

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION RECORD

23 August 2013

The meeting commenced at 9.30am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Keith Dawkins, Alison Lilley, Robbie Payne and Chris Simmons

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Barday was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Cranney, Councillor Griffin was in attendance as substitute for Councillor James, Councillor Cook was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Richardson and Councillor Sirs was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Jackson.

Also Present:

Edwin Jeffries, Joint Trade Unions

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Chief Executive
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
John Morton, Assistant Chief Finance Officer
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Graham Frankland, Assistant Director, Resources
John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
Kerry Trenchard, Acting Performance and Partnerships Manager
Karen Oliver, Facilities Management Manager
Laura Stones, Scrutiny Support Officer
Steve Hylton, Public Relations Officer
Rachael Clark, HR Business Partner
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

73. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cranney, Jackson, James, Richardson, Thompson and Wells

74. Declarations of Interest

None at this point in the meeting. However, declarations were declared later in the meeting (Minute 84 of the open minutes and Minute 92 of the closed minutes refer)

75. Minutes

- (i) Minutes of the meetings of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 26 July 2013, 2 August 2013 and 8 August 2013 – Received.

In relation to the minutes of 8 August – Minute 71 – Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation, a Member questioned the accuracy of the minutes in respect of the preferred site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The Chair confirmed that the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting. Councillor A Lilley requested that her disagreement in relation to the accuracy of the minutes be recorded.

- (ii) Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 24 June 2013 – Received.

76. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2014/15 Savings Proposal *(Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To enable Members to consider the initial 2014/15 savings proposals relating to the Committee remit. Comments made were to be incorporated with those received from each of the Policy Committee in relation to their remits and will be considered by the Finance and Policy Committee at the meeting on 19 September 2013.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Chief Finance Officer referred to previous reports to the Committee which provided background and an overview of the Council's financial position including details of the significant financial challenges and risks facing the Council over the four years commencing 2013/14 arising from continued reductions in Government funding for Councils.

In relation to the 2014/15 budget, it was reported that that the Council faced a gross budget deficit of £8.524m. The gross budget deficit could be reduced to £4.594m without impacting on services through a combination of permanent budget savings and one-off factors as summarised in the report. The report also detailed departmental savings proposals with a total value of £4.376m. Assuming the proposed departmental savings were

implemented there was a net unfunded deficit for 2014/15 of £0.218m. It was anticipated at this stage, that this amount could be bridged from the 2014/15 New Homes Bonus. However, this income was not yet guaranteed.

Members were advised that if the proposals, as set out in the report, were approved for addressing the 2014/15 budget deficit the Council would still face significant budget deficits in 2014/16 and 2016/17. Over the period of the current MTFS it was forecast that the Council would have to make permanent budget cuts of around £16.2m, details of which were included in the report.

Members were referred to the proposed departmental budget savings and budget pressures for consideration by the Committee, attached as appendices to the report, that would be incorporated with those received from each of the Policy Committees in relation to their remits for consideration by the Finance and Policy Committee on 19 September 2013.

It was noted that an additional report would be presented to a future meeting of this Committee to consider the criteria for the Community Pool.

Clarification was sought in relation to the proposed saving regarding Security Services and whether the review of provision included the Civic Centre. It was confirmed that it was security in other buildings, not the Civic Centre.

Decision

The Committee supported the proposed savings and budget pressures for further consideration by the Committee on 19 September 2013.

77. Living Wage *(Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference CE58/13.

Purpose of report

To obtain Finance and Policy Committee approval to implement a Living Wage for low paid employees in the Council.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Chief Executive presented the report which provided background information relating to the Living Wage Initiative including the benefits of the scheme, sub regional decisions as well as details of the background to the decisions of Council to establish a Living Wage. The report included details of the impact of a 1% pay offer on bands 1-4, justification for introducing a Living Wage for Council employees, accreditation information, should the Council wish to become a Living Wage Foundation Accredited employer, financial implications of a Living Wage as well as details of the flexibility to change the rate of a Living Wage.

Details of the contractual arrangements, the impact on pay and grading structures together with feedback from Head Teachers and Joint Trade Unions were provided as set out in the report.

It was proposed that the Living Wage be contractual for Green Book and TUPE employees and Bands 1-3 be merged into a single pay band (Band 1-3) comprising spinal column point 10 only.

The main group of employees who would benefit from the introduction of a Living Wage would be cleaners. Members were referred to the summary of proposals together with Alternatives for Green Book employees as detailed in the report.

In response to a request for clarification that Elected Members would not benefit from the proposals given recent comments on this issue, the Chair provided assurances that Elected Members would not benefit from the Living Wage Initiative highlighting that the only link between Elected Members and the Living Wage was the decision to ring fence savings from the new governance arrangements to support this initiative.

The Chair suggested that part of the ring fenced reserves from savings in Members' budgets for the current year be utilised to fund the Living Wage the following year.

Decision

- (i) That a Hartlepool Living Wage equivalent to Spinal Column Point 10 (currently £7.26 per hour) and uprated as and when the value of Spinal Column Point 10 increases be introduced for Council employees with effect from 1 September 2013.
- (ii) That Bands 1 – 3 be merged into a single pay band (Band 1-3) comprising Spinal Column Point 10 only with effect from 1 September 2013.

- (iii) That the national minimum wage methodology (i.e. including hours on sleeping in duty) be applied when determining compliance with the Council's Hartlepool Living Wage for employees
- (iv) That employees be referred to appropriate agencies outside of working hours if they wish to receive advice on the possible impact on benefit entitlement.
- (v) That members note the intention of the Director of Child and Adults and the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods to submit a further report on a Hartlepool Living Wage in respect of the potential impact on commissioning arrangements to Finance and Policy Committee.
- (vi) Members expressed their support to encourage other Hartlepool employers to pay our Hartlepool Living Wage to their employees and noted the intention to submit a further report to Finance and Policy Committee in due course.
- (vii) That Council be requested to release £90,000 from the Living Wage reserve to fund a Hartlepool Living Wage of £7.26 per hour in 2013/14
- (viii) That the cost of implementing the Living Wage of £155,000 be funded from 2015/16 onwards from the ongoing savings in Members Allowances (£131,000) with the residual shortfall of £24,000 being funded from the review of Workforce Arrangements, or if savings in this area are not achieved the residual cost will be a budget pressure for 2015/16.
- (ix) That part of the ring fenced reserves from savings in Members' budgets for the current year be utilised to fund the Hartlepool Living Wage the following year (2014/15).
- (x) That client budgets and trading accounts be funded for the Hartlepool Living Wage.
- (xi) That a strategy for using the unused element of the Living Wage reserve be developed as part of the 2013/14 Outturn Strategy.
- (xii) The Committee noted the Council's aspiration of moving to the National Minimum Wage.

78. Warm Up North – Delivery of Green Deal Measures for Residents *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN17/13.

Purpose of report

To provide information on the 'Warm Up North' project and to seek approval and funding to formally engage with the scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director presented the report which provided background information on the Warm Up North Project together with details of the purpose and benefits of the scheme. Although Hartlepool had previously decided not to join Warm Up North there were a number of areas where, through good progress in delivery of the scheme, risks had been reduced, mitigated or managed, details of which were provided. The report included details of progress to date in relation to the project.

With regard to the financial considerations, Members were advised that the Council would have to make a financial contribution of £50,000 towards the scheme and this was a capped sum, which could be paid over two financial years. The Director of Public Health was considering the option of funding this contribution from the Public Health budget. Another option was to consider a contribution from any under spend on the Authority's social fund budget.

Decision

- (i) That Hartlepool BC join and participate in the Warm Up North Project.
- (ii) That an allocation of £50k be committed in order to facilitate inclusion and this be funded from the non-recurring Public Health Grant Fund.

79. Future Use of Brierton Site *(Director of Regeneration of Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Reference RN89/11.

Purpose of report

To update the Committee on progress for the future use of the site.

To consider the outcome of the marketing of EDC/Golden Flatts sites.

To consider options for potential parking areas on part of the land adjacent to Sitwell Walk.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Resources reported on the background to the use of the Brierton site and Cabinet's and Council's subsequent approval of the proposals for the future of the site, details of which were set out in the report.

The report included progress to date in terms of the future use of the site including Catcote Future's works, demolition of the upper school building and the moves from the existing Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and EDC site. The different elements of the Brierton site usages were identified on a plan attached as an appendix to the report.

As part of the approved Master Plan, the western edge of the site was designated for residential development. A six week statutory public consultation had been carried out, details of which were provided, the results of which would be submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration.

Details of future sports provision and playing field developments were outlined in the report as well as the outcome of the tender process for the sale of EDC and Golden Flatts sites, included in a confidential appendix to the report. ***This item contains 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).***

With regard to Macaulay/Sitwell Walk, two options to provide parking bays had been investigated, the outcome and benefits of each were provided. Members were referred to the risks, financial and asset management considerations.

In the discussion that followed Officers responded to issues raised by Members which included clarification on capital receipts targets, the financial, planning and demolition considerations as well as the advantages and disadvantages of attaching various planning conditions to the sale of sites of this type.

In relation to option 1 – to provide parking bays at end of Groves off Macaulay Road, and the suggestion that this could be phased over more than one year, a Member queried whether this could be undertaken in one year as opposed to a phased approach. The Assistant Director agreed to incorporate this option in a future report relating to capital receipts for consideration by the Committee.

With regard to the future use of this site, Members were keen to ensure that the recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum in relation to Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children were considered in terms of improved facilities and emphasised the need for a greater mix of bungalows on that site.

In addition, the Committee requested that the report to be submitted in relation to capital receipts should explore the impact of attaching planning conditions to the sale of the site.

Decision

The Committee:-

1. Noted the current position on the development of the Brierton site.
2. Approved the highest bidder as preferred bidder in relation to the EDC and Golden Flatts sites.
3. Provisionally approved the use of any surplus capital receipts from the relevant disposals to fund parking at locations adjacent to the end of Groves off Macaulay Road (Option 1 in Section 9) and the option of works being undertaken in one year as opposed to a phased basis be explored and the various options be presented to the Committee for consideration.
4. Noted that if Members approved recommendation 3 above, a report would need to be submitted to full Council to enable this proposed scheme to be funded when funding was available. It was currently envisaged this proposal will be included in the 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Strategy report which will be submitted to Council in February.
5. That a future report in relation to capital receipts be awaited and include the impact of attaching planning conditions to the sale of the site as well as future sites.
6. That consideration be given to the provision of a greater mix of bungalows on the site.

80. Welfare Reform Impacts *(Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) apply – General Exception Notice.

Purpose of report

To set out for information the range of welfare reforms, their associated implementation timescales/impacts and update Members on the Council's arrangements for dealing with these challenges.

To enable Members to approve revised proposals for using the Local Welfare Support funding in 2013/14.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Finance Officer reported on the background to the Government's Welfare Reforms, the national impact with Hartlepool ranked as one of the worst hit Councils. The report provided detailed information of the local impact of Welfare Reforms, progress on collection of Council Tax under the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, bedroom tax/social rented sector under occupancy charge, properties affected by the new bedroom criteria rules by Ward and the average loss of housing benefit which equated to £1.2m across the borough.

Data on local welfare support awards in Hartlepool during Quarter 1 indicated a significant underspend as summarised in the report. If current trends continued the Council may potentially underspend in the current year by up to £400,000. Members views were sought as to how they wished to apply the underspend.

In the debate that followed Members discussed the impact of the bedroom tax changes, the various options available and initiatives explored by other local authorities. With regard to the potential underspend and the option to support households affected by the bedroom tax changes at a cost of £346,000 to the Local Welfare support budget and £4,000 to support food bank initiatives, Members were keen to support this proposal.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the retention of a contingency amount of £50,000 from the

forecast LWS underspend be approved to manage any increase in demand for support in the current year.

- (iii) That the proposals for applying the forecast uncommitted LWS underspend as set out below be approved and this proposal be referred to full Council as a departure from the approved Budget and Policy Framework

Bedroom Tax			Food Bank Initiatives	Contingency	Total
No of weeks Support	Help per household	Cost to LWS budget			
£	£	£	£	£	£
16	218	346,000	4,000	50,000	400,000

- (iv) It was noted that a further report on the development of the 2014/15 Local Welfare Support arrangements would be submitted when the 2014/15 funding allocation was confirmed.
- (v) Council be requested to approve that delegated authority be given to Finance & Policy Committee, to determine the application of any underspend of the contingency sum of £50,000 following a Local Welfare Support scheme review in January 2014

81. Data Quality Policy Review *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of report

To inform Finance and Policy Committee of the review of the Data Quality Policy and provide them with the updated version of the policy for approval.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Acting Performance and Partnerships Manager reported that the Data Quality Policy had been reviewed in 2011 and it was therefore considered

timely to review and update the policy to reflect, amongst other things, the Council's new governance arrangements. The Policy, attached at Appendix 1, had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at the meeting on 25 July 2013 with no amendments received.

Decision

That the updated Data Quality Policy be agreed.

82. Review of Risk Framework (*Assistant Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the review of the Risk Management Framework and provide them with the updated version of the Framework for information and comment.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Acting Performance and Partnerships Manager reported that the Risk Framework had been in place since the Spring of 2011 and had been reviewed and updated particularly to reflect the role of the Finance and Policy Committee in the new governance arrangements in relation to risk management. The Framework, attached at Appendix 1, had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at the meeting on 25 July 2013 with no amendments received.

Decision

That the updated Risk Framework be agreed.

83. Quarter 1 Strategic Financial Management Report
(*Corporate Management Team*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To inform Members of:

- (i) 2013/14 Forecast General Fund Outturn;
- (ii) Corporate Income Collection;
- (iii) Progress in achieving the capital receipts target; and
- (iv) Capital Programme Monitoring.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Chief Finance Officer provided details of progress against the Council's 2013/14 Forecast General Fund outturn, Corporate Income Collection, progress in achieving the capital receipts targets and Quarter 3 Capital Programme Monitoring.

The report included background information and reporting arrangements for 2013/14. As previously reported an initial assessment of the forecast 2013/14 outturn for a range of corporate budgets was completed and an initial underspend of £1.1m forecast. In relation to the management of departmental budgets, the Corporate Management Team was again seeking to achieve underspends to help address the significant financial challenges through a combination of robust management actions, as detailed in the report. After reflecting these actions, it was currently anticipated that there would be a year end underspend of £2.090m to £2.764m which included the initial forecast outturn of £1.1m. A range of additional one off commitments had also been identified since the initial 2013/14 outturn forecast. When account was taken of these commitments and the earmarking of the initial forecast outturn of £1.1m it was anticipated there would be a net uncommitted underspend of between £19,000 and £693,00. Details of the forecast outturn were provided in Appendix A and summarised in a table included in the report. The range reflected the impact of seasonal and demand led budgets which were difficult to predict after only three months actual activity. At this stage it was not recommended that this amount be committed until the position was more certain.

In relation to collection of Business Rates and Council Tax in 2014/15, taking into account the significant changes implemented in April 2013, the figures compared favourably with the same period last year.

Decision

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the potential use of the forecast uncommitted outturn of £19,000 to £693,000 be deferred until the position on demand lead/seasonal budget was more certain and the actual 2014/15 Local Government Finance Settlement was known.

84. Review of Civic Lottery Fund and Minor Awards (Assistant Director, Community Services)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To advise Members of a number of options for the future administration and the responsibility for the Civic Lottery and the restrictions placed upon disbursement of Civic Lottery funds by the Secretary of State. In addition, the report gave options for clarity on additional existing small grants funds related to the Community pool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information to the establishment of the Civic Lottery Fund together with details of the current eligibility criteria. In terms of the options for future administration and the responsibility for the Civic Lottery the following options had been identified as detailed in the report :-

Option 1 – Transfer the responsibility of the Civic Lottery to another Committee other than Finance and Policy

Option 2 – Allocation of Civic Lottery awards alongside Member Ward Budgets

Option 3 – No change to the current arrangements

Members were referred to the Civic Lottery Guidelines and Secretary of State approvals, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Members were advised that there were currently two other small grant pots, the Sports Council Award and Directed Lettings which were formerly linked to the community pool and related to historical allocations and Members

views' were sought in this regard. It was recommended that the annual grant to the Hartlepool Sports Council continued and the current budget amount continue to be awarded direct. In terms of directed lettings, it was proposed that this category of funding support be no longer supported and the small number of groups affected apply for support via the Member Ward Budgets in the area in which they operate.

At this point in the meeting Councillors Griffin and Payne declared a personal interest in this item of business

In the discussion that followed the Assistant Director, Community Services responded to issues raised by Members. Clarification was provided in relation to the proposal in option 2 that no successful bidding group would be eligible to apply again within three years and that new applicants would be given preference over repeat applications. A Member questioned the impact of the three year restriction on small groups ability to operate to which it was highlighted that there was an option to utilise Ward Member Budgets for support.

Decision

1. That the option for the future administration of the Civic Lottery be agreed as follows:-
 - (i) That the Civic Lottery grants be administered on a Ward basis via Neighbourhood Management and be reported annually to Neighbourhood Services Committee.
 - (ii) That the Civic Lottery local guidelines be amended as outlined in **Appendix 2**.
2. In relation to the Former Community Pool 'top sliced' funds, the additional 'grant pots' be amended as follows:-
 - (i) That the Hartlepool Sports Council continue to be allocated £2,500 from the existing budget for the benefit of sporting talent in the town.
 - (ii) That the 'Directed Lettings' budget be terminated and existing qualifying groups bid for support via the Members' Ward Budgets.
 - (iii). The Elwick Parish Council be given direct premises hire support of £250 per annum from existing budgets to meet the Borough Council's legal obligations.

85. **School Meals Service Strategy** (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To report to the Finance and Policy Committee the actions and outcomes from the School Meals Service task group.

To seek Committee's consideration and approval of various elements of the future strategy.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information to the establishment of a School Meals Service task group together with the costs associated with the running of the School Meals Service in 2012/13 along with a breakdown of the income generated and funded as set out in a confidential appendix to the report. A breakdown of the overhead costs was also provided in a confidential appendix. ***This item contains 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).***

Take up of school meals was 58% overall in 2012/13 which represented an increase of 3% on 2011/12 figures. Take up by school was set out in an appendix to the report. A detailed schedule showing the financial performance by school was also attached as a confidential appendix ***This item contains 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).***

In relation to the future strategy, the task group identified a number of areas to be explored as set out in the report. In terms of the pricing strategy, options included a price reduction, price freeze or pricing incentives for those with more than one child in education, the implications of which were included in report. A number of other considerations were set out in detail in the report including school kitchen and equipment improvements, tackling childhood obesity and poverty via the school meal service, school

involvement, school funding reform and free school meals. Details of free school meal eligibility and take up over the years was also provided.

A lengthy discussion ensued in relation to the various strategies in place to improve take up of school meals and commented on the educational benefits of breakfast clubs and promoting healthy eating initiatives in schools. Members welcomed the report and the principles around addressing family poverty and financial incentives for larger families. The Committee was pleased to note the proposals to further explore with head teachers the implications of pupils leaving the school premises at lunch times. The Assistant Director and Facilities Management Manager responded to issues raised by Members in relation to the strategy and take up figures, as detailed in Appendix 1, and highlighted the potential reasons for low levels of take up.

Decision

- (i) That the strategy to freeze prices for 2013/14 be approved.
- (ii) The Committee endorsed that strong support was needed from schools and parents to work towards a continued price freeze and a longer term reduction of school meal prices.
- (iii) That the feasibility study into offering financial incentives for families with more than one child in education be approved and receive a report on the options available.
- (iv) That further investigations into an ICT system to support menu selection and payment collection be approved.
- (v) The continuation of an in-house School Meal Service based on the strategy within the report be supported and reported back to the Committee in twelve months.
- (vi) The Committee approved the proposal to take a report to the School's Forum recommending a new monthly charging process for Primary Schools based on actual meals served, and raise the need for strong support to increase the take up of school meals in all schools.
- (vii) That further exploration into the Blackpool pilot to fund free breakfasts in all primary schools using a combination of Public Health, Pupil Premium and other funding opportunities as outlined in the 'School Food Plan' document be approved.

86. Tees Valley and South Durham Local Improvement Finance Trust – Future Arrangements *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To consider the development of the Tees Valley and South Durham LIFT Company (LIFT Co) and requests the Committee to consider whether there were any benefits to the Council of pursuing Level 2 Signatory status linking to operational work the Council was delivering in partnership with “Community Ventures” the Private Sector Partner managing the business of the LIFT Co.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the development of the LIFT company as well as the aim and objectives of the company. There had been significant structural change within the NHS since the original establishment date. However the strength of this model had stood the test of time and continued to deliver with successor bodies their strategic Service Development Plans.

To date the Council had not taken up the option to sign up to the Strategic Partnering Agreement due to concerns around the cost of the procurement route and any commitment to long term maintenance arrangements which could be out of the Council's control. However, subsequent feedback from the PCTs and other Councils had been positive. Details of the supporting arrangements and benefits to the Council in joining the SPB at level 2 were provided.

Decision

- (i) The Committee noted the development of the LIFT Company since implementation.
- (ii) That the Council should sign up to the Level 2 non-exclusivity status on the LIFT Company Strategic Partnership Board.

87. **Assessment Process Regarding Clawback of Grants From Historical Grants Programmes** (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval from Members on a suggested process for dealing with grant clawback enquiries.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regeneration reported on the background to the changes to the removal of DCLG's capital clawback rights from certain historic grant programmes. Responsibility for dealing with enquires from grant recipients now sat with the Council and a system was required.

It had been recognised by Government that although there was a requirement to protect public funds that were administered through various grant schemes, the fact that they were tied into clawback clauses forever was restrictive and often counteractive in terms of supporting businesses and economic growth over the medium to long term.

It was proposed that following receipt of an enquiry from a grant applicant a report would be prepared for Finance and Policy that would provide a recommendation as to whether clawback funding should be pursued and would cover a range of considerations to establish if the repayment of funding was required. It was suggested that grants administered 10 years ago or more that were below a grant offer of £25,000 should not be pursued unless there were extenuating circumstances. Grants paid out within the last 10 years would be looked at on an individual basis.

Members views were sought in relation to a current enquiry, details of which were included in a confidential appendix. ***This item contains 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 lengthy discussion ensued during which Members raised a number of queries/issues in relation to various cases and clawback options to which the Assistant Director provided clarification on the clawback arrangements.

Given the current financial situation, Members emphasised that clawback funding should be consistently pursued. The Committee was assured that the suggested approach would address any concerns as all enquiries would be considered on a case by case basis.

Decision

- (i) That the approach suggested that would allow historic grant enquiries to be dealt with in a fair and equitable way, be endorsed.
- (ii) In relation to the enquiry received from Bamardo's, clawback funding be pursued.
- (iii) To ensure full Member participation in clawback decisions, all enquiries would be considered by the Finance and Policy Committee on a case by case basis.

88. Quarter 1 Council Overview of Performance and Risk 2013/14 *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To inform the Finance and Policy Committee of the progress made against the 2013/14 Council Plan, for the period ending 30 June 2013.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Acting Performance and Partnership Manager presented a report which described progress made against the actions and performance indicators included in the Council Plan for 2013/14. It was noted that at this stage 88% of actions were on target.

Decision

That the current position with regard to performance be noted.

89. Employee Sickness Absence 1st Quarter 2013/14 (Assistant Chief Executive)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To update the Committee on the Council's performance in relation to employee sickness absence for the first quarter of 2013/14.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided details of employee sickness absence for the first quarter of 2013/14 and actions taken across the Council to achieve this. Members were advised that the target figure for 2013/14 was 7.50 days absence per wte (whole time equivalent). The actual sickness rate at the end of the first quarter showed the Council's performance was on target at 7.52 days per whole time equivalent per employee per annum. There had been continuous improvement year on year, as detailed in the Council's annual sickness absence statistics included in the report. The Council continued to focus on sickness absence management to ensure the Council achieved its target at the end of the reporting year.

The report included sickness absence statistics by department as well as a breakdown of long, medium and short term sickness absence.

Decision

That employee sickness absence rates for the first quarter of 2013/14 be noted.

90. Six Monthly Monitoring of Agreed Scrutiny Recommendations *(Scrutiny Manager)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide Members with six monthly progress made on the delivery of Scrutiny recommendations that fall within the remit of this Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided details of progress made against the investigations undertaken by the previous Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee. The report included a chart which provided the overall progress made against each scrutiny recommendation since the last six monthly monitoring report was presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in March 2013.

It was noted that 72% of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's recommendations had been completed with 13% in progress, 11% cancelled and 4% overdue.

Decision

That progress against the agreed recommendations be noted.

91. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 92 – Workforce Arrangements – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para 4) – namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection

with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holder under, the authority.

- 92. Workforce Arrangements** *(Chief Executive) This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para 4) – namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holder under, the authority*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference CE59/13.

Purpose of report

To advise Members of progress in negotiations with Hartlepool Joint Trade Union Committee in relation to possible savings in workforce costs which would not affect the number of employees working for the Council.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information relating to progress in negotiations with the Joint Trade Unions in relation to the possible savings in workforce costs which would not affect the number of employees working for the Council, further details of which were included within the exempt section of the minutes

Decision

The decision was set out in the exempt section of the minutes

The meeting concluded at 12.05 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 2 SEPTEMBER 2013