

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

DECISION RECORD

18 JULY 2013

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

Present:

Councillor Robbie Payne (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Stephen Akers-Belcher, Kevin Cranney, and Dr George Morris.

Also Present: Councillors Jim Ainslie and Rob Cook

Officers: John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Antony Steinberg, Economic Regeneration Manager
Amy Waller, Principal Housing Regeneration Officer
Ali McKenna, Flexible Support Fund Contract Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

15. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Dawkins and Fisher.

16. Declarations of Interest

None.

17. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2013

Confirmed.

18. Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund (*Assistant Director, Community Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key Decision.

Purpose of report

To recommend the acceptance of an external grant offer from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund for the “999: What’s Your Emergency” museums project.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund is a National grant stream which funds research into public Museum collections, especially where such work helps to widen public access and engagement. Culture and Information Services had been invited to make an application for the final round of the Fund in April 2013. After discussion with potential partners, a collaboration between The Museum of Hartlepool (lead, HBC), The Dorman Museum (Middlesbrough BC) and Head of Steam (Darlington BC) was developed. This collaboration was informed by research into public need carried out in 2012 across the partners, and is supported by ACE (Arts Council England).

The initial project proposal was successfully shortlisted, and the partners were invited to make a full application in May 2013. Only 15 projects were shortlisted from the 76 applications that were initially received by the Fund. Seven projects were chosen for funding on 17th June 2013, including £62,000 for two years of delivery of our project, called “999: What’s Your Emergency”. This would be a collections research and public access project to create knowledge of, and widen public involvement, in museum social history collections directly relating to The Emergency Services and individual heroes who have helped our communities over the last 250 years. The Assistant Director referred to the recruitment of a single Collections Access Officer to deliver the project, employed by Hartlepool Borough Council, on behalf of all the partners. This was the subject of a separate report to the Finance and Policy Committee.

The Chair and Members welcomed the grant award and the project and congratulated officers on achieving the funding. Members welcomed the involvement of the lifeboat service within the emergency services involved in the project and hoped that some link with the remembrance around the 1914 bombardment could be made.

The Committee briefly discussed the visitor numbers to the Museum of Hartlepool which the Assistant Director indicated were still encouragingly high at an annual average around 130,000 to 140,000 with high numbers of schoolchildren visiting.

Decision

1. That the acceptance of the grant offer from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund be approved.
2. That the recruitment of a Collections Access Officer to deliver the project be supported and an appropriate report be submitted to Finance and Policy Committee.

19. Department for Work and Pensions ‘Flexible Support Fund’ *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

Type of decision

None, the report was for the Committee's information only.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform the Regeneration Services Committee of the successful delivery of the Tees Valley Flexible Support Fund (FSF).

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported that in April 2012, through an open and competitive tendering process; Hartlepool Borough Council, as Lead Accountable Body, secured £500,000 from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to enable the delivery of the Tees Valley FSF project. Within this grant application the five local authorities agreed to offer match funding of £250,000. The FSF was officially launched in May 2012 and was a partnership between Hartlepool Borough Council's Economic Regeneration Team and the other four Local Authorities across the Tees Valley. The project was delivered between May 2012 and May 2013.

The Assistant Director highlighted the outcomes and targets achieved through the project, as follows:

- 805 referrals against a target of 650
- 451 claimants (pre work programme) into employment against a target of 400 – 80 for each local authority
- 869 SMEs engaged with against a target of 500
- 10 HR employment workshops delivered
- 10 self-employment workshops delivered.

Specifically for Hartlepool, the Assistant Director indicated that there had been 202 referrals with 89 going into employment, 65% of whom still remained in employment beyond 13 weeks, and 168 SME's engaged. It was highlighted in the meeting that the figures for employment may improve over coming weeks as a number of those who had found employment through the scheme had not yet passed the 13 weeks measure. It was also highlighted that of the 89, 56 were young unemployed, 18-24 years old, with 44 of those being male.

The Committee welcomed the report and congratulated all those involved on the success of its delivery. Members commented that this showed again the success of employment schemes when they were delivered by the public sector.

Decision

That the report be noted.

20. Quarterly Housing Report Jan-March 2012/13 *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

Type of decision

None, the report was for the Committee's information only.

Purpose of report

To update the Regeneration Services Committee about progress across key areas of the Housing Service relating to empty homes, enforcement activity, financial assistance (grants and loans), selective licensing, Disabled Facilities Grants, housing allocations and housing advice and homelessness prevention during the fourth quarter of 2012/13.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Regeneration provided an update on progress and benchmarking across key areas of the Housing Service during Quarter 4, 2012/13 and updates the last report presented to the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder on 8 March 2013. The report covered the following key areas –

- Empty homes update including enforcement activity and the empty homes incentive scheme overview
- Enforcement update
- Financial Assistance including Regional Loans, Homeplus Grants and Warm Homes Healthy Hartlepool grants
- Selective licensing update
- Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) benchmarking data
- Allocations summary including lettings information
- Housing advice and homelessness prevention activity, and
- Housing reports on forward plan - RN 20/12 Selective Licensing

The Committee discussed many of the issues in the report and made the following comments –

- The need for two bedroom homes should be built into the empty home strategy to deal with housing issues created by the 'bedroom tax'.
- Council tax information showing an increase in the number of homes would be a useful gauge of the effectiveness of the empty homes strategy.
- Some form of plan needed to be developed quickly for the Manor House, which while an empty property, was probably too large to come under the current strategy. The building was becoming a severe hazard. The Chair agreed that he and the Vice-Chair should meet with the ward members and officers to discuss the issue and propose a means of tackling the problem.
- The potential for selective licensing to be extended town wide. The Assistant Director indicated that Newham Borough in London had just taken this step and officers would visit the authority to assess how they

had progressed the licensing designation and if that could be transposed to Hartlepool.

- The effects of the changes under the new Universal Credit needed to be monitored, particularly the potential for increasing rent arrears.

Decision

That the report and Members comments be noted.

21. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 10.10 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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