

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

16 JANUARY 2014

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

Present:

Councillor Kevin Cranney (In the Chair)

Councillors: Keith Dawkins and Keith Fisher.

Also Present: Councillor Brenda Loynes as substitute for Councillor George Morris in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
Antony Steinberg, Economic Regeneration Manager
Patrick Wilson, Employment Development Officer
Rob Smith, Senior Regeneration Officer
Matthew King, Senior Planning Officer
Sarah Scarr, Landscape Planning and Conservation Team Leader
Alyson Carr, Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)
Peter Graves, Townscape Heritage Initiative Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

82. Apologies for Absence

Councillors, Christopher Akers-Belcher, Stephen Akers-Belcher, Dr George Morris and Robbie Payne.

83. Declarations of Interest

None.

84. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2013

Received.

85. Shop Front Design Guide (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

The report sought the Committee's authorisation to undertake public consultation on the Draft Shop Front Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Landscape Planning and Conservation Team Leader reported that the Shop Front Guidance Supplementary Planning Document was intended to encourage good design within retail areas of Hartlepool to achieve centres that are vibrant, pleasant to visit, and safe. It was not intended as an undue burden on development.

English Heritage advice to local authorities in their publication 'Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas' (February 2006) indicated that an appraisal of a conservation area needed a set of policies, strategies and actions identified to actively manage change in a conservation area. To this end Conservation Management Plans had been produced for Seaton Carew, Church Street and most recently Stranton. All of these areas had a commercial element. Public consultation carried out as part of the management plan indicated that there was a need for guidance on both shop front design and advertisements. The guidance would fulfil that need.

It is proposed that public consultation be undertaken on the draft Shop Front Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document commencing in January/February 2014 and running for a minimum period of eight weeks.

Decision

That the consultation on the Shop Front Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document be authorised as proposed.

86. Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report was to inform the Committee of the results from the second targeted public consultation on the Draft Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Action Plan which had been consulted on between 9 December 2013 and 10th January 2014 and to seek approval to make necessary amendments and report the documents to the Council meeting on 27th February for adoption.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Senior Planning Officer reported that the Green Infrastructure SPD outlined the benefits and purpose of Green Infrastructure and its importance to the Borough. It highlighted the current areas of green infrastructure within Hartlepool and looked at investment in green infrastructure as well as the management of it. As part of the SPD an Action Plan was included which looked at improvements and enhancements which were needed over the coming years to continue the successful development of the Green Infrastructure network within the Borough.

During an eight week consultation period earlier in 2013 a total of 17 representations had been made to the Green Infrastructure SPD and Action Plan. The main points of the representations had been included in a revised document where they were considered appropriate. A revised SPD and Action Plan has been subject of a re-consultation with those organisations and individuals who initially commented.

Subject to the Committee's approval additional changes would be made to finalise both documents prior to their submission to Council. To adhere to the terms of the grant of £5000 received from Natural England, the SPD (and Action Plan) must be adopted by the end of March 2014 and it was proposed to take the revised SPD to full Council in February 2014 for adoption. The Senior Planning Officer anticipated that the amendments would only be minor adjustments, including wording to strengthen the links between the rural and urban environments.

Decision

That officers be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the Draft Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document and Action Plan following the public consultation and to submit the revised documents to full Council in February for adoption.

87. Proposals for Inclusion in Council Plan 2014/15 (*Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Management Team*)

Type of decision

None Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To provide the opportunity for the Regeneration Services Committee to consider the proposals for inclusion in the 2014/15 Council Plan that fall under the remit of the Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported the proposals included in the 2014/15 Council Plan that fell under the remit of the Regeneration Services Committee. As in previous years detailed proposals were being considered by each of the Committees throughout January and

February. A further report would be prepared for the Finance and Policy Committee on 14 February 2014 detailing the comments/observations of each of the Committees along with a full draft of the 2014/15 Council Plan.

The Vice-Chair commented that as well as monitoring the creation of new businesses, the growth and sustainability of those businesses should also be monitored. Reference was also made to a government initiative providing improvement grants in the form of loans up to £15,000 to bring empty homes back into use. Officers indicated that the Council's present programme of bringing empty homes back into use was supported through grants from the Homes and Communities Agency. If any further sources of finance were available to support the programme they would be investigated.

Decision

That the proposals reported for inclusion in the Council Plan 2014/15 be supported subject to the additional monitoring of business sustainability under NI171.

88. Heritage Skills Apprenticeship Project (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform members of the potential for the Council to develop a Heritage Skills Apprenticeship Project in partnership with the other four Local Authorities in the Tees Valley, Hartlepool College of Further Education (HCFE), Heritage Craft Alliance (HCA), English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Employment Development Officer reported that the conservation of an area required dedicated, skilled workers who could restore and maintain the historic environment. The Heritage Skills Initiative had identified the 'severity of the regional skills gap within trades' needed to support this sector and across Tees Valley there were inadequate numbers of skilled workers who could effectively stem this shortage. As the demand for skilled trade persons' increased across the sub-region, companies outside of the area were actively securing contracts to deliver bespoke work on behalf of public and private owners of these historic sites. For local companies to reverse this trend would require an investment in the next generation of young people so that they could become fully qualified in trades which were most in demand such as carpentry and masonry. Investment through on-the-job training and apprenticeships would provide the greatest asset for the company and would help make their organisation become more competitive by having a skilled workforce in which to secure future work.

To increase the number of apprentices within the Heritage Sector, Heritage Craft Alliance contacted Hartlepool Borough Council to develop an apprenticeship scheme. Heritage Craft Alliance are an accredited training and assessment provider who have an established strategic partnership with HCFE and were dedicated to the built heritage sector. The aim of the project would be to increase the number of qualified crafts personnel within the Tees Valley who would have the skills base to assist in the conservation and maintenance of the sub-region's built heritage. The project will be targeted towards young people aged 16 to 18 years old who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET.

To support the delivery of the Heritage Skills Apprenticeship Project, there were a range of potential funding sources which the Council are currently exploring including, Heritage Lottery Fund, Regional Growth Fund, Vulnerable and Disengaged Young Peoples Fund, ESF Youth Engagement Scheme (YES) Project, English Heritage, and the Raddiffe Trust.

The project would require substantial financial investment and there was a potential to submit a large scale Heritage Lottery Fund application for up to £5 million. Officers had explored this option and there was an opportunity to bid for this funding in April 2014. This would provide sufficient time in which to develop the project idea further with partners.

The Committee welcomed the proposal. Members noted that the authority had a good track record of 'up-skilling' local people to meet gaps in the general workforce. A Member did feel that the council was consistently chasing 'public funds for apprentice and training schemes which, had it been simply allocated to the authority would have allowed the progressing of such schemes much more quickly and efficiently. The shortage of such skilled labour in this and other sectors was reflective of years of under investment in apprenticeships that were leading to skills gaps and shortages in key trades.

The Vice-Chair considered that this was an innovative way of bringing new opportunities and new skills to Hartlepool in a sector where there was a clear skills shortage.

Decision

That the proposal for the Council to develop a Heritage Skills Apprenticeship Project in partnership with the other four Local Authorities in the Tees Valley, Hartlepool College of Further Education (HCFE), Heritage Craft Alliance (HCA), English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund be supported and endorsed.

89 Civic Collections Review (*Assistant Director, Community Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To report on the findings of a comprehensive review of all the historical objects held by the Authority in the Civic Collections and to make recommendations as to those items in the Civic Collections that should be permanently transferred into the care of the Museum of Hartlepool, to identify those items which should be Retained for Civic Use or returned to their original owners, and to seek committee comments and approval for submission for decision to Finance and Policy Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that a full review of the Authority's Civic Collections was one of the outcomes of the work of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's Museum and Art Gallery Collections Working Group in 2011-2012. Two of the recommendations in the final report were: -

- (i) Full internal transfer and Accession of the Authority's Civic Regalia into the Museum Collection.
- (ii) Items not owned by the Authority are instead sensitively returned to legal owners.

The thinking behind these decisions was to ensure that items of historical importance to the story of the Borough were correctly preserved in the care of the Authority's Accredited Museum, while confirming the validity of other items for continuing use in the everyday ceremonial life of the Authority.

To this end, the Museum Manager with the assistance of the Registration and Member Services team carried out an exhaustive physical search of the Civic Centre, including restricted access areas such as the Vault, the Mayor's Parlour, offices and secure storage rooms, for items regarded as comprising the Civic Collections.

A total of 343 items were recorded. These were mainly individual items, but some, for example photographic albums, consist of multiple elements. These items were formally recorded by the Museum Manager, their historical stories researched, and their ownership status checked. All items were listed and detailed in the table attached as an appendix to the report.

For each item or group of items two important factors were identified. These were the item's most probable ownership status, and a recommendation as to whether or not it should be formally transferred into the Museum collection. For each individual item one of four recommendations were proposed:

Accession (legally transfer the item into the permanent collection of the Museum of Hartlepool).
Return to its rightful owner.
Retain for Civic Use.
Disposal.

The Assistant Director commented that all recommendations about Accessioning were made purely on two factors: the object's historical importance and its suitability to be collected by the Museum of Hartlepool as defined by our Collections Development Policy 2013. Once approved, the physical process of transferring, accessioning and indentifying owners for returns would commence in February 2014.

Decision

1. That Committee notes the importance to local communities of preserving their material heritage by formally placing such items within the permanent care of the Borough's accredited public museum.
2. That the Finance and Policy Committee approves the Recommendations set out for each individual item.

90. Strategic Financial Management Report – As at 31 October 2013 *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, Director of Public Health and Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the 2013/14 Forecast General Fund Outturn, 2013/14 Capital Programme Monitoring and provide details for the specific budget areas that this Committee is responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported that the latest report submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee on 19th December 2013 advised Members that there will be an overall underspend in the current year. The report also advised Members that this position reflected action taken by the Corporate Management Team to achieve underspends to help address the significant financial challenges facing the Council over the next few years and to fund one-off commitments not provided for in the approved 2013/14 budget as these items were not known at the time.

The outturn projections detailed in the report reflected the ongoing assessment of financial risks and/or one-off expenditure commitments and the recommendation that specific reserves were created to manage these issues. This approach would protect the Council's medium term financial position and avoid having to make higher in-year budget cuts when these issues need to be funded.

The report provided details of the reserves which it was recommended were created for this Committee, which in broad terms provided reserves to fund the phasing of income and expenditure between financial years, or reserves to meet unavoidable one-off financial commitments. The creation of

reserves amounted to £490,000 providing a net overall position ranging between £40,000 overspend to £60,000 overspend.

The Director of public Health added that there were a number of budgets that would be transferring to the Public health department in the new financial year. Some of these were income dependent and Members would be kept updated on any issues in relation to these.

Decision

That the report be noted.

91. Sport and Recreation Service – Grant Applications for Sport and Physical Activity Initiatives (*Assistant Director, Community Services*)

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report was to advise Committee of two intended grant funding applications to Sport England for physical activity initiatives to be delivered in the Borough.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that the first application was a Tees Valley partnership bid to Sport England's 'Inclusive Sports Fund' that if successful, would support disabled residents to increase their levels of sport and physical activity participation. This application was being led by the County Sports Partnership, Tees Valley Sport, who had been tasked by Sport England to work with local authorities, national governing bodies of sport, education and health on a sub-regional basis. The Council's Sport and Recreation service was a key member of this partnership.

The second was an application that the Council intended to make to Sport England's 'Community Sports Activation Fund', again to fund a specific participation initiative aimed at those identified as being in most need. This was aimed at the most sedentary residents (identified by the "Active People" 1 x 30 minutes indicator) in targeted sports across a range of localities.

Decision

That the report be noted and the two bids for funding supported by the Committee.

92. Sport and Physical Activity Team – Six Monthly Progress Report (*Assistant Director, Community Services*)

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to inform and update members on the work of the Sport and Physical Activity Team which is part of Hartlepool Borough Council's Sport and Recreation Service. This area of work included Summerhill Outdoor Activity Centre and Country Park, the Outdoor Activities Service, GP Referral Programme, Learn to Swim Programme (including Primary School Lessons) and all targeted work aimed at increasing participation in sport and physical activity.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Community Services indicated that the report outlined the breadth of work undertaken by the team, much alongside third party organisations, to improve the development of sport in the town. The Director of Public Health commented that the team had transferred into public health from the 6th January and she had been impressed with the amount of work undertaken across the town, particularly with those groups identified as being of particular need such as those with diabetes and/or obesity problems.

Members questioned the numbers involved in some of the activities reported. The Assistant Director commented that numbers were particularly encouraging across all the various activities but highlighted the football Street League that was targeted at young people which now regularly involved over 200 and one participant had, through a national competition, won a place at the world cup in Brazil.

Members questioned the involvement of schools in leagues across the town. The Assistant Director commented that there were school leagues for football and other sports across the town and he highlighted the new role for sport being led by Dyke House Sports College.

Decision

That the report be noted.

93. Economic Growth Adviser Programme (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

Type of decision

For information only

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform the Regeneration Services

Committee of Hartlepool's successful application to the Local Government Association's Economic Growth Adviser Programme.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Senior Regeneration Officer reported that the Economic Growth Adviser Programme was launched by the Local Government Association to offer direct bespoke advice and support to Local Authorities to help them deliver economic growth in their area. The Local Government Association has a panel of advisers available from a broad range of Regeneration and Economic Growth backgrounds to support Local Authorities. The Council has been successful in securing the maximum £7,000 worth of support to create a strategy to facilitate the regeneration of Church Street.

The aim of the project was to create a strategy for Church Street that would reduce the number of vacant buildings, facilitate additional daytime uses and create a cluster of creative industries businesses in sectors such as arts, design, photography, music and digital enterprise etc.

The area had the potential to contribute towards economic growth as the historic street scene presents a unique environment for the creation of a specialist town centre quarter. The student base and activity generated by Hartlepool College of Further Education and Cleveland College of Art and Design were cornerstones of economic activity in Hartlepool, especially in supporting the day time economy.

The Colleges help to establish a critical mass of activity to enhance the town's offer and attract new trade and enterprise. The project aligns with the regeneration framework for the town centre and the drive to create a specialist town centre "Innovation and Skills Quarter" to support small and new businesses, whilst offering graduates the opportunity to establish their own businesses. The grant would provide external specialist advice to support the work undertaken by council officers.

Decision

That the report be noted.

94. Planning Peer Challenge (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the scope of the Planning Peer Challenge which is due to take place over the period 18th to 20th February 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported that in 2012, the Government issued a consultation paper entitled 'Planning Performance

and the Planning Guarantee' regarding plans, now introduced to improve planning performance across local authorities.

The measures, which were introduced following the consultation, were aimed at improving both the speed and quality of decision making, with the prospect that poorly performing local authority planning services would be placed in 'special measures'. For a Local Authority placed in 'special measures' there are a number of consequences, primarily that an applicant can choose to have an application dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate, rather than the Council and as a consequence, decision making is taken away from Local Authority as well as any planning fee income which is used to help deliver the service.

When the new performance measures were introduced, they were applied to Local Authorities retrospectively. One of the key measures introduced related to 'Major' applications which already require to be determined within thirteen weeks, with the Government introducing a 30% minimum threshold. In other words, whilst there is an established target to determine all 'Major' planning applications within 13 weeks, any Local Authority who's performance falls below 30% determination within 13 weeks, risks being placed in special measures.

At the time the Government produced its first table of performance in the late Summer/Early Autumn 2013, Hartlepool was hovering dangerously close to the 30% threshold. As a consequence, contact was made with the Planning Advisory Service to seek support to improve performance. The support on offer to the Council as one in 'danger' of being placed in special measures is fully subsidised and to date has consisted of Officer attendance at a workshop on impacts and implications of being placed in special measures and how to avoid it and Members attendance at a 'Leadership Academy – Making decisions in line with policy workshop'.

The Assistant Director indicated that as part of the process, a business case had been submitted to receive 100% funding from the Planning Advisory Service to undergo a Planning Peer Challenge. This business case had been approved and the plans have now been drawn up for the Peer Challenge to commence on 18th February 2014.

The report went on to outline the specific areas that would be the focus of the Peer Challenge. The Assistant Director indicated that while performance on major applications had improved over recent months, there was anticipation that the government threshold would also increase keeping up the pressure on performance.

Members commented that some of the announcements recently from government in relation to planning issues amounted to little short of a developer's charter. There was a campaign being organised against some of these measures and it was suggested that the authority support such a campaign.

The Assistant Director commented that in a recent report to the Planning Committee he had advised Members that should planning applications for housing that were deemed to be in accordance with government criteria be refused by Members and then subsequently approved by a Planning Inspector, not only would the Council be liable for the costs associated with the appeal but the council would not be eligible to claim the New Homes Bonus on those properties.

Decision

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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