

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

18 October 2022

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

Present:

Councillor Young (In the Chair)

Councillors Clayton, Feeney, Hargreaves, Lindridge, Loynes

Councillor Cook was in attendance at substitute for Councillor Brown

Also present were the following Members of the Neighbourhood Services Committee who had been invited to the meeting:-

Councillors Cassidy, Creevy, Little and Moore.

The following Elected Members, who had also been invited to the meeting, were also present:-

Councillors Cowie, Harrison, Martin-Wells, D Nicholson and Thompson

Officers: Beverley Bearne, Assistant Director, Development and Growth
 Tony Hanson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
 Israr Hussain, Economic Growth and Regeneration Manager
 Hayley Martin, Chief Solicitor
 Katie Greenwood, Economic Growth Officer
 Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Manager
 Amanda Whitaker, Democratic Services Team

12. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Brown.

Apologies had also been submitted from Councillors Buchan, Jackson and Tiplady.

13. Declarations of Interest

None

14. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022 were received.

15. Referral from Council – Crustaceans Update *(Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key – referral from Full Council.

Purpose of Report

On 14th July 2022, it had been agreed by Full Council, in response to a motion on the deceased and dying crustaceans impacting on the local fishing industry, that a report would be presented to the Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee for consideration.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services presented a report which advised that on 14th July 2022, a Motion had been agreed by Full Council, the terms of which were set out in the report. As agreed by Full Council, this matter was being considered by this Committee. Furthermore invites for the meeting had been sent to Defra, Environment Agency, Food Standards Agency (FSA), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Marine Management Organisation (MMO), North East Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NEIFCA), Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), Natural England, South Tees Development Corporation (Teesworks), Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), the Member of Parliament for Hartlepool, members of the Neighbourhood Services Committee, all other elected members and representatives of the local fishing industry.

The report set out the background, including a timeline, since reports had first been received by the Council and their partners, in October 2021, that crabs and lobsters were washing up dead, and dying, on Hartlepool beaches. In May 2022 a Joint Agency Investigation into Teesside and Yorkshire Coast Crab and Lobster Mortalities report was produced, a copy of which was appended to the report. A separate study had been commissioned by the Whitby Commercial Fishing Association and a second paper was produced in March 2022, appended to the report.

It was noted that on 22nd September 2022, the Leader of the Council had written to the Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP, as Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in relation to the Mass Crustaceans Mortality Event in Tees Estuary, a copy of which was appended to the report.

Following presentation of the report, the Director read out the following statement from the South Tees Development Corporation

“We too are concerned about the impact that the death of these crustaceans is having on our local fishing community and the Tees Valley Mayor continues to call on Government for financial support to all of those affected.

The South Tees Development Corporation’s remit is for the redevelopment of the 4,500 acres that makes up the Mayoral Development Corporation, Teesworks site. We have followed the multi-agency reports into the deaths of marine crustaceans and note their findings.

While we are unable to attend meeting, we support Hartlepool Borough Council supporting the local fishing community.”

David McCandless, Chief Officer, North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA), accompanied by Dr Ralf Bublit, addressed the meeting. A presentation was made by the Chief Officer which advised that the Authority was one of ten IFCAs covering the English Coast. Its statutory role was to ensure sustainable management of fishing activities in terms of impacts on stocks & habitat. The Authority had a supporting role to Environment Agency (EA), Centre for Environment Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS). The Authority also monitored trends in stock and maintaining direct engagement with affected industry. Details were outlined of Shellfish Stock Monitoring Work and it was noted that an assessment of commercial catch & effort data had been submitted to the Marine Management Organisation.

An Interim report had been published in September 2022. It was highlighted, however, that the report carried some very strong caveats as highlighted in the presentation together with a summary of findings. It was reported that the next steps for the Authority would be to continue the stock monitoring regime, to maintain the industry working group meetings and the technical research, to support the continuation of further monitoring, research and assessment.

Dr Gary Caldwell, Marine Biologist, Newcastle University addressed the Committee. Mr Caldwell reinforced some of the issues which had been addressed in the presentation and referred to the extent of the event. The Committee was informed of monitoring which had been undertaken by the University with Liverpool University, at a site in Staithes, which had shown a comparable mass termination event and the extermination of the barnacle population. It was considered that the main causative agent was an industrial agent and that pyridine was a major driver. It was claimed that pyridine was being attacked in scientific data as it had short life and would disappear from the environment, without trace, within a month.

Mr Caldwell advised that he wanted to correct a number of points included in the letter from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, which had been tabled at the meeting. His concerns related to both the alleged commitments made by CEFAS to quantify pyridine levels and the reference in the letter to detection of algal toxins in many of the impacted crabs which had been considered by DEFRA to be a significant finding. In relation to Academic research, the Committee was advised there had not been ongoing engagement with the academic community and concerns expressed that the validity of reports and data had been questioned.

The Chair expressed appreciation to the specialists who had addressed the Committee and clarified that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the economic impact of the event and to feed into the Select Committee.

Elected Members debated issues arising from the report and information that had been conveyed by the specialists who responded to questions raised by Members. Disappointment was expressed at the delay in convening the meeting and that 'key people' were not in attendance.

It was highlighted that the Motion submitted to Full Council, in July, had been supported unanimously. The complexities of the issue were recognised. It was noted also that there were 2 separate issues; further investigation into causes of event and secondly the economic support to support those impacted by the event. Further disappointment was expressed that it had been agreed that Hartlepool Overview and Scrutiny representatives would not be taking up positions on the Joint Scrutiny Committee proposed by Redcar and Cleveland Council. It was considered that the decision should be reconsidered. Following constitutional advice from the Chief Solicitor, it was moved and seconded that:-

“That Full Council reconsider the decision that Hartlepool Overview and Scrutiny representatives would not be taking up positions on the Joint Scrutiny Committee proposed by Redcar and Cleveland Council”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.5 of the Constitution, a recorded vote was taken:-

Those for:-

Councillors Cook (substitute for Councillor Brown), Clayton, Feeney, Hargreaves, Lindridge, Loynes and Young.

Those against:-

None

Those abstaining:-

None

The vote was carried unanimously.

During the continuation of the debate, information was sought in relation to estimated timescale for the return to usual stock levels for crustaceans and whether any human intervention was intended.

Further information was sought in relation to the number of businesses which had been affected and whether Officers were actively communicating with those businesses to support them. The Assistant Director responded that if agreed by this Committee, Officers would reach out to local businesses and provide advice and support and would also work closely with the Tees Valley Combined Authority colleagues to determine if further support was available. The Committee agreed that recommendation.

The Chair opened debate for questions by the public who were in attendance at the meeting. Mr Rennie, representing the local fishing community, addressed the Committee and reiterated the emotional and financial impact of the situation. The Committee was informed of a timeline from 6 September when scrap dust had been reported in the sea, to the commencement of dredging on 25 September and the deaths of crustaceans at the end of September. A North East Fishing Collective had been formed and a report had been commissioned with 4 independent university investigations ongoing. It was stated that the report referred to high levels of pyridine in crab tissues. The claim that algal toxins had been the cause was questioned with results considered to be flawed. Concern was expressed regarding the reaction of Agencies to the findings of the independent report. Concerns were expressed also regarding the action taken by the Council since the meeting of Full Council, in July, with reference to the decision not to be represented on the Joint Scrutiny Committee. Reference was made to the letter sent by the Leader on 22 September to the Minister of State at the Department for Environment, which had been circulated.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to all those who had attended the meeting and advised that the information which had been shared at the meeting would be submitted to the Government Select Committee.

Following clarification sought from a member of the Committee, the Chair confirmed that it had been agreed earlier in the meeting that the Economic Growth Team would provide advice and support to those businesses which had been affected and would also work closely with the Tees Valley Combined Authority colleagues to determine if further support was available.

Decision

The report was noted.

It was agreed that information be conveyed to the Government Select Committee and that the Economic Growth Team provide advice and support to those businesses which had been affected

That Full Council reconsider the decision that Hartlepool Overview and Scrutiny representatives would not be taking up positions on the Joint Scrutiny Committee proposed by Redcar and Cleveland Council.

16. Creative Hartlepool Sector Research Study - Assistant Director (Development and Growth)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To report the findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) funded Hartlepool Creative Sector Research Study, a copy of which was appended to the report.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

In July 2021, this Authority had been invited by the Local Government Association to take part and benefit from their Economic Growth Advisers Programme. The Programme offered the Council procured specialist consultant support up to the value of £14,000 equating to 24 days of work. The LGA had agreed to support Hartlepool Council in mapping out a route to enhance and grow opportunities in the creative industries sector, which would have a number of service objectives as set out in the report. After a competitive procurement exercise undertaken by the LGA, Chimera Consulting were appointed in October 2021 to work with the Economic Growth Team to fulfil the set objectives. Chimera Consulting had been briefed to undertake a review of the current position of Hartlepool's creative industries sector through consultation with key stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector. The findings of which were documented in the study along with outline recommendations. The key findings and recommendations from the study had been categorised into four key areas which were detailed in the report.

Adam Jeffrey, Chimera Consulting, attended the meeting and presented the findings of the study. The Committee briefly debated issues arising from the study. The Chair referred to the importance of the issues which had been highlighted and due to time constraints at this meeting suggested that

further consideration of the report be deferred and Mr Jeffrey be invited to return to the next meeting of the Committee.

Decision

That consideration of the report be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

17. Inclusive Growth Strategy 2022 – Action Plan – *Assistant Director (Development and Growth)*

Type of decision

Key Decision, test (ii). Forward Plan reference CE 80/22.

Purpose of report

To provide the Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee with an updated version of the Action Plan for the Inclusive Growth Strategy 2022-2025 (Appendix 1) and seek approval prior to adoption and publication

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

At the Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee on 19th July 2022 the Inclusive Growth Strategy and Action Plan, setting out Hartlepool's economic priorities and growth in the coming years, was presented after extensive consultation with local stakeholders and businesses. The strategy was developed around three broad themes and to deliver the three themes, a ten point action plan was also presented with identified projects and initiatives. The Committee discussed and agreed with the content and themes of the strategy and ten point plan, members did however ask for more detail in the accompanying Action Plan, in particular clear and detailed targets and timescales. The Action plan, appended to the report, had been therefore updated to include more precise targets with timescales for delivery. Consultation had taken place with businesses and stakeholders through various methods including an Economic Regeneration & Tourism Forum, a survey and interviews.

The Chair advised that there continued to be more work required to the Action Plan and that he had received representations that the Action Plan should include benchmarking and target setting information.

Decision

That consideration of the item be deferred.

18. Renewal of the Longhill and Sandgate Business Improvement District (BID) - Assistant Director (Development and Growth)

Type of decision

Key decision, test (ii) Forward Plan Ref CE84/22

Purpose of report

To provide background information on the Longhill and Sandgate Business Improvement District (BID) and to seek authorisation to pursue a re-ballot for the renewal of the Longhill and Sandgate BID.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The report set out the background to a proposal by the Executive of the Longhill and Sandgate Business Association to pursue a renewal of the BID for a further 5 years. The BID intended to continue the operation of the estates wide 17 camera CCTV system, camera monitoring and environmental cleansing services to the estate. Approval was also sought for Hartlepool Borough Council to continue in its role as the accountable body for the BID.

The process for renewing the BID involved a number of steps, as detailed in the report. It was highlighted that without a formal BID arrangement the ongoing funding of the CCTV system would most likely have to be met from voluntary contributions by the businesses located on the estate which provided a number of potential issues as set out in the report. The income generation from the proposed BID levy was anticipated to be approximately £63,000 per annum collected from over 300 businesses that were based in the BID area. The income to the Council for providing services to the BID was detailed as follows:-

Council Service	BID Activity	Income (per annum)
Monitoring Centre	To monitor the 17 CCTV cameras across the estate.	£30,000
Finance	Specific IT system used for the BID administration, costs associated with sending out bill reminders and recovery action for non-payers.	£5,700
Environmental Cleansing	Regular environmental cleansing activities to the estate.	£11,000

The Committee was advised that members of the Longhill and Sandgate Business Association Executive had been consulted and approved of the proposed Business Plan.

Decision

The Economic Growth Team were authorised to continue discussions with businesses and internal Council sections to progress with the BID renewal ballot.

It was agreed that Hartlepool Borough Council continue in its role as a partner in the Longhill BID and continue its role as the accountable body.

The meeting concluded at 12.50 p.m.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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