

REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

17th June 2011

The meeting commenced at 3.30 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

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

Officers: Damien Wilson, Assistant Director (Regeneration & Planning)
Fiona Stanforth, Regeneration Officer
Jeff Mason, Head of Support Services
Antony Steinberg, Economic Development Manager
Patrick Wilson, Employment Development Officer
Amanda Whitaker, Democratic Services Team.

1. Regional Growth Fund – Round 2 (*Assistant Director – Regeneration and Planning*)

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

To provide details on the Round 2 of the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) and to seek endorsement of the approach to RGF particularly with regard to potential programme bids within the Tees Valley.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out details of the background to the Regional Growth Fund and the criteria for individual business and programme bids. The Portfolio Holder noted that Round 2 of RGF had a deadline for submission of 1st July 2011. In terms of individual applications from businesses both Hartlepool Borough Council and Tees Valley Unlimited would offer support to the businesses to complete applications.

The Government were also encouraging the development of Programme Bids to support business e.g. business finance, guidance, technical support

etc. In terms of potential programme bids, details of the additional criteria were set out in the report. A range of options were being considered for programme bids from the public, voluntary/community and private sectors. Following a request from the Portfolio Holder, Officers provided details of the outcome of a recent workshop together with an update in respect of bids at sub regional level. The Portfolio Holder highlighted that there would be considerable competition for funding from Round 2 of the Fund and that she considered decision making in respect of the award of funding had not always been consistent.

Decision

The principles of a Tees Valley programme bid approach were endorsed and information relating to the emerging proposals for a Tees Valley wide programme bid were noted

2. Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) – Final Outturn (2010/11) (Assistant Director – Regeneration and Planning)

Type of decision

Non-Key – the report was for information.

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the final outturn position relating to the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) 2010/11.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out the final outturn position relating to the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) 2010/11. The Portfolio Holder was advised that £4,938,085 of WNF had been available to spend in 2010/11. Appended to the report were details of the financial position at the end of the year which highlighted that £4,925,603 of the WNF budget was spent at the end of the year. This was an under spend of £12,481.99 which equated to 99.74% spend of the overall available grant.

In response to a request from the Portfolio Holder, Officers advised that it was intended that a further report be submitted which would set out a comprehensive evaluation of projects which had received funding over the three years of the Fund. The Portfolio Holder requested that information be included in respect of overall outputs/outturn positions. The Portfolio Holder also highlighted that she considered the WNF had been a tremendous source of funding which had supported organisations who wouldn't otherwise have received funding. Withdrawal of the Fund had, therefore, had a significant impact.

Decision

The report was noted.

3. **Review of Financial Assistance Provided by Economic Development Section** (*Assistant Director – Regeneration and Planning*)

Type of decision

Non-Key – the report was for information.

Purpose of report

To provide details of the financial assistance provided by the Council to support local enterprise during the financial year 2010/2011.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out details of the various financial assistance schemes which were provided by the Council. The report, and appended document, provided details of the background, criteria and approval mechanisms of the various schemes. Information was provided relating to associated financial and risk implications. Schemes were monitored to ensure all financial criteria were met and information relating to performance measures for the different regimes was presented as follows:-

Job Creation	-	80 jobs
Jobs Safeguarded	-	35 jobs
Residents into employment	-	40 individuals
Business Start Ups	-	41 new businesses assisted

Details of individual awards which had been made, in the financial year ended March 2011, were provided by way of an exempt appendix. **(The appendix contained exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006) namely (paragraph 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

The Portfolio Holder sought clarification regarding the implications on the North East England Service Provider Register (NEESPR) when Business Link no longer operated and suggested that the issue be included in next report. It was agreed that information also be included in subsequent reports relating to increased turnover and number of jobs still in existence as a result of grants awarded.

Decision

The report was noted.

4. Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan Monitoring Report – April 2010 to March 2011
(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)

Type of decision

Non-Key – the report was for information.

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made against the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan 2010/11.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out progress against the key actions and performance indicators along with the latest position with regard to risks contained in the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Departmental Plan 2010/11.

The Portfolio Holder noted the information included in the report particularly the Performance Indicator relating to Unemployment rates in Hartlepool which indicated that rates had remained constant. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that in the current climate it would be difficult to reduce unemployment rates but she was encouraged that the rate had remained constant and had not increased.

Decision

The report was noted.

5. Targeted Vacant Buildings Grants Scheme *(Assistant Director – Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of decision

Non-Key – the report was for information.

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the Targeted Vacant Buildings Grant Scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out the background, the current position of the overall Targeted Buildings Grant Scheme and the projects that had been approved. The Scheme had an allocated budget of £200,000 from Hartlepool Borough

Councils capital programme, for improvements to business premises. The scheme was focused on the vacant properties in the town centre (in particular the stretch of York Road between Park Road and Victoria Road) and premises in the Southern Business Zone. To date seven projects had been issued formal offer letters following approval which had resulted in a budget commitment of £97,103.40. Project details were provided in the report. Two projects had been completed, bringing two empty buildings on York Road back into use. Before and after photos were appended to the report. Four further projects are currently progressing through the application process. The value of these projects was expected to be £60,000.

It was noted that approved projects and those at the application stage currently amounted to £157,103.40. In addition to this £1,048.60 had been spent on undertaking Quantity Surveyor checks as part of the application procedure, giving a total budget 'commitment' of £158,152. Should all of the projects be approved; there was £41,848 of unallocated budget which could be used to support a further 3/4 projects. Work was ongoing to identify premises in the two areas that would benefit from the receipt of a grant to bring premises back into use and have a positive impact on the surrounding area providing a catalyst for further investment.

The Portfolio Holder requested that clarification be sought that on the York Road project, and more generally across the scheme, that where Section 215 works are required to be carried out they are netted off from any grant award offered.

Decision

The report was noted and a further update would be submitted when appropriate.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 29th June 2011