £150,000 had been identified within the Capital Programme Regeneration Match Funding allocation. The proposed investment by Cleveland College of Art and Design could be included as match funding within the Single Programme application. There was a risk that fees could be spent on the design work and implementation funding not be available. However having a fully designed scheme would then enable the project to be responsive to future funding opportunities should they become available and improve the chances of a successful bid.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the possible closure of the underpass querying how well used it currently was. A Senior Regeneration Officer advised that it was not widely used, was prone to flooding problems and would be made redundant by surface improvements. The Portfolio Holder queried the potential cost of a pedestrian footbridge and was advised that these would be very high as would the cost of lowering the existing road. The Portfolio Holder suggested that a footbridge could be incorporated when plans by Middleton Grange Shopping Centre to open up the frontage of the centre were implemented. However the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods felt that while this had not been ruled out the space would not be big enough. A meeting between HBC and Middleton Grange Shopping Centre would take place. It was in their best interests to make the shopping centre more inviting than it currently was.

A Senior Regeneration Officer indicated that Cleveland College of Art and

Design were hoping to submit a bid to make improvements to their existing premises and create business incubation units within Church Square. The Portfolio Holder queried whether HBC had any involvement in this, officers indicated that they had been working closely with Cleveland College of Art and Design (CCAD) and CCAD had also been involved in the development of the ISQ Gateway scheme.

Officers confirmed that the required funding was available and designs should be finalised by the end of August. The Portfolio Holder asked to be given sight of the designs at that time.

### **Decision**

- I. That the development of the ISQ Gateway project be endorsed
- II. That the use of funds allocated from the Council's Capital programme as match funding towards the ISQ Gateway project be approved
- III. That the submission of a Single Programme bid to fund the implementation of the first phase of the ISQ Gateway scheme be endorsed
- IV. That the use of funds allocated from the Major Regeneration Projects budget to fund the external elements of the design and feasibility works for the ISQ Gateway be approved.

## **18. Targeted Vacant Buildings Grants Scheme – Approval Arrangements** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of report**

To seek endorsement of the approval arrangements for a grants scheme focused on priority properties in the town centre area and Southern Business Zone.

### **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 HBC's capital fund. Eligible work would include external improvements including replacement shop fronts, windows and roofing works. Commercial areas within the town centre and southern business zone that have a concentration of empty

properties within a small area would be prioritised for support with officers proposing 75% of costs up to a maximum of £20,000 be made available for eligible property owners or businesses. The proposed grant scheme would complement the Market Hall initiative and others supporting retailers and empty units. Regeneration Officers would work closely with Economic Development and the relevant Business Liaison Managers in delivering the scheme which would ultimately require the approval of the Assistant Director for Planning and Economic Development and the Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder expressed support for the scheme in principle but queried whether a flat 75% grant contribution to the total cost was too rigid. Officers advised that this was similar to the NDC grant scheme which had had very good levels of take up. Previous grant schemes that offered 50% of costs had met with limited interest given the high cost of replacement shop fronts and roofs. There would be a clawback clause linked to future onward sale for profit included as a standard condition in any grant offer. The Portfolio Holder asked that the amount of grant contribution paid to each applicant be as flexible as possible, with officers given the discretion to award up to 100% depending on individual applications. This flexibility would be made clear to anyone expressing interest and a clawback clause included as standard. There would also be a requirement to sign up to the Buy Local campaign and include the logo on any renovations. Opportunities for applicants to pay back the funding should also be examined. The aim would be to retain the largest number of beneficiaries from the scheme at the best possible value

### **Decision**

- I. That the suggested approval arrangements for the vacant buildings grant scheme be endorsed
- II. That flexibility around grant rates should be built into the grant scheme, reflecting the type of business or landlord applying for funding, enabling officers to negotiate and advise the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director what grant rates are applicable. .

## **19. Regeneration and Planning Services Departmental Plan 2009/10 – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Monitoring Report** *(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 Planning Services Departmental Plan 2009/10 to the end of the fourth quarter of the year.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

A detailed report was provided on the progress against the actions contained in the Regeneration and Planning Services Departmental Plan 2009/10 and the fourth quarter outturns of key performance indicators. All of the 23 actions for which the Portfolio Holder was responsible were completed on target. A separate report detailing the progress of Performance Indicators would be included in a comprehensive year end Performance report, due for production in July 2010.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services indicated that there had been a £1.3 million underspend across the Department as a whole. £100,000 was now available to spend on pothole improvements due to underspends in the Highways Department. Works would be prioritised through the Neighbourhood Forums.

### **Decision**

That the progress of key actions be noted along with the latest position with regard to risks.

The meeting concluded at 3:35 pm

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010**