

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

18 June 2018

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Kevin Cranney (In the Chair)

Councillors: Paddy Brown, Rob Cook, Jim Lindridge, Shane Moore and Leisa Smith

Also Present: Councillor Ann Marshall

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Helen Williams, Planning Policy Officer
David Worthington, Head of Culture
Patrick Wilson, Learning and Skills Manager
Tim Wynn, Strategic Asset Manager
Olwen Maddison, Project Co-ordinator, Family Wise
Sarah Scarr, Heritage and Countryside Manager
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

None

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2018

Received

4. Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Part of Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

Members were asked to support the consultation and completion of a residential design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (see **Appendix 1**) that will help shape residential development within the borough. The SPD will become part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided background information to the development of a residential design SPD, a copy of which was attached at Appendix 1. Once adopted the SPD would provide guidance to developers, who will be expected to have considered the SPD prior to the submission of a planning application. The SPD sets out guidance on a number of subjects such as access, parking, dwelling design, open space design, safety, play spaces, energy efficiency, adaptability and dementia design.

Members were advised that it was envisaged that the SPD would be consulted upon during August and September and not July and August as indicated in the report. Correspondence would be sent to developers, local agents and others who had shown an interest in residential design through the Local Plan process or those who had requested to be directly consulted.

In the discussion that followed presentation of the report a number of queries were raised in relation to the report. Members commented on the need for developers to consider issues around providing wider doorways to meet the needs of an ageing population, ensure dwelling sizes met the needs of growing families and review garage door sizes as there were examples on new developments where garage access was restricted to smaller cars. Clarification was provided regarding the responsibilities upon developers to consider such matters as conservation issues and distinctive features of the area.

In response to a query as to whether the prescribed space standard guidelines adopted in London would be adopted in Hartlepool, the Committee was advised that whilst information in this regard was quite general in the adopted local plan, there would be an opportunity to include this information following the consultation and prior to the adoption of the SPD.

The Chair welcomed the report and encouraged Members to contribute to the consultation.

Decision

- (i) That the draft SPD be approved.
- (ii) The Committee authorised officers to proceed with the public consultation.
- (iii) That officers be authorised to make any amendments to the draft SPD and for the final version to be brought back to the Regeneration Services Committee in the autumn of 2018.

5. Routes to Work Project *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Reference RN 10/17

Purpose of report

To seek approval from Regeneration Service Committee Members to fully implement Routes to Work project.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

It was reported that the report had been intended for submission to Committee in October 2017, however, due to delays in receiving a contract from the Department for Work & Pensions there was a departure from the Forward Plan. Regeneration Services Committee had been informed of the delay.

The report provided background information in relation to the Tees Valley Routes to Work pilot project funded via the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP), which had been secured through the intervention of the Council and the total contract value would be £7.5m, £6m of which was DWP funding and £1.5m match funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

The Tees Valley wide pilot initiative would support unemployed and economically inactive adults aged 30 and over who faced the greatest difficulties in accessing employment. The initiative would support up to 2,500 people over the three year lifetime of the pilot, move 15% into employment and help the other participants to make significant progress towards securing work. The official date of commencement was 1 October 2017 to March 2020 and some low level activity had begun for eligible participants. Each local authority had been allocated an indicative number

of learners to work with and Hartlepool's target was to support 398 participants.

The Committee was referred to the proposed Hartlepool Delivery Model, as set out in the report, which would include every learner receiving a dedicated key worker to assist them through their journey into employment. The delivery model would be based on a graduated Three Key Steps to Employment Programme, details of which were included in the report:-

- First Step Programme – will provide a six week course that will support individuals who are furthest from the labour market.
- Second Step Programme – will offer bespoke accredited training based on the needs of the customer and employer.
- Third Step Programme – will provide specific employer routeways with guaranteed interviews and sheltered work experience.

The report included details of how the overall project would be delivered including progress to date.

The Chair took the opportunity to express thanks to the Leader of the Council for his involvement in securing the funding for Hartlepool from the Combined Authority.

In the lengthy discussion that followed presentation of the report, officers responded to queries raised by Members in relation to aspects of the report. Clarification was provided regarding the type of support available, how the project would work, how aspirations could be achieved including the role of key workers in terms of managing expectations, support available to individuals with disabilities or literacy problems as well as the importance of cross working and effectively utilising links with other groups/agencies and key stakeholders.

Some concerns were raised by a Member in terms of whether the length of time dedicated to learners was sufficient and whether caseloads were manageable. The Learning and Skills Manager advised that it was good practice for key workers to have a caseload of 30 active learners at any one time which would be closely monitored. It was noted that individuals required varying levels of support and may also be receiving support from other agencies. The various support mechanisms available were outlined.

Members were keen to receive an update on progress of learners and requested that a 6 monthly update report be provided to include details of programme outcomes, case study information including good news stories, whether caseloads were manageable and how well needs were being met.

In response to Members comments regarding the risk implications in terms of clawback arrangements in the event that outputs were not achieved, assurances were provided that a Routes to Work Steering Group had been established to identify any under performance at the earliest opportunity.

Decision

- (i) That approval be granted to fully implement the Routes to Work Project and deliver on supporting the 398 eligible participants.
- (ii) That an update report be provided in 6 months time.

6. Housing Revenue Account Voids *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Key decision (test ii) applies - Forward Plan Reference No RN06/18

Purpose of report

To update the Committee on the latest position for voids and to propose a scheme which sought to reduce the level of voids for former empty properties in low demand areas by implementing rents using Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) funded by a contribution from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided background information to the report submitted to Finance and Policy Committee in November 2017 and the decision taken to develop a scheme which sought to reduce the level of voids of former empty properties.

It was reported that the current housing stock consisted of 256 houses, of which 141 were former empty properties. Most of these were 2 bedroom with some 3 bedroom houses. An assessment of the risk level attributed to each property had identified that 27 were “high” risk and 37 “medium” risk of becoming a future void due to being in areas of low demand.

Officers had identified an opportunity to bridge the gap between low demand for former empty properties and the high demand for housing appropriate for couples without children and single persons. This involved supplementing rents using the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Scheme for new tenants of former empty homes in low demand areas. The DHP scheme would make payments to eligible tenants to help with housing costs and was funded by a grant from Government. The proposal was to extend the existing scheme by funding additional payments from the HRA. These would be funded from the rent income secured and council tax

saved and would help future tenants afford the rents of void properties where the 'bedroom tax' applied. It was noted that payments made to tenants would be subject to regular review to ensure tenants were paying their rent and keeping houses in good order. The Council was required to apply for permission from the Government to use the DHP scheme for HRA tenants each year and had already received approval for the current year. Members were referred to the financial considerations of the proposals as set out in the report.

Members recognised the problems around letting properties of this type and the various alternative options were debated. A query was raised regarding the feasibility of undertaking structural property changes to address this issue to which the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods advised that any structural changes would restrict the type of families that could be accommodated. However, such suggestions would be pursued should the proposals presented to Committee today not be successful.

Concerns were raised in relation to the choice based lettings process during which a Member shared with the Committee the type of complaints received from residents. It was noted that these concerns were shared across registered providers and tenants and a report would be presented in relation to these issues to a future meeting of the Committee.

Members recognised that this was a challenging and complex issue and, whilst there was some reluctance to support any rent supplements, given the costs associated with these arrangements, it was acknowledged that the scheme would have a positive impact on the HRA as a result of reducing tenant turnover and the number of voids and would help meet the shortage of demand for two bedroom properties.

Following further debate, the Committee requested that the viability of the scheme be assessed after 6 months and an update be brought back to Committee.

Decision

- (i) That the proposal for the HRA to contribute towards DHP payments for re-lets of houses assessed as high or medium risk when required in order to secure rent income and avoid Council Tax be approved.
- (ii) That the viability of the scheme be assessed after 6 months and an update be brought back to Committee.

7. The Addition of Names to War Memorials *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the results of Cultural Services search for the names of individuals currently not commemorated on the Borough's War Memorials.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

It was reported that following the formal decision in August 2015 into the question of adding names to the Borough war memorials, Cultural Services had initiated a comprehensive public search for cases where a person's name had been historically omitted on either of the two Hartlepool memorials. Staff and volunteers had checked historic records, honour rolls, service histories and other sources of information.

From these sources, 38 possible cases had been identified and investigated in depth. Of these, 5 individuals were found to meet the official criteria for inclusion, details of which were set out in the report. In all 5 cases, there were no family members resident in the Borough to sponsor the names for inclusion on a memorial following their sacrifice. It was proposed that the 5 individuals be formally recognised and commemorated on the Victory Square Memorial for their sacrifice during military service.

In the discussion that followed, the Head of Culture and Information responded to queries raised in relation to the research that had been undertaken. In response to a request for clarification, the criteria utilised to identify the 5 individuals proposed for inclusion within the memorial pillars was provided. A Member asked whether the families of the individuals, who had not been recognised, were happy with the findings of the research to which it was confirmed that feedback had indicated that families had been satisfied with the findings.

Decision

- (i) That the 5 individuals, as named in the report, be added to the memorial pillars in Victory Square.
- (ii) That the names be added to the memorial as a continuation of the current list, in alphabetical order, and in the same type and format as

all the others, respecting the principle that “All Sacrifices are Equal.”

- (iii) The Committee authorised the commencement of the necessary physical works.

8. Church Street Townscape Heritage Scheme *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision

Purpose of report

To update the Committee with details of the Church Street Conservation Area Revival Townscape Heritage Scheme and seek approval for the Governance arrangements to oversee the programme and third party grant approval.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided background information to the approval by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to start the Townscape Heritage Scheme in Church Street Conservation Area. The delivery stage of the scheme would be led by a Project Officer who had started work at the end of March, on a three year contract, funded by the HLF.

Details of the programme of works and governance structure for the Church Street Conservation Area Revival Townscape Heritage Scheme were provided as detailed in the report. The grant funds would cover three categories:-

- Key Buildings
- Building Grants
- Shop Front Grants

Key buildings had been prioritised based on the need for works and the impact those works would have on the conservation area.

Members were referred to the proposed governance arrangements for the project, attached by way of an appendix to the report. Grant applications would be submitted to the Church Street Townscape Heritage Grant Board for consideration and approval, which comprised the Chair of Regeneration Services Committee and Assistant Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration. Decisions taken would be via delegated authority from the Regeneration Services Committee.

A Member commented on the benefits of shop frontages being consistent and in keeping with the area and questioned what the Council could do to encourage this. The Heritage and Countryside Manager reported that the Council could provide guidance, refer individuals to the supplementary planning guidance and would encourage owners to utilise displays in shop windows to add interest to the public when utilising pavements and pathways.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Heritage and Countryside Manager for her work in securing grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.
- (ii) That the delegation arrangements for the Townscape Heritage Grants to the Church Street Townscape Heritage Grant Board be approved.
- (iii) That the governance arrangements, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Monday 23 July 2018 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 3.25 pm.

H MARTIN

INTERIM CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 25th June 2018