

# **CULTURE, LEISURE & TOURISM PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD**

10 January 2012

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Councillor Cath Hill (Culture, Leisure & Tourism Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Denise Ogden, Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services  
John Mennear, Assistant Director of Community Services  
Craig Thelwell, Waste and Environmental Services Manager  
Helen Beaman, Environment Coordinator  
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer  
Vicky Bosley, Democratic Services Officer

## **12. Review of Allotment Service** *(Assistant Director – Neighbourhood Services)*

**Type of decision**

Non-key

**Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the findings of the recent review of the allotment service in Hartlepool.

To seek approval to implement changes as detailed in the report, which are intended to address key issues that exist on allotment sites and provide for a sustainable allotment service.

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

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services reported a concise background to the allotment service provided by the Council, which contained details of a review carried out to identify key issues on allotment sites across Hartlepool. The report also contained proposals aimed at addressing issues and providing for a sustainable allotment service.

The Environment Coordinator highlighted that a survey had been carried out in 2009 as part of a three year rolling programme and that further deterioration had occurred in the overall condition of many allotment sites

throughout the town due to the bad winters experienced.

The Waste and Environmental Services Manager emphasised the importance of a realistic and effective programme being implemented through increased rental income would allow significant improvements to be made to the allotments and to prevent any further decline. The survey showed that allotment holders acknowledged problems, however were not content with an increased annual rent charge.

The Portfolio Holder commented that due to the current economic climate, the only way to release revenue to improve the allotments was through a rental increase. A member of the public, in attendance did not share the same opinion and confirmed that allotment holders could aid by raising small amounts of monies and suggested external funding sources. However, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager explained that an estimated £2million was required to improve the infrastructure which may result in external funding and prudential borrowing as well as increasing rents.

Representatives from Briarfields Allotments were present at the meeting and with the Portfolio Holders permission spoke in favour of devolved management of the Briarfield allotments site. The Waste and Environmental Services Manager confirmed that at this moment in time the improvements were a priority and devolved management may be an option for the future.

### **Decision**

That the findings of the review and the outcome of the consultation exercise carried out amongst allotment holders, members of the public and key stakeholders be noted.

That the proposed implementation of works to improve the condition of allotment sites across Hartlepool and the continued actions to address issues that contribute to their decline be noted.

That the phased increase in allotment rental charges over a period of three years, as detailed in the report, commencing April 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 be approved.

## **13. Fees and Charges Increases for 2012/13** (Director of Child and Adult Services)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the Portfolio Holder with the annual review of fees and charges proposed for 2012/13 and provide commentary upon those pricing categories which are demonstrating a significant increase.

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

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that fees and charges income was a very important element of service provision and that the more income achieved, the net cost of financing our wide range of services will be reduced. The current list of charges was over 700 strong and was reviewed regularly. They were continually benchmarked against other service providers and regional neighbouring authorities. The report provided a commentary against each area of service and highlighted any particularly challenging increases and new areas of charging.

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that Active Cards were available, offering substantial discounts to regular users. It was highlighted that an error in the pricing structure for the Borough Hall/Town Hall Theatre hire charges set out in appendix 1 which would be corrected.

The Portfolio Holder expressed concerns regarding the fees and charges 2012/13 increase, given the current economic climate, however understood the need for the increase and approved the revised schedule, subject to the amendment as detailed above.

### **Decision**

The revised schedule of fee and charge increases for 2012/13 be approved.

## **14. Proposed Disposal of Old Newspapers Held by The Library Service** (Director of Child and Adult Services)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder regarding volumes of old Hartlepool Newspapers held by the library service and to ask the Portfolio holder to consider options for the disposal of the collection.

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

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that the library held a collection of copies of the Northern Daily Mail/Hartlepool Mail dated from

the early 1900's to the 1960's and that they were previously held at Foggy Furze Library.

Some of the collection was in a state of natural deterioration and the collection had not been used by the public for many years. All newspapers in the collection were fully and freely available to the public in micro-film format at the Central Library. The library no longer had space to store the large collection. The library had approached other bodies, including Tees Archives and the Hartlepool Mail, and asked if they would be interested in the collection. However, to date no interest had been expressed.

The Assistant Director, Community Services confirmed that the selling of the newspapers would be explored but if this was not an option they would be recycled.

### **Decision**

That approval be given to the library seeking to sell either all or part of the collection, and to dispose as recyclable waste those collection items that cannot be sold.

The meeting concluded at: 10.50 a.m.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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