

CABINET MEMBER'S REPORT		
Councillor	Committee	Date
Ian Maher	Cabinet Member Regeneration	27 January 2011

Planning & Economic Regeneration update

Employment team gains top standard

Staff at employment specialists Sefton@Work have gained the highest accolade for the way they treat their customers.

The team has just scooped the Customer Service Excellence Award – the UK Government standard for customer-facing public services administered by the Cabinet Office.

Exceptionally, Sefton@Work scored as “excellent” on 6 out of 12 criteria.

Sefton@Work is part of the council's Economic Development Division and helps local workless residents get into employment and training.

Some of the services include one to one advice, access to pre-employment training, help with CVs and interview techniques, and grant advice for one-off job start costs or training courses.

Review of Economic Development

Cabinet on 16th December 2010 noted the completion of the Review of Economic Development. Essentially, the proposal is to refinance the Council's Economic Development Service so that in future its payroll costs are recharged to external grants, income-generating contracts, and to accumulated project balances. This will save the Council about £725,000 in a full year. The arrangement will be reviewed in 2-3 year's time.

The next step is to prepare a Business Plan for the Service with a forecast of resources to determine the affordability of its core-funded workforce, and current and planned activities. The thirteen affected staff have been pre-consulted on the process, but no decision on changes to job roles or redundancies can be made until the Business Plan is prepared and approved.

As a precaution, “at risk” letters are being issued to all staff of Sefton@Work, and to three former WNF-funded business advisors in InvestSefton, all of whom are affected by the Council's Review of External Funding reported to Cabinet in December. However, plans to attract additional external funding are well-advanced.

Housing Market Renewal Update

The two Compulsory Purchase Public Inquiries for Bedford Queens Phase 3 and Klondyke Phase 1B closed in November. It is anticipated that a Secretary of State's decision will be forthcoming in the Spring.

In the absence of ring fenced funding from April 1st for the HMR programme, the Council's HMRI Team is pursuing bids for future funding through the first round of the Regional Growth Fund with its developer partners, Keepmoat and Bellway. As this funding is aimed at private sector job creation, the intention is that bids will be made by the developer partners. If this proves successful, further bids will be made to future rounds. Bids are to be submitted by 21st January.

There are good indications that the HCA may be prepared to offer the Council £1 million of capital funding for acquisition of properties for demolition in the Klondyke. This is subject to a formal decision being made by the HCA this week and entering into a legal agreement with them. The money has to be spent in the current financial year, so Cabinet is being requested to approve accepting the money and entering into a legal agreement with the HCA at an Urgent Business Cabinet Meeting on 13th January. This will mean that HMRI will be able to continue with acquisitions for the time being.

This meeting will also consider, for the same reasons, an offer of £250,000 of HCA funding for remediation of Klondyke 1A land and a variation to the Overarching Agreement with Keepmoat which will allow the next phase of Bedford/Queens new build to start on site in the current financial year, thus securing the HCA funding for social housing on the site.

The HCA has also (subject to due diligence) approved funding to RSLs for affordable social housing to start on site before March 31st at:

- Pine Grove, Bootle (Riverside – 6 houses)
- Knowsley Road, Bootle (Plus Dane – 10 houses)
- Site of 19 - 29 Stanley Road, Bootle (Plus Dane – 6 houses)
- Langdale Street, Bootle (Cosmopolitan HA – 5 units of accommodation for people with learning difficulties).

They have also approved funding to convert the Kings Centre in Balliol Road to 5 apartments, but there still remains a substantial gap, so it is unlikely that this scheme will proceed.