

REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

18th September 2019

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

Present:

Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Ann Marshall and Leisa Smith

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 (ii) Councillor Tony Richardson was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Lee Cartwright

Officers: Andrew Carter, Assistant Director (Economic Growth and Regeneration)
Chris Parkin, Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Community Service)
Karen Kelly, Housing Strategy Team Leader
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

9. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Lee Cartwright.

10. Declarations of Interest

None

11. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2019

Minutes received

12. Tees Valley Common Allocations Policy Review (Assistant Director (Economic Growth and Regeneration))

Type of decision

Key Decision (test ii) Forward Plan Reference No. RN 12/19

Purpose of report

To approve the revised Common Allocations Policy for the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director (Economic Growth and Regeneration) gave a brief overview of the historical background to the formation and adoption of the Tees Valley Common Allocations Policy. In recent months it had become clear that the existing policy would require amendment and a review had identified a number of proposals. Consultation had subsequently taken place across the Tees Valley, the results of which were summarised and appended to the report. The amendments to the policy which were being proposed following the consultation exercise were detailed within the report.

A member referred to the proposed 'one reasonable offer of accommodation' policy and queried what would happen to tenants who refused an offer. The Housing Strategy Team Leader stressed that the key was 'reasonable' and if a property was rejected for legitimate reasons the tenant would remain on the priority list and no action would be taken against them. The final policy would make it clear what would be deemed acceptable reasons to reject a property but these could include proximity to carers or issues with anti-social behaviour in the area. The Housing Strategy Team Leader noted that Central Government had recommended the Partnership implement this 1 offer policy.

A member queried whether assistance in completing application forms was made available to those who required it. The Housing Strategy Team Leader advised that applications needed to be made online however there was assistance available at the Civic Centre and Titan House. Additionally there were also plans to offer home visits via the lettings team.

Decision

That the proposed amendments to the Tees Valley Common Allocations Policy be approved.

13. Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 31st July 2019 *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods & Director of Finance and Policy)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the 2019/20 forecast General Fund outturn, the 2019/20 Capital Programme Monitoring and to provide details for the specific budget areas that the Committee is responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods & Community Service), presented the report which provided the background and financial reporting arrangements for 2019/20 as well as a summary of the overall Council financial position and General Fund outturn information in relation to the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services Department.

Details of the overall budget position for the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services Department was summarised in a table included in the report together with the reasons for the forecast overspend. Further details of specific budget areas this Committee was responsible for were outlined at Appendix A. The financial outlook for the next 2 years was the most uncertain position the Council had ever faced with forecast deficits of between £5.7 million and £7.4 million. Detailed proposals to address this deficit were being developed and would be reported to a future Finance and Policy Committee.

A member referred to an officer investigation into ways to increase Borough Hall revenue and asked whether a report would be coming back to the Committee. The Assistant Director (Economic Growth and Regeneration) confirmed that it would. He advised that there was a shortfall of income from the Borough Hall and while numerous third parties had contacted the Council regards possible franchising no concrete offers had been made so far. The Chair asked that a report on the investment/refurbishment options and future business planning for both the Town Hall Theatre and Borough Hall be brought to a future committee meeting.

Decision

That the report be noted

That a report on the investment/refurbishment options and future business planning for both the Town Hall Theatre and Borough Hall be brought back to a future meeting

14. Student Accommodation Needs *(Assistant Director
(Economic Growth and Regeneration))*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the work being undertaken on establishing the current and future student accommodation need in the Borough.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director (Economic Growth and Regeneration) informed Members that following significant growth in Hartlepool's higher education facilities there had been an increase in the town's student population. Further growth was anticipated but the extent of this was yet to be established therefore consultants had been appointed to undertake a student accommodation needs assessment to establish both the current and emerging need. This study would inform the emerging Housing Strategy and be aligned with the Council's ambition for the ISQ quarter and the regeneration of Church Street. Officers were due to meet with the consultants later this month to progress the study, the objectives of which were detailed within the report. The contract value would be funded through the Tees Valley Combined Authority Indigenous Growth Fund.

A member queried whether potential locations would be considered. The Assistant Director advised that the assessment would identify student accommodation needs for the future but would not look at specific locations which would be the responsibility of the Council and private sector going forward. The Vice-Chair asked if locations which had already been identified as being suitable would be taken into account as part of the consultation. The Assistant Director indicated that the consultation would look into what improvements could be made to current student living arrangements. From the public gallery a representative of SV24 Student Accommodation, a current provider of student accommodation, referred to a previous feasibility study carried out by them and expressed his willingness to share their findings. The Assistant Director confirmed that the consultant would be asked to engage with him on this matter while the Chair also asked that information on Council Tax payments, the Council Housing Strategy and UCAS data on clearing projections be passed on. The Chair expressed a wish that the results of the consultation be reported back to the committee in a timely fashion and indicated he would be happy to convene an additional meeting if necessary. Further timescales would be reported to Members when available.

Decision

That the report be noted.

That the consultant be asked to engage with a representative of SV24 Student Accommodation on this matter.

That information on Council Tax payments, the Council Housing Strategy and UCAS data on clearing projections be passed on to the consultant.

The meeting concluded at 10:30am

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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