

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

22 OCTOBER 2024

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor: Pamela Hargreaves (In the Chair)

Councillors: Quewone Bailey-Fleet, Corrine Male, Martin Scarborough and Mike Young

Co-opted Parish Councillor:
Stephen Smith (Greatham Parish Council)

Officers: Tony Hanson, Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Beverley Bearne, Assistant Director (Development and Growth)
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services)
Karen Cooper, Strategic Procurement Manager
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

5. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Matthew Dodds.

6. Declarations of Interest

None.

7. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2024

Received.

8. Adult Literacy Crisis (*Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

Provide an overview of the literacy crisis facing the population of Hartlepool;

Raise awareness of how poor literacy impacts on individuals, families, society and the economy; and

Raise the profile of adult literacy as a town-wide issue that requires a multi-sector approach to affect positive change.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services) gave a comprehensive and detailed presentation on the adult literacy crisis in Hartlepool. It was highlighted that across Hartlepool, 33.2% of the population aged 16 years and over were functionally illiterate. Other factors to be taken into account when considering adult literacy was health literacy, digital literacy and numeracy and further details on this were included within the presentation. The Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services) informed Members that work was underway to look at the Local Authority's publications in association with the Plain English Campaign such as Hartbeat magazine and communications about Council tax, recycling and other services. In addition to this, a piece of work was being undertaken with the Council's workforce to reflect on the use of overly professional language and the importance of building relationships with people.

During the discussion that followed, Members highlighted their concerns that a third of the population in the town were unable to engage with literature and every day essentials such as medicine bottles. It was noted that a key part of the challenge faced was people feeling labelled as illiterate and changing this needed to be part of the work being undertaken. The Chair added that it was incumbent on all Members to be involved and become champions of adult literacy in the ongoing work and in changing perceptions.

The Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services) informed Members that the national organisations the Book Trust and Libraries Connected were very interested in working with Hartlepool as a

driver to shift culture in relation to adult literacy and this was an exciting opportunity for the Local Authority.

Decision

- (i) To commit to raise the local literacy levels and improve the equality of opportunity for all residents; support the development of an internal plan of action to ensure the barriers facing those with poor literacy are removed. Starting with literacy checking the readability of information produced by the council aimed at the public. This includes publicity, social media, resources, letters and information to ensure the literacy levels reflect the local community.
- (ii) To support the development of a multi-sector partnership, committed to working together to drive change for our most vulnerable residents in Hartlepool and ensure a clear process of monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate impact.
- (iii) To raise awareness of the local literacy crisis including health and digital literacy, and lead a cultural change to reduce the stigma felt by adults with poor literacy who are reluctant to seek help.
- (iv) To support adults with low literacy levels to increase their self-esteem and teach them of the benefits of improving their reading and writing skills. This requires a multi-sector commitment to support reading and writing skills and the Council will be a leading advocate in this.
- (v) That Members be invited to become involved and be champions of adult literacy to support the ongoing work on the Adult Literacy Crisis in Hartlepool.
- (vi) That an update report be considered by the Committee in six months' time.

9. Corporate Procurement Quarterly Reports on Contracts *(Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To satisfy the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules with regard to Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee:

- To receive and examine quarterly reports on the outcome of contract letting procedures including those where the lowest/highest price is not payable/receiveable; and
- To receive and examine reports on any exemptions granted in respect of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee

The Assistant Director (Development and Growth) provided the Committee with an update report on the Council's recent procurement activity. Appendix C to the report included commercial information in respect of the tenders received and any confidential information relating to Contract Procedure Rule exemptions or contract extensions. The appendix contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

A discussion ensued on the procurement exemptions and the potential for Elected Member involvement. The Assistant Director (Development and Growth) confirmed that current practice was that procurement exemptions were considered by the appropriate Executive Director, Director of Finance, IT and Digital and the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources. It was proposed that the Constitution Committee undertake a review of the current delegated authority process for procurement exemptions to determine if the existing process was compliant with the procurement regulations.

Decision

- (i) The report was noted.
- (ii) That the current delegated authority process for procurement exemptions be referred to Constitution Committee for review and further discussion once the appropriate information has been collated in relation to the procurement process for exemptions.

The meeting concluded at 5.45pm

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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