

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

23 May 2011

The meeting commenced at 9.15 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond - In the Chair

Councillors: Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)
Robbie Payne (Deputy Mayor) (Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder),
Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder).
Hilary Thompson (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder),

Also Present: Councillor Jane Shaw, Chair of Adult Services Scrutiny Forum
Councillor Stephen Thomas, Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum
Councillor Ray Wells
Edwin Jeffries, Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee

Officers: Paul Walker, Chief Executive
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive,
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Tony MacNab, Solicitor
Joanne Machers, Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer
Nicola Bailey, Director of Child and Adult Services
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager
Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration
Graham Frankland, Assistant Director, Resources

Alistair Rae, Public Relations Manager
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Elaine Hind, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

230. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Pam Hargreaves (Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder), Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder) and Peter Jackson (Cabinet Member without Portfolio).

231. Declarations of interest by Members

None at the commencement of the meeting. During consideration of the item on “Photo-Voltaic Retrofit Proposal” (Minute 242 refers) Councillor Brash declared a personal interest.

232. Inquorate Meeting

It was noted that the meeting was not quorate. The Mayor indicated that (as permitted under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Constitution) he would exercise his powers of decision and that he would do so in accordance with the wishes of the Members present, indicated in the usual way. Each of the decisions set out in the decision record were confirmed by the Mayor accordingly.

233. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2011

Received.

234. Final report – Adult Safeguarding *(Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To present the Final Report of the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into ‘Adult Safeguarding’.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chair of Adult Services Scrutiny Forum, Councillor Jane Shaw, presented the final report of the forum’s investigation into ‘Adult Safeguarding’. Councillor Shaw outlined the principle aspects of the report, its conclusions and recommendations.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health Services commented that he shared the forum’s stance that it was essential that the authority protect the most vulnerable in society and these issues were matters on which he received regular reports as part of his portfolio. The Director for Child and Adult Services considered that it was essential to link these services with the protection of those subject to domestic abuse, as reported later on the agenda. The Council had also recently been subject to a ‘peer review’ of its adult safeguarding services and a report would be submitted to a future meeting.

Decision

That the following recommendations of the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into ‘Adult Safeguarding’ be

approved and adopted: -

“The Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum’s key recommendations to Cabinet are as outlined below:-

- (a) That a dialogue regarding budget and service cuts is maintained between members of the Hartlepool Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board to ensure that:-
 - (i) cuts to services are not taken in isolation, without consideration for the impact on partner agencies;
 - (ii) scarce resources are managed as effectively and efficiently as possible between agencies.
- (b) That the Primary Care Trust (or its equivalent replacement body) is encouraged to put forward a GP representative to sit on the Hartlepool Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board;
- (c) That the potential to recommence visits to care homes by Elected Members of the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum is included in the contract negotiations to be undertaken with providers;
- (d) That the feasibility of including an Elected Member from the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum on to the membership of the Hartlepool Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board is explored;
- (e) That the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum be kept up to date on the provision of Adult Services in the town through the receipt of relevant aspects of the regular updates received by the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health Services;
- (f) The use of welfare notices is investigated with partner agencies;
- (g) That safeguarding workshops are delivered to groups within Hartlepool (with particular reference to the deaf community) and a review is undertaken of the accessibility of safeguarding services.”

235. Action Plan – Adult Safeguarding *(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 Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum’s investigation into ‘Adult Safeguarding’.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

Submitted as Appendix A to the report was a proposed Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations made by the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum’s following its investigation into ‘Adult Safeguarding’, which had been prepared in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health Services commented that he considered the recommendations useful and supported them going forward for implementation through the submitted action plan.

Decision

That the submitted Action Plan in response to the recommendations of the Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Adult Safeguarding' be approved.

236. Final Report – Foreshore Management *(Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to outline the findings and conclusions of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Foreshore Management'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum, Councillor Stephen Thomas, presented the final report of the forum's investigation into 'Foreshore Management'. Councillor Thomas outlined the principle aspects of the report, its conclusions and recommendations.

In response to the comments made by the Chair of the Neighbourhood Scrutiny Forum and the issues highlighted within the report relating to Seaton Carew, the Mayor indicated that a report later on the Cabinet Agenda would look to move the development of the town forward through the potential redevelopment of council owned land. The forum in its report had acknowledged that there were budget implications with many of the issues raised, particularly with the paddling pools at the Headland and Seaton Carew and the Mayor stated that it was difficult to say at this stage that those budgets could be protected from cuts.

Decision

That the following recommendations of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's following its investigation into 'Foreshore Management' be approved and adopted: -

"The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum has taken evidence from a wide variety of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below:-

- (a) That the Council co-ordinates its beach cleaning services with forthcoming public events in order to provide an improved public

- service;
- (b) That the Council works with local businesses / industry and developers to explore and encourage investment opportunities to assist in the future development and restoration of foreshore activities;
 - (c) That the Headland and Seaton Carew paddling pools be kept open and work undertaken to identify the most cost effective means of dealing with ongoing maintenance issues;
 - (d) That the Council fully consults with residents on any improvements which are to be made to sites along the foreshore and ensures that residents are kept up to date on the progress of the improvements;
 - (e) That the Seaton Carew Residents Action Group is re-launched and the membership refreshed to provide a suitable forum to engage with local residents and business and encourage their input into the economic development of Seaton;
 - (f) That, in marketing areas of interest to tourists along the foreshore, in addition to traditional attractions, increased emphasis should be placed upon the promotion of Hartlepool's natural assets (i.e. Saltholme and other sites of special scientific interest);
 - (g) That the promotion of tourist attractions / events in Hartlepool should continue to be undertaken through traditional means, in addition to web based approaches, in order to reach as wide an audience as possible;
 - (h) That the Council provides guidance and support to local business and groups to access funding to improve the appearance of the foreshore;
 - (i) That concerns regarding the lack of formal response(s) to residents reports of vehicular access to the beach via the Brus Tunnel, and nuisance on / damage to the beach and dunes, be relayed to Cleveland Police; and
 - (j) That a permanent solution is explored to close the Brus Tunnel to vehicles, utilising funds obtained in relation to the vandalised camera on the site, giving consideration to:-
 - (i) Professional advice from Network Rail, Cleveland Police, CCTV operators and Council Officers; and
 - (ii) Views of local residents."

237. Action Plan – Foreshore Management *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services)*

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 'Foreshore Management'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

Submitted as Appendix A to the report was a proposed Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations made by the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into 'Foreshore

Management', which had been prepared in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Tourism commented that the forum's report showed that the Council was managing the foreshore well, though there were areas for improvement. The majority of the actions set out in the submitted plan could be met from within existing budgets except for any proposals to replace the padding pools. In relation to the issues of publicity of events highlighted by the forum, while there was still a place for the traditional forms of publicity, it was essential that new ways of targeting younger people should be explored.

Decision

That the Action Plan submitted in response to the recommendations of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Foreshore Management' be approved.

238. Final Report – Services Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse *(Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To present the Final Report of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into 'Service Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

Councillor Jane Shaw presented the Final Report of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into 'Service Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse'. Councillor Shaw outlined the principle aspects of the report, its conclusions and recommendations.

A Member commented that alcohol was a major factor in domestic abuse of female partners and asked if this was an element in the abuse of male partners. The Scrutiny Manager indicated that that had not come forward as a factor through the investigation. The Mayor commented that there had been changes in the way the Police responded to and dealt with domestic abuse and that it was now appropriate to stop differentiating between victims of domestic abuse.

Decision

That the following recommendations of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigation into 'Service Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse' be approved and adopted: -

"The Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum has taken

evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Forum's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below:-

- (a) That promotion of support and assistance available to male victims of domestic abuse is undertaken to encourage more male victims to engage with services, including:-
 - (i) Utilisation of appropriate promotional and awareness raising activities, highlighting services available to male victims of domestic abuse;
 - (ii) Ensuring that additional to recommendation (a)(i) information is made available to members of the public who are not able to access the internet.
- (b) That the provision of a helpline specifically for male victims of domestic abuse is investigated with the Safer Hartlepool Partnership;
- (c) That following the refresh of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership website a review of the Hartlepool Borough Council website is undertaken to assess whether:-
 - (i) The website contains sufficient information and signposts to enable male victims of domestic abuse to access services and contact appropriate support agencies;
 - (ii) Information can be accessed with limited searching.
- (d) That work is undertaken in conjunction with the Child and Adult Services Department to investigate the potential to deliver non gender specific domestic abuse prevention programmes at a school level.
- (e) That a work is undertaken with other local authorities in the northern region to consider:-
 - (i) Support for a cross authority male domestic abuse worker to develop and promote services available throughout the northern region;
 - (ii) Undertaking a cross authority review to determine the demand for a male refuge."

239. Action Plan – Services Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services*)

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 investigation into the 'Services Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

Submitted as Appendix A to the report was a proposed Action Plan for the

implementation of the recommendations made by the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into the 'Services Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse', which had been prepared in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Decision

That the Action Plan submitted in response to the recommendations made by the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into the 'Services Available to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse' be approved.

240. Final 2010/2011 Outturn Strategy *(Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

To enable Cabinet to finalise the 2010/2011 Outturn Strategy.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chief Finance Officer reported on the action taken in the last 6 months of the 2010/11 financial year which resulted in the overall outturn being better than previously forecast. This action sought to manage expenditure (including holding posts vacant where possible and reducing non pay spending) in preparation for the significant cuts implemented from 1 April 2011 totalling £10 million. The actions implemented and their positive impact on the financial position enables specific risk reserves to be established to protect the Council's financial position in 2011/12, which given the scale of cuts already implemented and required over the next few years provides additional temporary resources to manage these risks and associated costs. These resources would not solve the significant financial problems facing the Council over the next few years.

The Chief Finance Officer reminded Members that further cuts of £14m needed to be made before the start of 2014/15. Given the scale of the cuts implemented over the last two years these additional reductions would be even harder to achieve. These additional cuts would mean that by 2014/15 cash expenditure would fall back to the level it was in 2005/06 – which demonstrated the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council. Proposed changes to the Local Government finance system could make this position even worse particularly if proposed changes to business rates were implemented.

The Council would need to fund significant redundancy costs from implementing ongoing cuts of £14m. As approximately half (56%) of the net General Fund budget related to pay costs (including Trading Account recharges) these cuts would result in further staffing reductions. There would therefore be additional redundancy costs over the next few years.

An initial assessment, based on experience over the last two years, indicated these one-off costs could be in the order of £5m to £10m, though the eventual outcome was anticipated to be at the higher end of the estimates. A funding strategy would need to be developed to address these costs. The actions taken to date provided a basis from which to commence this process.

In relation to the individual departmental outturns, the Chief Finance Officer commented that nationally applied technical accounting changes relating to the recording of income accounted for £800,000 of the overall underspend.

The net corporate underspend was £0.414m more than anticipated. This was mainly due to -

- lower borrowing costs and higher investment income on the Council's cash flows in the final quarter than anticipated. This position reflected the Bank of England's decision to hold interest rates at the current historically low level for longer than expected;
- Lower gas prices over the last three months of the financial year, though it had to be noted this trend was reversing and significant price increases were anticipated; and
- external audit fees £76,000 lower than anticipated due to national reductions implemented by the Audit Commission.

The report set out in further detail the individual department outturns and details of the proposed reserves for Cabinet consideration. These reserves included carrying forward income as a result of accounting changes and reserves earmarked to help manage risks, particularly for volatile (and often high cost) services such as caring for vulnerable adults and children.

It was suggested in the report that the net uncommitted underspend be earmarked to the following corporate risks: -

Budget Support Fund – proposed contribution £0.161m

Strategic Risk Reserve – proposed contribution £0.874m

In addition to the above proposals an amount of £89,000 will transfer to General Fund Balances as expected when the initial outturn strategy was approved.

An initial assessment of the forecast outturn for the Tall Ships event was reported in October 2010. This was a worst case position and indicated an outturn shortfall of £0.72m. The majority of the outstanding invoices and contractual commitments had now been paid and income due collected. On this basis the outturn shortfall was expected to reduce to £0.58m. This assumes the remaining outstanding income of £65,000 (net of VAT) is received. On this basis it was now expected the actual cost of this event will be £0.14m less than previously forecast.

Redundancy and early retirement costs relating to the spending review cuts were estimated to be £1.6m. The actual costs were £1.47m. The reduction

reflects the impact of redeployments which reduced the number of compulsory redundancies and the impact of actual payments to staff made redundant. These costs have been funded from the Transitional Grant and in accordance with the Council resolution in February the unused Transitional Grant of £0.305m (£0.178m estimated in February) has been transferred to General Fund Balances. A strategy for using the residual Transitional Grant, which is a one-off resource, will need to be developed as part of the 2012/13 budget process.

In conclusion the Chief Finance Officer stated that the outturn position is more favourable than anticipated owing to one-off factors and careful management of budgets in advance of 2011/12. This helped the Council manage the budget position for 2011/12 and reduced the number of compulsory redundancies by holding posts vacant.

The improved outturn also provides one-off resources which it is proposed are earmarked to manage ongoing budget risks. The report therefore proposed allocating these one-off benefits to establish specific reserves.

The financial position over the next few years is even more challenging and cuts of £14m need to be made before the start of 2014/15. Implementing these permanent reductions would have implications on current staffing levels and the Council would need to fund the resulting redundancy and early retirement costs (where applicable).

An initial assessment suggests these costs will be in the order of £5m to £10m. These costs would fall over the next 3 years. No resources had been identified to fund these potential costs and a funding strategy would be developed during the current year to address this issue. This would include reviewing the resources transferred into the General Fund from the General Fund outturn of £89,000, the unused Transitional Grant of £305,000 and the forecast unused Tall Ships funding of £120,000.

Cabinet Members while welcoming the reported underspend expressed concern that the proposed allocations for the underspend had not been examined in detail by Cabinet in advance of the Outturn report. It was suggested that the outturn report be noted but that the allocation of the underspend be deferred to a later date. The Chief Finance Officer commented that the authority's final accounts had to be signed off by 30 June and they would need to show how the underspend was to be utilised or there could be criticism from the auditors that the council had failed to put in place robust plans.

There was concern at the level of the underspend reported to Cabinet. A Cabinet Member considered that it was difficult to defend some of the recent budget cuts when an underspend had occurred. The level of reserves was sometimes difficult for people to understand and a report on the reserves held by the council was requested. Cabinet needed to be fully briefed on the proposals set out in the report. Returning some or all of these monies to front line services needed to be considered alongside the

proposed contributions to the Budget Support Fund and Strategic Risk Reserve.

The Mayor highlighted that a full investigation into the reserves held by the Council had been undertaken by Scrutiny and there was therefore no need for a further report. In light of the timetables for the production of the accounts, the Mayor suggested that the Outturn Report be reconsidered in two weeks time by Cabinet following further discussions on the proposals set out in the report for the utilisation of the underspend.

Decision

1. That the report and the final position in relation to the Tall Ships Outturn position and the Transitional Grant be noted.
2. That consideration of the specific use of the reported underspend be deferred until the next meeting of Cabinet to allow further discussion on the proposals.

241. Climate Change Adaptation Strategy *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision (test i and ii applies). Forward Plan reference Number RN52/11.

Purpose of report

To seek Cabinet approval for the proposed Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and associated risk assessment process.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Mayor reported that the extra pressures that climate change would place on services was likely to lead to an increase in the cost of delivering those services for example, extended growing seasons would require more resources to maintain trees, verges and open spaces, and increasing temperatures may lead to the requirement for air-conditioning units, with installation and running cost implications. Climate change would lead to an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. During the past two winters, extreme weather events had led to an increase in winter maintenance costs. However, the general long-term trend was expected to be a move towards milder winters.

By understanding the risks presented by climate change, and taking early action to address these risks, the Local Authority could adopt a proactive approach to tackling climate change, which would cost less than dealing with issues as and when they arose. Adoption of this strategy would put in place a formal process for identifying and monitoring the risks that climate change poses to service provision. The full strategy document was submitted as an appendix to the report.

The Mayor indicated that the strategy had in the past been promoted and

led by the Environmental Partnership but with the proposed changes to the Hartlepool Partnership structure, he questioned who would lead on the strategy after its adoption. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that officers would drive the strategy and the three Assistant Directors in Regeneration and Neighbourhoods were developing a coordinated approach.

Decision

That the Climate Change Adaptation strategy and associated risk register be approved and adopted.

242. Photo-Voltaic Retrofit Proposal *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – test (i). Forward Plan reference Number RN 44/10

Purpose of report

The report provided further detail on how the Council may be able to install renewable energy in the form of photo-voltaic panels, to reduce carbon emissions and potentially save the Council money and generate income following the report of 6th December 2010.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning reported that as detailed to Cabinet on 6th December 2010, it had been proposed that the Council investigate the potential viability of using the Government incentive scheme to install photo-voltaic (PV) panels on Council owned buildings. This investigation would consider the risks of implementing such a scheme.

In the previous report it had been suggested that this work may be done in partnership with Housing Hartlepool, however they have now indicated that they will undertake a separate programme of works to install PV panels on their properties.

Officers have undertaken a preliminary investigation of Council owned properties considering aspects such as: orientation of the building roof, risk of vandalism, height of the building, structural strength of roof, shading, roof area and planning constraints (Listed status for example). The resulting list included a number of schools. Schools are considered separately to Council buildings in terms of costs, benefits and delivery of the project for practical reasons.

Indicative costs had been obtained for the buildings which were considered most appropriate for the installation of PV panels and were in the order of £646,000. It was possible to install a total of 258kWp of PV panels on HBC buildings in the short term; this could reduce the Council's CO2 emissions by 124 tonnes each year.

The Council was also working in partnership with Hartlepool College of Further Education (HCFE) and Tees Valley Unlimited to promote and develop opportunities for Hartlepool residents and business in the growth sectors of renewables including PV panels. HCFE was leading on the delivery of new skills and qualifications with purpose built facilities in the new building which include a bespoke manufacturing and fitting unit for photo voltaic panels. The facilities are open for commercial training.

There were two options available to the council:

Option 1 - Use prudential borrowing to install PV panels and finance loan repayment costs from forecast FiT income and electricity savings.

Option 2 – Rent roofspace on Council buildings to a commercial operator to install PV panels and gain a proportion of the FiT and electricity savings.

Option 1 carries a greater potential financial risk than option 2 as the Council would need to borrow £646,000, which may potentially generate a net annual benefit after meeting loan repayment costs between £25,000 (FiT income) and £36,000 (FiT income plus electricity saving). Option 2 has the lowest financial risk as the Council is not borrowing to fund the project and consequently the lowest potential financial benefit for the council. There would be risks around renting out roof space for 25 years, the main risks link to the Council deciding to dispose of the building and the consequences of the commercial operator ceasing trading; responsibility for maintenance and repair also needs careful consideration.

The situation regarding school buildings is more complex than envisaged when work commenced on assessing the feasibility of installing PV cells on the Council's own building and schools. The main complexity relates to future changes to schools funding and the academies agenda. Given this uncertainty it would not be wise to use prudential borrowing to install PV cells on schools as the Council could not guarantee repayment loans over the lifetime of the project.

Earlier in the year the Government announced that the first review of the Feed in Tariff had begun and would 'be completed by the end of the year, with tariffs remaining unchanged until April 2012, unless there is specific need for greater urgency'. It is therefore imperative that the Council acts quickly if it intends to take advantage of the FiT scheme as FiTs are widely expected to decrease after April 2012.

Members supported the proposal though did express their disappointment that Housing Hartlepool had chosen to operate on their own. The advice against using schools sites was also disappointing though Members considered that a service to schools should be offered if at all possible. In light of the potential changes to the government scheme, members acknowledged that time was a major factor but did feel that taking advantage of the current scheme was essential.

Decision

1. That approval be given to the implementation of Option 1,- the installation of PV cells using prudential borrowing of up to £646,000 in order that the Council retain control of the installations and reap most benefit whilst reducing CO2 emissions;
2. That the forecast annual revenue saving be earmarked to pump prime other income generating initiatives and/or cost reduction projects, rather than allocate the savings to reduce the 2011/12 budget deficit.

243. Declarations of interest by Members

During consideration of the above item on “Photo-Voltaic Retrofit Proposal” (Minute 242) Councillor Brash declared a personal interest.

244. Child Poverty Needs Assessment and Strategy (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Key Decision – test (ii). Forward Plan Ref CAS86/11

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the publication of a Child Poverty Needs Assessment and Child Poverty Strategy as required in the Child Poverty Act 2010.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager reported that Cabinet had approved the publication of a child poverty strategy in April 2010. Following this an independent child poverty review had been published by Frank Field and a number of child poverty pilots have shared their findings nationally. More recently the government had published a National Child Poverty Strategy in March 2011. Due to all the changes the previous Hartlepool strategy had been revised in line with the Needs Assessment. The most recent statistics produced based on the 60% measure of median average income showed that 29.5% of children in Hartlepool were living in poverty.

The report set out the main findings from the Child Poverty Needs Assessment and the main areas of development within the proposed strategy. The needs assessment and strategy documents were attached as appendices to the report.

Cabinet commented that the strategy was as much about tackling family poverty as child poverty and the only target that could be contemplated was lifting all children out of poverty. The Mayor considered that much also relied on the aspirations of parents and children. The Director of Child and Adult Services stated that there had been an improvement in educational standards over the last few years but there is still an attainment gap in the wards with the highest deprivation. However, the aspiration to achieve

more also needed aspirational families and positive male and female role models, particularly for young children. It was hoped to highlight such role models in future '11 million Take Over Days'.

Decision

That the publication of the Child Poverty Needs Assessment and Child Poverty Strategy be approved, as required in the Child Poverty Act 2010.

245. Developer Interest in Sites at Seaton Carew *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To report to Cabinet the results of the exercise carried out to assess developer interest in Council owned sites in Seaton Carew and seek endorsement, to explore in more detail the strongest submissions.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration reported that Cabinet in February 2011 agreed to undertake a marketing exercise in relation to Council owned sites in Seaton Carew. Interested developers were asked to submit the requested relevant information by 25/03/11.

In total, marketing particulars were circulated to thirty interested parties in response to the adverts placed in the national press. Seven expressions of interest were subsequently submitted by the deadline date. One response was received after the formal deadline and has been discounted. Five of the seven submissions included only the PQQ element of the requested information. These organisations did not respond in any detail to the development brief and the information requested. These particular organisations had therefore been deemed not to have met the minimum level of information that was requested.

Two organisations had provided detailed and full information in line with the PQQ and development brief. Both of these organisations had indicated that they would look to develop all of the sites identified, releasing significant funding to deliver a range of regeneration priorities, a key aim of the scheme. Both companies had indicated that they would look to develop elements of residential on all of the Council owned sites and look to develop small scale commercial development at The Front, on the site of the Longscar Hall, in line with the details of the development brief.

The exercise had indicated that there was real interest from the private sector in developing sites at Seaton Carew. This provided evidence that there is interest despite the current market conditions which in principle is sufficient to deliver the regeneration priorities. To determine if one of these organisations could practically deliver comprehensive development in

Seaton Carew would require the submission of further information and separate face to face discussion with the companies involved.

The mayor indicated that he was encouraged by the results of the marketing exercise and indicated that the further assessment process should include informal meetings with Cabinet. The Mayor also suggested that a representative from the Seaton Carew Regeneration Advisory Group should be involved in the decision making process so that there was an input from the residents and trades people of Seaton Carew.

Decision

That officers be authorised to assess further the expressions of interest by interviewing the two shortlisted companies in June, and then requesting the formal submission of final information for preferred developer selection in August. The assessment process was to involve a representative appointed by the Seaton Carew Regeneration Advisory Group and informal meetings with Cabinet.

246. Strategy for Bridging the Budget Deficit 2012/13 – ICT, Revenues and Benefits Services (*Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To enable Cabinet to make a decision in respect of the proposed options available in respect of ICT and Revenues and Benefits services and their contribution to addressing the budget deficit in the available timescales.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Performance Portfolio Holder reported Cabinet have received three reports (on 24th January 2011, 7th February 2011 and 8th April 2011) which had identified and provided options and proposed recommendations in respect of the potential benefits from and the procurement route for a revised delivery mechanism for ICT and Revenues and Benefits services.

At the meeting in February 2011, Cabinet determined to refer this matter to Scrutiny for consideration with particular reference to the Revenues and Benefits element and the report from Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee was considered on 8th April 2011.

Cabinet agreed on 8th April that further investigation of the following options be undertaken and reported back to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity taking account of the timescales required for identifying the future of the services in question and the recommendations of the Scrutiny investigation reported earlier in the meeting: -

- (i) A procurement exercise is undertaken using the OGC Buying Solutions Framework for ICT and Revenues and Benefits services.

- (ii) Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's recommendations for Revenues and Benefits Services would be considered as part of whichever delivery option is chosen.
- (iii) Other local authorities be approached quickly about what opportunities there are for working together.
- (iv) Early stages of testing the market, as part of the procurement process, would be undertaken.
- (v) The options and implications of a joint venture vehicle be researched.

Additionally the recommendations of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's review of the proposals for the provision of the revenues and benefits service, as referred by Cabinet on 7 February 2011, were noted and utilised to inform the process of the development of the strategy for bridging the budget deficit in the ICT and Revenues and Benefits services for 2011/12/13.

The Mayor reported that discussions had been held with the other Tees Valley authorities on the potential for working together. These had not proved fruitful as the other authorities were not at the same stage and had differing needs. There had been comment that they would be looking to achieve savings as well from any arrangement.

There was extreme concern expressed by one Cabinet Member that the potential for joint working had not been explored further than the four Tees Valley authorities. The proposal also did not contain any projected savings or a business case for the proposed procurement exercise.

The Chief Executive assured Cabinet that no agreement would be entered into unless there were definable savings for the authority. Any contract with an external company would be designed to build upon the high level of transferable skills in the current staff.

The Mayor referred to the letter submitted by the Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee and stressed that in his opinion the fundamental driver behind this process was to protect as many jobs in Hartlepool as was possible. These service areas could not be isolated from the budget cuts and outsourcing was not something that we would want to do as a matter of course. However, the Government's changes to benefits and the introduction of the Universal Credit were going to have a major affect in any event. Bringing a contractor in to utilise the skills of the current staff in developing a regional hub for this type of work had to be seen as a positive.

Cabinet discussed the issues surrounding the utilisation of the OGC Buying Solutions Framework. The Assistant Director, Resources stated that advice had been taken from OGC Managers on the utilisation of the ICT framework for Revenues and Benefits. Independent legal advice had also been sought and later in the debate, members requested that a copy of the advice be circulated to Cabinet. Again a Cabinet Member expressed deep concern at using the list proposed which was not a specialised Revenues and Benefits list and didn't contain some of the companies that could be anticipated to undertake this kind of work. The member indicated their opposition to the

recommended proposal to enter into a procurement exercise. Legal advice was also sought on the involvement of senior officers of the authority that had been involved in endorsing the service of one of the companies on the list.

The Trades Union representative was invited to comment further on the letter submitted by HJTUC. The representative indicated that the unions shared concerns in relation to the use of the OGC Buying Solutions Framework and that they were minded to challenge the procurement process.

In concluding the debate, the Mayor indicated that the legal advice sought on the process should be shared and revisited to ensure that the proposed procurement exercise route was strong enough to resist challenge. In seeking the views of the Cabinet Members present (Councillor Payne having left the meeting) on the recommendations, there was an unanimous indication of support.

Decision

That a procurement exercise be commenced using the OGC Buying Solutions Framework for ICT and Revenues and Benefits services.

The meeting concluded at 11.25 a.m.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 31 May 2011