

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

21 January 2013

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond - In the Chair

Councillors: John Lauderdale (Adult Public Health Services Portfolio Holder)
Paul Thompson (Finance and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Chief Executive
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor
Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services
Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health
Alastair Rae, Public Relations Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

151. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Cath Hill, Children's and Community Services Portfolio Holder.

152. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

153. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2013

Received.

154. Reablement Strategy 2012-15 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Key – test (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference No CAS 135/12

Purpose of report

To seek Cabinet approval to the Reablement Strategy 2012-15 which sets out the strategic aims and direction for the Reablement Service over the next three years.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services provided background information relating to the government's continuous promotion of prevention as a key principle to empower communities and people to regain or retain their independence. Reablement was defined as "working with individuals who have support needs to rebuild their confidence, support the developing of daily living skills and promote community access and integration". There had been a national allocation of approximately £300 million in 2012/13 for reablement services. The benefits of reablement were outlined in the report. The aim of reablement within Hartlepool was "to provide the appropriate support to people to ensure that they can live as independently as possible, for as long as possible". It was reported that the reablement service was free and was not subject to the Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) eligibility criteria.

The Reablement Strategy outlined the purpose of reablement and also sets out a number of outcomes that reablement services were expected to deliver including the six strategic recommendations required to meet the expected outcomes. An annual action plan would detail the actions required to meet and achieve the outcomes and recommendations of the strategy.

With regard to consultation arrangements, the final draft of the Reablement Strategy had been circulated for consultation to a number of key stakeholders and community groups, referred to in the report. Comments had been received from both professionals and members of the public.

Members were referred to the current reablement funding arrangements as set out in the report

In response to the Mayor's request for assurances that the comments of professionals and members of the public had been addressed in the strategy, the Assistant Director of Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services advised that it was envisaged that such comments had been addressed. However, clarification would be provided following the meeting.

Decision

That the Reablement Strategy 2012-15, be approved.

155. Community Energy Collective Switching (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Key – tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Reference No RN38/12

Purpose of report

To update Members on the progress of implementing a Community Energy Switching Scheme and to seek approval to appoint a preferred switching partner.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods presented the report which included background information in relation to the scheme following Cabinet's request, at their meeting on 4 October 2012, that a switching scheme be explored and the option for the Council to become an energy provider be also considered. The option for the Council to become an energy provider was more complex and officers were still assessing the feasibility of this process.

The report sought approval on a switching scheme which required swift action to hit the market at the right time to achieve local benefits as soon as possible. The switching process was led by a third party organisation with experience in collating details of energy accounts and consumption and facilitated the switch on behalf of residents, further details of which were provided, as outlined in the report.

In relation to proposals, the Council was looking to conduct a switch either alone or with other Tees Valley authorities and discussions were currently ongoing in this regard.

The report provided details of how the scheme may work. It was highlighted that of all the switching schemes which had, or were being implemented, IChoosr had been the preferred partner. A communication strategy was being formulated to ensure the Council obtained the maximum benefit from the scheme. Details of promotion and communication arrangements as well as predicted outcomes were provided.

Members welcomed the scheme and commented on the benefits as a result. The need to publicise and promote the scheme as widely as possible was emphasised and the benefits of publicising the scheme to residents via the Council Tax reminder letters was suggested. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods advised that this option was currently being pursued.

Decision

- (i) That progress to establish a Collective Energy Switching Scheme, be noted.

- (ii) That approval be granted to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods to enter into negotiations with IChoosr to provide a switching scheme for Hartlepool alone, or in conjunction with other Tees Valley authorities.

156. Empty Property Purchasing Scheme – Local Authority Flexible Tenancies (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Key – test (ii) applies - Forward Plan Reference No RN32/12

Purpose of report

To set out the proposed tenancy arrangements for the Empty Property Purchasing Scheme (EPPS) and specifically seek approval for the implementation of Local Authority Flexible tenancy agreements for all properties let through this scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning provided an overview of the Empty Property Purchasing Scheme as well as background information to the Local Authority Flexible Tenancy arrangements. It was proposed that the Council implemented the use of Local Authority Flexible Tenancies for all properties acquired through the Empty Property Purchasing Scheme. These would be let at an affordable rent for a minimum period of 5 years and in exceptional circumstances 2 years. Details of introductory tenancy as well as fixed term tenancy arrangements were outlined, as set out in the report.

The consultation exercise undertaken through the production of the Tees Valley Tenancy Strategy identified that the introduction of fixed-term tenancies should not undermine the sustainability of the community or neighbourhoods. It was recognised that the Government had introduced fixed-term tenancies to allow for more flexible arrangements.

The use of these tenancies would provide the opportunity to be flexible with the properties acquired through the Empty Homes Scheme. The tenants opportunity for home ownership was retained through the right to buy but using a flexible tenancy arrangement the Council could implement intermediate housing products to the empty homes stock which would serve to reintroduce owner occupation in an affordable way. Further details of the proposed scheme, lettings policy and monitoring and review arrangements were included in the report.

Decision

- (i) That the use of Local Authority flexible tenancies for all properties let through the Empty Property Purchasing Scheme, be approved.
- (ii) That the principles of the Lettings Policy, set out in Section 5 of the report, be approved.

157. Furniture Solutions Project *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

For information only

Purpose of report

To feedback the outcome of the procurement process following the approval of the project proposal by Cabinet.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning referred to approval of the introduction of a Council assisted scheme for the provision of household white goods and furniture in Hartlepool and the recent procurement process given that the projected value of the project was under the threshold for tendering services. The report included details of the procurement process undertaken, consultation and publication arrangements as well as details of the level of interest received. Interest had been expressed from 11 organisations who had been invited to submit their proposal via the NEPO portal.

In terms of procurement outcome and commissioning, one partnership bid submission had been received. Hartlepool Credit Union submitted the bid, as the host organisation, working in collaboration with East Durham Partnership, OFCA, Choose2Re-use Furniture Services and Epilepsy Outlook. The Audit Sub-Committee, on 17 December 2012, noted the background to the project and the procurement process that had been undertaken.

It was highlighted that Hartlepool Credit Union, as the host organisation, would manage the scheme and would be the initial point of contact for all customer referrals. Further information regarding project delivery and the role of the Credit Union was included in the report. It was noted that the scheme would result in over 350 beneficiaries over two years, over which time the scheme would become self financing.

Decision

That the contents of the report, be noted.

The meeting concluded at 9.50 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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