

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

30 SEPTEMBER 2021

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

Present:

Councillor: Tim Fleming (In the Chair)

Councillors: Gordon Cranney, Angela Falconer, Sue Little, and Carl Richardson.

Also present: Councillor Brian Cowie as substitute for Councillor Darren Price as substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.

Councillor Moss Boddy as substitute for Councillor Amy Price as substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.

Councillor John Riddle

Frank Harrison, and Gordon and Stella Johnston

Officers: Jill Harrison, Director of Adult and Community Based Services
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services

Leigh Keeble, Head of Community Hubs and Wellbeing

Sarah Scarr, Heritage and Countryside Manager

Julian Heward, Communications and Marketing Team

David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

9. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Darren Price and Amy Prince.

10. Declarations of Interest

None.

11. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2021

Councillor Riddle commented that he had been present at the previous meeting but had not been recorded on the attendance and requested that the minutes be amended accordingly.

Subject to the above, the minutes were received.

12. Heritage Strategy (*Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services)*)

Type of decision

Non-key Decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with details of the proposed Heritage Strategy.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services) reported on the proposal to develop a new Heritage Strategy for Hartlepool. In formulating the Heritage Strategy the Assistant Director stated that there were three key issues to consider,

1. Preservation – the current foundation of our work on heritage;
2. Priorities – what are the key events, activities and issues;
3. People – how we will acknowledge significant individuals from the past and engage people with our work now and in the future.

The strategy would also look to the future covering both events and the key sites and strategies which would showcase Hartlepool's heritage.

The Assistant Director also addressed the request submitted by Councillor John Riddle for the introduction of a blue plaque scheme in Hartlepool. The Assistant Director indicated that, unfortunately, such a scheme could not be delivered within existing financial or staffing resources although she highlighted that other means of commemorating significant individuals within Hartlepool's history and heritage were in place and opportunities to develop this work further were being explored. Councillor Riddle thanked the Assistant Director for the consideration of the scheme and indicated his support for the wider strategy.

Members expressed their concern with the condition of a number of the listed buildings in the town, many of which were now simply seen as a blight on local communities by many residents and questioned the work being done with their owners to progress matters. The former Odeon building was one such building highlighted by Members. There was also criticism of the significant money that had been invested in Church Street over the past decade which had done little to raise its fortunes.

The Heritage and Countryside Manager informed Members that the Council website did include a detailed list of those 'heritage' buildings that were considered at risk and a link would be circulated to Members. Officers did meet regularly to address the issues with derelict buildings and while there may be a perception that these buildings were simply being left vacant, a great deal of work was being done behind the scenes but much did depend on the owners.

In relation to Church Street, the Heritage and Countryside Manager stated that much of the recent investment into Church Street had been as a result of a successful Heritage Lottery bid. The council had, however, been unsuccessful in a bid for funding to bring the former Shades building back into use. The Church Street area had, though, changed significantly over recent years with the arrival of the new Northern School of Art college and the ongoing work on the development of the new Television and Film studios, and also the Council development of the BIS.

A Member considered that the situation with many of the derelict listed buildings had changed so little in over a decade that the decision should simply be taken to demolish those that had no hope of redevelopment and remove some of the sites of blight adversely affecting communities.

Members expressed their disappointment that a Hartlepool Blue Plaque scheme could not be brought forward as there many Hartlepool people from the past that had gone on to achieve significant national positions and honours.

The Assistant Director acknowledged Members comments and indicated that they would be fed into the process of developing the new Heritage Strategy and would form future reports for the Committee's consideration.

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

That the current work ongoing within this area be noted and that the Committee supports the development of a Heritage Strategy with reports being submitted to future meetings as appropriate in the preparation of the strategy.

13. Library Relocation (*Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services)*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the relocation of Throston Library to Throston Youth Centre.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services) reported on a proposal to relocate Throston Library to the Throston Youth Centre. The Assistant Director also gave a short presentation to the Members as part of the report outlining the consultation process and the results thereof.

The Throston Library building had closed at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic and had not re-opened due to the inability of officers to implement appropriate Covid-19 mitigation measures to protect staff and the public within such a small space. The most recent condition survey for Throston Library also recommended an investment of £249,000 to ensure the building is maintained and able to operate safely. There was no available budget for this work to be progressed.

Throston Youth Centre was not actively used during the day with most engagement taking place on an evening. As a result there was space available to host a library offer with the same amount of stock that was currently available at Throston Library without other services being adversely affected. Throston Youth Centre was 0.7 miles from the existing library and can accommodate the same hours of operation and existing programme of activity. There were also opportunities for a more collaborative and community focused way of working that would potentially increase and enhance the offer.

The Assistant Director also reported that Catcote School were looking for premises to expand their offer. Throston had been identified as a potential solution and, pending approval of relocation of the library, a full feasibility study would be conducted providing an opportunity for the asset to be transferred to Catcote School on a long term arrangement.

Members broadly welcomed the proposal as it would maintain the service in the Throston area. There were some concerns as the distance between the two locations and the availability of public transport. Members were also concerned to ensure that a popular youth centre was also not unduly impinged by the relocation of the library. The Assistant Director stated that she was confident this would be the case.

Members expressed some concern that a similar review of provision to this at Throston would be rolled out to other branch libraries around the town potentially eroding local service provision. The Assistant Director stated that the position with other libraries was being reviewed as part of the wider review of Community Hubs. Members requested details of the usage of the local libraries, which the Assistant Director undertook to share with Members.

The following decision was supported unanimously.

Decision

1. That the proposal to relocate Throston Library to Throston Youth Centre as reported, be approved; and
2. That officers engage further with Catcote School so that more detailed feasibility work can be undertaken to secure the long term use of the current Throston Library building.

14. Impact of Covid on Adult and Community Based Services - Update (*Director of Adult and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To update the Committee on the position in the services operated by the department following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Adult and Community Based Services gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the Covid-19 case rate in Hartlepool in comparison with the local and national position and the uptake of vaccines across the community. The Director updated the Committee on the situation in care homes in the town indicating that following the mandatory introduction of the vaccine for care home staff only 10 of over 1000 staff were still awaiting their first vaccine. There currently only two homes reporting cases of Covid-19 with one of those being a member of staff.

The Director also gave an update on some of the additional work that had been undertaken during the pandemic and the additional services and 'demand shift' that had been experienced across the town. Day services were slowly returning to pre pandemic levels and community based services were also in the process of reopening. There had also recently been a number of events that had taken place in a covid secure manner – the Waterfront Festival and Big Lime Triathlon – that had been abandoned last year due to the pandemic.

One of the biggest concerns highlighted by the Director was the significant drop in income through the services operated by the department, particularly leisure services.

A Member expressed their concern that the mobility of the older generations in the town had been adversely affected by the need to isolate during the pandemic and that there could be an adverse effect on their health and an impact on council services because of this. The Director stated that this had been acknowledged and activity through the Occupational Health Teams and the Active Hospitals scheme where hospitals worked with patients on their mobility before discharge, were ongoing to mitigate the potential impact of this.

Decision

That the report be noted.

15. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman indicated that he had been contacted by Councillor Price raising concerns that the changing facilities at playing fields had not been reopened causing difficulties for local and visiting sports teams. The Director stated that the only changing facilities at this time that were not open were at Rift House Recreation Ground. Officers were reviewing the operation of these facilities in a Covid secure manner before they could be reopened.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 21 October, 2021 at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 12 OCTOBER 2021