

REGENERATION AND NEIGHBOURHOODS PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

26 October 2012

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Alastair Smith, Assistant Director, Transportation and Engineering
Antony Steinberg, Economic Regeneration Manager
Rob Smith, Senior Regeneration Officer
Rachael White, Democratic Services Officer

29. Additional Highway Maintenance Schemes – *(Assistant Director, Transportation and Engineering)*

Type of decision

Key Decision

Purpose of report

To seek approval for additional highway maintenance schemes funded from under spend in the Local Transport Plan Structural Maintenance capital budget.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director (Transportation and Engineering) reported that on 27th April 2012 approval was granted by the Transport and Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder for the Five-year Highway Maintenance Plan. The resurfacing schemes that were identified as being in year 1 had been completed and a rationalisation of the remaining budget undertaken, which had identified an under spend. Under spends from 2011-12 had also been identified which had added to the total budget available for the additional works.

The 5 year programme had been developed through analysis of condition survey results, which were undertaken by specialist contractors on an annual basis, feedback from Members and the Neighbourhood Forums. A full detailed

list of proposed schemes was provided. The total budget available for the additional works was £430,000 and in order to avoid overspends, contingencies had been included in the estimates.

Decision

That the additional highway maintenance schemes to be funded from surplus contingency underspend of the Local Transport Plan, Structural maintenance capital budget (Year 1) be progressed as per the detail of the report.

30. Davison Drive – Local Safety Scheme *(Assistant Director – Transportation and Engineering)*

Type of decision

Non Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To seek approval to implement traffic calming measures on Davison Drive and extend the existing 20mph speed limit to cover the full length of Davison Drive.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director (Transportation and Engineering) reported that following a recent road traffic accident involving a child pedestrian, residents of Davison Drive had submitted an 81 name petition requesting traffic calming measures be imposed. A number of attempts had been made to address road safety concerns on Davison Drive previously. These had included the provision of 'SLOW' markings mounted on red surfacing at various points along the road, a 20mph speed limit on the section between Carrick Street and Warren Road and electronic speed signs.

It was proposed that a series of 6 speed cushions be implemented on the road. The cushions were to cover the full extent of Davison Drive and help to reduce average traffic speed to around 20mph but still allow emergency service vehicles and buses to travel along the road unimpeded. It was also proposed that the existing 20mph speed limit be extended to cover the full extent of Davison Drive.

The Officer reported that a public meeting was held with residents to discuss various traffic calming options. Following the meeting a letter and plan were devised to all residents and ward members showing the preferred option. 29 replies were received of which 26 were in favour of the proposals and 3 against, however none of the respondents expressed any specific reason for their objection. A further public meeting was held were discussion took place

over extending the existing 20mph speed limit to cover the full extent of Davison Drive and this was considered acceptable. The emergency services had also been consulted with regards to the proposed traffic calming and speed limit proposals, and had no objections to the scheme.

It had been estimated that the proposals would cost £16,000 and would be funded through existing traffic and transportation budgets.

Decision

That the implementation of the scheme to reduce traffic speeds and improve road safety on Davison Drive be approved.

31. Key Vacant Building Grant Process *(Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of decision

Non Key Decision

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the Portfolio Holder to revise the application process for the Key Vacant Buildings Grant scheme so that Hartlepool Borough Council has the opportunity to quote for the grant works.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Senior Regeneration Officer reported that the Key Vacant Building Grant scheme offered grant assistance of up to 60% of eligible improvement costs up to a maximum threshold of £15,000 to help building owners bring vacant properties back into use. The grant funding was provided by the Council. The aim of the grant scheme was to address key empty buildings within Hartlepool by providing the opportunity for owners to undertake significant improvements to their property that would result in buildings being brought back into use. The scheme was primarily focused on the Town Centre and the Southern Business Zone.

The grant process involved the applicant obtaining three independent quotations against a schedule that officers from the Economic Regeneration Team prepare. The applicant was free to get quotations from any contractor and Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) did not make any recommendations of which contractor the applicant could select. Checks were made to ensure that the contractor and the quotes were legitimate. The quotes were also assessed

by the HBC Quantity Surveyor to ensure value for money. The grant was based on the lowest quotation although the applicant was free to choose whichever contractor they wished to complete the works.

It was proposed that the grant process be changed to a model similar to the Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme whereby the Housing Team obtain quotes through the NEPO Portal using the quick quotes method. For the Key Vacant Buildings Grants Scheme it was recommended to use the quick quotes system to obtain three quotations for the works including one from the Council. An itemised schedule would be compiled with the applicant so that comparable quotations could be obtained. The grant would be based on the lowest quotation and the applicant would be free to choose whichever contractor they wish to complete the works. The advantage of sourcing quotations through the quick quote system was that it would provide the opportunity for the Council to submit a quotation using a system that had a clear audit trail for transparency. The revised process would provide the opportunity for the Council to win contracts through the grant scheme which they currently do not have the opportunity to win. This provides the Council with additional income generation opportunities at a time when the Council is losing funding.

The changes to the grant process would not result in any risk to the Council as the applicant would remain responsible for the selection process and for ensuring that the works were completed to an acceptable standard. If the Council was successful in gaining work through the Key Vacant Building Grant scheme the works would be managed through the Council's existing management arrangements.

Decision

That the changes to the Key Vacant Buildings Grant process be approved.

32. Retail Revival Strategy Brief *(Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning)*

Type of decision

Non Key Decision

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the Portfolio Holder to develop a Retail Revival Strategy for Hartlepool. The Portfolio Holder is also requested to approve brief and recommend that officers identify and secure funding for the development of the strategy.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Senior Regeneration Officer reported that the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder approved the preparation of a brief for a Retail Strategy on the 24th August 2012. The development of a Retail Revival Strategy was proposed given the significant challenges that the town centre was facing and the growing number of vacant shops. As reported to the Portfolio Holder on the 28th September 2012 the scale of the challenge facing Hartlepool could be highlighted by the fact that the town centre had been highlighted as the fourth worst performing medium sized centre in the country with a vacancy rate of 28.8%. A long term strategy was therefore required.

The Retail Revival Strategy would provide a comprehensive strategy and action plan to improve retail opportunities in the town. Comprehensive survey work would form a key element of the strategy. It was important that the views of residents, businesses and town centre users were used to help shape the action plan. The Senior Regeneration Officer reported that specialist retail analysis would examine the short, medium and long term capacity for retail development and how this was impacting upon the performance of existing retailers. The results would be used to determine a suitable strategy to manage retail development in the town whilst protecting the town centre. The Retail Revival Strategy would examine the suitability of existing retail space and how this compared to the needs of modern retailers. It was important that adequate supply of appropriate space was available to attract target retailers for the town.

It was proposed to complete as many of the actions as possible in-house however specialist external input would be required. It had been estimated that this would cost a maximum of £30k. Funding opportunities were also being explored for the production of the strategy.

Following a question from the Portfolio Holder regarding University involvement, the Senior Regeneration Officer advised that discussions were taking place with Universities and that it was hoped that they would become involved in the survey and research work.

The Senior Regeneration Officer informed the Portfolio Holder that some of the recommendations of the Retail Revival Strategy would form the basis of the retail section of the Hartlepool Central Area Supplementary Planning Document, which would add weight to the recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder approved moving the date back for the completion of the Central Area Supplementary Planning Document so that the two pieces of work could tie together. The Portfolio Holder approved a change to the Economic Regeneration Strategy deadlines to reflect the new timescale for the production of the Central Area Supplementary Planning Document.

Decision

That the brief for the Retail Revival Strategy be endorsed and the production of a Retail Revival Strategy for Hartlepool be approved. Officers were approved to identify and secure funding for the production of the strategy.

The meeting concluded at 10.15

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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