

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

20 FEBRUARY 2014

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, Keith Fisher and Dr George Morris.

Officers: Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Sylvia Pinkney, Public Protection Manager
Chris Pipe, Planning Services Manager
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Maggie Heaps, Learning and Skills Manager
David Worthington, Head of Culture and Information
Alyson Carr, Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)
Garry Hutchison, Building Control Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

95. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Keith Dawkins.

96. Declarations of Interest

None.

97. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2014

Confirmed.

98. Revision of 2014 / 2015 Fees and Charges – Public Protection *(Director of Public Health)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To consider the annual review of fees and charges in respect of services, licences and registrations undertaken by the Public Protection section of the Public Health Department.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Public Protection Manager reported that charges for the various services offered by the Public Protection section had been subjected to annual review. The review had considered both the services provided to clients and the Council's financial position (including the 2014/15 budget process) and charges made for similar services across the Tees Valley.

The suggested increases in charges were based on an average rise of 2.5%; or a more accurate reflection of staff resources being utilised; or to bring charges into line with other Authorities. Charges had generally been rounded off where appropriate and were exclusive of VAT. Based on current service operation the increase in fees would achieve gross additional income of £4800. However, costs including staff costs had also increased in proportion. The suggested charges for 2014/2015 were set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Public Protection Manager highlighted the charge for annual street trading licences in Seaton Carew. A previous decision by the executive portfolio holder had proposed a charge increase to £2500 per annum but on reflection, the Public Protection Manager considered that in the current economic circumstances the charge should remain at £2000. This was supported by the Committee

Decision

That the fees and charges set out in the appendix to the report be approved, subject to the annual street trading licence fee for Seaton Carew being amended to £2000.

99. Local Plan Timetable and Progress *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement for the timetable and progress of the Hartlepool Local Plan.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported that there were two options for progressing the Local Plan, either with or without the Issues and Options Stage.

Option 1 included an Issues and Options Stage. The main purpose of the

Issues and Options stage was to stimulate debate and seek the views of the community and other stakeholders on how and where Hartlepool should develop over the next fifteen years or so.

One of the main issues to be addressed in the paper was where future development in the Borough would be concentrated - the locational strategy. This included issues relating to the future use of employment land, provision of housing, flood risk and reducing congestion.

In suggesting options for addressing the issues, it was important that these were as wide-ranging as possible as at least one of the Core Strategies prepared by Local Planning Authorities soon after the new planning system came into effect was found to be 'unsound' by the Planning Inspector at the Public Examination in part because it failed to provide a reasonable choice of spatial options for the public to respond to.

It was considered that Option 1 was the most appropriate option and this is reinforced in paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 which states:

“Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made.”

Although it was acknowledged that the inclusion of the Issues and Options stage would add time onto the timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan, officers were committed to expediting the process. The Assistant Director commented that a plan should be completed for submission to the Planning Inspectorate in June/July 2015. It should also be acknowledged that should the Local Plan be prepared without the issues and options stage this would be unusual and could be problematic at the Examination in Public when justifying the development of the plan to the Secretary of State in light of the NPPF requirement as highlighted above.

A Member commented that the timetable now reported, and also reported to the Planning Committee, was considerably longer than the six months indicated by the Leader of the Council when the previous Local Plan Submission was withdrawn in October 2013. Members had been concerned that at that time some had commented that the development of a new plan could take up to three years. The Leader's assertion that the timescale would only be six months had assuaged some Members.

The Leader, Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher, stated that, at that time, it had been his understanding based on the best advice available. The previous plan had not been the best fit for the town and it was right that it was withdrawn. The plan for the development of the new plan had been developed by officers taking into account the needs of the town now and

they were to be commended on the proposal submitted. There would be various elements of the plan agreed throughout the preparation period and they would contain policies that would be robust and defensible. This Committee would be the appropriate forum for the development of those various policies and the process would allow full engagement for Members and stakeholders. The costs of the preparation of the new plan would reflect the fact that much of the costs were incurred through existing officers day-to-day duties and the additional costs quoted provided good value for money.

Members welcomed the clarification but one Member did consider that the initial assessment of the preparation time for a resubmitted plan should be followed up. Members endorsed the proposal for Option 1 and considered it offered the best option for the Council's preparation of a new Local Plan for the town. The Chair reiterated the Leader's comment in that the Regeneration Services Committee would be the vehicle for delivering the required aspects of the Local Plan and Members input would be a key component.

Decision

That the timetable for production of the Local Plan be noted and that Option One be approved as the route to preparing the new Local Plan.

100. Six Monthly Monitoring of Agreed Scrutiny Recommendations (*Scrutiny Manager*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To provide Members with the six monthly progress made on the delivery of scrutiny recommendations that fall within the remit of this Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Scrutiny Manager reported on the progress made against the investigations undertaken by the previous Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum. These recommendations now fell within the remit of the Regeneration Services Committee. The report provided a detailed explanation of progress made against each scrutiny recommendation since the last six monthly monitoring report was presented to the Committee in August 2013.

The Scrutiny Manager indicated that there was only one action that remained in progress and, therefore, the Committee was asked to consider whether it was more appropriate to continue to monitor that action through the Overview of Performance and Risk 2013/14 which was reported to the Finance and Policy Committee on a quarterly basis. Subject to that decision, this would complete the monitoring of scrutiny recommendations through this Committee.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the report and congratulated all those involved in the delivery of the recommendations set out in the progress report.

Decision

1. That the progress against the agreed recommendations be noted.
2. That the remaining action to be monitored through the Overview of Performance and Risk 2013/14 report which is presented to the Finance and Policy Committee on a quarterly basis.

101. Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 31st December, 2013 (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, Director of Public Health, and Chief Finance Officer*)

Type of decision

None – the report was for the Committee's 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 was responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods) reported that the latest overall financial position as at 31st December 2013 was that there was a net forecast uncommitted underspend at the year end of between £0.729m and £1.160m. As a minimum, the lower forecast 2013/14 uncommitted under spend of £0.729m should be available to support the Medium Term Financial Strategy over the period 2014/15 to 2016/17. This funding had been taken into account in the final 2014/15 to 2016/17 Medium Term Financial Strategy Report presented to Finance and Policy on 31st January, 2014.

The Head of Finance reported that the Regeneration Services Committee has responsibility for services managed by the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and the Director of Public Health. Budgets are managed at a Departmental level and a summary of the Departmental position for both areas was outlined. After the creation of reserves the overall position for the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department was a forecast variance of between £40k adverse and £60k favourable. For Public Health the forecast outturn projection is and adverse variance of between £167k and £147k. 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.

Appendix A to the report provides further details for the specific budget areas this Committee is responsible for including the reserves which it was

recommended were created for this Committee,

The report provided an update on expenditure to date against the approved capital budget and a breakdown by project was provided at Appendix B.

Decision

That the report be noted.

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

Type of decision

None – the report was for the Committee's 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 updated the Committee on performance across the division's three principal teams; Commercial Services, Environmental Protection and Trading Standards and Licensing. The Public Protection Manager highlighted the work undertaken in relation to health and safety assessments at social care homes which had resulted in the issuing of eleven enforcement notices, all of which had been complied with. Issues with the sale of a Halloween themed neck tie which was very flammable were also outlined as was work with Cleveland Fire Service on the testing of a cigarette for compliance with Reduced Ignition Propensity requirements.

Members welcomed the report and questioned what work was being undertaken on 'e-crime'. The Public Protection Manager indicated that some work would be undertaken in the new financial year on e-crime and the online selling of fake products. Advice was regularly issued and the division was working with banks on identifying elderly customers who may be withdrawing large sums of cash by talking to them on the reasons for the withdrawal and referring them onto Trading Standards if there was any concern. Members welcomed this approach as the elderly were often the target of e-mail and post scams and also rogue traders.

Members asked what levels of information were shared with other authorities particularly in relation to the flammable neck tie. The Public Protection Manager indicated that authorities did share information on a regular basis but stressed that the flammable neck-tie was not being sold illegally. Officers were concerned that it was being displayed alongside children's products.

Members suggested that use of the Council's social media accounts should be utilised alongside the more usual press releases in the cases of faulty

products or e-mail and phone scams as the wider audience that become aware, the more people would be protected.

Decision

That the report be noted.

103. Culture and Information Services Progress Report – August – December 2013 (*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 and update members on the work of the Culture and Information Services. Previously reports had been on a 6 monthly basis, however, whilst this report will cover a 6 month period, future reports will be on a quarterly basis.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Head of Culture and Information updated the committee on the key activities in the Libraries, Community Centres, Arts and outreach service, Events service, the Town Hall Theatre, Hartlepool Art Gallery, Hartlepool Museum, the Maritime Experience and the First World War project. It was highlighted that last year's Summer Reading Challenge had a record number of 1211 children completing the challenge in 2013. The Art Gallery in Christ Church was on target to achieve its highest attendance figures with numbers for 2013/14 expected to exceed even the numbers during the Tall Ships event. The display of art within the Civic Centre was also highlighted.

Members welcomed the art displayed in the Civic Centre and commended officers on the display. The Mayor commented that when showing visitors around the Civic Centre the art on display was one of the key elements highlighted to them. The Head of Culture and Information commented that one of the issues currently being worked on by officers was the re-hanging of art in the Long Gallery. There was also to be a portrait exhibition at the Gallery later in the year.

Members questioned the increase in visitors to the Hartlepool Gallery and if the numbers were related to the increase in school visits. The Head of Culture and Information indicated that school visits only accounted for around 2500 visits to the gallery. The total expected for this year was anticipated to exceed 70,000 so much of the increase was simply down to more visitors attending.

Members questioned what part the service was playing in improving tourist visits to the town. The Head of Culture and Information indicated that there were a wide number of events organised through the service which were aimed at increasing tourist visits, but events such as the Christmas Lights

switch on event had been very successful in terms of numbers attending and it was hoped that this would become an annual event.

Members asked what happened to donations of items related to World War 1 which were not specifically connected to Hartlepool. The Head of Culture and Information indicated that if an item was donated and wasn't one that could be accommodated within the Hartlepool collection, then it would be offered to another accredited collection around the country as was normal practice. This would ensure the item was donated to a public collection and therefore available for viewing/use by the public. It was reported that there had been an increase in donations connected with the bombardment of Hartlepool in 1914.

Members also indicated that they would wish to see reports on activities at and the use of the Borough Hall. The Director of Public Health stated that there was to be a report to the Committee in March relating to the Borough Hall.

Decision

That the report be noted.

104. Self Assessment Report of the Adult Education Service *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Non-key Decision

Purpose of report

To update the Committee on the annual Self Assessment Report of the Adult Education Service.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Learning and Skills Manager reported that as a provider of Learning and Skills funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) the Adult Education service was required to produce an annual Self Assessment Report (SAR). This report had then to be uploaded onto the SFA portal within five months of the end of the academic year.

All the aspects inspected are graded on a scale of one to four. Grade one provision was defined as outstanding, grade two is good, grade three is required to improve and grade four is inadequate. The Adult Education team found that all areas of the service were good. A summary of the grades for all aspects is submitted as Appendix 1 to the report.

During the self assessment process the following key strengths and areas for improvement were identified.

Key Strengths:-

- High success rates in most areas.

- High level of support for unemployed learners
- Good strategies and partnerships to promote social inclusion
- Good teaching learning and assessment.

Key Areas for Improvement:

- Effective use of the analysis of a range of data to target provision.
- Better engagement of service users in Quality improvement
- Further embedding of Functional skills.

Decision

That the report be noted.

105. Inspection of the Adult Education Service *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To update the Committee on the recent Ofsted Inspection of the Adult Education service.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Learning and Skills Manager reported on recent full inspection of the Adult Education Service by Ofsted which took place between the 3rd and 6th December 2013. A total of five inspectors visited the service for four days. Full details of the inspection were included in the inspection report which was published on the 10th January.

During the inspection two sector subject areas were inspected in detail. These were Health and Social Care and Education and Training. The inspectors graded both of these areas as grade 2 good.

During the inspection the following grades were awarded.

Outcomes for Learners	Grade 2	good
The Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Grade 2	good
The Effectiveness of Leadership and Management	Grade 2	good
Overall effectiveness	Grade 2	good

The inspectors also noted the key reasons why the Adult Education service was a good provider. These were:-

- Outcomes for learners at Hartlepool Adult Education Service are good.
- Learners achieve good levels of success in accredited programmes and excellent success in non-accredited community learning courses.
- The development of personal, social and employability skills for learners is very good. The service successfully recruits learners who

often start programmes with low prior attainment and barriers to learning: they subsequently improve their levels of personal confidence and self-esteem, and many are better prepared to gain employment.

- Successful strategic planning enables adults from the most disadvantaged communities in the borough to develop their skills and confidence, successfully enhance their employment opportunities and improve the quality of their lives.
- The service develops very successful partnerships with community and voluntary organisations that enable the service to target its provision successfully and encourage adults to participate and succeed in learning.

On the basis of the service moving towards becoming outstanding in future the inspectors noted a number of key points which the service needed to do to improve further. These were:-

- Improve success rates for learners on accredited programmes so that even more learners benefit from successful achievement from their learning.
- Ensure that rigorous systems track and monitor all learners' progress towards achieving their targets in developing their English and Mathematics skills.
- Ensure that actions from observations are more specific in identifying how teachers can improve their practice further, and monitor closely progress in implementing these actions through performance reviews.
- Improve the self assessment process by analysing data on learners' performance and outcomes from observations more rigorously, and identifying specific areas for improvement.
- Improve the training and support for tutors to enable them to promote diversity in their teaching successfully.

As all areas of the service are now deemed to be good this would ensure that the service would continue to be eligible for funding from the Skills Funding Agency to fund the provision of learning opportunities.

Members welcomed the report and congratulated all the staff in the Adult Education Service on achieving such a positive inspection report. The Chair also commented that the Ofsted inspection report showed that the service's own self assessment had been accurate.

Decision

That the report be noted.

106. Quarterly Building Control Report September - December 2013 *(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 regarding the key areas of the Building Control Service including the fee earning and statutory enforcement activity, during the 3rd quarter of 2013/14.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Building Control Manager provided an update on progress and performance of the fee earning element of the Building Control Service and the provision of the statutory enforcement element during quarter 3, of 2013/14. The Chair noted that Building Control was a competitive market and that the feedback from customers was extremely positive.

Decision

That the report be noted.

**107. Quarterly Update Report for Planning Services
October – December 2013/2014** *(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 on performance and progress across the key areas of Planning Services for the third quarter of 2013/2014.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Planning Services Manager reported on the work over the last quarter of the four teams within Planning Services, Development Control, Planning Policy, Landscape Planning and Conservation and Tees Archaeology.

The Planning Services Manager highlighted performance against the nationally monitored targets for both major, minor and other planning applications, which, at 86.6%, 79.48% and 87.34% respectively for determination within the 13 week target for major applications and 8 week target for minor and other applications for the year to date, were well ahead of the national targets.

The Planning Services Manager also highlighted the work of the pre-application advice service, the number of new businesses locating to the new Enterprise Zones and the work of the Landscape Planning and Conservation Team and Tees Archaeology.

Members questioned why when preparing the updated Gypsy and Traveller

Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) as part of the Local Plan evidence base, an 'impartial' consultant had to be engaged. The Planning Services Manager indicated that where possible, in-house resources would be used in the development of the new Local Plan. There were, however, some policies where specialist knowledge was necessary and where it was also prudent to have impartial external specialist advice that was both robust and defensible. The Assistant Director, Regeneration commented that with specialist sensitive areas such as the GTAA, it was wise to have a strong piece of independent work that put the basis of any recommendations on a stronger footing. A Member commented that external advice did also cost and should only be used when resources were not available in-house. The report gave the impression that there was no option other than to go to external consultants and that the decision on that had already been made without Member involvement.

The Chair thanked the officers for a comprehensive report. The Vice-Chair indicated that Members had given a clear indication that the Council would reduce the need for external consultants where possible and undertake work in-house. However, this could not always be achieved and sometimes that external expertise was required to provide policy advice that could be defended. Members also referred to the success of the one stop shop for pre planning advice which had created income of over £12,000.

Decision

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10.40 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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