

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

28 September 2015

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Councillor: Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jim Ainslie, Allan Barclay, Steve Gibbon, Brenda Loynes and  
Jean Robinson

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Stephen Akers-Belcher was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Peter Jackson

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Phil Hepburn, Parking Services Manager  
Joanne Burnley, Principal Environmental Health Officer  
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **25. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Jackson.

### **26. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **27. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2015**

Received.

### **28. Strategy for Using 2014/15 Outturn Resources Allocated by the Finance and Policy Committee** *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

**Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

- (i) Enable Members to determine a strategy for using the 2014/15 outturn resources allocated by the Finance and Policy Committee; and
- (ii) To enable these proposals to be referred to full Council as a departure from the approved Budget and Policy Framework.

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

The report outlined the process involved in allocating the final uncommitted 2014/15 revenue outturn. The Finance and Policy Committee had resolved that £196,000 of the net uncommitted outturn be allocated to the Neighbourhood Services Division to be utilised to support Members' priorities relating to environmental improvements, additional Enforcement Officers, the utilisation of Neighbourhood Development Officers to support HVDA and voluntary groups in the town with further consideration of the loan to the Hartlepool Credit Union (Moneywise Community Banking) being converted into a grant. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods updated Members by confirming that the negotiations with HVDA had concluded. Further details on the proposals to use the £196,000 were included in the report.

Members welcomed the proposals, in particular the additional environmental enforcement to be provided across the Town. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that the operational hours of the Enforcement Team would be flexible to suit the needs of the service. A Member questioned whether the community pay-back scheme was still utilised by the Council for environmental maintenance. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that Officers worked closely with the Probation Service to utilise the community pay-back scheme wherever practical.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods indicated that the safety of the public, and Council staff when emptying the bins, was a fundamental consideration when looking at the location of waste bins.

A Member sought clarification on how often 'environmental action days' were held within wards across the Town. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that each ward has one action day per year and were scheduled in advance. In relation to the problem of dog fouling, it was noted that the stencils used across the Town had worked exceptionally well in raising awareness and reducing the problem of dog fouling.

### **Decision**

- (i) The proposals detailed in Section 4 of the report to utilise the £196,000 referred from the Finance and Policy Committee were approved.
- (ii) The above proposals to be referred to Council for approval as a departure from the Budget and Policy Framework.

## **29. Referral from Council (Council Motion from 26 February 2015) (Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)**

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To follow up on the motion to Council on 26 February 2015.

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

Members considered the following motion:

“That either staff car parking charges be abolished or car parking charges be introduced for Elected Members”.

It was noted that the current Council staff car-parking scheme provided over 300 car parking bays in a number of car parks close to Council buildings. This generated an income to the Council of £80k which was calculated on the individual's band/grading. There are 11 bays allocated within the Civic Centre underground car park for 33 Elected Members to use on an ad hoc basis.

It was highlighted that should the Council decide to introduce an Elected Member parking scheme, potentially 33 bays would need to be allocated which would be detrimental when the resource base of the Council was reducing. It would also be difficult to calculate a comparative charge to that of Officers which is based upon salary band level.

### **Decision**

- (i) Given the costs associated with administering and maintaining the staff car parking scheme, the retention of staff charges at their current levels was unanimously approved.
- (ii) Given the administrative burdens related to introducing Elected

Member payments for car parking charges and the fact that the current scheme appears to be working well, the introduction of charges for Members' bays within the Civic Centre car park was unanimously rejected.

**30. Unauthorised Encampments Policy** (*Assistant Director, Regeneration*)

**Type of decision**

Non key.

**Purpose of report**

To update the Unauthorised Encampments Policy and operational framework which was last updated in 2004. The policy deals with the unauthorised occupation (including by travellers) of any land forming part of the highway, land owned by the Council or any private land occupied without the consent of the owner. The report took into consideration, the updated guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2015 and the new power to seize vehicles which were suspected of having been involved in an offence relating to the illegal deposit of waste.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the creation of the Unauthorised Encampments Policy. The Policy was attached at Appendix 2 of the report and included the following areas of responsibility:

- A. Areas considered to be unsuitable where action will normally be taken to remove an unauthorised encampment;
- B. Conditions which will normally result in action to require the removal of an encampment; and
- C. Further matters which may be considered prior to making a decision to secure the removal of an unauthorised encampment.

It was proposed that Council adopted the Policy and continued with a policy of tolerance where encampments do not fall into any of the sections included within Sections A and B of the Policy as noted above. In addition, it was proposed that consideration be given to matters included within Section C of the Policy before making a decision to secure the removal of an encampment.

Further proposals included the transfer of the lead role for enforcement of the Policy to the Community Safety and Engagement Team, the power to seize vehicles in encampments where it was suspected that the vehicle had

been used in the illegal deposit of waste and the development of effective liaison between all relevant partners and agencies to deal with unauthorised encampments.

A Member referred to an unauthorised encampment incident at Central Park within the Headland and Harbour ward and wished to pass on his gratitude to Officers for dealing with this in an extremely professional and efficient manner. The Committee endorsed this request and would ensure that the comments and thanks of the Committee be forwarded to the relevant Officers.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the Policy attached at Appendix 2 be submitted to Council for adoption including the continuation of a policy of tolerance where encampments do not fall into Section A or B of the policy and that consideration be given to the matters in Section C before making a decision to secure the removal of an encampment.
- (ii) That the lead role for enforcement of the Policy be transferred from Housing Services to the Community Safety and Engagement Team. The Community Safety and Engagement Team to co-ordinate any action and depending on the most appropriate powers to use, liaise with other teams and organisations and where the land occupied was in the ownership of the Council, with Estates and Regeneration and Legal Services.
- (iii) That consideration be given to exercising the power to seize vehicles both in encampments and in general, where the vehicle was suspected of being involved in the commission of an offence relating to the illegal deposit of waste or other waste offences. The use of this power needs to be considered generally where such offences were committed and would not be used in isolation with respect to travellers.
- (iv) That internal procedures be developed and effective liaison developed between all relevant partners and agencies to ensure that unauthorised encampments were dealt with effectively having regard to, and taking into consideration, the needs of the travellers and others affected by the Policy.

The meeting concluded at 10.28 am

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 5 October 2015**