

# **REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

24 JULY 2014

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

**Present:**

Councillor Robbie Payne (In the Chair)

Councillors: Rob Cook, Kevin Cranney and Keith Dawkins.

Also Present: Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher as substitute for Councillor Stephen Akers Belcher in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2

Councillor Alan Clark.

Officers: Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health  
Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration  
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Stephen Akers Belcher, Pamela Hargreaves and Dr George Morris.

### **2 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2014**

Received.

### **4. Savings Programme 2015/16 – Regeneration Division** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

**Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to identify proposals for the delivery of savings in respect of the Regeneration Division (excluding Estates and Regeneration) for consideration as part of the 2015/16 budget process.

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

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods briefly set out the current financial position of the Council and the need to develop a further savings programme for 2015/16 for consideration by the Finance and Policy Committee and then Council. The Director gave an overview of the areas of the department that were the responsibility of the Committee and the scope of the proposed savings. The savings proposed were be bundled into four discrete packages as follows:-

- (i) Divisional Management Structure
- (ii) Cross Departmental Management Structure
- (iii) Specific Operational Service Proposals
  - Economic Regeneration
  - Planning
  - Housing
  - Culture and Information.

The savings target for the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department is £2.250m for the financial year 2015/16. In addition to this target, the Department needed to find additional savings to offset Departmental budget pressures of £170,000. The overall savings figure was therefore £2.420m for 2015/16. The approach taken within the Department had been not to apportion specific percentage targets to each Division/service, but to look at options emerging from across the department in a more structured manner in order to achieve the overall target. The contribution towards this from the services which fall under the remit of the Regeneration Committee equated to £465,000. The remainder will be considered by Finance and Policy Committee £650,000 and Neighbourhoods Committee £1,135m.

The proposed savings were set out in report and are summarised below –

Divisional Management Structure	£60,000
Economic Regeneration	£50,000
Planning Services	£50,000
Housing Services	£85,000
Culture and Information	£220,000

The Director stressed that this was the very earliest stage of the savings programme and things were changing constantly. The Director stated her concerns with the pressures placed on the fourth tier of the department's management structure. Culture and Information was the area taking the largest proportion of the savings proposals though at this stage this did not include any proposals to close branch libraries; it was unlikely that that situation could continue into the savings programme for 2016/17. In light of

this, the Director indicated that it would be prudent to undertake a full review of the library service followed by the early commencement of the necessary statutory consultation process.

The Director also reported that at the Finance and Policy Committee meeting held earlier in the week, a report on the disposal of Throston Grange Community Centre was considered. The Finance and Policy Committee resolved that “That the future use of any income generated from the [above] proposal be referred to the Regeneration Services Committee on 24 July 2014 for consideration as part of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department Savings Programme for 2015/16.”

The Leader of the Council commented that it was difficult to make any decisions on savings at this early stage as there was still a major review of reserves to be undertaken. It was proposed that a new specific planning policy allowing the wider community use of Section 106 monies should be considered at the earliest opportunity. The Leader also suggested that the public would not want to see any further branch library closures in Hartlepool so the Council would need to look at the smarter use of its community based facilities as service access hubs. This was supported by the Committee unanimously.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration commented that the closure of branch libraries was always going to be a contentious issue. Other areas that had looked to the wider use of libraries for the collocation of services had not always found the process totally straightforward or with the potential to deliver the level of savings that had been hoped for. This would, however, be included as part of the wide ranging review of the service. Later in the debate on this issue, the Committee resolved that the potential closure of any branch libraries should not form part of the review. The collocation of services including public health within libraries should form part of the review of the delivery of services within the division.

In the discussion on the potential changes to the uses of S.106 monies within the authority, the Assistant Director cautioned that any financial contributions set out in a S.106 agreement as part of a planning approval formed a legal contract with a developer. The new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for larger developments may allow contributions to be drawn from a developer for strategic need but not for any use the authority saw fit. It may be difficult legally for either to be utilised for anything not specifically associated with the impact of a particular development. Members agreed that further work was needed and the advice of the Local Government Association should be obtained as it was known that other authorities had found a means of allowing the wider use of these monies.

Members commented on the potential proposals for the merging of management responsibilities within the department. The Assistant Director commented that these proposals were based on the potential of a member of staff seeking voluntary redundancy. Such a decision was an important

and personal decision for an individual. Should this saving not come forward an equivalent saving would have to be found from within the service area. As Members had indicated their wish not to close any branch libraries, the potential savings from within that service area, may unfortunately, fall to staff costs.

During the discussion on the disposal of Throston Grange Community Centre, Members suggested that the money gained could be used to support the remaining community centres. The Assistant Director indicated that the revenue budget for community centres was around £90,000, there were also additional property related costs to be factored into the overall cost of running the service and the capital receipt from the Throston Grange centre would only go part way to supporting that cost.

### **Decision**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the comments of Members be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee on 13 October 2014 as part of the Councils overall budget considerations for 2015/16; specifically: -
  - That the review of the library service does not include the option to close any of the current branch library network in the town.
  - That the capital receipt from the disposal of the Throston Grange Community Centre be utilised to support the remaining Community Centres during 2015/16.
  - That the early introduction of a new specific planning policy be investigated to allow the wider community use of contributions from developers linked to the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements.

## **5. Savings Programme 2015/16 – Public Health Department** *(Director of Public Health)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to identify proposals for the delivery savings in relation to public health core revenue grant funded services for consideration as part of the 2015/16 budget process.

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

The Director of Public Health reported that there were two core revenue grant funded services in public health - Sport and Recreation and Public Protection. These services contributed to the Council's Strategic aims to protect and improve the health of the population.

The savings proposals outlined within the report for Members consideration were –

- 1 – Consideration of alternative management arrangements for sports and recreation services - £150,000
- 2 – Review of the Metrology and Testing Service - £17,000

The Director indicated that, as Members were aware, the proposal to consider alternative management arrangements for Sport and Recreation was currently being scoped as agreed by the Regeneration Committee on the 8th May 2014. The options appraisal was now complete and officers were checking the report for accuracy and the financial assumptions contained within the report. The report had included a strategic review of the service, analysis of current performance and soft market testing with potential operators. The report would be presented to the Regeneration Committee in September 2014 for a decision regarding whether there were savings to be realised through the Council partnering with other providers and securing an alternative management arrangement.

The Director stated that should there are not savings to be realised through alternative management arrangements then the Sport and Recreation service would still need to make the savings of £150,000. This would be challenging and would require sustained and focused work to innovate and find new sources of income. Further opportunities to drive up income may exist in areas of health and fitness and activity classes.

The proposal to review the Metrology Laboratory was fairly complex as it would be to some extent interdependent on other local authorities. The Metrology and Testing Service was delivered through a joint arrangement led by Middlesbrough Council on behalf of the four contributing local authorities (Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton and Hartlepool). The Directors of Place based services (for Hartlepool the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods) across the four authorities have had initial discussions as to the value of reviewing the Metrology and Testing Service. They have concluded that given the pressure on all local authorities' budgets this was worthy of further exploration and they therefore commissioned a review of the service. The outcome of the review was due to be presented to the Directors of Place later in the year and this would then be reported to Committee for a decision on the implications for Hartlepool and how the proposed savings of £17,000 were to be realised.

The Leader of the Council commented that the increased income generation and usage of the Borough Hall had to be at the heart of the review of the service. Utilisation of the building as a community hub with potentially a facility similar to Inspirations should be considered. Members supported this view but did believe some remedial works to the building were required in order to increase its usage. The Director indicated that a report on the Borough Hall would be coming the September meeting of the Committee.

In relation to the potential outsourcing of the Sport and Recreation service the Director indicated that a report would also be submitted to the September meeting to allow Members the opportunity to consider the

appraisal before the October meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee.

**Decision**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the comments of Members be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee on 13 October 2014 as part of the Councils overall budget considerations for 2015/16; specifically: -
  - That the development of the Borough Hall as a community hub on the Headland must be advanced through the promotion of greater usage and development of the facilities there.

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

No items.

The meeting concluded at 10.17 am.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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