

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

26 SEPTEMBER 2013

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

Present:

Councillor Robbie Payne (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher and Cranney.

Also Present: In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2; Councillor Geoff Lilley as substitute for Councillor Keith Dawkins.

Councillor Alison Lilley.

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health
John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
Sylvia Pinkney, Public Protection Manager
Antony Steinberg, Economic Regeneration Manager
Patrick Wilson, Employment Development Officer
Andrew Golightly, Principal Regeneration Officer
Nigel Johnson, Housing Services Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

42. Apologies for Absence

Councillors S Akers-Belcher, Dawkins, Fisher and Dr Morris.

43. Declarations of Interest

None.

44. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2013

Received.

45. Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document – Update on Progress (*Assistant Director (Regeneration)*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform the Regeneration Committee of the results from the public consultation on the Draft Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which was consulted upon between 4 April 2013 and 30th May 2013. The report also identified the next steps in the process.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported that during the eight week consultation period a total of seventeen representations were made to the Green Infrastructure SPD and Action Plan. A Consultation Statement has been produced which includes a summary of the main points of the representations and is included as Appendix 1 to this report. The Consultation Statement also highlights where HBC has agreed to make amendments to the documents to reflect the comments received.

Overall the document had been very well received and this was reflected in comments made by Natural England, who have provided £5000 of funding towards the production of the Strategy and Action Plan, who state “In general these documents are extremely useful, being well written and easy to follow and understand.”

The Chair congratulated officers on the production of the document and the level of feedback gained during the consultation period and asked that these comments be passed on to the relevant staff by the Director.

Decision

That the progress made in relation to the Green Infrastructure SPD and Action Plan be noted and that the comments made in the first consultation period also be noted.

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

Type of decision

Key Test Decision (i) and (ii) applies. Forward Plan Reference No. RN15/13

Purpose of report

To inform members of the successful application for European Social

Funding (ESF) and to seek approval for the Council to deliver the project.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Employment Development Officer reported that at the meeting on 20th June 2013 the Committee was informed that the Secretary of State for Education had announced a tendering opportunity to procure provision funded by ESF and co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to support young people who are aged 14-19 and who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET. The five Tees Valley Local Authorities met to discuss the options for submitting a tender application and it was agreed that a joint local authority sub-regional bid would be submitted, with Stockton Borough Council (SBC) acting as the Accountable Body. The bid was submitted in June 2013.

On 19th August 2013, the SFA announced that the joint local authority sub-regional bid was successful. Stockton BC as the Accountable Body had commenced contract negotiations with the SFA and EFA. The Tees Valley project would target 14-19 year olds who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET with particular focus on 16, 17 and 18 year olds and a more targeted focus on groups which are over represented in the NEET cohort. The specification outlined that delivery should be defined by the needs of young people in each local authority area, but may focus on particular localities and NEET hotspots.

As requested by members at the Regeneration Services Committee meeting on 20th June 2013, Council Officers have contacted the EFA to query the low allocation of numbers for Hartlepool (79 out of a Tees Valley total of 1022). The EFA has responded and stated that due to the previous success of the Council in reducing the number of NEETs, the EFA had redirected funding to those Local Authority areas with the greatest need. However, through this funding stream, there was still scope for these numbers to increase if the Council delivers on the current targets. Members commented that that this did feel as though the Council had been penalised for past success.

Decision

That the Council deliver the programme as reported.

47. Trading Standards Service Plan 2013/14 (*Director of Public Health*)

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To consider and approve the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2013/14.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Public Protection Manager outlined for Members the main issues contained within the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2013/14, including a review of the previous year's performance against the main targets.

Members expressed some reservation at the work relating to loan sharks being designated as low priority. The Public Protection Manager this was only in terms of resource allocation. Members considered that it may be more appropriate to see such an issue dealt with on a corporate basis and it was indicated that it may be feasible to build this into the council's financial inclusion policy. It was highlighted that Middlesbrough BC had done some work on loans sharks last year and an update on that may be available. The Council was also investigating restricting access through its own computers to high interest payday lenders.

Members questioned the support larger agencies and multi-national corporations provided in terms of the local work in dealing with pirating and counterfeit goods. The Public Protection Manager commented that pirating of DVDs for example was often done on a huge scale with high quality copies being produced. Owners of the copyrights did provide feedback to the department on whether goods were genuine or not and did provide support in prosecuting offenders. Counterfeit goods were a significant issue with many being sold as legitimate through the internet. EBay did work with officers in supplying the details of the vendors of counterfeit goods for example.

Decision

That the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2013/14 be approved.

48. Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 *(Director of Public Health)*

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To inform Members about the implementation of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 and to seek approval for the licence fees to be levied under the Act.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Public Protection Manager reported that the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 (the 'Act') would be implemented in October 2013 and would deliver much needed reform of the scrap metal sector. The Act has been introduced to remove many of the loopholes from previous legislation and will require, amongst other things, scrap metal dealers (both fixed site and itinerant) to be licensed by the local authority and sales of scrap metal for cash will no longer be permitted.

Two types of licence are to be introduced – site licences will allow a dealer to operate from the sites named on the licence whilst collectors licences only have to name the dealer and the local authority area that they are licensed to operate within. Collectors' licences cover dealers who do not have a site and regularly collect through door-to-door collections. Licences will last for three years unless revoked.

The proposed fees were as follows: -

<u>Site Licence</u>	<u>Fee</u>
New	£350 for one site (add £190 for each additional site)
Variation	£77
Renewal	£270 (every 3 years)

Collector's Licence

New	£120
Variation (Minor)	£77
Variation (Major - <i>this includes a variation from a collector's licence to a site licence</i>)	£336 for one site (add £190 for each additional site)
Renewal	£77 (every 3 years)

The Public Protection Manager highlighted to Members that fees had to be set on a cost recovery basis and every effort had been put into ensuring that the proposed fees would stand up to scrutiny. The fees compared relatively well with those of other authorities in the region being around or slightly below average. Members did consider that an early review of the fees in April 2014 should be undertaken to assure that they were recovering the council's costs of administration.

In response to Members questions, the Public Protection Manager indicated that the local authority did not have power to stop and check licences; that would lay only with the Police. The Director commented that there were multi-agency campaigns on over-loaded vehicles and metal thefts. Hartlepool did have three times more waste collection sites than the three other Tees Valley Councils added together.

It was reported that there was to be a publicity campaign on the introduction of the regulations on 1 October in order to improve public awareness.

Decision

That the report be noted and the fees as detailed above approved.

49. Emergency Works – Shades Hotel and Longscar Building *(Assistant Director (Regeneration))*

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To seek Committee endorsement to carry out works to Shades Hotel, Church Street under Section 54-55 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Longscar Building, Seaton Carew, under Section 77 of the Building Act, 1984, if required and temporarily meet the costs of those works.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Principal Regeneration Officer outlined the problems at both buildings detailing the work that had already been undertaken by the Council and the further works/investigations that were now needed. Costs would be pursued with the owners of the buildings and a meeting was due to be held with one of the owners on the day of the meeting.

If the Council was required to use the legislative route to ensure the works were carried out to the required standard then following completion of the works the Council would then invoice the current owners for payment and apply to the Land Registry to register a miscellaneous charge against the property. If payment was not made then the Council would pursue payment and take vigorous action through all channels to ensure payment. The land charge would also help to protect the Council's financial position, if it had expended monies. The success of recovering costs through this route would depend on what other monies were owed on the property or any other charges that may exist. In the case of Shades and the use of Section 54 of the Listed Buildings Act expenses were recovered through section 55 of the Act.

Even with the miscellaneous charge there remained a risk that funds could not be recovered, for example if there were other loans or charges already secured against the property. Similarly, if the property cannot be sold or sufficient value realised through a sale, to cover the value of the charge then there was a risk that monies could not be recovered.

Members considered that it was essential to ensure charges against the properties were listed with the Land Registry and asked if past expenditure could also be registered on these or other properties in the ownership of the registered owners, as they had been a major issue for the council over a number of years. The Principal Regeneration Officer stated that the issue of past charges would be investigated. However, charges could only be listed for the specific property. Officers were not relying on the listing of the charges with the land registry and were pursuing the owners through County Court as well.

Decision

1. That the use of powers under Section 54-55 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 be authorised to ensure urgent works are carried out by the owners at Shades Hotel, if required, and that officers be authorised to carry out these works in default, if required;
2. That the Council's use of powers under Section 77 of the Building Act 1984 be authorised to ensure that emergency repair works are carried at the Longscar Building, Seaton Carew, if required and that officers be authorised to carry out the works in default, if required;
3. That officers be authorised to seek payment for the cost of the works from the owners, if the Council undertakes the necessary works, and to use the powers of financial recovery available to the Council to ensure payment.

50. Environmental Apprenticeship Report (*Assistant Director (Regeneration)*)

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

To update members on the progress of the existing Environmental Apprenticeship project which is a collaboration between the Council, Hartlepool College of Further Education, Housing Hartlepool (part of the Vela Group) and Job Centre Plus and to consider the potential for future initiatives.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Employment Development Officer reported that in January 2013, the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Portfolio Holder approved the delivery of a 12 month Environmental Apprenticeship project with 21 apprentices being employed. The Apprentices were supported through contributions from Councillors Ward Budgets, in-kind support from Hartlepool Council's staff, Department for Work and Pensions Youth Wage Incentive and Flexible Support Fund and the Vela Group. The cost of this project was £118,221.

Due to the success of the project, members had requested that Council Officers explore whether there are opportunities to create a new Environmental Apprenticeship project in 2014. Partners had met to consider what funding was available and to review lessons learnt in relation to the existing project. Officers from Neighbourhood Services believe that they would have capacity to commence a new project in April 2014 and would be able to effectively manage 10 apprentices via the same delivery model as the current project.

The challenge was to secure the funding required which could employ 10 new apprentices as funding such as FSF is no longer available. At the time of writing this report, Officers had already secured £27,750 (£22,750 Department for Work and Pensions Youth Contract Wage Incentive and £5,000 from Housing Hartlepool – part of the Vela Group) with a shortfall of £34,313 remaining. Other funding streams were still being explored to ensure that the project is financially viable.

The Chair indicated that he had written to every Member seeking their support for the scheme from their ward budgets. It was suggested that Members support for the scheme could be forthcoming through a contribution from the ward budgets 'top sliced' at the beginning of the financial year. This proposal was welcomed by the committee.

As employment for the existing apprentices was reaching the end of the scheme Members questioned what 'exit strategies' had been put in place. The Employment Development Officer reported that throughout the scheme work had been undertaken with the young people to make them more employable, through assistance with literacy and numeracy skills for example and through mentoring. Advice had been given for those that may wish to look to future self-employment for example and Members suggested that any available assistance through other means, such as the Prince's Trust should be examined.

Decision

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Council give consideration to top slicing the 2014/15 Ward Members Budget to provide the remaining funding required to meet any unfunded shortfall required to make the scheme for 2014/15 viable. This proposal to be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee meeting in November for consideration.

51. Quarterly Housing Report April-June 2013/14 (*Assistant Director (Regeneration)*)

Type of decision

For 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, Selective Licensing, Disabled Facilities Grants, housing allocations, the impacts of Welfare Reform and housing advice and homelessness prevention during the first quarter of 2013/14.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Housing Services Manager outlined the main issues contained within the quarterly report for Members information. It was highlighted that there

was a significant waiting list for Disabled Facilities Grants with a level of over-subscription of funds in excess of £150,000. It was reported that a bid for additional funds had been made through the Adult Services to the Clinic Commissioning Group (CCG) for one off funding for 2013/14. Members considered that consideration should be given when bringing empty properties back into use the potential of incorporating disabled facilities adaptations. The Director indicated that officers did take this into account but it did need to be the right adaptations to the right property for the right client.

Problems of low demand for some properties due to welfare reform were being noted and officers would be meeting with housing providers in the near future to look to how these properties could be better marketed to avoid them becoming void. It was also being reported that under occupancy charges (the bedroom tax) was leading to increased arrears across all providers.

Members particularly noted that 81 households had, with Council officer assistance, been prevented from becoming homeless. The Chair commented that staff were doing an excellent job under difficult circumstances and asked that the comments of the Committee be taken back to staff by the Housing Services Manager.

Decision

That the report be noted.

52. Quarterly Update Report for Public Protection (*Director of Public Health*)

Type of decision

For information only.

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 Public Protection Manager outlined the main issues contained within the quarterly report for Members information. Members noted the reduced numbers for pest control, particularly relating to mice and questioned if this was due to the charges in place. The Public Protection Manager commented that there had always been charges in place for commercial properties. Many people did resort to buying their own traps for mice infestations in their homes and there were other services available other than that provided by the Council. Pest Control where there were problems with rats, were still free of charge to domestic property owners.

Decision

That the report be noted.

53. The North East ‘Community Grants’ Project *(Assistant Director, Community Services)*

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the external funding opportunity from the Skill Funding Agency (SFA) to administer the next round of the ‘Community Grants’ Project to support Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations across the North East to work with unemployed adults to re-engage them in learning activities. This report advised on the proposed application by the Council’s Adult Education Service to manage this regional project.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that the Council’s Adult Education Service had passed the Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) and had been invited to tender to coordinate the delivery of the next round of the Community Grants project across the North East. The service had been asked to submit the bid on behalf of Learn North East; this was an informal partnership of all the 12 north east Local Authority Adult Learning services. It had been agreed by the partnership that, if successful, Hartlepool would manage this project on their behalf.

Decision

That the report be noted and that a further report be submitted once a decision has been made by the Skill Funding Agency on the submitted application.

The meeting concluded at 10.35am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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