

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

23 March 2015

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

Present:

Councillor: Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Allan Barclay, Tom Hind, Marjorie James, Robbie Payne, Carl Richardson and Chris Simmons

Also present:

Councillor Jim Ainslie

Officers: Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Catherine Grimwood, Performance and Partnerships Manager
Mark Smith, Head of Youth Support Services
Stephen Carter, Health Improvement Practitioner
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Alastair Rae, Public Relations Manager
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

141. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geoff Lilley and George Morris.

142. Declarations of Interest

None.

143. Minutes

- (i) Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 23 February 2015 – received.
- (ii) Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 12 January 2015 – received.

144. Council Plan 2015/2016 *(Corporate Management Team)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To enable the Committee to consider and comment on the final draft of the proposed Council Plan for 2015/2016.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the Council's Service Planning Framework. It was noted that the detailed proposals for 2015/16 had been considered by each of the Council's Committees and summaries of the issues raised was attached at Appendix 1. The proposed Council Plan was attached at Appendix 2 and set out how the Council proposed to deliver the priority outcomes. It was proposed to submit the Council Plan to Council for approval on 26 March 2015.

The Assistant Chief Executive highlighted one comment received from the Children's Services Committee that it may be beneficial to include post-holder's job titles within the Council Plan as opposed to post-holder's names. Whilst it was noted that this change would not be possible prior to submission to Council on 26 March 2015, the Plan could be amended to incorporate that change prior to its publication if Members' wished.

The following was a unanimous decision.

Decision

The Council Plan 2015/16 was endorsed for submission to Council on 26 March 2015 for consideration, with the published Plan to include post-holder's job titles as opposed to post-holder's names.

145. A Combined Authority for the Tees Valley *(Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (ii) applies – Forward Plan reference number CE67/15.

Purpose of report

At the meeting of the Committee on 24 November 2014, the Committee received a report in respect of the potential creation of a Combined Authority for the Tees Valley (including Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland). As part of this report, it was agreed that consultation be undertaken as outlined and a further report submitted to the Committee prior to the submission of a draft scheme to the Secretary of State.

The report incorporated a recap on the rationale for the establishment of a Combined Authority (and the original report was attached at Appendix 1) and how it would support the achievement of our economic goals, the results from the consultation and the draft scheme for submission to the Secretary of State.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided details on the benefits of moving to and the proposed operation of a Combined Authority. A consultation process had been undertaken across all five Local Authorities with over 1900 responses received. The results of the consultation were supportive of the creation of a Combined Authority with 1828 (almost 65%) of responses in favour of the creation of a Combined Authority (with 27% against and 8% don't know). The results of the consultation were clearly in favour of the creation of a Combined Authority and were a strong endorsement of the proposals.

It was noted that Authorities were required to submit a draft scheme for the operation of the Combined Authority to the Secretary of State to lay the appropriate orders in Parliament. In broad terms, the scheme would be ready to be submitted to Government in early April 2015 with the most likely conclusion being that the earliest the Combined Authority could be implemented was October 2015 or during the winter of 2015/16.

In response to clarification sought by a Member, the Chair confirmed that Hartlepool Borough Council would not disappear due to the creation of a Combined Authority, would retain sovereignty of decision making and would be able to leave the Combined Authority should that decision be made by Council. The Public Relations Manager confirmed that all communications in relation to the proposed Combined Authority had been clear that this was not about recreating Cleveland County Council but was happy to reiterate and reinforce this message in further communications. The Chair indicated this would be helpful along with highlighting that the focus of the Combined Authority would be to cement the relationship already in place with the Local Enterprise Partnership and create more opportunities to lever in as much funding as possible to further develop transport, employment, skills, economic regeneration and the low carbon foot print within Hartlepool.

The following was a unanimous decision.

Decision

- (1) The positive nature of the consultation results was noted.
- (2) The Draft Scheme be referred to Council for consideration and endorsement prior to the submission to the Secretary of State.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Leader of the Council to make any minor changes which may be required to the draft scheme through the negotiation process with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- (4) It was noted that further reports may be forthcoming to the Committee as required following DCLG processes.
- (5) That a further press release be issued reiterating the benefits of Hartlepool Council being part of a Combined Authority.

146. Land at Rear of Croft Terrace *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To consider the sale of land at rear of Croft Terrace at less than best consideration.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the ownership and use of the land shown on Appendices 1 and 2. Following discussions with the owners of the Duke of Cleveland, the Council's Estates and Regeneration Manager had valued the land and submitted Heads of Terms to the owners for the sale of the land, the details of which were included within confidential Appendix 3. **This information contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.** The owners of the Duke of Cleveland were unwilling to pay the sums considered appropriate by the Council and have submitted a counter offer as set out in confidential Appendix 4. **This information contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)**

(Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.

A valuation report and description provided by the Estates and Regeneration Manager was provided at confidential Appendix 5. **This information contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.** Discussions were ongoing with the External Auditors (Mazars) and subject to a clear indication from Mazars that they have no concerns, the sale will proceed.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the proposed value of the disposal of the land along with the benefits that had been created from the renovation of the Duke of Cleveland including the creation of jobs as well as bringing an old building back into use.

147. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 146 – Land at Rear of Croft Terrace and associated Appendices (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*) – This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.

146. Land at Rear of Croft Terrace (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Further detail can be found in the exempt section of the minutes.

The following was a unanimous decision.

Decision

That the proposed sale was approved.

The meeting returned to open session.

148. Update on Community Defibrillator Project (*Director of Public Health*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To update Members on the progress of installing defibrillator units at key locations across Hartlepool and the associated communication plan to deliver awareness training to the wider community including staff and elected Members.

To obtain Members' views on the proposal to identify future locations for further roll out of defibrillation units across Hartlepool, subject to funding being available.

Issue(s) for consideration

A breakdown of the new locations and current progress towards the provision of defibrillator units and external storage cabinets was provided in the report. A meeting was held with NEAS on 6 March to develop a training plan for staff and a further mapping exercise was taking place with NEAS to register the new defibrillator locations with the emergency services. As a result of the Cardiovascular Disease Working Group report submitted to the Extraordinary Council on 16 March, it was proposed that further funding be sought to provide defibrillator units at other key locations in community and workplace settings and the proposed sites were listed in the report.

A Member commented that where the defibrillator units were being installed in larger work place settings, that the organisations should be asked to contribute to the funding of the purchase and installation of the Units and that the potential training of on-site medical teams to use the equipment be explored. It was noted that the Lynn Street Depot was referred to in the report and the Director of Public Health confirmed that this would be amended to refer to the Tofts Farm Depot. A Member requested that further training sessions be arranged for Elected Members as well as raising awareness of the purpose of the Units.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Public Health indicated she would look into whether North East Ambulance Service pay the St John Ambulance for the installation of the defibrillator units and if so, what the cost of this was.

It was highlighted that a partnership had been developed with a local charity group, Defibs for Hartlepool, led by Mark Rycraft and colleagues at Middleton Grange Shopping Centre who would be willing to match fund the purchase of up to five Units using money previously raised. The Chair commented that he was pleased to see that the Council was involved with this Promotion with match funding to purchase the defibrillator units being secured.

The following was a unanimous decision.

Decision

- (1) The content of the report was noted.
- (2) That resources be identified from the Public Health resources and host organisations to meet the costs of the defibrillator units and ongoing maintenance.
- (3) That where Units were to be installed within larger organisations, that negotiations be undertaken to secure funding from those organisations for the purchase and installation of the Units as well as the potential being explored to train their on-site medical teams to use the Units.
- (4) The Director of Public Health to make enquiries with NEAS to ascertain if they fund the installation of defibrillator units within any organisations.
- (5) That additional training for Elected Members be arranged.
- (6) That the reference to the Lynn Street Depot be amended to refer to the Tofts Farm Depot.

149. Pay Policy 2015/16 *(Monitoring Officer)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To obtain the Committee's endorsement, subject to Member comments, of the proposed changes to the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2014/15 in advance of Council approval being sought on 26 March 2015 and to determine the Council's policy on the use of zero hours contracts.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Chief Solicitor presented a detailed and comprehensive report which provided the background to the provision of a Pay Policy Statement in line with the Department for Communities and Local Government's guidance on the content and application of senior pay statements. The proposed amendments to the Pay Policy were detailed in the report. It was noted that

Council had recently considered a motion in relation to zero hours contracts and the report included the considerations of each of the specific proposals included within the motion.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the use of zero hours contracts including the fact that some employees choose and prefer to be employed on a zero hours basis. In addition, it was considered that zero hours contracts provided the Council with the flexibility to ensure that the organisations service requirements were met in a cost effective manner. However, the Chair reminded Members that Council had already given the commitment to removing all zero hours contracts from within the Council. The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the number of zero hours contracts within the Council had reduced to 22 and was part of an ongoing review to reduce them further. The Assistant Chief Executive expressed some concerns at the total removal of zero hours contracts as some employees preferred to be employed on this basis and they were an effective tool for the Authority to use to manage its resources in a cost effective manner.

In relation to contractors using zero hours contracts, the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that all contractors employed by the Council were encouraged to implement the Hartlepool Living Wage. It was suggested that contractors could also be encouraged to reduce the use of zero hours contracts where possible. However, Members considered that paragraph 15.1 of the Pay Policy be amended to remove the last part of the sentence which included reference to Contractors avoiding the use of zero hours contracts and that they should not use them at all.

A discussion ensued on the potential alternative arrangements to zero hours contracts including short fixed term arrangements and it was suggested that alternative mechanisms to zero hours contracts should be explored further.

In response to a comment by a Member, the Assistant Chief Executive indicated that he was not aware of any other Local Authorities who had removed the potential to utilise zero hours contracts. It was confirmed that a review into the Council's current use of zero hours contracts was currently being undertaken. It was also suggested that service managers should be made aware that this was the direction of travel of the Council. It was noted that at the end of the review, an update report would be submitted to the Committee, including details of the rationale behind any zero hours contracts remaining as well as confirmation that the employee was willing to continue work for the Council on this basis.

The following decisions were unanimous.

Decision

(1) That the proposed arrangements in Section 5 of the draft 2015/16 Pay Policy be approved subject to the 2015/16 Pay Policy being amended as follows:

“14. Use of Zero Hours Contracts

14.1 The Council does not generally support the use of zero hours contracts. However, there may be circumstances where the use of zero hours contracts is the most effective and efficient way of meeting the Council’s needs. Where employees are employed on a zero hours contract they are employed on a permanent or fixed term basis, are entitled to request a review of their contracted hours at any time after six months in post and are not prevented from working for other employers.

15. Contractors

15.1 The Council requires that contractors comply with the national minimum wage legislation in all new and extended Council contracts and encourages all contractors to pay the Council’s Living Wage.

15.2 The Council will encourage all local employers employing 250 or more employees to publish their pay multiple.”

(2) That the review of the use of zero hours contracts involve the employees and be completed by 31 October 2015 and that the outcome of the review be reported to Finance and Policy Committee including the rationale behind any remaining zero hours contracts, along with confirmation of the employee’s wish to remain employed on that basis.

(3) That, subject to any further comments from Members, the 2015/16 Pay Policy as amended above, be recommended to Council.

(4) That Officers be reminded of Council’s commitment to removing all zero hours contracts from within the Council and that alternative arrangements to the use of zero hours contracts be explored further, ie fixed term arrangements.

150. Irrecoverable Debts – Council Tax and Business Rates *(Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek the Committee's approval to write-out a number of Council Tax and Business Rates debts which were now considered to be irrecoverable.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Council's performance in collection of Council Tax was positive, especially given the difficult economic climate, with 96.1% of Council Tax being collected within the financial year it was billed. However, it was recognised that those facing hardship or who may be in a temporary difficult financial position may require additional time to pay their Council Tax.

The report highlighted that the Council's performance in the collection of NNDR was positive with 98.5% of business rates collected within the 2013/14 financial year which was higher than the national average for Metropolitan and Unitary Councils at 97.25%. Most of the Business Rates recommended for write-out relate to a company's insolvency where the Council was limited to submitting a claim in insolvency proceedings.

A range of recovery actions were deployed to secure Council Tax and Business Rates recovery, including court action. Attached by way of Appendix was further detail of the individual Council Tax and Business Rates debts over £1,000 and the reasons why each debt remained unrecovered. All debts submitted for write-out from the accounting records had been comprehensively scrutinised by Officers.

A Member sought clarification on the priority of debts when a company goes into liquidation. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the HMRC were first in line for any debts owed to them when a company went into liquidation and that business rates would be included with all other debts owed by the Company with any payments being shared across all creditors. It was suggested that the Local Government Association, Local Authorities and their partners should lobby the Government to ensure that the payment of business rates was treat as a priority in cases of liquidation. The Chief Finance Officer indicated that the Government was currently consulting on business rates and this request could be included within that consultation. In addition, the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that he was meeting with representatives from ANEC and would ascertain if other Local Authorities within the region would lend their support to lobby the Government on this issue.

Decision

- (1) That the write-out of irrecoverable Council Tax of £2,427.12 and Business Rates debts of £16,304.97 be approved.
- (2) It was noted that £8,152.49 of the proposed Business Rate write-outs

- will be borne by Central Government.
- (3) That the Council's response to the Government's consultation on business rates include the request that the retrieval of business rates owed be treat as a priority in all cases of company liquidation.
 - (4) That the Chief Finance Officer discuss this issue with ANEC to ascertain if they would lend their support to lobby the Government.

151. Children and Young People's Democracy (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To propose a new framework for children and young people's engagement in the local democratic process that will enhance their involvement and voice and ensure that children and young people work more closely with key strategic decision-makers to find joint solutions to shared concerns and problems.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was noted that Hartlepool had a proud heritage of involving children and young people in key decision making that lead to meaningful change through a number of successful participation groups, further details of which were included within the report. A new framework was proposed for children and young people's democracy to be developed within existing funding arrangements through building upon the current activities and the partnership work already underway with the Children's Services Committee, Children's Strategic Partnership and the Corporate Parent Forum. The proposals would include:

- The election of a Hartlepool Youth Council;
- The development of four themed task and finish groups; and
- The facilitation of a quarterly participation conference with Committee Chairs plus their supporting Directors and Assistant Directors.

The Chair of the Children's Services Committee commented that the children and young people who attended this Committee provided invaluable input to the decision making of that Committee, including with the Children's Scrutiny Forum before that. The Chair of the Children's Services Committee was fully supportive of the further involvement of children and young people in the democratic process and welcomed the opportunity for Chairs of Committees to discuss and challenge ideas.

A Member suggested that the operation of a debating society should be explored further as this would prove very beneficial to children and young people. In addition, it was suggested that the Schools' Councils could be involved in specific pieces of work that would support the Council's decision making process.

The Chair suggested that the involvement of children and young people should be included within the budget process through consultation with the Youth Council and on the provision of health services such through involvement with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Decision

- (1) That the proposed framework for the children and young people's democracy in Hartlepool be agreed with the recruitment and retention of children and young people be supported by agreeing to meet, discuss and listen to children and young people's ideas and concerns about what affects them and their community through the opportunities that this framework provided.
- (2) That the Youth Council be involved in the budget consultation process on the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- (3) That the involvement of children and young people in the Health and Wellbeing Board through its sub-group the Children's Strategic Partnership be strengthened.
- (4) That Schools Councils be involved in debating specific pieces of work where appropriate to support the Council's decision making process.

152. Purchase of Manor House, Owton Manor Lane (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the purchase and onward sale of Manor House, Owton Manor Lane.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the history to the ownership and use of Manor House. It was proposed to proceed with the purchase and onward sale of Manor House on the terms set out in confidential Appendix 2. **This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to**

Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3. It was also proposed to attempt to facilitate the inclusion of Manor House West into the site by agreeing terms for the purchase and onward sale of that property on a capital neutral basis.

It was noted that to address the potential shortfall, it was recommended by the Chief Finance Officer that this risk be cashed backed from the 2014/15 uncommitted revenue budget outturn. Members were informed that the proposal did not impact on the previously approved outturn strategy.

153. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 152 – Purchase of Manor House, Owton Manor and associated Appendices (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*) – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.

152. Purchase of Manor House, Owton Manor Lane (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

The Assistant Director, Regeneration provided a detailed and comprehensive background to the current situation in relation to the Manor House site referring to the confidential appendices attached. **This information contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.**

Further details can be found in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

(1) The proposed acquisition and disposal on the terms as set out in confidential Appendix 2, including emphasising condition 4, was approved subject to the provision of an appropriate element of affordable social housing and that the Council recover any investment made in this development less the cost of the affordable social housing. **This information contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.**

(2) It was noted that if it was not possible to achieve the acquisition and disposal of Manor House West on a capital cost neutral basis, that provision be made from the uncommitted 2014/15 to fund a potential shortfall as detailed in confidential Appendix 2. **This information contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.**

The meeting returned to open session and was adjourned for a brief comfort break.

Upon reconvening, the Chair reaffirmed the decisions in relation to minute 151 that were taken in closed session.

154. The Friarage Manor House Development (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee that the Council had successfully facilitated a joint working arrangement between the Henry Smiths Trusts to enable the redevelopment of the Friarage Manor House and adjacent land.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report outlined the history to the previous uses and ownership of the site. The Henry Smith Educational Trust (HSET) and the Henry Smith Non-

Educational Trust (HSNET), facilitated by the Council had agreed to work in partnership to sell their joint interests in order to increase the potential of a sale and refurbishment of the Manor House. The land was marketed extensively by the Council on behalf of the Trustees on a national basis. Upon completion of the tendering process, the Thirteen Group were the preferred bidder and they had developed a proposed scheme involving the construction of thirty eight residential units which were a mixture of two-bedroom bungalows, one and two bedroom flats and two bedroom houses. The Friarage Manor House itself will be converted into four self-contained flat units. It was noted that substantial demand existed for affordable accommodation on the Headland, specifically smaller two bedroom properties and bungalows.

A Member commented that this was a fantastic scheme with the additional benefits of bringing a derelict building back into use and creating apprenticeships with on site training.

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that the contracts for this development had been signed on 20 March 2015.

Decision

The report was noted.

155. Seaton Carew Regeneration: Longscar Hall *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with an update on negotiations to acquire the Longscar building to incorporate in the wider redevelopment proposals for The Front, which were detailed in the Seaton Carew Masterplan.

The report also included details of the preparatory work being undertaken to facilitate the Council's exercise of its compulsory purchase powers (CPO) in the event that the acquisition of the Longscar Building was not achieved by agreement.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided an outline of the on-going process to acquire the Longscar Building along with an update on the negotiations with the

owners. At its meeting on 30 January 2015, the Finance and Policy Committee approved the preparatory work for the use of compulsory purchase powers under Section 226(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to acquire the Longscar site, subject to negotiation with the owners to resolve the matter without the need for the Council to invoke its CPO powers.

Members were informed that should negotiations with the owners continue to be unsuccessful, it was anticipated that a resolution to make the CPO would be considered by the Committee in June or July when ideally the planning application for the proposals on The Front together with the community facilities in the Park will have been submitted.

A discussion ensued on the lengthy and cumbersome process involved in undertaking of Compulsory Purchase Orders and it was suggested that the Committee should write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association highlighting Members' concerns. The Chief Solicitor highlighted that the Secretary of State had recently issued a consultation document in relation to Compulsory Purchase Orders which will inform a review of current CPO practices. The Chair suggested that Members' views be incorporated within the response to this consultation document.

Clarification was sought by a Member on the progress with the future development of Jacksons Landing. The Assistant Director, Regeneration confirmed that discussions were ongoing with a number of potential end users and the potential interest from the National Museum of the Royal Navy remained. The Chair requested an update report to be submitted to the Committee in June 2015.

Decision

- (1) That the report was noted.
- (2) That a further update report on the CPO process for the Longscar Hall be submitted to the Committee in June/July 2015.
- (3) That an update report on the potential development of Jacksons Landing be submitted to the Committee in June 2015.
- (4) That the response to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government include Members' concerns on the lengthy and cumbersome process involved in progressing Compulsory Purchase Orders.

156. Vacant Posts *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide a list of vacant posts within the Council.

Issue(s) for consideration

Following approval of the Compulsory Redundancy report at Committee, Members requested a report on vacant posts within the Council. A list of vacancies was attached at Appendix 1.

The report noted that vacancies were actively managed throughout the year by Officers as part of their responsibilities to balance the needs of services (and the resources and skills required to effectively deliver such services) alongside considerations in respect of the ongoing financial and budgetary challenges the Council faced.

The Chair indicated that Union representatives had requested further dialogue with Officers in relation to the monitoring of vacancies with a further report to update Members on the outcome of those discussions being submitted to the Committee.

In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that where possible, vacancies were advertised internally in the first instance and apprentices were eligible to apply at this point.

The Chair sought clarification on the appointment of an apprentice to Democratic Services as previously requested by the Committee. A Member expressed disappointment that this appointment had not been made and commented that there should be enough scope within Democratic Services and Scrutiny to fulfil the role of 1 or 2 apprentices and where better to gain training in a general administrative capacity than within that section.

A discussion ensued on the Council's current policy position to look at redeployment options and to advertise vacancies internally in the first instance as this reduced the number of potential redundancies each year. The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the redeployment approach was very important in managing the provision of effective services in what were difficult circumstances. It was noted that active consideration was given to the filling of any vacancies and the redeployment process and internal advertising were tools used to manage this process. A Member added that one of the reasons posts were filled internally was to recognise the vast array of talent already working for the Council.

Decision

- (1) The report was noted.
- (2) That Members be provided with a verbal update on the discussions between Union Representatives and Officers on the monitoring of vacancies at a future meeting of the Committee.

157. 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.

158. Any Other Business - Local Development Orders for Oakesway, The Port and Queen's Meadow Enterprise Zones – Extension to Timescale *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To seek approval to extend the timescale of the existing Local Development Orders on the Enterprise Zone sites at Oakesway, The Port and Queen's Meadow Business Park beyond their current expiry date of 31 March 2015 for a further three years until 31 March 2018.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the establishment of a number of Enterprise Zones in the Tees Valley in 2011 and the provision of Local Development Orders (LDO) which allow certain types of development to be undertaken without the need to obtain planning permission, subject to specified requirements and conditions. The LDO had an original timescale of 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2015 but the Government have confirmed that the financial incentives will remain in place for businesses locating to the Enterprise Zone sites until 31 March 2018.

The LDOs along with wider Enterprise Zone incentives, support the ongoing economic growth ambitions for Hartlepool as set out in the Economic

Regeneration Strategy, the Hartlepool Vision and the Regeneration Master Plan. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods highlighted that Hartlepool's Enterprise Zones were some of the most successful in the country and had proven extremely beneficial to the further development of the Town.

Decision

The extension to the timescale of the Local Development Orders covering Oakesway, The Port and Queen's Meadow Business Park with a revised expiry date of 31 March 2018 was endorsed for submission to Council on 26 March 2015 for consideration as part of the Chief Executive's report.

The meeting concluded at 11.52 am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 30 March 2015