

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

DECISION RECORD

20 June 2013

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

Present:

Councillor Robbie Payne (In the Chair)

Councillors: Kevin Cranney, Keith Dawkins, Keith Fisher, and Dr George Morris.

Also Present: In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2; Councillor Rob Cook as substitute for Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher.

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Antony Steinberg, Economic Regeneration Manager
Patrick Wilson, Employment Development Officer
John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
Maggie Heaps, Adult Education Coordinator
Pat Usher, Head of Sport and Recreation
Karen Kelly, Principal Housing Strategy Officer
Jane Kett, Principal Environmental Health Officer (Commercial)
Amy Waller, Principal Housing Regeneration Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

6. Apologies for Absence

Councillors C Akers-Belcher and S Akers-Belcher.

7. Declarations of Interest

None.

8. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2013

Confirmed.

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

Type of decision

This is a key decision (test (i)), forward plan reference number CAS011/13.

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the committee to accept funds to manage the delivery of the Tees Valley European Social Fund (ESF) bid for Skills Support for the Workforce.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that in December 2012 the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) issued an invite to tender for ESF funds. At that stage there was the opportunity to bid for a project for Skills Support for the Workforce. After initial discussions with a range of organisations the partnership of the Local Authority Adult Learning Providers in the Tees Valley came together to submit a joint bid to deliver the project across the sub region. It was agreed that Hartlepool Adult Education would lead on this and submit the bid on behalf of the partnership. The bid was written with the assistance of the Economic Regeneration team.

In May 2013 the SFA contacted the service to inform that we had been successful in the bidding process and that they would issue a contract to deliver the project across the Tees Valley. The report went on to outline the target areas of the project and the numbers anticipated to be involved. The total amount allocated in the bid is £2,773,397 over 2 years. These funds would be used to deliver and commission the training required and to deliver the other targets as required in the bid. Within the project there would be the need to recruit dedicated project staff to fulfil all the objectives. In total it was envisaged that there could be a need for an additional 10 staff to work on the project. This was in addition to the staff required by the partners to deliver the training. This element of the project was subject to a separate report to the Finance and Policy Committee.

Members welcomed the report and the additional ESF funds that would be drawn into the Tees valley area through the project. The Chair indicated that he would write to the staff in the teams that had prepared the successful bid congratulating them on their work.

Decision

1. That formal acceptance of European Social Fund funds for the Tees Valley Skills Support for the Workforce contract for the delivery and management of the project be approved.
2. That the project be branded Tees Valley Skills.
3. That the appointment of additional staffing requirements to deliver the project be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee.

10. Mill House Leisure Centre – Options for Future Pool Configuration *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to advise members of the available options regarding the future configuration of the swimming pools at Mill House Leisure Centre. This was linked to the ongoing need for savings and efficiencies from Council services as part of the financial budget for 2014/15.

The report also highlighted some essential maintenance work that was required to be carried out on the pool circulation and filtration pipe-work that had already been approved as part of the Council's Capital programme for 2013/14.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that there were a number of options for the reconfiguration of the pool in The Mill House Leisure Centre. The options available to the council were set out in detail within the report. If an option to install some kind of bulkhead was chosen, the Assistant Director indicated that the works would be undertaken at the same time as some scheduled works to the pool circulation and filtration system which had been approved as part of the capital programme and which would be undertaken in November when usage was at its lowest.

The option recommended to Members was Option 1, the installation of a static bulkhead which would create an ASA standard 25m short course competition pool. These works would be funded from a revenue reserve balance of £100,000 which would cover the costs of installing the bulkhead and the loss of income during the time the pool would be closed.

Members supported the proposal as set out in the report. It was suggested that all avenues of additional grant funding should be pursued to assist with the costs of the proposal.

The Vice-Chair suggested that at this point, the scheme should be approved in principle as there was the potential for movement on the Mill House Masterplan in the next few months. Should no concrete proposals come forward from the masterplan over the summer months, then, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair the proposals set out in the report could be actioned.

Decision

1. That the closure of the pool at Mill House Leisure Centre around November 2013 be approved in order to undertake the required work on the pool filtration system. A further report to be submitted once the

- affected dates and a works programme had been finalised.
2. That the principle of installing a static pool bulkhead (Option 1) into the main pool during the same closure period be approved to be funded from the Mill House Leisure Centre revenue rates reserve.
 3. That Officers pursue all potential external funding opportunities to enhance further the pool hall facilities.
 4. That the decisions detailed above be “in principle” and subject to further consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair in light of potential developments to the Mill House Masterplan.

11. Quarterly Update Report for Public Protection (Assistant Director (Regeneration))

Type of decision

The report was for information.

Purpose of report

To update the Regeneration Services Committee on performance and progress across key areas of the Public Protection service.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Regeneration gave an outline of the work undertaken in the last quarter by the Commercial Services, Environmental Protection and Trading Standards and Licensing teams in the Public Protection Division.

Members highlighted the levels of service provided by the division in protecting members of the public. Members queried if the high rates of pest control complaints were limited to the quarter or an ongoing statistic. The Assistant Director indicated that he would need to assess the figures and report back to Members.

The cases of Legionella were also questioned. Officers indicated that the two occurrences related to two individuals who suffered the illness, though no specific cause/source could be found. Members also requested further details in relation to the numbers of premises that had failed the tobacco control inspections. Members also expressed their concern at the numbers of premises still being caught making underage sales of alcohol and tobacco. Members sought assurances that retailers that consistently failed these tests were prosecuted. Officers indicated that initial failures tended to lead to the retailer having to ensure that appropriate measures and staff training was in place. Subsequent failures would lead to prosecution.

The Chair congratulated the staff in the division on their important work that often went unseen by the general public.

Decision

That the report be noted.

12. Baden Street Regeneration Initiative: Progress Update *(Assistant Director (Regeneration))*

Type of decision

The report was for information.

Purpose of report

To provide Committee Members with an update on the progress to date regarding the pilot Baden Street Regeneration Initiative. The report complements the updates provided as part of the quarterly housing reports, which would be considered by the Regeneration Services Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Regeneration updated the Committee on the progress with the Baden Street initiative. There had initially been 22 empty properties in the street and to date 6 had been brought back into use, 4 having been purchased by the Council's Empty Property Purchasing Scheme and work on the refurbishment of these properties has already commenced. The 2 other properties had been brought back into use by the owners and the majority of the owners of the other properties were actively engaging with the council on bringing them back into use.

The Assistant Director commented that the scheme had to date cost a lot less than original budget and appeared to be providing good value for money. Baden Street was no longer considered as a ward priority by the Neighbourhood Police Team and the initiative did seem to be encouraging landlords to improve and bring their properties back into use.

Some Members expressed their concern with the initiative and considered that the landlords should have been making these improvements without any encouragement or financial assistance from the Council. The Assistant Director indicated that when seen as part of the wider programme of bringing empty properties back into use, the initiative in Baden Street showed that the local authority could act on long-term empty properties and that would in turn encourage private landlords to act themselves. Since April 2012 up to December 2012, 135 empty properties had been brought back into use in Hartlepool through direct Council intervention.

Decision

That the report be noted.

13. European Social Fund NEET Provision: North East *(Assistant Director (Regeneration))*

Type of decision

The report was for information.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform members of a new tendering opportunity from European Social Fund (ESF) and co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Education Funding Agency (EFA) to target 14-19 year olds who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Employment Development Officer reported that a bid had been submitted in line with the requirements of the ESF, SFA and EFA earlier in the week after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee to meet the deadline for bids.

The indicative funding that would be available for the Tees Valley would be £2,173,618 which would recruit a minimum of 79 young people in Hartlepool from a total of over 1000 across the Tees Valley. Members expressed grave concerns that incorrect government statistics were once again penalising young people in the town. The number of young people to be involved under this scheme in Hartlepool were, by some margin, the lowest of the five Tees Valley authorities, yet Hartlepool had one of the highest numbers of young people who **were** not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to the other four authorities within the sub-region.

The Employment Development Officer highlighted that there were TUPE consideration in relation to authority staff that may be transferred under the scheme. The lead authority on the scheme in the Tees Valley was Stockton. This and an update on the scheme bid would be the subject of a further report to Members.

Decision

That the report be noted.

14. Social Housing Stock Re-designation (due to Welfare Reform Act 2012) *(Assistant Director (Regeneration))*

Type of decision

The report was for information.

Purpose of report

The Regeneration Services Committee will consider how Registered Providers of social housing have looked at possible re-designation of their properties following the introduction of the under-occupation charge (a measure contained within the Welfare Reform Act 2012). The report was for information and was intended to inform Regeneration Services Committee about the national and local context.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported that Housing Hartlepool, who own 70% of the social housing stock in the town, had undertaken an assessment of those who would be affected by the under-occupation charge. They had 1152 properties that were under-occupied which were broken down as follows:

845 that are one-bedroom under-occupied
307 that are two-bedroom under-occupied

Within the stock that was owned by the Council and managed by Housing Hartlepool, 9 properties were under-occupied by one bedroom. From information provided from the other Registered Providers there were approximately a further 300 properties in the town which were currently under-occupied and the majority of these were also under-occupied by one bedroom.

The Principal Housing Strategy Officer reported that a meeting of registered providers earlier in the week noted that demand for three bedroom homes was falling, as had been expected, but the demand for two bedroom homes was also falling which had surprised many. Housing Hartlepool had already re-designated some five bedroom homes as four bedroom homes if there was a bedroom on the ground floor. Some four-bedroom homes had also been re-designated as three-bedroom homes where the fourth bedroom was particularly small.

Members expressed their concerns at the falling demand and the pressure that would be placed on already stretched families. The Assistant Director indicated that families changed circumstances could lead them to being affected by the charge but what was concerning was those families that had chosen homes larger than they needed in low demand areas to avoid waiting lists.

Members were extremely concerned at the total insensitivity of the Government's proposals in relation to the empty bedroom charge. There was concern that some families could end up with rent arrears that could lead to their eviction. Members considered whether in such circumstances that while there would be a loss of income in relation to rent for social landlords through re-designation, those costs would be significantly lower than the costs of eviction and the arrears.

Officers indicated that as the empty room charge did not apply in the private rented sector, some families were moving into the private rented sector to avoid losing housing benefit which had the knock on effect of incurring a higher level of benefit being paid to the private landlords.

The Chair asked that a regular quarterly update on the situation be submitted to the Committee so Members could monitor the situation as it developed.

Decision

That the report be noted and that quarterly updates be provided to the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 11.15am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 27 JUNE 2013