

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE DECISION RECORD

11 November 2013

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

Present:

Councillor: Peter Jackson (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jim Ainslie, Allan Barclay, Keith Dawkins, Steve Gibbon, Brenda Loynes and Sylvia Tempest

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Mike Blair, Highways, Traffic and Transport Manager
Alyson Carr, Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)
Peter Frost, Traffic Team Leader
Philip Hepburn, Parking Services Manager
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

48. Apologies for Absence

None

49. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 October 2013

Received.

50. Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement Schemes *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Key decision – test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Ref No RN29/13

Purpose of report

To seek approval for additional TVBNI schemes, to ensure Hartlepool's

allocation is fully utilised for schemes within the town.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information of progress made to date in relation to the Bus Network Improvement Scheme. As a result of a budget surplus the following additional improvement schemes had been identified at an estimated cost of £635,000, details of which were set out in the report and were considered by the Committee:-

Victoria Road

Following concerns raised by Traffic Signals Engineers over the scheme's effectiveness it was proposed that this scheme be removed from the programme.

Members supported the proposal to withdraw this scheme from the programme.

A179 Powlett Road

The purpose of this scheme was to reduce traffic congestion between Raby Road and Lancaster Road, details of which were set out in the report. The proposals included a ghost island to be incorporated into the carriageway on the eastbound approach to the Milbank road junction, a full width bus lay-by on the west bound carriageway, installation of three lanes on the westbound approach to the Milbank Road traffic signals, as set out in Appendix 1. With regard to consultation, 360 letters and plans had been sent out to residents and businesses as well as Ward Councillors. Of the 9 responses received, 6 were from residents concerned with the loss of parking on the section of Powlett Road between Lancaster Road and Milbank Road.

Two members of the public were in attendance at the meeting and were invited to speak. One resident raised a number of issues in relation to the proposals including concerns regarding removal of established trees, that the money could be more efficiently utilised in repairing damage to the roads and the safety aspect of the proposal in terms of the proposal to erect a bus stop outside her property which was directly opposite an existing bus stop. Another resident also spoke against the proposals expressing concerns in relation to a recent accident at this location and the potential safety benefits of retaining the current verge were shared with the Committee. In relation to the reasons for the lack of responses to consultation, a resident indicated that the lack of response to the 2nd consultation letter was as a result of elderly residents not understanding the plans and highlighted that the plans attached to the 2nd consultation letter were different to those attached to the first letter.

In the discussion that followed officers responded to issues raised by Members and residents. Members were advised that there was no evidence to suggest any safety concerns in relation to the proposals. However, this issue would be further examined. In terms of the suggestion that the funding could be better utilised, the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods advised that funding was ring fenced for schemes of this type and could not be utilised for resurfacing works.

Following further debate in relation to the options available and to address the concerns highlighted above, the Committee was of the view that a face to face consultation exercise should take place with local residents, Ward Members and Members of this Committee to clarify the proposals and seek further views of residents. The importance of holding the event as soon as possible to avoid any loss of funding was emphasised.

Hart Lane

The section of Hart Lane from Sacred Heart School to Jesmond Road had been highlighted by Stagecoach as the biggest problem they had in Hartlepool. It was proposed to make parking improvements to the rear of the properties on the North side of Hart Lane which would enable waiting restrictions to be placed on this side of Hart Lane.

In relation to consultation, whilst initially not all residents had been in favour of the scheme, a recent consultation meeting with residents had resulted in support for the proposals.

A Member raised some concern that the block paving which had been removed from Belle Vue roundabout could not be cleaned and reutilised for this scheme. The Committee was advised of the resource implications of this proposal. Following discussion, it was suggested that resources be explored with other agencies like the probation service with view to utilising the paving blocks on another scheme.

The Committee supported the scheme and the suggestion regarding the re-use of paving blocks.

Clavering Road

It was proposed to create a parking bay in the existing grass verge at this location to allow residents to park off the main carriageway and would benefit Stagecoach services 4 and 6. No objections had been raised during the consultation.

The Committee supported this proposal.

King Oswy Drive

Concerns had been expressed by Stagecoach representatives over the bend at the bottom of King Oswy Drive where parked vehicles caused delays at most times of the day particularly during school times. It was

proposed to create a parking bay in the existing grass verge at this location. This would benefit stagecoach services 4 and 6. No objections had been raised during the consultation.

The Committee supported the proposal.

Decision

- (i) That the Victoria Road Scheme be withdrawn.
- (ii) That the following schemes be approved:-
 - Hart Lane
 - Clavering Road
 - King Oswy Drive
- (iii) That the Powlett Road scheme be deferred pending the outcome of a face to face consultation exercise with residents, Ward Members and Members of this Committee.
- (iv) That resources be explored with other agencies with a view to cleaning up and reutilising the block paving recently removed from Belle Vue roundabout on another site.

51. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ainslie declared a prejudicial interest in Minute 57 and Councillor Tempest declared a personal interest in Minute 57.

52. Environmental Crime Campaign (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Key decision – test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Ref No RN25/13

Purpose of report

To consider a number of measures that aim to reduce environmental crime in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods presented the report which provided information relating to the outcome of a recent scrutiny investigation and the background to the establishment of a proposed Environmental Enforcement Campaign. The report included a definition of the meaning of environmental crime, details of the extent of environmental

crime in Hartlepool as well as a summary of environmental incidents recorded across agencies by ward for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. Results from the Hartlepool Household survey 2013 indicated that when residents were asked about problems in their local area dog mess and litter were a problem for 56% and 38% of residents respectively..

With regard to proposals, further discussions with partners had highlighted a number of possible measures that could be taken forward to tackle environmental crime and included Neighbourhood Action Days, creating a bank of Neighbourhood Improvement Volunteers and making use of new technologies to improve reporting and feedback to communities, details of which were set out in the report as the risks and financial implications of these measures.

Members were referred to an action plan outlining the proposed timeline in relation to each element of the Respect your Neighbourhood Campaign, attached at Appendix C.

Members welcomed the campaign and discussed the benefits as a result. Emphasis was placed upon the importance of educating the public on the health impact of environmental issues, such as dog fouling, on the public highway and open land and the importance of reporting such issues to the Council. The need to recruit volunteers was also highlighted.

Members noted this was a far reaching project and a major step forward from the Clean Sweep Campaign with enforcement teams being allocated from various agencies. Members were pleased to note the proposals in terms of use of new technologies and acknowledged the resource implications in this regard. The Committee took the opportunity to highlight their support for enforcement officers in undertaking a difficult role.

Decision

- (i) That the proposed Respect Your Neighbourhood Campaign and action plan be endorsed.
- (ii) That the following separate elements of the Campaign be approved:-
 - Neighbourhood Action Days – one per month
 - Neighbourhood Improvement Volunteer Scheme
 - Improved technologies to tackle environmental crime.
- (iii) That the comments of Members on the merits of the campaign be noted.
- (iv) That the financial implications associated with the initiative be noted.

53. Parking Strategy – Update and Future Objectives

(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the progress of the Hartlepool Parking Strategy and to seek Members' endorsement of the proposed aims and objectives of the programme and approval of key policy decisions identified within the action plan.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the 10 year plan for parking provision including the aims and objectives of the strategy and how nationally determined legislation allowed local policies, aims and objectives to be enforced and controlled. Whilst the policy had a 10 year vision, there were many short term aims and focussed on 20 key policy objectives, details of which were set out in the report. In relation to the key policy aims, the report provided an update on progress to date.

In relation to the option to continue support of the free after 4.00 pm parking promotion and the proposed free parking on Saturday's initiative throughout December, whilst the loss of revenue was acknowledged, Members were keen to support this initiative given the potential benefits to local businesses as a result.

A query was raised as to whether a reduced fixed parking charge eg £1 on the Saturdays throughout December had been considered. The Highways Traffic and Transport Manager reported that this would not be cost effective as all current parking machines would have to be recalibrated.

In response to a request for clarification, details of the wheel clamping policy was provided.

Decision

- (i) That the update/progress within the Hartlepool Parking Strategy be noted.
- (ii) That the aims and objectives of the programme for the next 18 months be endorsed.
- (iii) That the key policy decisions as set out within the action plan of the report be approved.

54. Savings Programme 2014/15 – Neighbourhood Management Section of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

For information. It is recommended that Members of the Committee note the content of this report and formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

Purpose of report

To identify proposals for the delivery of savings in respect of the Neighbourhood Management Service for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget process.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods presented the report which included the proposals for delivery of savings in the Neighbourhood Management Service as part of the 2014/15 budget process, the risks associated with the proposals and the financial considerations which had been taken into account in developing them.

The report included a breakdown of the cost of providing the Neighbourhood Management Service in its current form of £3.46m as well as details of the outcomes/outputs. The savings target for Regeneration and Neighbourhoods for 2014/15 was £1.3m. Details of how the savings target would be achieved was provided as detailed in the report. Members were referred to the risk implications, financial equality and diversity considerations and staff considerations, as set out in the report.

The Committee highlighted the exceptional nature of the Council's workforce and reluctantly supported the savings identified for 2014/15. During the course of discussion the following issues were raised:-

- Members drew particular attention to the effectiveness of the interface between themselves and the Neighbourhood Managers and requested that the Neighbourhood Management Team be specifically thanked for all their hard work.
- Members reiterated their concerns regarding the financial challenge facing the Council and attention was drawn to the impact of the loss of police funding. Members noted that further discussions would be needed in relation to the impact of this funding reduction and it was agreed by the Committee that the most appropriate course of action

would be for a further report to be presented to the Finance and Policy Committee. Officers were asked to ensure that Members of the Neighbourhood Services Committee were invited to participate in discussions at this meeting and provided with a copy of the report.

The Committee thanked officers for their hard work in achieving these savings with the minimal level of impact and acknowledged the further difficult decisions ahead in terms of future budget cuts facing the Council.

Decision

- (i) The Committee reluctantly supported the savings proposals relating to the Neighbourhood Management Service, as detailed in the report.
- (ii) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted and be utilised to formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

55. Savings Programme 2014/15 – Neighbourhoods Division of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

For information. It is recommended that Members of the Committee note the content of this report and formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

Purpose of report

To identify proposals for the delivery of savings in respect of the relevant areas of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget process.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods presented the report which included the proposals for delivery of savings in the Neighbourhoods Division as part of the 2014/15 budget process, the risks associated with the proposals and the considerations which had been taken into account in developing them.

The report included a breakdown of the cost of providing the services within the Neighbourhoods Division which included Engineering Design and Management, Integrated Transport Unit, ITU School Crossing Patrol, Waste and Environmental Services and Parks and Countryside as well as details

of the outcomes/outputs. The savings target for Regeneration and Neighbourhoods for 2014/15 was £1.3m. Details of how the savings target would be achieved was provided as detailed in the report. Members were referred to the risk implications and financial equality and diversity considerations as set out in the report.

The Committee reluctantly supported the savings identified for 2014/15 and during the course of discussion the following issues were raised:-

- Members sought reassurance that the savings proposals would not result in an increase in cremation fees and that there would not be a reduction in staff numbers. The Committee was advised that the intention was not to increase cremation fees as part of the savings programme for 2014/15, however, given the financial challenges facing the Council, an increase in fees would need to be considered as part of any future savings proposals. It was also noted that a reduction in staff numbers would be achieved through natural wastage.
- Members sought clarity in relation to the need to balance savings in this division against the existing subsidy provided by income generation and fee charges. The Committee was advised that the trading accounts were reliant on income generation and fees, on this basis, there were risks in achieving income generation targets in an area where there was significant competition. It was emphasised that levels set for income generation against trading accounts were now at their maximum and should not be increased.
- In relation to horticultural activities, Members queried the potential for residents to take over responsibility for the maintenance of areas of land and, in particular, what the position would be in terms of insurance. The Committee was advised that expressions of interest to work in partnership with the Council to take over such maintenance would be welcomed with insurance not expected to be a real issue. However, experience had shown that such arrangements were not always sustainable in the longer term.
- Members sought clarification as to the provision of school crossing patrols at lunch time and were advised that as part of the proposals all lunch time provision would be removed. Members noted this element of the savings proposals and requested that where schools allowed children to leave the premises at lunch time, they be asked to ensure that parents were made aware of the absence of a crossing patrol and the need to make their own appropriate arrangements. It was highlighted that should schools wish to continue the provision of school crossing patrols outside their gates at lunch time, the option existed to either 'buy back' the Council's services or provide their own warden.

Decision

- (i) The Committee reluctantly supported the savings proposals relating to the Neighbourhoods Division of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department, as detailed in the report.
- (ii) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted and be utilised to formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

56. Strategic Financial Management Report as at 31 August 2013 *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

The report informed Members of the 2013/14 Forecast General Fund Outturn; 2013/14 Capital Programme Monitoring, and provided details for the specific budget areas that the Committee was responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that the latest report submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee on 18 October 2013 advised Members that there would be an overall underspend in the current year. The report also advised Members that this position reflected action taken by the Corporate Management Team to achieve underspends to help address the significant financial challenges facing the Council over the next few years and to fund one-off commitments not provided for in the approved 2013/14 budget as these items were not known at the time.

The agreed approach was that no specific decisions would be taken in relation to the use of underspends until the details of the Government's grant settlement were known. It was likely that this would not be available to the Council until November/December. Members were advised of the overall budget position for the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services Department by Committee, the reasons for the forecast outturn together with planned capital expenditure, as detailed in the report.

In the discussion that followed a Member requested further details of expenditure of £16,000 for planned usage of speed cameras.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted.

Prior to consideration of the following item of business Councillor Jim Ainslie left the meeting during consideration of this item of business in accordance with his earlier declaration.

57. Northgate Bus Stop – Petition (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To advise Members of the receipt of a petition objecting to proposals to relocate the bus stop currently outside 103 Northgate to the area adjacent to 107 Northgate

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were advised on the receipt of a 200 name petition from residents of the Headland opposing the recent decision of the Neighbourhood Services Committee to relocate the bus stop currently outside 103 Northgate and correspondence from a Ward Councillor. Copies of the correspondence and petition were available in the Members library prior to the meeting. Due to the significant amount of objections to the proposed relocation and in light of concerns around safety it was proposed that a further review of the proposals be undertaken and findings reported back to a future meeting of this Committee.

Consideration would be given to:-

1. Confirming the original proposal to relocate the bus stop
2. Suggesting an alternative location to relocate the bus stop
3. Relocating the bus stop to the originally proposed location with additional road safety measures
4. Leaving the bus stop in its current location

The Chair sought Members' views on this issue. The background to the decision as well as the various options available were discussed and following debate Members were of the unanimous view that the original decision of the Committee should remain.

In terms of communicating the Committee's decision, the Chair reported his intention to respond to the Elected Member and requested that the department respond direct to the Lead Petitioner.

Decision

- (i) That the petition be received.
- (ii) The Committee reaffirmed its original decision to relocate the bus stop currently outside 103 Northgate to the area adjacent to 107 Northgate.
- (iii)

58. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

59. Any Other Business - Request from Neighbourhood Forum - Sea Coaling

A Member referred to the last meeting of the Neighbourhood Forum when it was agreed that a report in relation to Sea Coaling issues would be reported to the next Neighbourhood Services Committee. Concerns had been raised by local residents that this issue had not been considered. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods stated that a report was scheduled for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting. It was highlighted that given the enforcement nature of the issues raised, the police together with local residents should be invited to attend the meeting..

The meeting concluded at 11.10 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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