

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION RECORD

28 June 2013

The meeting commenced at 9.30 in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Marjorie James, Alison Lilley, Carl Richardson, Chris Simmons and Paul Thompson.

Also Present: In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 the following substitutions were in place –

Councillor Rob Cook for Councillor Robbie Payne,
Councillor Ged Hall for Councillor Angie Wilcox.

Officers:

- Dave Stubbs, Chief Executive
- Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
- Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
- Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor
- Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health
- Jill Harrison, Assistant Director, Adults
- John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
- Graham Frankland, Assistant Director, Resources
- Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
- Sandra Shears, Head of Finance (Corporate)
- Wally Stagg, Organisational Development Manager
- Rachel Clark, HR Business Partner
- David Hart, Strategic Procurement Manager
- Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
- Maggie Heaps, Adult Education Coordinator
- Neil Harrison, Head of Service (Commissioning)
- Joan Chapman, Corporate ICT Manager
- John Bulman, ICT Contract Manager
- Lisa Anderson, Information and Consultation Officer
- Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
- David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

24. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Keith Dawkins, Peter Jackson, Robbie Payne and Angie Wilcox.

25. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Cook and Simmons declared personal interests in Minute No. 27.

Councillor Hall declared personal interest in Minute Nos 27, 28, 31 and 32.

Councillor Thompson declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. 29 and left the meeting during its consideration.

26. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2013 and 31 May 2013

Confirmed.

The Chair referred to the question asked at the meeting of Council on 6 June 2013 (Minute 20 refers) in relation to the rationale, given the current economic climate, for the decision taken by the Committee relating to the performance increment scheme for the Chief Executive and Directors. The Chair indicated that at Council he had failed to include in his response that the salaries received by those officers were now lower than in the past and previously there had been no performance management, which was now in place.

27. Going Forward Together Project (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN 10/13.

Purpose of report

To inform the Finance and Policy Committee of the additional funding awarded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Education Funding Agency (EFA) to the Council to support delivery of additional activity for the Going Forward Together (GFT) project.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported that in November 2010; through an open and competitive tendering process, the Council secured £614,000 of SFA/EFA/European Social Funding (ESF) to enable the delivery of Hartlepool's GFT project. The aim of the GFT project was to provide targeted interventions to young people aged 14-19 to prevent them from becoming disengaged from mainstream learning, support vulnerable young people during periods of learning transition and re-engage young people who were identified as not in education, employment or training

(NEET) or are in danger of becoming NEET.

To date, GFT has registered 318 (22 above profile) young people onto the project, of which 91 had progressed into further learning opportunities (21 above profile), 48 into employment and 22 had been sustained in employment 6 months after leaving the project.

GFT is the main NEET reduction project in Hartlepool and continued to be one of the best performing SFA/EFA/ESF projects in the North East. Due to the ongoing success of GFT, the SFA and EFA had now awarded an additional £173,000 to the Council to deliver the following additional outcomes:

- Start an additional 77 young people aged 14-19 years of which:
 - 47 must complete a non-accredited course
 - 13 must complete an accredited course
 - 54 to enter into further learning
 - 1 into employment.

The Committee welcomed the additional funding to the GFT project.

Decision

That the report be noted and the additional funding for the project be received and welcomed in supporting young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or were in danger of becoming NEET.

28. Supported Living – Land at Burbank Street and Centre for Independent Living *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Assistant Director (Adults))*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN 5/13.

Purpose of report

To outline a proposal to redevelop land adjacent to the Havelock Centre for Independent Living (CIL), including the potential development of 20-25 units of accommodation for adults with a disability and a new purpose built Independent Living Centre.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported that in September 2012 the Council was approached by a specialist adult social care provider seeking land to develop with the intention to provide housing care and support for adults with a disability. Discussions took place with both Planning Policy and Estates and two sites adjoining the Havelock Centre in Burbank were put forward. These sites were acceptable to the developer and terms were provisionally agreed for the sale of the sites.

Since that time discussions had progressed with Child and Adult Services and the Planning and Estates sections in relation to the proposed development. Terms had been provisionally agreed, as outlined in Confidential Appendix A to the report which contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)), for the sale of land relating to the residential and supported living elements of the scheme. Further negotiations would be required in relation to the CIL site.

During discussion with the developer, a proposal to construct a replacement for the existing Havelock Centre for Independent Living was proposed and some provisional plans had been drawn up. The present proposal was to build a new centre (of at least 950 sq metres Net Internal Area plus car parking externally) as a replacement for the existing Havelock Centre on the land adjoining it, prior to demolition of the existing centre and construction of a supported living residential scheme on the site of the current centre. The second site to the west in Burbank Street could be used to provide 20 – 30 units of accommodation of mixed tenure including supported tenancies, shared living and specialist resident provision for adults with complex health and social care needs.

At present there were four disability specific organisations within the existing Havelock Centre leasing office space. The new development proposed to increase the office accommodation as well as creating additional training areas to increase income generation. In relation to the new Independent Living Centre, the developer was proposing that the Council would lease the Centre and manage it as the current CIL is managed. No lease terms have been agreed but this is likely to be a long term lease agreement (circa 35 years).

Part of the development would require the existing Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) to be relocated within the area and the developer had agreed to consult on and consider this in their proposals. This was an important consideration as the Council's Multi Use Games Area Strategy sought to maximise the availability of such facilities at ward level.

Members welcomed this exciting proposal though had some questions of

clarification in relation to the proposal. Members questioned the issues around transport for the users of the facility and the Head of Service indicated that discussions were already commenced with the Integrated Transport Unit. Members also indicated that the users of the CIL had sought assurance that the facility would remain open while the development was ongoing. The Head of Service indicated that the plan was that once the new facility was completed then operations would move to that new building; there was not anticipated to be a closure period. Members also sought assurance that the MUGA would definitely be re-provided within the new development and this assurance was given by officers. The Chair also indicated that a robust business case would be required before the Council could relinquish ownership of the land in question.

Decision

That the Council enter into an exclusivity agreement with the proposed developer to provide the required security prior to design, site investigation and consultation work and the submission of a planning application.

Councillor Thompson left the meeting at this point.

29. Skills Support for the Workforce *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services and Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference CAS11/13.

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Finance and Policy Committee to appoint fixed term additional staff to manage and deliver the Tees Valley European Social Fund bid for Skills Support for the Workforce – June 2013 to July 2015.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that in May 2013 the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contacted the Adult Education service to announce that they had been successful in the bidding process and that they would issue a contract for the service to manage and deliver the project across the Tees Valley. The bid was led by Hartlepool Adult Education on behalf of the five Local Authorities Adult Education services and their respective Economic Regeneration teams in addition to the specialist skills providers. Details of the successful bid had been reported to the Regeneration Services Committee meeting on 20 June 2013, minute

no.9 refers.

The Assistant Director indicated that In order to deliver the project according to the specifications listed by the SFA, additional staff would need to be appointed for the duration of the project. After discussions with the SFA it had been proposed that separate staff would be required for the 2 different parts of the project – the Local Response Fund and the Delivery Project.

The staffing structures for both the Local Response Fund (LRF) and Delivery of Skills parts of the project were shown in appendices to the report. There were several possibilities for the number of posts which could be supported for the capacity building element of the project, the limiting factor was the amount of money which the SFA had stated could be used for each type of post. Based on these amounts five possible options had been identified and these were set out in the report.

Taking into account all the factors it was proposed that option D was the best fit. This would give sufficient Business coordinators and Skills coordinators to cover all sectors. It would also give potential staff 1.5 year full time contracts. This would give them ample opportunity to build relationships with the required sectors and deliver the project outcomes.

Members sought assurance that internal candidates would be able to apply for the posts, including those on the redeployment register. The Assistant Director indicated that this would be the case. The Chair indicated that as the main thrust of the project was economic regeneration through education, the project would be led by the Economic Regeneration Team within the authority working in collaboration with Adult Education.

Decision

That the appointment of the additional staff would be made within the Economic Regeneration Team as outlined in the report and Option D be approved, namely;-

1. Local Response Fund action plan -

- 1 x Project Manager (LRF)
- 1 x Skills Coordinator
- 1 x Curriculum Support assistant

2. Delivery of the capacity building element of Tees Valley Skills -

- 1 x Project Manager (TV Skills)
- 3 x Business Coordinators (Final number to be determined)
- 3 x Skills Coordinators (Final number to be determined)

All posts were currently subject to Job Evaluation and the numbers may

change should there be a risk of over extending the finite salary allocation allowed in the project budget.

Councillor Thompson returned to the meeting.

30. Acquisition of Assets – Jackson’s Landing *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Key Decision - Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN 98/11.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to purchase Jackson’s Landing to facilitate the regeneration of a key site in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director outlined the background to the proposal to purchase Jackson’s Landing. In order to minimise any risk to the Council a significant amount of work had been undertaken to identify a suitable residential developer who would be willing to undertake a quality scheme on a ‘back to back’ basis that would both complement the quality of design at the adjoining Historic Quay and provide a range of housing to add sustainability to the Marina.

Although a suitable developer had been identified and a scheme prepared unfortunately, at a very late stage, they decided to withdraw from the purchase. All other residential developers with north east land requirements both nationally and locally had been contacted to seek further interest but at this time they are unwilling to commit to buy due to other obligations. As such it is currently not possible to achieve a ‘back to back’ sale.

In order to secure the site it would be necessary to commit to a purchase without the comfort of an onward sale. Although this represented a risk, the benefit of having control of a strategic site critical to the long term sustainability of the Marina with the ability to address a large derelict building in a key location is fundamental to the implementation of the Councils Central Investment Framework. As the property market improved the value of the site and its desirability would increase and the Council would be able to determine the type and form of development on the site that would add maximum economic development impact for the town. It was important for the town that the land was available for development and that it was not purchased and land banked by a third party which could create long term blight.

The options available to the Council were set out in the report and it was recommended that the site be purchased without the safety net of an immediate back to back sale but with the recommendation that if no alternative and financially viable use of the site for operation purposes was identified by December 2014 then the site should be disposed of for housing and or commercial development.

The Chief Finance Officer outlined the financial risks to the authority and that there was a clear need for a strategy to be clearly identified for the site. It was anticipated that this project should be eligible for a 'Growing Places' loan and an application had been submitted to enable this process to commence, subject to a decision at this meeting. The Growing Place loan would be an interest free loan repayable no later than August 2015.

A successful application for a Growing Places loan would mean that this project could proceed without an un-budgeted revenue cost to the Council for the period of the loan. Without this funding the Council would need to use traditional borrowing and over the period of the Growing Places loan (i.e. up to August 2015) this would have an un-budgeted revenue cost of approximately £45,000, based on current interest rates. In accordance with existing Local Authority financial regulations all borrowing, including a Growing Places loan, was classified as Prudential Borrowing. Therefore, to progress this issue and to draw down the Growing Places loan it was recommended that full Council approval was sought to increase the Prudential Borrowing Limits up to the maximum of the purchase price details in Appendix A, This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A 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).

Members were concerned that the previous arrangement for a back to back sale had fallen through when the plan agreed by Cabinet in May had been to progress the deal. The Assistant Director indicated that the deal had fallen through in May but the Council had only become aware later. Members were concerned that no money had been lost through the arrangement that had collapsed and the Assistant Director assured Members that no money had been paid on any option discussed with the owners of the site.

Members welcomed the proposals, particularly as it effected a 'plan B' for the site and still placed the Council in a controlling position in dealing with a site that had become a significant blight on the town. Members considered that an appropriate development scheme for the site could be obtained and that purchasing the site could only bring that forward. Members noted the risks as highlighted by the Chief Finance Officer but were also concerned that, as highlighted by the Assistant Director, Regeneration, other potential purchasers of the site may simply land bank the site for development or resale sometime in the future leaving the town with an unsightly blight and

no control over its future.

The Chair sought the Committee's support for the proposals through a vote. The majority of votes cast through show of hands were in support of the proposal to purchase the site as recommended.

During consideration of the matter during the public section of the meeting, a Member indicated that they had a question in relation to the proposal that would require consideration of the information set out in the exempt section of the report but would not affect the decision made by the Committee. Appropriate discussions therefore took place during the exempt section of the meeting and are recorded in that section of the minutes.

Decision

1. That Jacksons Landing be acquired on the terms as agreed and set out in confidential Appendix A which contains exempt information under Schedule 12A 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).
2. That by December 2014 the Council will either have identified an alternative use for this site, or achieved an onward sale, and that if this is not achieved the Council notes that it will face unbudgeted revenue costs as highlighted in the report.
3. That Council be requested to approve the funding for the acquisition of the site as a departure from the 2013/14 Budget and Policy Framework.

31. Mill House Master Plan – First Phase *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Key Test (i) and (ii) applies - Forward Plan Reference No RN 90/11.

Purpose of report

To adopt the Mill House masterplan and to seek agreement to enter into a development partnership with Gus Robinson Developments, on land to the North of the football club, for the first phase of delivery.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported that, as previously reported

to Cabinet on the 19th March 2012, Gus Robinson Developments had been selected as the preferred bidder to develop a masterplan for the Mill House area of Hartlepool, which encompassed six hectares close to the town centre north of Morrison's supermarket between Clarence Road and Raby Road.

Gus Robinson Developments previously produced proposals for a masterplan which were reported to Cabinet on the 19th March 2012. They now wished to commence with the delivery of the first phase of development which involved providing housing on the Council owned land to the North of the site.

In order to facilitate the delivery of the scheme it was proposed that the Council enters into a Development Partnership with Gus Robinson Developments. In order to enable the first phase it was proposed that the partnership would share the risk of development and as such it was proposed that the Council transfer the land and Gus Robinson provide the capital and development expertise. Any profit in excess of the development/masterplan preparation costs and land value would be divided equally between the parties. The land to be transferred extended to some 1.06 acres and was identified in Appendix 2 to the report.

The revised masterplan proposals detailed in Appendix 3 to the report included two options depending on whether the existing leisure facilities were redeveloped on the existing site or relocated elsewhere. Alternative sites were currently being reviewed to determine the viability of the leisure proposals.

It was therefore proposed to adopt the masterplan with two options which included leisure facilities either being redeveloped on the existing site or relocated to an alternative location. A detailed report determining the future of the leisure facilities at Mill House would be brought back to the committee at a future date.

Members welcomed the proposals and also welcomed the inclusion of the Odeon site within the masterplan as this had been a blight on the town centre for over 20 years. It was indicated that the housing development would include 10% social housing. It was noted that the proposals for prudential borrowing to fund the proposals would require Council approval as a departure from the Budget and Policy Framework. The recommendations were unanimously supported by the Committee.

Decision

1. That the Mill House masterplan be adopted with the inclusion of two options depending on whether the leisure facilities were to be redeveloped on the existing site or relocated elsewhere.
2. That the creation of a development partnership between the Council

and Gus Robinson Developments be approved in order to facilitate the delivery of housing on land identified in Appendix 2 of the report as part of the first phase of the delivery of the Mill House Masterplan.

3. That Council be requested to approve the funding for the proposal as a departure from the 2013/14 Budget and Policy Framework.

32. Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2013-14 (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide the Finance and Policy Committee with suggested revisions to the Commissioning and Procurement Strategy and seek comments on and endorsement of the Strategy.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Resources outlined the background to the development of the Commissioning and Procurement Strategy and the most recent revisions which were included in the strategy document set out as an appendix to the report.

Members welcomed the document and considered that Members should take up the offer of training on the strategy. The Chair thanked all those involved in the preparation of the strategy welcomed the inclusion of 'social value' within the document.

Decision

That the Commissioning and Procurement Strategy for 2013 – 2014 be endorsed.

33. Celebrating Achievement 2013 (*Assistant Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To request that the Finance and Policy Committee approve the proposal to hold a 2013 Celebrating Achievement Event.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive outlined the background to the Celebrating Achievement events in the past in supporting and acknowledging the work and achievements of staff. It was proposed that an afternoon event covering long service and academic/vocational achievement continues and takes place on 6 September 2013 in the Council Chamber and an evening event recognising the other achievements of the workforce is held on 27 September 2013 at the Borough Hall. The evening event would be fully funded through external resources. The Committee supported the holding of the two events though commented that the evening event should be scaled dependent on the resources available. Members welcomed the opportunity to highlight that the endeavours of all staff were recognised. It was indicated that the date of the evening event may need to be amended subject to the Mayor and Members availability.

Decision

That the proposals for holding the Celebrating Achievement event be approved.

34. Employee Sickness Absence Annual Report 2012-13 *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To update the Finance and Policy Committee on the Council's performance in 2012/13 in relation to employee sickness absence and seek approval for the sickness absence targets and key focus areas for 2013/14.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported on the employee sickness absence statistics for 2012/13 which showed improvement for the sixth consecutive year. The target figure for 2012/13 for the Council had been 7.70 wte days absence per wte employee (whole time equivalent). The end of year figure,

although not meeting the target, still showed an improved figure of 7.96 days per wte per employee per annum.

Members welcomed the report but did feel that it was incumbent on managers to show staff that they were appreciated in their work as this had such a significant effect on performance and moral and subsequently sickness rates. The Assistant Chief Executive agreed and indicated that there was generally a culture of support for all levels of staff throughout the authority. This was evident not only for those at work but those on sickness absence, particularly those on long term sickness absence, through the support offered to help bring people back to work. The Chief Executive supported the comments and considered that it was great testament to the staff that during the recession, spending cuts and the welfare reforms that sickness levels were still falling.

Members acknowledged the comments and indicated that they were aware of large numbers of staff working beyond their normal hours in many teams across the authority. Members queried why the target for schools staff had increased on the previous year and were informed that the revised target was based on the previous year's performance.

Decision

That the information in relation to employee absence in 2012/13 be noted and that the sickness absence targets and key focus areas for 2013/14 as set out in the report be approved.

35. Proposal for the Department of Public Health (*Director of Public Health*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the proposed management structure within the newly created Department of Public Health.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Public Health reported on the statutory functions that had been transferred to the authority in relation to Public Health following the introduction of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The report also set out the non-statutory, discretionary functions also now undertaken.

The report set out the Director's proposed structure for her department designed to meet the expectations of the authority in delivering its statutory and non-statutory functions. It was highlighted that an application from a member of staff for voluntary redundancy had been received and it was proposed to accept the application as part of the implementation of the proposed staffing structure.

Decision

That the proposed management structure within the new Public Health Department, as reported, be approved

36. Scrutiny Investigation into Selected Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Topics – Final Report *(Overview and Scrutiny Chairs)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek consideration of the conclusions/recommendations contained within the Overview and Scrutiny final report, formulated following completion of the 2012/13 investigation(s) of selected JSNA topics. Subject to the approval of the report's recommendations, delegated responsibility was sought for the monitoring of actions to the appropriate Policy Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The final report of the scrutiny investigation into selected Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Topics was introduced by the former chair of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, Councillor James, and commended to the committee for approval. The former Chair of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum, Councillor Hall, commented on the value of the investigation into employment and the work of the Economic Regeneration Team in delivering great results for the authority and the town.

Decision

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny final report and associated appendices, formulated following completion of the 2012/13 investigation(s) of selected JSNA topics be received;

2. That the conclusions / recommendations contained within the Overview and Scrutiny final report be received and approved; and
3. That responsibility for the monitoring of actions, subsequent to the reports recommendations, be delegated to the appropriate Policy Committees.

37. Scrutiny Investigation into Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Topics – Action Plans (*Director of Child and Adult Services, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Director of Public Health*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek agreement to an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Investigation(s) in relation to selected JSNA topics.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Scrutiny Manager presented for the Committee's approval, the action plans that had been developed to monitor the implementation of the recommendations approved by the Committee under the previous item. Actions would be monitored through the submission of six monthly monitoring reports to the appropriate Policy Committee.

Decision

That the action plans, as detailed in Appendix A – G of the report, in response to the recommendations of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and the Scrutiny Forums investigations into the JSNA topics be approved.

38. Welfare Reform New Burdens Funding (*Chief Finance Officer*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To set out details of funding recently announced by DCLG and the DWP to meet the costs of implementing welfare reform changes in 2013/14 and options for applying some of the available resources.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Chief Finance Officer reported on the impact of the welfare reforms across the town and the direct impact they were having on the authority through increased workloads and interaction with the public. It was indicated that a further report would be brought to the Committee at the end of the first quarter which should include some meaningful statistics for Members consideration.

The Government had recognised that the welfare reform changes would impose additional workload burdens and challenges to local authorities. In line with the spirit of the New Burdens doctrine, the DWP announced in April 2013 that it would provide national funding of £24.1m to local authorities to support the costs of implementing welfare reform changes. Hartlepool's share of this national funding allocation was £55,812. It was proposed that this one-off funding be utilised to appoint a Housing Benefits Assessment Officer, a Housing Benefit Advice Officer and modern apprentice for twelve month fixed terms. The creation of the modern apprentice post reflected comments from the Chair to use part of this funding to provide a training opportunity. The modern apprentice post would be continued for two further years funded from within the department's budget. Members welcomed the creation of the modern apprenticeship.

Decision

1. That the Appointment on a 12 month Fixed Term contract of a Benefits Assessment Officer - Band 7 and a Housing Advice Officer - Band 9 at a combined cost of £48,170 be approved.
2. That the Appointment of a Modern Apprentice to work within the Revenues and Benefits services at a year 1 cost of £7,032 be approved.
3. That the necessary IT and process amendments covering Discretionary Housing Payment reporting to the DWP using the balance of one off funding of £610 be approved.

39. Adoption Reforms (*Assistant Director, Children's Services and Chief Finance Officer*)

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To inform the Finance and Policy Committee of the Department for Education, Adoption Reforms, how the Council proposes to implement the reforms and its financial priorities for the (2013 – 2014) Adoption Reform Grant.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Adults reported that in the last two years the government has raised the profile of adoption, highlighting a national crisis in the numbers of children waiting for adoptive placements. Since the report published in March 2012 'Action Plan for Adoption – Tackling Delay', there has been a range of initiatives announced aimed at improving adoption for children and adoptive parents.

To support the required reform of adoption services, the Department for Education had provided additional monies to Local Authorities through a one year Adoption Reform Grant. The grant was authorised by the Secretary of State for Education under powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and comes in 2 parts; Part A is an allocation of £100m (non ring fenced) of which Hartlepool's allocation is £169,978. The grant allocation had been calculated based on a mixture of the under 5's population, deprivation, and a scarcity to allocated money. An area cost adjustment had been applied to account for the differing cost of inputs in different local authorities.

The report set out in detail the government's reforms and the proposals for the expenditure of the grant to facilitate their introduction. It is proposed that the one year grant funding is used to:

- Create a dedicated Family Finder post to strengthen practice in searching for families for children. This role will also support social workers in completing Child Permanence Reports and life story work with children undertake any direct work with the child to prepare him or her for adoption;
- Provide additional social work capacity within the adoption team to meet the reduced timescales for training and approval of adopters and increase recruitment of adopters;

- Create a part time development post to lead on recruitment, foster to adopt, concurrent planning and skill up the wider workforce in relation to life story and placement preparation and develop adopter information;
- Create part time post to lead further development of robust post adoption support for children, birth families and adopters;
- Create an additional newly qualified social worker post within fieldwork teams to strengthen capacity;
- Provide additional funding to the placement budget to reflect the increased interagency fees.

Given the short term nature of the grant funding the additional posts would be one year fixed term posts and as a consequence, the Assistant Director indicated that it may be difficult to recruit suitably experienced and qualified social workers. To manage this, it was proposed that workers were seconded into the one year posts from within the existing team and the wider children's social care workforce.

Members acknowledged that the department had a very good record in placing children for adoption quickly once it had been determined that that was in the best interests of the child. There was concern at the potential back filling that may be required elsewhere in the department's front line services through the secondments that were suggested as part of these proposals. The Assistant Director indicated that the authority had not experienced any problems filling social worker posts on short-term contracts in other areas of its work. With these posts, the required experience and the demands through other authorities doing the same meant that secondment would be more appropriate. Members requested that the back-filling arrangements be reported to the Children's Services Policy Committee.

Decision

1. That the Adoption Reforms taking place at national level be noted.
2. That the plans for local implementation and the use of the one-off grant provided by the Government, as detailed in the report, be approved.

40. Viewpoint 39 – Citizens' Panel Results (*Assistant Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To present the results of Viewpoint 39, which had been distributed to the

Citizen's Panel in December 2012.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that Viewpoint, Hartlepool Borough Council's citizen's panel, was one of the ways the council consults and involves local people in the governance of Hartlepool. It was a statistically balanced panel of local people who receive questionnaires at regular intervals throughout the year, asking for their views on a variety of local issues facing the Council and Hartlepool as a whole.

Each phase of Viewpoint covers various topics and within this phase there were questions on:

- Children's Centre's and Youth Centre's
- Internet, Technology and Smartphones
- Awareness of Benefits Welfare Reform

Viewpoint 39 had been sent in December 2012 to all 1,415 active members of the panel. A response rate of 70% was achieved with 968 questionnaires being returned. The Assistant Chief Executive stated that 70% was an excellent response rate for a citizen's panel survey.

The data obtained through Viewpoint surveys were weighted for analysis purposes. This was because, although the full panel is statistically balanced to provide a representative sample for Hartlepool, not all panel members complete the questionnaire at each phase.

While noting that the panel was statistically balanced, Members expressed concerns as to the returns from individual wards. The Assistant Chief Executive stated that the panel was reflective of the socio-economic balance of the town, its demographic balance and was also balanced across areas and wards.

Members queried the balance of responses returned electronically as in some areas of the town access to the internet would be limited. It was indicated that 75% of the returns were submitted on the paper form of the survey. In relation to the survey results on children's centres, Members were concerned that the results were not reflective as 84% indicated that they had no childcare responsibilities. The Assistant Chief Executive indicated that the survey on children's centres was not intended to be a user survey; it was about the community's awareness of those centres and the services they provided.

Members questioned the original establishment of the panel and how it was refreshed. The Assistant Chief Executive described the background to the Viewpoint panel and how the detailed statistics held by Tees Valley Unlimited were utilised to ensure a fair and balanced cross section of the community was utilised in the surveys.

Decision

That the results of Viewpoint 39, as reported, be noted.

41. Public Health Core Officer to Clinical Commissioning Groups – Memorandum of Understanding *(Director of Public Health)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To present to the Finance and Policy Committee for information, the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Hartlepool Borough Council and the Hartlepool and Stockton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) regarding the core offer of public health expertise.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Public Health reported that one of the key roles for local public health teams in the regulations following the Health and Social Care Act 2012 was to provide public health expertise to the NHS commissioners of healthcare services. Local authorities since 1st April 2013 had a duty to provide a core service of specialist public health expertise and advice to NHS commissioners.

The MOU, set out as an appendix to the report, was based on national guidance and covered the content of core public health advice from local authorities to CCGs. It estimated that about 40% of the public health team's time would be needed to deliver the core offer and suggested the criteria CCGs could use to assess the quality of the service provided.

The five local authorities in Tees Valley had created a Tees Valley Public Health Shared Service (TVPHSS) to support the work of their local public health teams. The delivery of the public health core offer to CCGs as detailed in the MOU would be delegated principally to the Tees Valley Public Health Shared Service.

Decision

That memorandum of understanding for the public health core offer to the Hartlepool and Stockton Clinical Commissioning Group be noted.

42. ICT Managed Service *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference CE56/13.

Purpose of report

To inform the Finance and Policy Committee of the outcome of the Invitation to Submit Final Tender and the evaluation processes for the selection of the Preferred Bidder for the ICT Managed Service. On the basis of the evaluation results and the objectives outlined by the Authority at the outset of this exercise, to seek Committee approval, to proceed to Contract Award for the Preferred Bidder.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported in detail on the background to the Council's ICT managed service contract and –

- The procurement process and timescales
- The evaluation methodology
- The bid submissions
- The risk implications

It was highlighted that, in particular, the assessment of the risk implications had been a very robust process. The Assistant Chief Executive indicated that while the process had been extensive and the timetable challenging, the process had been delivered on time which was a credit to the staff involved closely with the process over the past ten months. The significant help and advice provided by the external advisors – both legal and technical – was also highlighted.

The Chief Finance Officer outlined the financial appraisal of the three bids that had been submitted to the Council. Again, a very robust approach to the detailed bids had been taken and a significant amount of work behind the scenes had been undertaken to analyse the financial information provided to ensure it met the cost envelope set by the council and that bids delivered the required savings year on year to meet those established in the MTFS.

In order to outline the detail of the bids and recommend a preferred bidder the meeting moved into closed session to consider the information set out in the exempt section of the report which contained exempt information under Schedule 12A 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).

At the conclusion of the item, the Chair expressed his thanks to the team that had been involved in the highly detailed procurement process and evaluation of the bids submitted. Based on the report submitted to the Committee their work had led to a very positive outcome for both the Council and Hartlepool.

Decision

The decision of the Committee is set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

43. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

44. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to 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 45 – ICT Managed Service – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para3, Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

Minute 46 – Acquisition of Assets – Jackson's Landing – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para 3, Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

45. ICT Managed Service (*Assistant Chief Executive*) This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para. 3)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference CE56/13.

Purpose of report

To inform the Finance and Policy Committee of the outcome of the Invitation to Submit Final Tender and the evaluation processes for the selection of the Preferred Bidder for the ICT Managed Service. On the basis of the evaluation results and the objectives outlined by the Authority at the outset of this exercise, to seek Committee approval, to proceed to Contract Award for the Preferred Bidder.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported in detail on the background to the Council's ICT managed service contract and –

- The procurement process and timescales
- The evaluation methodology
- The bid submissions
- The risk implications

It was highlighted that, in particular, the assessment of the risk implications had been a very robust process. The Assistant Chief Executive indicated that while the process had been extensive and the timetable challenging, the process had been delivered on time which was a credit to the staff involved closely with the process over the past ten months. The significant help and advice provided by the external advisors – both legal and technical – was also highlighted.

The Chief Finance Officer outlined the financial appraisal of the three bids that had been submitted to the Council. Again, a very robust approach to the detailed bids had been taken and a significant amount of work behind the scenes had been undertaken to analyse the financial information provided to ensure it met the cost envelope set by the council and that bids delivered the required savings year on year to meet those established in the MTFS.

In order to outline the detail of the bids and recommend a preferred bidder the meeting moved into closed session to consider the information set out in the exempt section of the report which contained exempt information under Schedule 12A 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 three bidders were identified in the exempt section of the report.

The Assistant Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer outlined to the Committee the detailed evaluation scores of the submitted bids as set out in the exempt section of the report.

At the conclusion of the item, the Chair expressed his thanks to the team that had been involved in the highly detailed procurement process and evaluation of the bids submitted. Based on the report submitted to the Committee their work had led to a very positive outcome for both the Council and Hartlepool.

Decision

1. That the information included in the report and the appendices in respect of the process undertaken and the evaluation results be noted and received.
2. That, on the basis of the evaluation results and the objectives agreed by the Authority at the outset of this exercise, that Bidder 2 be approved as the Preferred Bidder.
3. That officers now proceed to Contract Award with the Preferred Bidder.

46. Acquisition of Assets – Jackson’s Landing (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*) This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para. 3)

Type of decision

Key Decision - Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN 98/11.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is seek approval to purchase Jackson’s Landing to facilitate the regeneration of a key site in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

During consideration of the matter during the public section of the meeting, a Member indicated that they had a question in relation to the proposal that would require consideration of the information set out in the exempt section of the report but would not affect the decision made by the Committee.

Members questioned officers on issues affecting the site and its adjacent

areas.

Decision

That the comments of Members be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 5 JULY 2013