

# **FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

13 October 2014

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Tom Hind, Peter Jackson, Marjorie James, Brenda Loynes, Robbie Payne and Carl Richardson.

Also Present: Councillor Jim Ainslie  
Members of the public: Mr Walter Cook and Mr Ray Pocklington.

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Chief Executive  
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive  
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor  
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer  
Gill Alexander, Director of Child and Adult Services  
Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health  
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education  
Danielle Swainston, Head of Access and Strategic Planning  
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager  
Ed Turner, Public Relations and Communications Assistant  
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## **59. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors David Riddle and Chris Simmons.

## **60. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher declared a personal interest in Minute No. 73.

## **61. Minutes**

- (i) Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 15 September 2014 – received.
- (ii) Minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 11 August 2014 – received.

## **62. Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy** (Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)

### **Type of decision**

Key decision – Test (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN 24/14.

### **Purpose of report**

To consider the merger of the Neighbourhood Management and Empowerment Strategy, and the Community Cohesion Strategic Framework to form a Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy with a revised delivery model.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported that the Neighbourhood Management and Empowerment Strategy directly supported the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy – The Strategy and Hartlepool's ambition to promote Safer, Stronger Neighbourhoods, had particularly close links to the Community Cohesion Framework and associated action plan introduced in 2011/12. It also directly contributed to the aims of the Equality Duty 2010 in ensuring that Hartlepool Borough Council tackled discrimination and advanced equality of opportunity for all, including equal access to services.

The Director highlighted that the data from the 'Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010' showed that Hartlepool communities remain some of the poorest nationally with Headland and Harbour, Manor House, Victoria, De Bruce and Jesmond wards falling within the top 10% most disadvantaged in the country. These wards accounted for approximately half of Hartlepool's population; and presented a major challenge in terms of social inclusion, and subsequent levels of community cohesion. This was evidenced in Appendix A to the report which highlighted the strong correlation between deprivation levels, low satisfaction, and cohesion levels as well as higher levels of the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour compared to the Hartlepool average in deprived areas.

To avoid duplication of effort in the future and given the evidence outlined it was proposed that the Neighbourhood Management and Empowerment Strategy and the Community Cohesion Strategic Framework were merged to become the Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy. It was proposed that the implementation of the strategy will be monitored via the following mechanisms:

- A six monthly Neighbourhood Sustainability Plan update and review, introducing new actions where needed, and a newsletter to local

neighbourhood groups on progress to date based on the 'You Said, We Did' approach.

- An annual report outlining progress on the Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership; the Councils Finance and Policy Committee, and Neighbourhood Services Committee including progress against Sustainability Plans; and Ward Profiles
- An annual progress report to the Neighbourhood Forums on Sustainability Plans and Ward Profiles.

The Director commented that the Strategy and Action Plan together could provide the statistical evidence and base to bid for any future government or European funding regime that may be introduced.

Members commented that the statistical information on deprivation levels was based on information that was now 2 to 3 years out of date. If anything, the situation in some areas had got worse. The Director commented that the six monthly reviews and the annual update would pick up updated information. However, the data would need to be robust to be used in bidding for any funds or programmes. It was agreed that ward Members would be involved in the process of producing the ward profiles and sustainability plans.

### **Decision**

1. That the existing Neighbourhood Management and Empowerment Strategy and Community Cohesion Strategy be merged to create a Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy and that the Council Constitution is updated to reflect this change.
2. That consideration is given to the implementation of a revised delivery model in relation to neighbourhood working that would build on existing approaches through the inclusion of the development of Neighbourhood Sustainability Plans for those neighbourhoods identified in the report as vulnerable.
3. That Officers be tasked with progressing the development of Neighbourhood Sustainability Plans liaising with partners to identify a lead organisation for each area identified in the report.
4. That the Strategy be monitored as outlined in Section 6 of the report.

**63. Disposal of Surplus Assets – The Willows, 30 Raby Road, Hartlepool** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

**Type of decision**

Key decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN 13/09.

**Purpose of report**

To consider the sale of The Willows (the former Registrar's Office) 30 Raby Road, Hartlepool to Developing Initiatives and Supporting Communities (DISC).

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported that The Willows building had now been declared surplus to the operational requirements of the Council following the relocation of the Criminal Justice Integrated Team (CJIT) to the Whitby Street Drug Centre.

Developing Initiatives and Supporting Communities (DISC) are a regional charity operating throughout the north-east and have over 25-years experience of helping people and communities deal with a whole range of life issues such as unemployment, poverty, crime, addiction, homelessness and family breakdown. DISC has been working in partnership with the Council for a number of years and were now one of the Council's contracted service providers for the treatment of people with longstanding drug and alcohol addictions.

DISC had been successful in securing a substantial capital grant from Public Health England (PHE) for delivery of a new Treatment Recovery HUB and The Willows had been identified as an appropriate building for the delivery of this new service. The grant had been awarded from PHE to cover both the initial acquisition and refurbishment costs to set up the new HUB service.

Heads of Terms for the proposed private treaty sale of The Willows had now been agreed with DISC and the details of such were set out in the Confidential Appendix B to the report (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).

As part of the sale proposals DISC also required early access to the building to commence the required refurbishment works as the capital grant

awarded needed to be fully spent by the end of the 2014/15 financial year. It was proposed that the Council would grant a separate licence agreement to facilitate this at a nil rental that would self terminate upon the formal transfer of the building.

As part of the delivery of the HUB service DISC would also require a small area of land to the rear of the building for the purposes of the social enterprise activities in connection with the HUB project. The land did not form part of the Willows site, but it was in Council ownership and fell within the grounds of the Sir William Gray House Art Gallery and Museum. The Head of Culture and Information had been consulted on these proposals and had no objections to the land identified being used as part of the HUB proposals. DISC would pay an annual market rent for the land and the licence agreement would be authorised under the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Delegated Powers Procedure.

A representative of the Engineer's Social Club, which was located immediately to the south of The Willows, commented that the club was now under new ownership and currently undergoing refurbishment. The club would have been interested in purchasing The Willows had the building been sold on the open market. The representative suggested that there were other venues in the town that DISC could operate from and a site immediately next door to a venue selling alcohol was not conducive to those recovering from alcohol dependency problems.

Some Members questioned if the value being obtained for the property was reasonable on the open market. The Director stated that the value obtained did reflect the market value of the building as assessed by the Estates Team. The Authority had been approached by DISC when seeking a facility for their service and The Willows was considered to be the most suitable property within the Council's ownership. The Director commented that any new marketing of the building would create a delay which could mean that the DISC proposal may not go ahead. This view was supported by the Director of Public Health.

Other Members supported the proposal and considered that value of the property to be fair and that its utilisation for a service that was needed in Hartlepool made the proposal one that had to be supported.

The Committee discussed the proposal and the value obtained for The Willows. Members discussed the potential of the building being marketed and what effect that may have on the proposal set out in the report. During the debate it was suggested that the issue be deferred to allow some quick market testing as some Members considered the sale to DISC compromised following the expression of interest from the Engineer's Club.

The Chair considered that the sale had not been compromised in any way. The DISC proposal would provide both an essential service to the people of Hartlepool and a valuable capital receipt for the Council. The proposal was put to the vote and the recommendations below were approved on a

majority vote.

### **Decision**

1. That the private treaty freehold disposal of The Willows direct to Developing Initiatives and Supporting Communities (DISC) in accordance with the agreed terms be approved.
2. That the granting of the early entry licence to allow the commencement of the refurbishment works be authorised in the terms reported.

## **64. Further Building Work at Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Brierton Site** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision – test (i) applies. Forward Plan Reference CAS 034/14. A Special Urgency Notice had been completed for this report to allow the works to progress at the earliest opportunity.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval from the Finance and Policy Committee for the further development of teaching facilities and other curriculum areas at the re-located Pupil Referral Unit on the Brierton Site.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Child and Adult Services reported that It was agreed at Cabinet in December 2012 that, as part of the Brierton site ‘masterplan’, the Pupil Referral Unit, then located at the Golden Flatts site, be relocated to Brierton with a view to opening in January 2014. It was further agreed, pending proceeds from the sale of land at the Golden Flatts site, to phase the building programme identified for the Pupil Referral Unit over a period of time as funding permitted. The initial programme of work did not include specialist provision within the Pupil Referral Unit for art, science and physical education and, in addition, had limited outdoor space for recreational purposes.

In February 2014, Ofsted reported, at a monitoring visit following a ‘Grade 3 requires Improvement inspection’, that the Pupil Referral Unit should: ‘consider ways in which the organisation of the unit can be further developed to prepare pupils more effectively for the next steps in education, employment or training. The existing primary-based approach is not fully effective in helping pupils to develop the skills they will need for their future

lives.’

Following the Ofsted monitoring report, the Pupil Referral Unit had now adopted a secondary-based approach and, as a consequence, required additional specialist facilities to meet the needs of the secondary curriculum. It was proposed that further building work is carried out to ensure that the Pupil Referral Unit could provide pupils with access to the full secondary curriculum, namely the development of:

- The gymnasium, pupil changing rooms and toilets;
- The science laboratory and art / technology area;
- An outdoor recreation area to provide pupils with additional space during non-classroom periods.

It was further proposed to purchase new classroom furniture to replace that which was to transfer from the old building and was no longer fit-for-purpose. In addition, some further minor decorative work needed to be carried out to bring the interior of the Pupil Referral Unit up to the specification required for a high-quality learning environment. Details of all the costs and funding were set out in an appendix to the report,

Some Members questioned some of the estimated costs set out in the appendix, particularly as the site had been used only two years ago to house Dyke House School when its building works were ongoing. The Director stated that Dyke House School had not used the entire site and the changing rooms in particular were in a very, very poor condition.

Other Members considered that the children attending the PRU deserved similar facilities to those available at any other secondary school in the town. The issue of costs was, however, understandable. Members also queried what level of funding had been allocated to the PRU by Cabinet when the decision had been taken to move the facility.

The Director commented that the money allocated from 2012 had been spent but during the initial works issues with asbestos had been discovered which incurred greater expenditure than initially anticipated. The costings had been through a very rigorous challenge process to bring them down as far as was possible. Much of the expenditure was being funded through the dedicated schools grant.

It was suggested that Members visit the PRU both before and after the works to assess for themselves the works required and the difference to the education facility they would make. It was indicated that the initial visit would need to be organised for this week order to allow the works to commence during the forthcoming school holidays.

## **Decision**

1. That the future specialist curriculum building work and associated

works to be carried out at the Pupil Referral Unit be approved.

2. That the funding for the works be as reported.

## **65. Local Growth Fund Programme Management Framework** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide an update on the Tees Valley Growth Deal and in particular the proposals for managing the Local Growth Fund (LGF) element through a Programme Management Framework (PMF).

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported that in July 2014 the Tees Valley secured £90.3m of Local Growth Funding through a Growth Deal with government. This funding would deliver 15 capital projects across the Tees Valley; these included transport projects, innovation builds/developments, further education establishments and opening up sites to enable development.

With funding confirmed, Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) were now working closely with government to put the necessary arrangements in place to manage and deliver the Growth Deal successfully. Local management of the Growth Deal funds would be through a LGF Programme Management Framework which would operate under the existing TVU Joint Agreement.

To ensure efficient and effective decision-making, it was proposed that the TVU governance groups assume full management responsibilities for current and future Growth Deal/LGF funding.

### **Decision**

1. That the requirements and progress made with the 2015/16 Growth Deal Funding Agreement and Implementation Plan be noted.
2. That the principles and approach for decision making under the LGF Programme Management Framework be noted.
3. That the devolution of current and future Growth Deal/LGF management to TVU governance groups, as detailed under the



existing Partnership Agreement and in accordance with the LGF Programme Management Framework be approved.

## **66. Irrecoverable Debts – Council Tax and Business Rates** *(Chief Finance Officer)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek Members approval to write-out a number of Council Tax and Business Rates debts which were now considered to be irrecoverable.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Chief Finance Officer reported that in terms of the annual Council Tax debit to be collected, the amount proposed for write out continued to be very low. National benchmarking puts Hartlepool in the lowest quartile for Council Tax write outs (no comparative data is available for business rates) and the proposed write outs reported were well within the financial planning assumptions underpinning the Council's budget. The total amount recommended for write out is £3,467.03.

For Business Rates, historical accounting provisions had been established and had been charged against the former National Non Domestic Rates / Business Rates Pool for any business rates debts prior to 1st April 2013, considered to be at risk of non recovery. Of the proposed business rates write outs reported of £51,953.76, the majority (75% or £39,122.62) would be charged against the central government National Non Domestic Rates Pool bad debt provision and thereby would have no financial impact on the Council. The proposed write outs were within the financial planning assumptions underpinning the Council's budget.

Comparative data showed that in 2013/14, the Council collected 96.1% of the Council Tax due, second highest in the Tees Valley and slightly higher than the national Metropolitan and Unitary average of 96.05%. After 5 years, in Hartlepool, in excess of 99.2% of Council Tax will have been collected and the Council continues to vigorously pursue recovery of the remaining amounts.

The Council's performance in collection of NNDR was also positive. In 2013/14, 98.5% of business rates were collected within the financial year it was billed, which was higher than the national average for Metropolitan and Unitary Councils of 97.25%. In terms of long term collection of business rates, after 5 years in Hartlepool, in excess of 99.5% of business rates due

will have been collected.

The appendices to the report detailed the individual Council Tax and Business Rates debts over £1000, and the reasons why each debt remained unrecovered. The amounts recommended for write out were the net debt outstanding and the net amounts involved often spanned more than one financial year:

Appendix A – Company Liquidated / Dissolved - £50,361.71  
(This information was disclosed as it would be in the public domain via Companies House.)

Appendices B, C and D contain exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely (para3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Appendix B – Absconders - £1,139.37  
Appendix C – Miscellaneous - £1,201.00  
Appendix D – Bankrupt - £2,718.71

A total of £55,420.79, comprising £3,467.03 Council Tax and £51,953.76 Business Rates. All debts submitted for write-out from the accounting records had been comprehensively scrutinised by officers.

A Member of the public present at the meeting questioned the potential effect of the power station shut down on the business rates collected. The Chief Finance Officer indicated that the power station was only liable for business rates when generating. Each year a programme of maintenance shut downs were agreed. The most recent shut down had extended beyond the expected period. The power station operators had applied to the Valuation Office for re-evaluation and there was the potential for the council to lose £300,000 for each month of non-operation, which could mean a loss of £600,000 to £900,000 if approved by the Valuation Office. It was for these reasons that an appropriate reserve had been created by Council.

## **Decision**

1. That the write-out of irrecoverable Council Tax of £3,467.03 and Business Rates debts of £51,936.70 be approved.
2. That the Committee notes that £39,122.62 of Business Rates write out relates to former national non domestic rates and would be charged to the former national pool bad debts provision, thereby having no financial impact on Hartlepool.

## **67. Service Planning 2015/16** *(Corporate Management Team)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To consider and agree the proposed Outcome Framework and service planning timetable for 2015/16.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that the Outcome Framework had last been reviewed and updated as part of the service planning process in 2014/15. Discussions had taken place with Council Officers from across all Departments on the revision of the outcome framework, and as a result of those discussions, it was not proposed to change radically the framework for 2015/16.

The proposed framework set out in the report contained 34 outcomes that address the eight Community Strategy themes. There had been a few minor changes to the wording of some of the outcomes within the framework. The Culture and Leisure outcome has been split into two to reflect the new organisational arrangement and to help clarify aims and objectives across this area. Two outcomes within organisational development had also been merged to reflect changes in service delivery. Finally, one of the outcomes had been removed as all actions, PIs and risks from this outcome sit better under the remaining outcome in Strengthening Communities Theme.

Further work was currently being undertaken to develop the actions and identify the performance indicators and risks that would underpin the outcomes, and would ultimately appear in the Council Plan. The key steps in agreeing the Council Plan, which incorporates the four Departmental Plans, were set out in the report which included reports to the policy committees before a final draft was considered by this Committee for approval and submission to Council for adoption in March 2015

### **Decision**

That the proposed Outcome Framework and the overall timetable as set out in the report be approved.

## **68. Local Welfare Support/Discretionary Housing Payment Administration – Review of Frameworks** (Director of Child and Adult Services)

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval for revised Local Welfare Support (LWS) administration framework and Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) administration framework.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Child and Adult Services reported that Cabinet approved Hartlepool's LWS and DHP administration frameworks in March 2013. These frameworks were developed to respond to the transfer of responsibility of discretionary support from DWP to the council in 2013.

The frameworks for the administration of LWS and DHP had been in place for over 12 months and a review had taken place to take into account the learning over this initial phase of Council responsibility. The revised frameworks were set out in appendices to the report and contained some amendments to the previously approved frameworks.

The DWP had notified Local Authorities that Local Welfare Support funding would be withdrawn after 2014/15. This was highlighted within the MTFS in Feb 2014 and Members agreed that funding would be allocated up until 2016/17. From May 2014 responsibility for LWS and DHP applications/decision making were transferred from Revenue and Benefits to the Advice and Guidance Hub.

The Head of Access and Strategic Planning outlined the proposed changes to the existing frameworks, highlighting –

#### **Local Welfare Support (LWS) Framework Changes:**

- An additional exception to the need to be in receipt of out of work benefits when hardship is evident e.g maternity allowance, in work poverty (section 2.4.1 of framework).
- Foodbank paragraph added. We have specified in the framework that LWS budget is set aside each year to support the Foodbank. (section 3 of framework).
- Included an option to buy second hand goods from charity shops, in particular the British Heart Foundation (BHF) who has begun to offer

this service across other Local Authorities. Other LAs have started to use this as a way to extend use of funding. The BHF can guarantee safety checks on electrical goods, fire testing and fire resistant materials and 12 month guarantees on purchases. (section 5.1 of framework).

- Remove Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Child Maintenance, War Pensions (not limited to) from income assessment – these will now be disregarded. (section 8.1 of framework)

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Framework Changes:

- More than one year on from welfare reform increasing numbers of DHP applications are being made from previous applicants. DHP applicants that were supported initially with shortfall in rent due to under occupation charges have been unable to move to alternative smaller/ more affordable accommodation. One of the reasons for this is a lack of funds to support a move from one place to another. The change within the framework is therefore to tackle this issue making it explicit that we will accept applications for funds to support a move including removal van, new carpets etc for a new more affordable property. We will also support rent in advance/ deposits if it supports the tenant into suitable alternative accommodation. This was explicitly refused in the last framework but is now acceptable in the updated guidance.(section 10.3 of the framework).

The Head of Access and Strategic Planning indicated that the revised LWS framework proposed to remove Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments and Child Maintenance from income assessment. From an examination of previous applications received into the hub this would not have a significant adverse impact in the budget available.

Removal of DLA/ PIP and Child Maintenance when undertaking income assessment within the DHP process had been proposed in the revised framework. This was included within the guidance issued by DWP. A review of previous applications showed that whilst a lot of applicants receive DLA/ PIP the amount of award is relatively low e.g. for example a typical rent shortfall is perhaps £20-£25 per week. Even if they received the full amount for 26 weeks this would only come to £520-£650.

All the other proposed changes to the framework could be covered within the existing budget.

Members queried the option to buy second hand goods from charity shops and why the purchase of brand new goods from the Credit Union Shop was not also included. The Committee agreed that the most cost effective option should be utilised in each case.

## **Decision**

1. That the revised Local Welfare Support Administrative Framework 2014/15 be approved.
2. That the revised Discretionary Housing Payment Administrative Framework 2014/15 be approved.

## **69. Health Weight Service Update** (*Director of Public Health*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval from the Finance and Policy Committee to a preferred option for the future delivery of the health trainer service.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Public Health reported that at the Committee meeting on 30 June 2014, it was agreed to secure a healthy weight service for Hartlepool, funded through the ring fenced Public Health Grant, to commence on 1st April 2015. A review of the current NHS Health Trainer Service, provided by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, had taken place in partnership with Stockton Borough Council. Throughout the service review, it became clear that Hartlepool and Stockton had different opinions of how the healthy weight service would operate in each area in the future, therefore, any new service would be bespoke to Hartlepool and operate separately to the Stockton Healthy Weight Services.

There were two possible options for securing a new Healthy Weight Service for Hartlepool:

Option A: Develop our own delivery model and provide the service in-house, with existing and eligible staff subject to TUPE into HBC.

Option B: Develop a service specification and procure an external service provider. Any successful bidder may also be subject to TUPE regulations with regards to eligible staff.

Details of the examination of both options, their opportunities and challenges were set out in the report. As part of the service review in Stockton, a market engagement event was held on 29 April 2014 for both

school nursing services and healthy weight services. Twelve organisations registered to attend the event with four Foundation Trusts, one voluntary sector provider and six private sector providers expressing their interest in providing Weight Management Services in the Borough. It was anticipated that interest from providers may be reduced due to the Hartlepool contract value being lower than Stockton.

By bringing the service in-house (Option A), and absorbing management costs through existing Public Health capacity and providing the service at staff cost, it was envisaged that savings of at least £20K per annum can be achieved against the existing contract value.

Potential redundancy costs for the eligible staff transferred via TUPE were estimated at no more than £60k. These costs would only be incurred in the event of a future decision to terminate this service and it not being possible to redeploy staff into alternative roles. This was currently assessed as a low risk. Furthermore, these potential costs needed to be considered in the context of the forecast annual saving from an in-house service.

If, as expected, there is no additional public health funding for the contract in 2015/16, there is a risk that the existing level of service could not be provided or maintained by an external provider (Option B). Overheads from external providers could be between 12-25% of overall costs.

The Director, therefore recommended approval to option A, bringing the service 'in-house' as the preferred option.

### **Decision**

That option A be approved as the preferred option for the future delivery of the healthy weight service.

## **70. HR Policy and Procedure Review (Discipline and Grievance)** *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To request approval for the revised Discipline and Grievance Policies and Procedures as part of the HR policy review programme.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that HR Policies and Procedures were being reviewed as part of an ongoing update process. The Discipline and Grievance Policies and Procedures had been revised in line with the ACAS codes of practice and updated to reflect any changes to personnel in line with the corporate reorganisation of Council Services. The trade unions had been consulted and the revised Policies and Procedures had been accepted.

### **Decision**

That the revised Discipline Policy and Grievance Policy and related procedures be approved.

## **71. Code of Conduct for Employees** *(Chief Solicitor)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To consider the appended draft 'Code of Conduct for Employees' following on from the consolidation of this item by the Audit and Governance Committee on 25 September 2014.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Chief Solicitor reported that the existing Code had been agreed with Trade Unions as part of the Single Status Agreement (Appendix A to the report) and a suggested revision (Appendix B to the report) covering the expanded themes and principles behind such a code was now proposed for adoption. The new draft Code had been considered by the Local Joint Consultative Committee and had been approved. There had also been further reference of this new code to the Trade Unions at their Single Table meeting in September. It was recommended, therefore, that the Committee requests Council to adopt this amended Code and that it be incorporated into Part 5 of the Constitution (Codes and Protocols).

### **Decision**

That the submitted 'Code of Conduct for Employees' be approved for submission to Council for adoption.



**72. Safer Hartlepool Partnership Draft Reducing Re-Offending Strategy 2014-2017** (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

**Type of decision**

Non key decision.

**Purpose of report**

To present and seek comments from the Finance and Policy Committee on the second draft of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership Reducing Re-Offending Strategy 2014/17.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported that in September 2013 the first draft of the Reducing Re-offending Strategy had been presented to and approved by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership. However, it was acknowledged that finalisation and consultation on the strategy should be delayed pending findings from the Audit and Governance investigation into the level, complexities and impact of re-offending in Hartlepool.

Following the conclusion of the Audit and Governance investigation in May 2014, the strategy was revised, and a second draft, now submitted, approved for consultation by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership on 18th July 2014. The finalised strategy would be approved and adopted by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership at the conclusion of the consultation.

The overall aim of the strategy is – ‘To break the cycle of reoffending by ensuring that local services are co-ordinated in a manner that meets the needs of offenders, whilst at the same time ensuring local communities remain safe’. Hartlepool had the unenviable position of having the second highest rates of reoffending in the country though officers in conjunction with the Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) were working hard on the implementation of best practice to tackle that statistic.

A member of the public asked if the Council received any additional finance to tackle problem families. The Director commented that the Council did receive funding for problem families and intensive work was undertaken with those families to break the cycle of reoffending. However, much of the reoffending statistics were driven by people aged 18 to 24 who didn't have a specific funding and support around them. In this group, accommodation was often a critical factor, as without a stable home much of the intensive support work couldn't commence. In response to Members questions, the

Director indicated that there were significant problems of homelessness among these younger people who ‘sofa surfed’ rather than sleeping rough thus frequently dropping out of the system until they came to us needing support.

Members queried if any research had been undertaken nationally on this worrying and hidden problem. The Director indicated that she was unaware of any. Gaining accurate statistics on this group was extremely difficult. There were some statistics available for when they presented themselves homeless to the local authority and the Director of Public Health indicated that there were some housing needs statistics included in the JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).

The Director reassured Members that there were appropriate procedures in place to assist homeless young people when they came to the Council looking for support. There were also regular quarterly updates on housing needs reported to the Regeneration Services Committee. Members considered that recent changes implemented by the government would mean that single people under the age of 35 were now only entitled to a room and not a house. This could be a significant issue for separated parents in arranging proper contact with their children.

### **Decision**

That the draft Safer Hartlepool Partnership Reducing Re-offending Strategy 2014-2017 be noted.

## **73. Northgate Community Fund** *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Finance and Policy Committee of the allocations made by the Northgate Community Forum.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that as part of the recent new ICT contract, Northgate had established the Northgate Community Fund of £40,000 per annum, £10,000 of which was match funding the Gus Robinson Foundation for scholarships through the Hartlepool College of Further Education (as already agreed by Finance and Policy Committee). The remaining £30,000 has been made available to the voluntary and

community sector (VCS), the Council, other public sector partners and Northgate. The aims of the Fund were agreed at Finance and Policy Committee and they were 'to reduce the proportion of individuals, small businesses and charities without basic IT skills and increase the number of people accessing digital services'.

The deadline for applications was Friday 27 June with a total of 7 applications received. The applications had been considered by the Northgate Community Forum and the report considered was submitted as an appendix to the report and included details of the projects to be supported.

It was agreed to support the Red Dreams project only if the group were successful in achieving the other funding identified as part of the bid. The Assistant Chief Executive informed the meeting that the group had been successful in achieving the other funding. For the Committee's information it was reported that in the consideration of the Rifty Youth Project application Councillor C Akers-Belcher did not take part in the discussion or decision. Councillor C Akers-Belcher had declared a personal interest in the report at the commencement of the meeting (minute no. 60 refers).

### **Decision**

1. That the allocations made by the Northgate Community Fund Forum, attached as reported be noted.
2. That the Committee notes that the Red Dreams allocation will now be progressed as they had been successful with other funding applications.
3. That the Committee notes that the remaining balance of the fund will be rolled forward to next year's allocation.

## **74. Clawback – The Domes, Tees Road, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool – Risk Management Arrangements**

*(Corporate Management Team)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

In response to the Council resolution of 19 September 2014 to consider the risk management arrangements for any potential liabilities associated with the agreement signed in relation to the Sports Domes at Seaton Carew.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Chief Finance Officer reported that at Council on 19 September, 2014 Members requested that a report be submitted to this Committee setting out the risk management arrangements for any potential liabilities associated with the agreement signed in relation to the Sports Domes at Seaton Carew. The report set out brief details of the previous reports considered by the Committee and Council.

In terms of the legal risks, the arrangements implemented to originally release the restrictive covenant protected the Council's legal position by putting in a place a Clawback Deed which would secure a financial payment over an agreed period, or an earlier date if the property was sold within the agreed period.

The effectiveness of the Clawback Deed was demonstrated by the negotiations the current owner commenced with the Council when the opportunity to dispose of the domes arose, as this sale could not proceed without the Council agreement and the payment of monies to secure this agreement.

In terms of the financial risk, as was the case with any disposal there was a financial risk until legal contracts had been exchanged and payment had been received by the Council. Officers had assessed the value of achieving a one-off payment compared to annual instalments over a 15 year period and recommended the one off instalment as the appropriate option.

The financial risk of using the one-off domes income had been managed by not spending monies until these have been received. Therefore, in the event that the domes monies were not received these projects will not be progressed. The only exception was in relation to the summer 2014 free swims where a decision needed to be made to either not proceed with this initiative, or to identify alternative funding. The decision was reached that as a contingency this amount would need to be funded from the 2014/15 General Fund revenue budget outturn if the domes monies are not received.

The majority of the forecast domes monies are earmarked towards managing the repayment of the existing Growing Places interest free loan secured to purchase the Jackson's Landing site. The allocation of these monies, together with monies already allocated, would completely remove the financial risk if the site was not developed, or an onward sale not completed by August 2015, which is the date the Growing places loan needs to be repaid. Members had been advised at the time of the purchase of the potential financial risks of the development being delayed beyond 2015. The opportunity to potentially allocate the domes money will largely remove the risk of having to use Prudential Borrowing for Jackson's Landing if this was delayed beyond August 2015. This was not known when the decision to purchase Jackson's Landing was made. Therefore,

on the basis of the monies being received the Council would be in a better position than forecast when the decision to buy Jackson's Landing was made.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

**75. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

The Chair reported to Members that Hartlepool Borough Council had been recognised by the Public Health Minister Jane Ellison in her first Award scheme for its efforts in increasing the health of its workforce. The award recognised excellence and innovation in workplace health and wellbeing initiatives and was presented at the annual RSPH Conference on 1st October. The Chair congratulated the Director of Public Health and all the staff involved in achieving the award.

The meeting concluded at 11.07 am.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 22 OCTOBER 2014**