

REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

22nd July 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: Alastair Smith, Assistant Director (Transport and Engineering)
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning)
Antony Steinberg, Economic Development Manager
Rob Smith, Senior Regeneration Officer
Mick Emerson, Principal Economic Development Officer (Business)
Philip Timmins, Principal Estates Surveyor
Israr Hussein, Economic Development Officer
Tracy Rowe, Regeneration Officer
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

Also present: Chris Dixon, Tees Valley Enterprise Arcade Coordinator

6. Wynnstay Gardens / Acclom Street Environmental Improvement Scheme *(Assistant Director – Transportation and Engineering)*

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

To present the proposed environmental improvement scheme at Wynnstay Gardens and Acclom Street and to seek approval to undertake works.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The project had been developed as part of a larger scheme focussing on areas adjacent to Housing Market Renewal sites. An Adjacent Areas Study and Communications Plan had been carried out and a number of issues identified including road safety and anti-social behaviour. In response to these issues and others highlighted by residents at the Dyke

House/Stranton/Grange Neighbourhood Partnership the project had been developed by Council engineers. It was fully supported by the Neighbourhood Partnership and involved the narrowing of the entrances to Acclom Street, Wynnstay Gardens, Helmsley Street, Ashley Gardens and Oakley Gardens. This would allow increased visibility for drivers and pedestrians. Street trees would be planted in the build-outs provided by the widened kerbs. The first phase of the scheme would concentrate on Acclom Street and Wynnstay Gardens with a complementary scheme at Chatham Road Shops. Plans of both the first phase and the overall scheme were appended to the report.

The report gave details of the extensive consultation process for the scheme. Plans were delivered to all residents affected and a copy made available at Chatham Road Children's Centre, where a drop in session was held to allow residents to discuss the plans with officers. 63% of residents/businesses responded to the consultation with 60% of those supportive of the wider scheme. 50% of Acclom Street/Ritchie Humphreys Drive residents responded and all were in agreement with the proposals however of the 67% of Wynnstay Gardens/Chatham Road/Chester Road residents/businesses who responded only 51% were in agreement with 49% either opposed or unsure. The key issue was the impact the scheme would have on parking in Wynnstay Gardens. Responses to these and other concerns were detailed within the report. Ward members were in support of the scheme.

In response to a query from the Portfolio Holder the Assistant Director (Transport and Engineering) clarified that £50,000 funding was available for the works however the estimated cost was only £40,000 and seemed likely to be even less. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that she was absolutely delighted to approve this scheme which would complement the Headway Development immensely. She felt that more schemes of this sort should be undertaken and had contacted Housing Hartlepool on this matter. She expressed her eagerness to promote these improvements with a view to carrying out similar works in other areas.

Decision

That the project proposals for the environmental improvement scheme at Wynnstay Gardens and Acclom Street be endorsed.

7. Tees Valley Enterprise Arcade *(Assistant Director – Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the progress of the Tees Valley

Enterprise Arcade Project which Hartlepool Borough Council is managing on behalf of the Tees Valley Industrial Programme (TVIP) Enterprise Stream.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) gave a brief update on the progress of the Tees Valley Enterprise Arcade Project. He advised that the Middlesbrough Arcade had completed its 6-month training period on 11th June 2011 and closed. Stockton Arcade would continue until early August while Redcar Arcade was expected to continue after the end of the project. The majority of traders who had been assisted by the project were expected to continue trading in one form or another. Officers from the 5 Local Authority areas of the Tees Valley had submitted a Regional Growth Funding bid to assist retail across the sub region and one element would be the formation of arcades in each of the areas. Middlesbrough and Stockton were looking at ways to offer similar support while the Redcar arcade would continue to be operated through a development trust which it was hoped would keep the arcade open long term. Upon the final closure of the arcades a formal evaluation of the project would be completed which would address whether the agreed targets had been achieved, how the project had been operated and look at recommendations for future similar activity. The Project Coordinator was in attendance at the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder congratulated all those involved for the success of the project. She felt that being given the opportunity to manage it had been a huge compliment and the people involved should be commended for its success. In terms of future development she queried how these successes could be packaged up and built upon particularly if the Regional Growth Funding bid were successful. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Business) advised that the project had been evaluated by an external evaluator on an ongoing basis. Evaluation had been based on what had worked well rather than what had been done. The Portfolio Holder queried whether the final report should be made public as it could be regarded as Hartlepool Borough Council intellectual property and as such should be used for the benefit of Hartlepool. Such expertise could be sold to other local authorities in the future. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Business) felt that the report could be confidential with only the highlights in the public domain to protect that intellectual property. The Portfolio Holder indicated she would wish to discuss the report informally with officers before deciding upon the most appropriate route. She also wished to look at how the project might complement other initiatives such as the Buy Local campaign, the Eat Guide and the Destination Hartlepool website.

Decision

That the report be noted and that a final report be received upon completion of the project.

8. Financial Assistance Provided by Economic Development Team *(Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))*

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

To amend the decision making process in respect of the financial assistance provided to businesses by the Economic Development Team.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Details of the current approval mechanism and basic details for the business grants package were given within the report. However in order to make the decision making process more consistent across the Regeneration and Planning Division a slight amendment was proposed whereby awards of £5,001 would be processed through a recommendation by a panel and the final decision delegated to the Portfolio Holder and the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning).

The Portfolio Holder queried the membership of the panel. The Economic Development Manager advised that the panel was made up of himself and external representatives including accountants. The Portfolio Holder asked whether only high value grant requests were subject to panel consideration. The Economic Development Manager confirmed this. The Portfolio Holder indicated she would like to see the current membership of the panel reviewed to bring new people on board. The Economic Development Manager was in support of this should the opportunity arise

The Portfolio Holder questioned what processes were in place to audit the decision making process. The Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) advised that audits were carried out across all service areas on a rotation basis. These were carried out both internally and externally. If officers felt that an audit would be of benefit to internal systems one could be requested with the results being used as an internal management tool to improve current practices. The Portfolio Holder asked that a quarterly report be brought back to her portfolio giving details of the nature of the grants, who they were provided to and who the provider would be.

Decision

That the recommended amendment to the Business Grants package decision making process be approved.

9. Delivery of the Church Square Masterplan *(Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))*

Type of decision

Key (test i applies)

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the progress of the Church Square Masterplan and to seek approval for the funding and delivery arrangements of the first phase of the scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

On 21st May 2010 the Portfolio Holder had endorsed the preparation of a masterplan for Church Square. This had since been developed by the Council's Building Consultancy Team with the aim of creating an open-campus environment and a key focal point for the town centre. Delivery had been divided into a number of phases which could be delivered as and when resources allowed. Details were given of the first phase which would involve structural design changes to Church Square. A plan showing specific details was appended to the report and a larger copy provided at the meeting for the Portfolio Holder's consideration. Later phases would cover tree planting, improved pedestrian access, installation of feature railings and the closure of the Stockton Street underpass. In addition a number of sites had been identified for art work which would give the opportunity to showcase local talent from Cleveland College of Art and Design.

The Portfolio Holder was asked to approve the commencement of a public consultation exercise on the masterplan. This would involve public drop-in sessions at the Christ Church Art Gallery and further consultation with businesses and other users of Church Square. Businesses within Church Square already consulted and shown themselves broadly in favour of the scheme providing their parking concerns were addressed.

It had originally been anticipated that funding for the masterplan would come from One North East Single Programme funds match funded by the Council. However Single Programme funding had now ceased. The first phase had been costed at approximately £650,000 with funding of £520,000 identified so far. This would include a contribution of £30,000 from the 2011/12 Major Regeneration Revenue budget and £100,000 from Reserves earmarked for Major Regeneration Projects. Further funding of £390,000 had been identified from Council capital budgets approved in previous financial years, resources which had previously been set aside as match funding for external bids. In order to allocate this funding it would be necessary to vire these resources. Cabinet and Council would be asked to approve this pending approval of the scheme by the Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her broad support for the proposals but questioned the amount of funding which would be needed and whether in the current economic climate the work was warranted at all as other areas might be more deserving of investment. The Senior Regeneration Officer acknowledged the large amounts under consideration but the rationale had been to use as high quality materials as possible complementing the investment within both Colleges and the Transport Interchange and considering the long-term nature of the scheme. The Portfolio Holder queried whether there would be monies available to carry out maintenance in the future. The Senior Regeneration Officer indicated that it was hoped that the improvements in materials would reduce future maintenance requirements, however spares would be available.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether existing businesses were happy with the proposals, particularly in view of the planting of trees outside their premises. The Senior Regeneration Officer confirmed that the businesses consulted were in favour in principle and that businesses would still be able to place items outside their premises. Consideration would also be given to parking restrictions on Tower Street.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether the Cleveland College of Art and Design were contributing financially towards the scheme. The Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) advised that so far no investment had been confirmed. The Masterplan had been designed to complement the work carried out by the College. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the proposed use of artwork by students from the College noting that this would publicise their artists and queried whether they might be persuaded to contribute in order to secure this publicity. The Senior Regeneration Officer confirmed that a contribution toward the costs of CCTV coverage and possible future art competitions would be sought. However their own expansion plans might make this difficult.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her support for the consultation into the proposals. The Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) suggested that a caveat be included questioning whether such a significant capital spend should be committed in the current economic climate. The Portfolio Holder queried whether the consultation should be taken to the Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forum. She asked whether the funding was time limited and was advised that it was not. However officers would need to ensure that budgets were aligned in order to be sure that the monies to fund the project were in place. The Portfolio Holder commented that she supported the development but would like a Cabinet view on it. The Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) clarified that phase 1 would be considered by Cabinet on 1st August 2011.

Decision

That the draft plans for public consultation be approved

That the delivery of the first phase of the Church Square Masterplan be approved subject to feedback from the consultation process

That the proposed funding arrangements as detailed in Item 7 of the report be approved, including the referral to Cabinet and Council of the approval to vire funds to the project.

10. 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 2006.

Minute 11 – Proposals for Easy Skips Site, Longhill Industrial Estate - This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information (para 3)).

11. Proposals for Easy Skips Site, Longhill Industrial Estate *(Assistant Director – Regeneration and Planning)* This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information (para 3)).

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

Detailed within the report

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Detailed within the report

Decision

Detailed within the report

The meeting concluded at 4:10pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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