

JOINT FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

12 JUNE 2017

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor Alan Clark (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers Belcher Kevin Cranney, Marjorie James, Brenda Harrison, John Lauderdale, Jean Robinson and Stephen Thomas.

Also Present: Councillor Bob Buchan as substitute for Councillor Tim Fleming in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

Member of the public: - Mr R Pocklington.

Officers: Gill Alexander, Chief Executive
Chris Little, Director of Finance and Policy
Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services
Mark Patton, Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19
Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Katie Hammond, Projects Manager
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Tim Fleming, Brenda Loynes, and Dr George Morris.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Proposed Business Plan for the Future Use of the Centre Currently known as Northern Lights Academy (NLA) (Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision test (i)/(ii) Forward Plan Reference No. CAS51/16.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to gain approval from Finance and Policy Committee and Children's Services Committee for a business plan in relation to the future use of the centre currently known as Northern Lights Academy (NLA).

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 briefly outlined the background of the NLA facility and highlighted that at the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee on 27 March 2017, Members had agreed to acquire the NLA and site to bring it within the Council's estate. The Assistant Director went on to explain the proposals for the future use of the facility and the business plan that had been prepared to develop the facility as a centre of excellence in technical training for the creative industries.

The centre aims to plug a gap that currently exists in the educational offer available to young people in Hartlepool through:

- primarily offering curriculum opportunities around vocational training and qualifications, traineeships and apprenticeships to 14-19 year olds focusing on technical training in TV and Film Production, Sound Production, Theatre and Live Event Production, and Graphic Design and Animation.
- providing new, unique and engaging learning opportunities for young people at key stages 3 and 4 who are experiencing difficulties in academic education and for whom the current vocational training offer – of construction and related trades training - is unsuitable.
- supporting the emotional development and resilience of young people through universal and targeted 'creative therapies'.
- offering a route to enterprise and self-employment in the creative industries by providing a base from which young people can develop arts and music projects, and business proposals, with a view to establishing new business start-ups.
- outside of school hours; the centre will also offer children and young people an opportunity to engage in creativity-based activities such as Saturday Club, a well established programme developed by the Sorell Foundation.

Examples of the kinds of students that would benefit from the facility and the delivery programme, funding sources and potential outcomes were highlighted within the report.

The Assistant Director indicated that Cleveland College of Art and Design (CCAD), Hartlepool College of Further Education and Hartlepool Sixth Form College had been valued partners in supporting a new use for NLA and developing the current business case and plan for a change of use to a the centre. They considered that this proposal would not only assist them to

expand their current FE offer to support the creative sector, but would also help demonstrate to young people that fulfilling careers in the creative sector are available in Tees Valley and the North East.

The Assistant Director stressed that the business plan was centered around a phased approach for the development of the centre so that not too much was done too soon so the centre could develop into its new role progressively. It was key that, as well as offering a new facility for students, the centre had to be seen as part of the local community.

Details of the business plan and risks were outlined within the report and the confidential appendices to the report which set out projections for the income strategy, staffing and running costs. The appendix 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 was also informed that bids to the Tees Valley Combined Authority had been made for both revenue underwriting for the first three years of the project and up-front capital investment. A response on these bids had been delayed due to election purdah periods. Should these funding bids not be successful, or only partially successful, it would be necessary to identify alternative funding from outside the General Fund revenue budget. In this regard one-off funding of £136,000 was available from Trading Standard fine income secured from the successful settlement of a recent case. These monies had not been included in the Council's financial plans as the outturn for the case was unknown. It was therefore recommended that these one-off resources should be allocated towards this project until the outcome of the funding bid to TVCA is known.

The Chair commented that it had been a long journey to reach the point where the centre could be brought back into the use for which it was designed. The Chair wished to record his thanks to the Assistant Director and Project Manager for bringing the project to this point. Members supported the comments and considered that as well as the wider potential of the facility, the benefit to local residents in the De Bruce ward had to be maximized. Many members of the local community had not wanted the building in the first place and its mothballing for almost two years had only heightened their concerns. Members hoped that bringing the building back into use in such a positive way would allay those concerns and stressed that local community had to be involved. Key towards this aim had to be the pricing for use of the building and facilities for local groups; they should not be priced out of the centre.

The Assistant Director acknowledged Members concerns, particularly on pricing. Officers had looked to the removal of any financial impact on the council from opening and running the centre. This was the main driver behind the phased business model to ensure the centre could be self-

sustaining. It would be wrong to make promises on pricing but there would be local community involvement in the Board to ensure local access.

In relation to the name for the new facility, a number of options were set out in the report and Members considered that it should be renamed the Centre For Excellence in Creative Arts. The Leader also proposed that should the Trading Standard fine income not be required in full or part, the remaining funds be transferred to the Family Poverty Reserve. This was seconded and agreed by Members.

It was agreed that regular update reports would be brought to Children's Services Committee once the centre was operational.

Decision

1. That the business proposal that the centre is used as a centre of excellence in technical training for creative industries be approved.
2. It was noted that the business case provided a 'worst case' financial model and should actual pupil numbers and income exceed the forecasts, the centre would break even sooner than currently anticipated.
3. That the re-branding of the centre, beginning with a new name for the centre and that forthwith it be known as the Centre for Excellence in Creative Arts and that signage for the facility set out the full name of the project.
4. That commissioning Option 1, concession tendering, as detailed in paragraph 4.13 of the report, be approved.
5. That the proposed four year financial plan, incorporating a staggered opening of faculty areas be approved.
6. That the allocation of the Trading Standards Fine income of £136,000 be approved to underwrite the project in the event that financial support from the Tees valley Combined Authority could not be secured for the worst case forecast deficit.
7. That in the event that all/part of the Trading Standards fine income was not needed for this project, the remaining fund be transferred to the Family Poverty Reserve.

4. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 10.20 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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