

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

7th November 2005

Present:

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: Stanley Fortune (Policy Co-ordination Portfolio Holder),
Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Paul Walker, Chief Executive
Mike Ward, Chief Financial Officer
Ian Parker, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services
Ian McMillan, Acting Director of Adult and Community Services
John Mennear, Acting Assistant Director of Adult and Community Services
Stuart Green, Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development)
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager
Peter Turner, Principal Strategy Development Officer
Joan Wilkins, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Steve Hilton, Assistant Public Relations Officer

Also

Present: Councillor Jane Shaw (Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum),
Representing Councillor Marjorie James (Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee)

121. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Peter Jackson (Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder), Robbie Payne (Culture, Housing and Transportation Portfolio Holder), Ray Waller (Adult & Public Health Services Portfolio Holder) and Marjorie James (Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee).

122. Inquorate Meeting

The Mayor noted that the meeting was inquorate. The Mayor indicated that, as permitted under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Constitution, he would exercise his powers of decision and that he would do so in accordance with the wishes of the Members present, as indicated in the usual way. The Mayor confirmed each of the decisions set out in the decision record below accordingly.

123. Declarations of interest by members

None

124. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2005

Received.

125. Final Report – Review Into The Authority's Financial Reserves (*Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To present the findings of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee following completion of its review into the Authority's Financial Reserves.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, on behalf of the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, summarised the content of the Committee's report relating to the outcome of the Committee's review into the Authority's Financial Reserves. Outlined within the report were details of the background to the inquiry, its overall aim, terms of reference, methods of investigation and findings. Details were also provided of the conclusions reached and approval sought of the Committees recommendations.

Decision

The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's recommendations, as outlined below, were approved:-

- (a) That consideration be given to returning the £1.6 million Coastal Defences Specific Reserve to the Authority's General Fund, in light of the findings to be published in the engineer's report which was expected to state that significant improvement works would not be required as originally expected, only that of maintenance works;
- (b) That any remaining balances from the Benefit Subsidy Reserve be returned to the Authority's General Fund as at 31 March 2006 and the associated risk transferred to the General Fund;
- (c) That the £50,000 Specific Reserve, ring-fenced for the Council Tax Re-evaluations for 2007/08 be returned to the Authority's General Fund, given that the Government had deferred such exercise until 2010;
- (d) That the procedures in place to ensure salary savings from vacant posts are rigorously followed across all departments to enable any resultant savings to be monitored and tracked within the overall budgetary control process.
- (e) That upon receipt of Audit Commission's findings into the Authority's Financial Reserves, consideration be given by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to the content of their report.

126. New Deal for Community Housing Plan – Dalton

Street (Director of Regeneration and Planning Services and Director of Neighbourhood Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision (Tests i and ii apply).

Purpose of report

To seek endorsement in principle to a recent decision of the New Deal for Communities Steering Group to amend the Community Housing Plan in respect of Dalton Park.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services and Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a joint report updating Cabinet on the background to the formulation of proposals for Dalton Street within the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Community Housing Plan.

Proposals for Dalton Street related to the demolition of 40 residential properties, the provision of additional garden space for a number of houses in Carlton Street, the retention of existing businesses with premises upgrades and improvements, and a tree-lined park linkage to York Road. The CHP, however, had no formal planning or legal status and independently tests had shown that the proposals would not contribute positively to the proper planning of the area, for a variety of reasons, and would be difficult to substantiate through the CPO process. As a result of this Cabinet resolved to receive further reports following further consultations with local residents, businesses and other stakeholders with a view to building some alternative and deliverable proposals.

The required consultations had since been completed and details of the key considerations identified as part of the process and financial implications and risk considerations were outlined in the report.

Decision

- i) That the 'in principle' decision of the NDC Steering Group to acquire the remaining residential and, subject to resource availability, the commercial interests in Dalton Street be supported.
- ii) That the development of an integrated and co-ordinated approach to the redevelopment of Dalton Street linked to the potential commercial re-use and re-habitation of Titan House be supported.
- iii) That the requirement for appropriate Officers to work closely with Hartlepool NDC, Hartlepool Revival, Endeavour Housing Association and parties potentially interested in bringing forward re-use proposals for Titan House, such that the future redevelopment proposals as far as was practicable a coherent solution to the future at Dalton Street and its surroundings, be noted.
- iv) That further reports be presented to Cabinet in due course in respect of the proposals for Dalton Street, as outlined in the report.

127. Hartlepool Tree Strategy (Director of Regeneration and Planning Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision (Test i applies)

Purpose of report

To seek endorsement of the Hartlepool Tree Strategy.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Director of Regeneration and Planning Services submitted a report detailing the background to the production of the Hartlepool Tree Strategy and its content. A copy of the strategy was appended to the report for Cabinet's consideration and endorsement.

Cabinet Members highlighted the importance of Hartlepool's trees as a resource for the town and expressed their support for the strategy. Concern was, however, expressed regarding the problems created by the autumn leaf fall and the protection on non-indigenous trees, such as sycamores.

Decision

That the Hartlepool Tree Strategy be endorsed.

128. Northgate Framework Arrangements (*Chief Financial Officer*)

Type of decision

Non Key

Purpose of report

To outline emerging details of a Framework Arrangements with Northgate Information Solutions covering the establishment of a benefits and revenues processing centre within the borough.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

Further to the report considered by Cabinet on the 10th October 2005 (minute no. 107 refers) the Chief Financial Officer outlined the background to the formulation of framework arrangements with Northgate and drew particular attention drawn to proposed commitments, responsibilities and charges for inclusion within the Memorandum of Understanding.

Decision

That the report be noted and the Chief Financial Officer authorised to finalise discussions with Northgate regarding a Framework agreement.

129. Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership: Membership (*Director of Children's Services*)

Type of decision

Non Key

Purpose of report

To seek consideration of two requests for representation on the Executive Board of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report detailing two representations received in respect of the Membership of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and the options available to Cabinet in dealing with the requests.

During consideration of the report the Mayor drew attention to the pace at which this had progressed in recent months with the PCT reconfiguration, police review, etc. Attention was also drawn to the need to see how everything was going to fit with the LAA and a proposal put forward for the deferral of consideration of the requests outlined in the report until all governance arrangements for the Hartlepool Partnership have been considered. This proposal was supported by the Portfolio Holders present.

Decision

That consideration of the requests outlined in the report be deferred until all governance arrangements for the Hartlepool Partnership have been considered.

130. Consultation on the Merger Between County Durham and Darlington Priority Services NHS Trust and Tees and NorthEast Yorkshire HNS Trust. (Acting Director of Adult and Community Services and Director of Children's Services)

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of report

To seek Cabinet's views on the proposed merger between County Durham and Darlington Priority Services NHS Trust and Tees and NorthEast Yorkshire NHS Trust as part of the public consultation.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Acting Director of Adult and Community Services and Director of Children's Services submitted a joint report outlining details of the proposed merger between County Durham and Darlington Priority Services NHS Trust and Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trust. A copy of the consultation document was appended to the report and within this attention drawn to the key issues involved in the proposed merger and the commitment of all those involved to the continued improvement of services.

Details were provided of the main arguments for the merger and Cabinet's views sought of proposals for the points to be included in the Local Authority's response to the consultation, as outlined in the report. Members considered each point and expressed their support for all five elements.

Decision

That the report be noted and the production of a response to the proposed merger, based upon the points identified in the report, approved.

131. Quarter 2 – Corporate Plan Progress and Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2005/2006 (Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer)

Type of decision

None

Purpose of report

To outline:

- Progress made towards achieving the Corporate Plan service improvement priorities (SIPs) in order to provide timely information and allow any necessary decisions to be taken.
- To provide details of progress against the Council's overall revenue budget for 2005/2006.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

In accordance with the wishes of Cabinet, as expressed on the 22nd August 2005, the format of quarterly Corporate Plan progress reports had been amended to contain both performance and revenue monitoring information, with the aim of enabling Cabinet to consider performance and expenditure together.

Based on this revised format, the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer submitted the 2nd quarter report. Within this report were provided details of progress towards the achievement of service improvement priorities and an overview given of Council performance, including detailed information for each Portfolio Holder's consideration. In relation to revenue monitoring details were provided of:

- Progress against departmental and corporate budgets and High Risk Budget Areas
- Progress against saving/increased income targets identified in the 2005/2006 Budget Strategy
- Progress against departmental salary turnover targets
- Key Balance Sheet information
- Outturn Presentation in 2005/2006 Statement of Accounts.

Decision

That the report be noted.

132. NRF, Capital and Accountable Body Programme Monitoring Report 2005/2006 (Chief Financial Officer)

Type of decision

None

Purpose of report

To outline progress against the Council's overall Capital budget for 2005/06 and progress against the spending Programmes where the Council acts as the Accountable Body and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF).

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chief Financial Officer submitted for Cabinet's consideration detailed monitoring reports for each Portfolio Holder up to the 30th September 2005 and outlined progress against the spending programmes where the Council acts as the Accountable Body and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) for the same period.

Decision

That the report be noted.

133. Adjournment

The decision was taken to adjourn the meeting for a short period until the arrival of the Culture, Housing and Transportation Portfolio Holder. It was, however, ascertained that the Culture, Housing and Transportation Portfolio Holder had been unavoidably detained at another meeting and would be unlikely to arrive in time for consideration of the item. The meeting was reconvened at this point.

134. Briarfields Allotments (Acting Director of Adult and Community Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision (Test i applies)

Purpose of report

To seek determination of the course of action to be taken in response to the Local Government Ombudsman's conclusions on the future of the former Briarfields allotment site.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

In view of the importance of this item the Mayor, and those Portfolio Holders present, felt that it was not appropriate to consider the report in the absence of a quorum and agreed the deferral of the item to the next Cabinet meeting.

Decision

That consideration of the report be deferred to the next meeting of Cabinet.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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