

# **REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

20 March 2014

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

**Present:**

Councillor Robbie Payne (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Kevin Cranney and Keith Dawkins

Also Present: In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2;  
Councillor Allan Barclay as substitute for Councillor  
Stephen Akers-Belcher  
Councillor Rob Cook as substitute for Councillor Dr George Morris

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  
Pat Usher, Head of Sport and Recreation  
Nigel Johnson, Housing Services Manager  
Maggie Heaps, Learning and Skills Manager  
David Worthington, Head of Culture and Information  
Dale Clark, Estates and Asset Manager  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

### **108. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Stephen Akers-Belcher and Dr George Morris

### **109. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **110. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2014**

Received.

## **111. Skills Support for the Workforce -Additional Funding** (Assistant Director, Regeneration)

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision Test (i) – Forward Plan Reference No RN 04/14.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval from the Committee to accept additional funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to deliver the Tees Valley European Social Fund bid for Skills Support for the Workforce – June 2013 to July 2015.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Learning and Skills Manager reported that the Skills Support for the Workforce project was designed to provide a range of training to assist employed individuals to:

- Enhance their skills in order to become more successful in the labour market
- Advance their career prospects
- Reduce the risk of long term unemployment and welfare dependency.

The offer of the contract for this project was approved at the Regeneration Service Committee on 20th June.

The SFA contacted the project staff in December to offer additional funding to support this project. After discussions with the SFA an additional £800,000 was applied for. This amount was allocated to both delivery activities and non learning activities in both elements of the project.

Confirmation was received in January that this figure had been approved by the SFA and would be made available to Hartlepool Borough Council as the Lead Authority. The additional funding would be split between the two elements of the project i.e. the Delivery project and the Local Response Fund. According to the SFA rules a maximum of 50% of any funding can be allocated to 'non learning activities'.

The Learning and Skills Manager outlined the main additional training and support that the additional finance would provide which would include additional employee training, support to employers to release staff for training, further apprentice opportunities.

Members welcomed the additional funding and questioned how employers could engage with the scheme. The Learning and Skills Manager indicated that there were five Business Coordinator posts, one in each of the Tees Valley local authorities, whose role it was to engage with employers to establish training needs and where this project could support that. Employers could also come direct to the project and there had been wide publicity with the business community and Trade Unions.

Members questioned to what extent training could be delivered and how much money was allocated per employee. The Learning and Skills Manager indicated that the European Social Fund had some restrictions on how the money could be allocated and spent. In essence each request for training generated an amount of money through the project and then the Coordinators had to find a training provider to meet that request.

### **Decision**

That the acceptance of the additional funding to support the Skills Support for the Workforce project, as reported, be approved.

## **112. First World War Commemoration** (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to inform the Committee how Hartlepool would commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of World War and the centenary of the Bombardment of the Hartlepoons on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014. To advise the Committee as to other activities taking place in the Borough and to request support for a new Bombardment Memorial to be unveiled on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Head of Culture and Information reported that Hartlepool Borough Council has been awarded £394,775 from Arts Council England's Renaissance Strategic Support Fund to work with partners in Darlington Borough Council, Middlesbrough Borough Council, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Stockton Borough Council and the Heugh Gun Battery Museum, to deliver a series of First World War commemorative activity across the Tees Valley up to March 2015. This is a cultural project that involves all areas of the sector including arts, events, libraries, archives and museums.

The Head of Culture and Information outlined the background from the launch of the project in July 2013 including details of the key events and activities scheduled for 2014. The main commemorative event for Hartlepool would be based around the centenary of the bombardment on 16 December 2014.

It is proposed that a memorial to those killed in Bombardment of the Hartlepoons was created on the Headland to be opened on 16th December 2014. The memorial to be erected in a plinth-style with decorative reliefs that would adorn the faces of the plinth would be based on the James Clarke painting 'the Bombardment of the Hartlepoons'. Drawings showing the proposed memorial were included with the report.

Members welcomed the proposed memorial and considered that it would form a significant sign of respect for those lost in the 1914 bombardment.

**Decision**

1. That the proposals and progress of the project be noted.
2. That the Council underwrites the cost of the Bombardment Memorial so that work can commence with an expectation that the cost could be covered by commercial sponsorship and through existing resources.

**113. Fees and Charges Review 2014/15 – Borough Hall and Town Hall Theatre and Operation Review of the Borough Hall** *(Assistant Director, Community Services)*

**Type of decision**

Non-key Decision.

**Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report was twofold; to seek approval for the Town Hall Theatre and the Borough Hall annual charges for the use of facilities from April 1st 2014. In addition, to appraise the current operation of the Borough Hall and Buildings and to consider future changes to be assessed after consultation with current users, community groups, members and the wider community. The report provided some contextual detail to inform Committee of developments at the Borough Hall and Buildings over the years, some usage detail and the current issues pertaining to the operation of the facility.

**Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that the Borough Hall and Buildings had to date been operated as a risk averse “hire venue” in a similar way to the community centre facilities rather than a “promoting venue”. Whilst there was a good regular repeat business and this in itself generated new expressions of interest, it was also reliant on clients making approaches to utilise the venue.

There were limitations in exactly what could be promoted at the site owing to the physical inadequacy of the dressing room facilities. However this simply meant that whilst the Borough Hall had limitations in its variety of use there was still a considerable market to be explored for major ‘large auditorium’ events.

Over the years, many of the rooms in the Borough Buildings had been used as long term hire dedicated office facilities for a range of users such as Phillips Petroleum Ltd, Adult Education and the Building Schools for the Future Project Team. Whilst this has been excellent business for the site in the past, as time has elapsed, the reliance on these former income streams has now caused a substantial income pressure as these users have

withdrawn from the site. The only remaining long term use is of the Middlegate Room which is used as a wedding room – this use would not be impacted by the current changes to Registrars.

The current charges for the Borough Hall, Borough Buildings and the Town Hall Theatre along with the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15 were set out in Appendix 2 to the report. These had been frozen and not increased for the past two years and already have concessions built within them. The Assistant Director highlighted some aspects of the revised charges and the reason behind some of the pricing decisions. The proposed amendments and freezing of prices was intended to stimulate usage and increase hires which in turn would assist in generating more income from ancillary spends from bar sales. Actual officer experience and supporting anecdotal evidence suggests that we know we were actively losing hires because of perceptions of cost rather than the reality.

Members welcomed the proposals and commented that they should encourage increased use of the facility by the local community.

#### **Decision**

1. That the revised fees and charges for the Borough Hall and Buildings and the Town Hall Theatre as attached at Appendix 2, be approved with effect from 1st April 2014.
2. That the operational review proposals contained within the report be noted.
3. That the proposal to undertake consultation with a report back to Regeneration Committee to consider a long term Strategy for the Borough Hall and Buildings site by early summer 2014 be approved.

### **114. Hückelhoven Youth Exchange 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 youth exchange in partnership with Hückelhoven in Germany using funding from the European Commission's Erasmus + Programme.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Employment Development Officer reported that Hückelhoven in Germany was Hartlepool's twin town and in December 2013, following a visit the Leader of the Council asked Officers to explore what external funding was available to enable the two towns to work more closely together to develop activities particularly those involving children and young people.

The Employment Development Officer reported that it was proposed that a youth exchange project was developed between Hartlepool and Hückelhoven. The project would be targeted to those young people from the most disadvantaged areas to provide them with new opportunities which would increase their personal, social and employability skills.

This proposed project would be for 60 young people (30 from Hartlepool and 30 from Hückelhoven) who were in Years 9 to 12. The young people would be selected from a range of partners including schools, colleges and youth centres. Each exchange will last for five days (excluding travel) with the activities and itinerary being designed by the young people from each country but as a minimum will include: -

- Visits to key businesses;
- Sports competitions, and;
- Links to Teesside University's Animex International Festival of Animation and Computer Games.

It was proposed that an application for funding for the exchange was made to the European Commission's Erasmus + Programme 2014 – 2020 which offers education, training, youth and sport opportunities across Europe. Under the programme funding is offered for the Mobility of Young People and Youth Workers with the aim of developing exchange programmes with partner countries across the European Union. The deadline for applications for projects which will be starting between 1st September 2014 and 28th February 2015 is 12 noon on Wednesday 30th April 2014. The support of the Hückelhoven authority was also required but support had already been indicated from the Dusseldorf Chamber of Commerce.

Officers indicated that they were hopeful that the application would be successful. Members supported the application particularly as it would help reinvigorate the links with Hückelhoven. Members suggested that if the bid was unsuccessful, would other avenues of funding be sought to ensure the programme went ahead. Officers indicated that bid did fit the Erasmus + Programme but if Members wished that other funding avenues were explored, officers would look to the potential of other funding.

Members indicated that Hartlepool was also twinned with Sete in France and should the programme with Hückelhoven now suggested prove successful, it would be good to re-establish connections with Sete.

The Leader of the Council indicated that during his visit to Hückelhoven, their representatives had been very welcoming and keen to re-establish the town twinning links. Many people in Hartlepool had very fond memories of the past twinning links with Hückelhoven and there still some links maintained through the schools and groups such as the Hartlepool Male Voice Choir. If other funding could be found to build on the programme now proposed than that could add to the aims of the proposal.

## **Decision**

1. That the report be noted and if the bid was successful a further report be submitted.
2. That officers examine any further funding avenues that may be available to promote greater town twinning links with Hückelhoven, Germany and Sete, France.

## **115. ESF Additional Funding Opportunities** (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the recent opportunity to seek additional funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) European Social Fund (ESF) for the delivery of two additional projects.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Learning and Skills Manager reported that on 10th February 2014 the SFA published invitations to tender to eligible providers for additional ESF funded projects. These tenders were for projects to be delivered across the whole of the North East region.

The first project will utilise ESF funding allocated by the SFA to provide English and Maths qualifications to employees in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). The funds available for this project were £4.6 million to be utilised over the North East region. The funding would be used to provide support for 3,500 individuals. In addition there was funding available within the project to support 1,000 employers to enable them to release the staff to attend the English and Maths provision.

It was envisaged that the delivery of the English and Maths would be mainly by the Adult Education services of the 12 local authorities in the North East as well as other sub contracted providers.

The second project was a flexible fund for the unemployed with a contract value of £670k across the North East. This funding would make the development of tailor made programmes for the unemployed and required the implementation of a plan of action which outlined how providers would work together.

The deadlines for the submission of the bids had been tight and the deadline was 24th February 2014. The projects were due to begin in June 2014 and will continue until July 2015. There had been discussions with a number of the North East Adult Education services who expressed an interest in being a partner within the project.

Both projects must deliver across the whole North East region and Hartlepool would submit a bid on behalf of the Local Authorities.

**Decision**

That the report be noted and a further report submitted once a decision had been made by the Skills Funding Agency on the submitted application.

**116. Quarterly Report – Adult Education** (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

**Type of decision**

For information only.

**Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to update members about the work of the Adult Education service.

**Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Learning and Skills Manager updated the Committee on the activities of the Adult Education service from the beginning of the academic year 2013/14. The Adult Education service is fully funded through allocations which are received from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Education funding Agency (EFA) as well as income from fees. The report updated Members on the work undertaken and numbers involved in Adult Skills, Community Learning, the provision funded by the Education Funded Agency, Tees Valley Workforce Skills, Enterprise Programme and the support, information, advice and guidance services.

Members questioned how the service engaged with potential service providers. The Learning and Skills Manager indicated that there was a regular Adult Education Provider Group that involved all providers. Any new providers could access the group through the Learning and Skills Manager.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

**117. Quarterly Housing Report October-December 2013** (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

**Type of decision**

For information only

**Purpose of report**

To update the Committee on 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, housing advice and homelessness prevention and Warm up North during the third quarter of 2013/14.



**Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Housing Services Manager updated the Committee on the statistical information of the main aspect of the performance of the Housing Service over the last quarter. Members focussed the delivery of home improvements through the Disabled Facilities Grants and questioned the means testing of such grants. The Housing Services manager indicated that means testing was done to a national standard set by government. Members expressed their concern at the future of funding available for Disabled Facilities Grants following the recent failure of a bid for funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group. The Director of public Health indicated that a letter had been sent, as Members had requested, to the CCG indicating the Council's disappointment in the failure of the bid for funding for Disabled Facilities Grants.

Members also noted from the report the numbers of people moving from social housing into private landlord accommodation in order to avoid the bedroom tax.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

**118. Quarterly Estates and Regeneration Report July – September 2013** *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

**Type of decision**

For information only

**Purpose of report**

To update the Committee about the range of work undertaken within the section and progress across key areas of the Estates and Regeneration service and recent achievements in the July to September quarter.

**Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Estates and Asset Manager updated the Committee on the Estates and Regeneration services performance over the last quarter in relation to Development and regeneration, Operational Property, Non-operational/Investment Property, Capital Receipts, Community Asset Transfer and Capital Investment and Maintenance.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

**119. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

The Chairman ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in

order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

Retirement of Assistant Director, Community Services John Mennear

The Chair indicated that this was the last meeting of the Regeneration Services Committee prior to the retirement of the Assistant Director, Community Services. The Chair wished Mr Mennear a long and happy retirement and thanked him for his service to the Council and the people of Hartlepool. Members echoed the Chair's comments.

The meeting concluded at 10.35 am

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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