

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

18 March 2019

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, Leisa Smith and Mike Young

Also Present: Councillor Ann Marshall

Ken Coupar and David Tuck, Genecon

Officers: Andy Carter, Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration
Karen Kelly, Housing Strategy Team Leader
Patrick Wilson, Learning and Skills Manager
Steve Hilton, Senior Public Relations Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

61. Apologies for Absence

None

62. Declarations of Interest

None.

63. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2019

Received

64. Hartlepool Economic Growth and Regeneration Strategy *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Key decision test (ii) – Forward Plan Ref No RN22/18

Purpose of report

To report details of the proposed Economic Growth and Regeneration Strategy 2019-2021 (see **Appendix 2**) and seek approval prior to publication.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided background information to the requirement to update the Economic Growth and Regeneration Strategy. Genecon had proposed a strategy for Hartlepool that covered the next three years allowing for targeted priorities and interventions that were realistic and achievable within this time period. The strategy was underpinned by three themes that emerged from the evidence review and formed “three masts” which reflected the distinctive maritime associations of Hartlepool’s economy, both from the past and for the future.

The report included details of the following three masts and the headline outcomes to be achieved as a result of the strategy:-

- Mast 1 – Creative Hartlepool
- Mast 2 – Productive Hartlepool
- Mast 3 – Connected Hartlepool

The strategy had been developed in consultation with the key partners from the public and private sector, details of which were set out in the report.

In support of the report, representatives from Genecon were in attendance and provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation which focussed on the following issues:-

- Purpose of the Economic Growth Strategy
- Characteristics of successful local economies
- Hartlepool’s economic narrative
 - distinctive identity – positive, investible external reputation
 - well connected – resilient transport and digital networks
 - skills and knowledge generators – business needs/inclusive
 - backing winners – sector specialisms with competitive advantage
 - space for growth – infrastructure for business
 - economic leadership and networks
- Economic progress under previous strategy
- Investment highlights in Hartlepool
- Future opportunities
- Focused economic ambitions for Hartlepool
- The headline outcomes of the strategy
- Structure of the strategy

Following conclusion of the presentation the Chair opened the meeting to

questions. The Assistant Director and representatives from Genecon provided clarification in response to queries raised arising from the presentation. The Committee and members of the public in attendance raised a number of suggestions/queries/issues which included:-

- (i) In response to a query raised in relation to how current assets in the town would be developed and marketed as well as how this would be measured, the Committee was advised that economic development would start from the bottom and it was envisaged that the strategy would promote entrepreneurship and sustained economic outcomes. In relation to the visitor economy, the intention was to continue to strengthen the asset base in the coming years. In terms of how outcomes/performance would be measured, data would be measured by growth and economic output nationally and the intention was to measure progress of the borough and narrow the gap against wider national averages.
- (ii) A member of the public, who was in attendance and invited to address the Committee, questioned the emphasis upon expansion of the art related sector and was keen to see more focus around more practical sectors of the economy. The representative advised that whilst the focus around the art sector was acknowledged, given that this was a key priority for Central Government and the Tees Valley Combined Authority, all sectors of the economy would be addressed as part of strategy going forward. The Chair made reference to the structure of the strategy which had been developed based on consultation with a number of partners/outside organisations, details of which were provided.
- (iii) A Member queried the timeframe in terms of progression of the strategy. Members were advised that it was envisaged that the principles of the strategy would continue for more than 3 years and should continue for at least 10 years provided there were no fundamental changes.
- (iv) Members spoke in support of the strategy and welcomed the creative and digital proposals which would build on the growing reputation of the town to support creative people and enterprise to choose to locate and grow in the local economy.
- (v) A Member commented on the number of apprenticeships that had been created in the town across a number of sectors in the last few years which included joiners, bricklayers etc.
- (vi) A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the ongoing projects that had been possible in the town as a result of securing external funding provision and Members commented on the importance of retaining skills in the town and building upon existing skills and expertise. The Chair highlighted the plans of the College of Further Education to

diversify into other sectors where skills gaps had been identified.

- (vii) A member of the public, who was in attendance and spoke on behalf of Seaton Bowling Club questioned if there were any funding opportunities available to regenerate the club house, particularly the roof which had recently been condemned. The Chair advised that arrangements would be made for officers to explore this issue and discuss the detail following the meeting.
- (viii) A Member requested that a copy of the presentation slides be provided to all Elected Members following the meeting.

Decision

- (i) That the Economic Growth and Regeneration Strategy 2019-2021 be agreed.
- (ii) That the contents of the presentation and comments of Members be noted and actioned as appropriate.
- (iii) That a copy of the presentation slides be provide to all Elected Members following the meeting.

65. Hartlepool Housing Strategy 2019-2024 *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Key Decision Test (ii) Forward Plan Reference No RN 36/18

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Regeneration Services Committee to consult on the Draft Housing Strategy for 2019-2024 (see **Appendix 1**) and Action Plan for a period of eight weeks. The Strategy details the key housing priorities for the Council and its partners for the period to 2024. The Action Plan is the delivery plan for the priorities which have been identified.

The report had been intended for submission to the Committee on 28th January however, due to additional workload in preparing for Thirteen Group's exit from the choice based lettings partnership, there was a departure from the Forward Plan.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided background information to the legislative and policy changes which had necessitated an early review and consultation to develop a new Housing Strategy for Hartlepool.

The strategy had been developed under three themes which would contribute towards achieving the vision:-

- Maximising housing growth and delivering sustainable new homes.
- Making the best use of existing homes, regenerating and improving communities.
- Supporting people with specific housing needs to access and maintain appropriate housing.

The Committee's approval was sought to undertake formal consultation with residents, ward members and stakeholders. It was expected that an 8 week consultation would take place during April and May 2019. A second draft of the Housing Strategy and Action Plan would be produced following the consultation and would be reported back to the Regeneration Services Committee for formal adoption.

In the discussion that followed presentation of the report, officers responded to queries raised in relation to the report. Members were advised that there would be an opportunity for Members, stakeholders and residents to feed into the draft strategy any suggested additions/amendments as part of the consultation process. A Member requested that the figures presented in the strategy relating to key facts and statistics be available in figures as well as percentage terms as opposed to a mixture of both.

Concerns were raised regarding the number of empty properties in the town and Members considered that the strategy should include more detailed information around house types as well as the age of such properties.

A Member placed emphasis upon the need to avoid poor landlords acquiring properties in the town. The Assistant Director advised that whilst the Council had no powers to avoid poor landlords acquiring properties there were limited powers available under selective licensing legislation which could be explored. However, it was noted that this was particularly resource intensive. A Member referred to a neighbouring authority who had increased Council Tax charges for properties which remained vacant for over a year and was of the view that this option should be considered in Hartlepool with a view to reducing the number of empty properties.

In relation to table 4, referred to on page 15 of the strategy, which showed a comparison between current dwelling stock and market aspirations, a lengthy discussion ensued during which a number of views were expressed by Members in relation to house types where there appeared to be a shortage. The Assistant Director advised that the information referred to in

the table had been devised from a survey undertaken. In relation to issues raised regarding the need for more bungalows in the town, the Assistant Director advised that such needs were being addressed by current developments in the town.

Decision

- (i) That formal consultation be undertaken with residents and stakeholders on the draft Housing Strategy.
- (ii) That the following suggestions of Members be included in the draft strategy:-
 - Figures relating to key facts and statistics be presented in figures as well as percentage terms.
 - More detailed information in relation to empty properties (house types and age of properties).
- (iii) That options to reduce the number of empty properties in the town be explored to include the feasibility of increasing Council Tax charges for properties remaining vacant for over a year.

66. ESF Community Grants Programme *(Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Key decision tests (i) and (ii) – Forward Plan Ref No RN34/18

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to manage the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) European Social Fund (ESF) Community Grants Programme.
2. The report was intended for submission to the Committee in early January 2019, however due to delays in the Council receiving notification from ESFA that the application had been successful, then there was a departure from the original date in the Forward Plan entry.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report provided the background to the invitation to tender from the ESFA for an organisation to manage and deliver the ESF Community

Grants Programme across the Tees Valley. The ESF Community Grants Programme would disseminate small grants of up to £20,000 to third sector and other small organisations for the purpose of mobilising disadvantaged or excluded unemployed and inactive people aged 19 plus to enable their progress towards employment.

Tees Valley Combined Authority had invited applications from suitable organisations that could design, implement and administer a Community Grants Programme across the whole of the Tees Valley. Following the announcement, the Council met with the other four local authorities and agreed to submit a tender application for the ESF Community Grants Programme. On 18 January 2019, ESFA confirmed that the Council had been successful in its application and would be awarded the contract for the ESF Community Grants Programme.

The Council's Learning and Skills Service was therefore leading on the implementation of the programme which involved a number of key actions, as set out in the report.

Members were referred to the financial, risk, human resource and legal implications of the proposals. It was highlighted that Council officers were still negotiating with the other local authorities to develop a Risk Share Agreement.

Officers responded to queries raised in relation to aspects of the report. Clarification was provided regarding the purpose of the programme, details of the process as well as the type of activities and communities that would be supported.

In response to a query from a member of the public in terms of eligibility for the programme, the Committee was advised that programmes of this type were output and target driven, details of which were provided. The financial and payment arrangements were outlined, as set out in the report and it was noted that the Council would be paid in arrears following the successful awarding of grants and submission of documentary evidence.

In response to a query raised regarding the potential risk implications should negotiations with the other local authorities prove challenging, the Assistant Director referred to recommendation (iii) of the report and the requirement upon the Chief Finance Officer to be satisfied of any cash flow risks.

Members welcomed the programme and the Chair took the opportunity to thank everyone who had been involved in the development of the programme.

Decision

- (i) The Committee noted the success in attracting funding for the ESF

Community Grants Programme.

- (ii) The Committee approved the Council to act as the Accountable Body on behalf of the Tees Valley for the full project value of £2,970,000 and noted the related risks as detailed in section 7 of the report.
- (iii) That the Chief Solicitor, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Chief Finance Officer be authorised to complete contracts to transfer legal responsibilities under the grant conditions to the other Tees Valley Local Authorities.
- (iv) It was noted that the Council's net financial risk will be £691,119.
- (v) That the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, Chief Solicitor and Chief Finance Officer be authorised to approve the Council's acceptance of the Funding Agreement subject to satisfactory completion of due diligences and completion of recommendation (iii).
- (vi) It was noted that further update reports will be brought to Regeneration Services Committee to advise on progress.

67. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be confirmed in the new municipal year following the elections.

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 25 MARCH 2019

.