

JOINT MEETING OF FINANCE AND POLICY AND REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEES

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

27 MARCH 2017

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor Kevin Cranney (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers Belcher, Stephen Akers-Belcher, Allan Barclay, Paul Beck, Dave Hunter, Marjorie James, Jim Lindridge, Brenda Loynes, Stephen Thomas and Paul Thompson.

Officers: Gill Alexander, Chief Executive
Chris Little, Director of Finance and Policy
Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Andrew Carter, Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration
Dave Anderson, Interim Project Manager, Regeneration
Rob Smith, Principal Regeneration Officer
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

4. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Alan Clark.

5. Declarations of Interest

None.

6. Public Realm Improvements for the Innovation and Skills Quarter Including Church Street and Church Square *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Assistant Director (Economic Growth and Regeneration))*

Type of decision

Key decision (test (i)). Forward Plan Reference No. 04/17.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to:-

- (i) Seek approval for the commencement of construction work on the Church Street Innovation and Skills Quarter (ISQ), subject to confirmation of planning approval and the formal award of grant funding from Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- (ii) Seek approval to allocate funding from the Regeneration Projects fund to support the overall cost of the scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Interim Project Manager, Regeneration reported that the Church Street ISQ forms an important part of Hartlepool Vision - the strategy for the regeneration of the Waterfront and Town Centre. The ISQ aimed to revitalise Church Street and the surrounding area by providing a positive environment for the creation and growth of new businesses. It aimed specifically to boost the growth of the creative industries sector in Hartlepool building upon the £11m investment that had been made to create new teaching facilities for Cleveland College of Art and Design (CCAD) on Church Street. The proposals would also improve connections between the Waterfront and Town Centre by creating high quality public realm space.

The ISQ was the subject of a conditional allocation of £5.5m Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies from the Tees Valley Combined Authority. The conditions of grant award required the Council to develop its plans to a sufficient level of design detail to enable firm cost estimates to be made for each of the projects within the Programme.

There are four projects within the ISQ Programme:

- (i) The creation of 31 managed workspace units within the former GPO building on Whitby Street;
- (ii) A scheme of public realm improvement works along Church Street;
- (iii) A major public realm improvement programme on Church Square; and
- (iv) A new pedestrian crossing, highway improvement and traffic signalling works on Stockton Street.

The report focussed on the public realms in Church Street, Church Square and Stockton Street. A presentation to the Committee by the Principal Regeneration Officer outlined the various design proposals for the works. Works in both Church Square and Church Street had been slightly constrained by the existence of a number of major services detected following ground penetrating radar surveys and site investigations. The presentation outlined the design for the public events space in Church Square, the revisions to Church Street and the works to Stockton Road which would include a revised single crossing point at Stockton Road between Church Square and Middleton Grange Shopping Centre (Wilkinson's corner) and a southbound right turn into the multi-storey car park.

Members welcomed the scheme proposals. In relation to the removal of trees in Church Square Members were concerned that there were two trees in the square that were dedicated and used during the Workers Memorial Day event for the placement of wreaths etc. Members also questioned if the trees removed would be replanted elsewhere in the borough so that, in line with the Council's adopted Tree Strategy, there was not any reduction in the number of trees. The Chair indicated that he understood more trees were to be planted than removed. This was confirmed by officers. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that discussions had been held with the Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee on the issue of the trees and they had indicated that they were happy with the arrangements and a new plaque referencing Workers Memorial Day was to be installed.

Members welcomed the initiative to include some historical references within the scheme and suggested that some reflection of the town's shipbuilding past should be included. The Interim Project Manager, Regeneration stated that officers were working on city dressing and that some new lamppost banners would be installed on the approaches to the town which would reflect that past which were being developed with Hartlepool Museum Service.

Members expressed concern that with all the services in the area, if works were undertaken, then the utility companies must be required to make good after any repairs to the standard of the original surface treatments.

Members discussed the various crossings within the schemes. In relation to those from Church Square to Church Street Members suggested that Belisha beacon crossing worked well in other areas of the town and that whatever crossing was installed pedestrians were given priority over vehicles. There was concern at the placement of the crossing at Tower Street on the corner and Officers indicated that this had been assessed by the Highways Team and was considered the most appropriate placement as it allowed the best sight lines for both pedestrians and motorists. In relation to the crossing at Wilkinson's Corner, Members welcomed the single crossing design proposed though questioned if the crossing was to be a raised crossing providing additional traffic calming at that point. It was also suggested that the tactile paving proposals near the crossings may need revision.

It was noted in the meeting that the design proposals for Tower Street near the Ward Jackson Public House were not finalised at this point.

Members questioned the revisions to the car park behind the old Municipal Buildings. Officers indicated that the scheme to use this site for the disabled parking for the Christ Church Art Gallery had been approved by the Highways team as being within permitted distances from the building. The left turn in, left turn out access had also been approved while acknowledging the closeness of the access to the traffic lights. Cleveland College of Art and Design (CCAD) had stated that they had an aspiration to

remove the remaining car parking provision at some time in the future and landscape the area.

In welcoming the works in Church Street Members were concerned at what steps were being taken to encourage new businesses to the area to fill some of the empty units and change the general focus of the businesses away from the night time economy. The Interim Project Manager, Regeneration indicated that part of the overall scheme was to link the area to the waterfront to create greater footfall along Church Street. The new CCAD building and the new Business centre on Whitby Street would also create greater footfall along Church Street. This together with the potential for businesses growing out of the start up units in the business centre would create a greater interest in the area from the investment market leading to a change in the focus of Church Street.

Members also welcomed the new right turn into the multi-storey car park and noted that the proposal had been welcomed by the shopping centre management and owners and questioned if there was any prospect of a contribution to the works. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods stated that the multi-storey car park was council owned. There was a general over provision of car parking around the town centre, so anything that could encourage more vehicles and visitors into the centre would be beneficial. Members commented on issues around lighting and the lifts within the car park that could be improved.

Decision

The Finance and Policy and Regeneration Services Committee Members jointly agreed to: -

1. Note the progress of detailed design and development work on the Innovation and Skills Quarter.
2. Note the designs for Church Street, Church Square and Stockton Street as set out in the appendices to the report and that the final approval be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee and the Chair of Regeneration Services Committee.
3. Instruct officers to submit Innovation and Skills Quarter final documentation to the Tees Valley Combined Authority for due diligence to be undertaken to enable the Contract letter to be awarded by May 2017.
4. Instruct officers to clear the final stages of design development and commence procurement subject to clearing all the necessary planning and external funding award approvals prior to entering into construction contracts and delegating the formal sign off of contracts to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods in conjunction with the Chief Solicitor.
5. Note that the project costs may change once tender prices have been received which may result in the need to value engineer or reduce the scope of projects in the later phases.

6. Note that the delivery of the Innovation and Skills Quarter programme is dependent upon the successful completion of the Tees Valley Combined Authority due diligence process.

The Finance and Policy Committee Members agreed to: -

7. In accordance with the authority delegated by Council within the approved MTFS for 2017/18: -
 - (i) The proposals to use the Regeneration Projects Fund to fund the current funding shortfall of £1.617m were approved,
 - (ii) That £277,000 from the Regeneration projects fund be used to underwrite the anticipated Heritage Lottery Fund contribution to allow the procurement process to commence.
 - (iii) It was noted that (i) and (ii) above would commit £1.894m of the £2.862m funding available leaving a balance of £0.968m to support future Regeneration Schemes.
 - (iv) That in the event that additional external funding was secured, the value of the amount secured would be transferred back into the Regeneration Fund to support future regeneration schemes.

Councillors S Akers Belcher and Hunter left at this point in the meeting.

7. Neighbourhood Investment Programme *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Key Decision. Test (i) and (ii) applies. Reference RN 01/17.

Purpose of report

To consider a capital investment programme that delivers improvements within neighbourhoods across Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported that Council had a desire to make Hartlepool known as a great place to live as well as invest and visit. As part of this, a new approach to improving the environment and public realm through a coordinated Neighbourhood Investment Programme has been agreed. A Members seminar on 23rd November 2016 informed Councillors of the intention to develop this new programme and to obtain initial views. All Ward Members were written to at the start of this year and invited to submit proposals for schemes that would form part of the programme.

Funding for the Neighbourhood Investment Programme had been

considered as part of the overall Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 23rd February 2017. The proposal to use Prudential Borrowing to support capital investment of £1.5m had also been agreed and authority was delegated to the Finance and Policy Committee to approve the detailed programme of schemes. The Council would also explore any additional funding opportunities that could support the delivery of the schemes proposed by Members through the use of Developer Contributions (Section 106) and through closer collaboration with Thirteen Group and their investment programme.

A large number of schemes have been submitted by Ward Members for consideration and these were set out for information in an appendix to the report. As expected, there would not be sufficient funding to meet the costs of all of the schemes that had been put forward.

A number of highway safety schemes had been requested by Members for inclusion within the Neighbourhood Investment Programme. In view of the limited budget and the potential availability of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding for such projects, it was proposed that these schemes were transferred to the LTP list and considered against other highway improvement priorities.

The remaining ideas for schemes had been assessed as to the extent to which they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- A scheme falls within an area in need of physical and social regeneration
- The scheme contributes towards Community Wellbeing
- The scheme has a positive impact on Community Safety

In addition, it had been assumed from previous discussions that Members would wish the new programme to focus solely on capital improvements not revenue items and deliver benefits across a wide sector of the community rather than to individuals.

A number of schemes were proposed for inclusion in the initial phase of the programme. These schemes were geographically spread across the town, would bring clear benefits to the community and meet one or more of the criteria set out above. While some further work would be needed to finalise detailed designs and firm up costs and implementation timescales, each of the schemes could commence reasonably quickly should the Committee approve their inclusion within the programme. Therefore the recommended projects to commence in 2017 are as follows:

Shopping Parades

There are several shopping parades within the borough in need of improvement work to the public realm elements at the front, with those at King Oswy Drive being highlighted as a priority requiring particular attention. Works that improve the visual amenity of the shopping area are likely to promote a sense of community pride and wellbeing. It is accepted

that engagement with shopkeepers and other stakeholders would be critical, while additional work to scope out the detailed proposals and costs would be required.

Rossmere Park

This scheme would have benefits not just for the local community but also the wider town. Redevelopments within the park would result in a more attractive, recreational space for local families and others to enjoy outdoor activities. This would therefore make a positive contribution to community health and wellbeing by introducing a new main play area and toddler play area and it is estimated that £160,000 is set aside for the delivery of this scheme. Additional improvements would be considered as part of the original masterplan produced for Rossmere Park, and these would be considered further once more detailed costs are established.

Stranton Cemetery

A scheme to identify an appropriate funeral vehicle route through this cemetery and to designate all other routes as 'pedestrian only' has been proposed. This would cover the implementation of a traffic management scheme that includes the installation of remote operated vehicle barriers, drop down bollards and vehicle control signage. In addition it is proposed to make alterations to improve traffic and pedestrian safety at the Brierton Lane entrance and the approach to the public car park, with the estimated cost of the scheme at £115,000. These works would also support the recently launched 'Respect Campaign' for the cemetery.

The Headland

Proposals to prevent further deterioration of previous regeneration schemes have been put forward for the Headland including the Heritage Trail at the Town Square, Northgate shopping facades and other amenities and asset improvements nearby. Further work would be required to identify the exact nature of the works required to key locations.

Improving Playspaces

This project will look at an overview of playspaces across the Borough, with the first project complementing the two existing 'Play Builder' sites already located at Seaton. The additional free play and exercise facilities would benefit children in the local community, while supporting the masterplan proposed for Seaton. It would also support the physical regeneration of Seaton by offering additional attractions for visitors to this area and therefore an estimated budget of £70,000 would need to be set aside to deliver this scheme. The review would also help to establish the need for future playspaces at other locations across the Borough.

Barrier Works

Works to renew and improve highway barriers and street furniture along key routes in the central area of town have been requested. New barriers could potentially be designed to reflect the town's maritime heritage which would support key regeneration projects. An audit of the existing barriers and street furniture would need to be carried out first, allowing for a more

detailed assessment to be made of any potential changes and the possible cost implications.

Roundabouts

Works had been proposed to consider improvements to our key roundabouts on the strategic road network that create a sense of arrival when approaching the Town Centre and our Coastal frontage. Additional work would be required to assess the suitable locations for these improvements and the cost implications of any measures installed. Discussions with the NMRN Hartlepool have commenced to look at the opportunity of displaying artifacts and maritime assets on our roundabouts.

Members welcomed the proposed schemes. In relation to the works at Stranton Cemetery, it was suggested that a referral be made to the neighbourhood Services Committee for it to consider at the earliest opportunity a dog control order following continued complaints from visitors to the cemetery. The Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Committee indicated that she welcomed the referral and also considered that any improvements to the cemetery also look to dealing with the water retention and flooding issues on the site which had not been alleviated as promised during the recent housing development at Whistlewood Close off Tanfield Road.

Members also welcomed the proposals for Rossmere Park. A Member for the Seaton Ward also commented that the Seaton Ward Councillors had indicated that they would wish to commit some Ward Member Budget funding for seating to assist in the implementation of the play areas in Seaton Carew.

Members requested that all Members be informed if the schemes they had proposed were to be progressed or not. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that this would happen after this meeting and the implementation of the schemes would be monitored through the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

The Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee welcomed the commitment to assist in funding through ward member budgets and encouraged other Members to support schemes in their wards where possible. The Chair also referred to match funding from other providers such as Thirteen and the use of section 106 monies where appropriate. In relation to the list of proposed schemes, it was suggested that the list remain open for Members to put forward proposals for future consideration.

The Chief Executive suggested that the proposals for implementation in the Headland Ward be deferred until after the by-election in May.

Decision

The Finance and Policy Committee Members agreed to: -

1. That the following schemes be approved for inclusion in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Investment Programme based on the assessment criteria set out in the report:
 - (i) Shopping Parades;
 - (ii) Rossmere Park;
 - (iii) Stranton Cemetery;
 - (iv) Improving Playspaces;
 - (v) Barriers works; and
 - (vi) Roundabouts.
2. That consideration of the schemes for the Headland be deferred until after the ward by-election in May.
3. That schemes eligible to be funded as part of the Council's Local Transport Plan programme are transferred and evaluated against other priorities for this funding.
4. In accordance with the authority delegated by Council within the approved MTFS for 2017/18 -
 - (i) That the proposals detailed in 1. Above be approved; and
 - (ii) That this would commit £345,000 of the £1.5m funding available leaving a balance of £1.155m to support future schemes.
5. That further exploration work is undertaken to assess and identify costs associated to deliver the proposed schemes at Shopping Parades, The Headland, Barrier Works and Roundabouts, with a further report to be brought back to Committee for consideration and approval.
6. That Officers are instructed to work up the schemes included within the report and present detailed costs and designs to a future Committee for information.
7. That subject to the level of funding available after the delivery of the schemes approved, additional schemes may be considered for delivery in future years.
8. That Members note the prioritising of future schemes as set out in Appendix A to the report.

The meeting concluded at 10.00 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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