

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

24 September 2015

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

Present:

Councillor Kevin Cranney (In the Chair)

Councillors: Stephen Akers-Belcher, Alan Clark, Rob Cook, Jim Lindridge and Paul Thompson

Officers: Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Sylvia Pinkney, Head of Public Protection
Joanne Burnley, Principal Environmental Health Officer
Karen Kelly, Principal Housing Strategy Officer
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

55. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor George Morris. The Chair highlighted that Councillor Morris had recently been taken ill and the Committee requested a card along with best wishes be sent to him.

56. Declarations of Interest

None.

57. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2015

Received.

58. Amendments to the Compass Choice Based Lettings System *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Key Decision Test (ii) applies - Forward Plan Reference RN 11/15.

Purpose of report

Members of the Committee were asked to approve amendments to how properties were advertised on the Compass Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided the background to the amendments to the CBL which were developed as part of a response to the Welfare Reform Act 2012. The proposed amendments were detailed in the report and would create efficiencies from the new way of working with improved information and advice offered to applicants. Consultation was undertaken through the CBL website, partner organisations' websites and a questionnaire for customers with 652 responses received. The results from the consultation were summarised in the report. It was highlighted that it was not expected that the costs of these amendments would be excessive and all partners involved in the scheme would make an equal contribution to these costs.

The Chair was pleased to note that the proposed amendments would make the process of Choice Based Lettings more efficient.

Decision

The proposed amendments to how properties were advertised on the Compass CBL Scheme were approved.

59. Quarterly Housing Report April - June 2015/16 (Assistant Director, Regeneration)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide and update about progress across key areas of the Housing Service relating to Empty Homes, Enforcement Activity, Selective Licensing, Disabled Facilities Grants, Housing Allocations, Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention and Housing Management activity during the first quarter of 2015/16. The report also gives an update on progress with regards to the setting up a Social Lettings Agency.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provide a comprehensive update in relation to Empty Homes; Enforcement; Selective Licensing; Disabled Facilities Grants Benchmarking Data; Allocations Summary; Housing Advice and Homeless Prevention Activity; Housing Management Activity; and the Social Lettings Agency.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Principal Environmental Health Officer confirmed that enforcement in relation to unauthorised encampment related to travellers on land within Hartlepool. It was highlighted that a report considering unauthorised encampments would be considered by Neighbourhood Services Committee on 28 September 2015.

A discussion ensued on the Disabled Facilities Grants and clarification was sought on the waiting list for the adaptations to be undertaken. The Principal Housing Strategy Officer indicated that the waiting list was prioritised based on the recommendations of Occupational Therapy who carried out the assessments. However, should any emergency situations arise, they would become a priority. A Member questioned how grants were prioritised and the Assistant Director, Regeneration confirmed this was the responsibility of Occupational Therapy within the Child and Adult Services Department. It was recognised that there may be scope to look at the referrals and concentrate on absolute needs which may reduce waiting lists. The Chair suggested that this issue be forwarded to the Chair of Adult Services Committee to explore further. In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director, Regeneration confirmed that ex-forces personnel were prioritised within the CBL with additional support available for them where required.

A Member sought clarification on the Empty Property Purchases and the level of revenue received from letting these properties at 80% market value. The Assistant Director, Regeneration confirmed that it was Council policy to let these properties at 80% of the market value to ensure it was an affordable rent for the local market. In addition, he confirmed that the business model to develop empty properties and rent them out was predicated on an 80% rent level revenue.

Decision

- (1) The contents of the report and the progress made across key areas of the Housing Service was noted.
- (2) That the issue of prioritising Disabled Facilities Grants through concentrating on absolute need be referred to the Chair of the Adult Services Committee to explore the potential to reduce the waiting list.

60. Health and Safety Service Plan 2015/16 (*Director of Public Health*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To consider the Health and Safety Service Plan for 2016/16 which was a requirement under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

Attached to the report by way of appendix, the draft Health and Safety Plan for 2015/16 had been updated to reflect last year's performance. Details of the performance of the service across all the sectors covered was set out in the report, together with the proposed activity for 2015/16 in the new plan.

A Member sought clarification on the planned priority of sun safety in nurseries and whether this would be rolled out to schools. The Public Protection Manager confirmed that the Health and Safety Executive maintained responsibility for the health and safety of schools. However, Officers were working with colleagues within Education and Public Health with a view to rolling the sun safety message across all schools. It was highlighted that a further report would be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board on this project including raising awareness of preventative measures that can be undertaken as skin cancer was one of the most preventable cancers.

In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager indicated that whilst she was not aware of any unlicensed tattooists, otherwise known as 'scratchers', in the town that did not mean that there were none operating. A project was currently underway involving students at the Hartlepool College of Further Education who as part of their post degree course, would pull together material for young people informing them of the issues surrounding tattoos, the requirement for premises to be licensed and to seek their views. Officers had been working with tattoo studios to increase their knowledge and raise standards such as the traceability of the inks used within their salons.

A Member commented on raising awareness of asbestos within businesses and commercial premises. The Public Protection Manager confirmed that business and commercial premises had an obligation to be aware if there was any asbestos within their buildings. In addition, a lot of work had been undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive to improve the knowledge

of contractors to ensure they were made aware whether an asbestos survey had been undertaken on the premises they were working in. The Council was responsible for monitoring small constructions where the main activity was retail however, any major refits were the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive. The report referred to 352 premises where asbestos management was applicable and a Member questioned how many were public buildings and how many were schools. The Public Protection Manager confirmed that none of the 352 premises were schools and that they were all private premises, shops and commercial premises.

Decision

The Health and Safety Service Plan for 2015/16 was approved.

61. 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.

62. Any Other Business – Forward Plan

In response to a question from the Chair, the Committee confirmed they had no issues or comments on any of the items included within the Council's Forward Plan. The Chair confirmed that a report on the Regeneration Masterplan would be submitted to a Finance and Policy/Regeneration Services Joint Committee on 6 November 2015, along with a report on the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

The meeting concluded at 10.22 am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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