

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

25 January 2016

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair)

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

Also Present:

Councillors Paul Beck, Jim Lindridge and George Springer

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Alastair Smith, Assistant Director  
Mike Blair, Technical Services Manager  
Clare Clark, Head of Community Safety and Engagement  
Phil Hepburn, Enforcement Team Leader  
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **54. Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **55. Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Beck and Robinson declared personal interests in Minute 57, Councillor Loynes declared a personal interest in Minute 60 and Councillor Gibbon declared a personal interest in Minute 59.

### **56. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2015**

Received

## **57. Merlin Way Crossing** *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval for the installation of a zebra crossing on Merlin Way.

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

The Assistant Director reported on the background to a request from residents regarding the need for safe crossing facilities on Merlin Way, particularly to assist children crossing when going to and from nearby schools. Ward Councillors and the local Residents' Association had also campaigned for the provision of some form of crossing on the road.

In accordance with the wishes of the majority of pedestrians using this particular area of Merlin Way, it was proposed that the crossing be located as close to the Merlin Way/Moorhen Road junction as possible as detailed in Appendix 1. Merlin Way was already traffic calmed in the vicinity of the junction by the presence of three sets of speed cushions and it was proposed to replace the eastern most set with a raised zebra crossing.

Consultation had taken place with nine households in the vicinity of the proposed crossing. Three replies had been received, all of whom were against the proposals. However, two were identical and from the same property. Details of the concerns raised by residents were set out in the report and a response to each was provided.

It was estimated that the scheme would cost approximately £25,000 and would be funded from the Local Transport Plan budget allocation.

A resident from Moorhen Road, who was in attendance and invited to speak on behalf of two residents from Merlin Way, spoke against the proposals on the basis that there was already existing traffic calming measures in place and residents had not been made aware of the proposals to install beacons during the consultation process otherwise more objections would have been made. The resident was also of the view that the consultation had been inadequate. Concerns were expressed that the introduction of flashing lights would adversely impact upon households in the vicinity of the crossing in terms of sleep disturbance, value and saleability and considered that this was not a good use of taxpayer's money. Members were asked to consider alternative options, including a crossing patrol, where there would be no impact upon residents.

A resident from Meadowsweet Road, who was also in attendance and invited to address the Committee, spoke in favour of the proposals on the basis of the level of traffic on this road and concerns in relation to child safety. Reference was made to a speed watch exercise which had revealed that 280 cars had utilised that stretch of road within a half hour period and given the outcome of this exercise, it was considered a safe crossing was needed.

A Ward Councillor, who was in attendance and invited to address the Committee, spoke in support of the proposals, the reasons for which were shared with the Committee and were mainly around child safety.

The Committee debated the issues raised and officers responded to queries from Members in relation to the consultation process, how the cowling would operate and the direction of the flashing lights. In response to clarification sought, the Committee was advised that there had been no accidents in the area.

### **Decision**

- (i) That a raised zebra crossing, replacing an existing set of speed cushions on Merlin Way, together with cowled beacon lights be approved.
- (ii) That the crossing be monitored for 12 months and revisited as necessary.

**Prior to consideration of the following item of business, there was a brief adjournment due to IT issues.**

## **58. Easington Road Crossing** *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval for the installation of a puffin crossing on Easington Road.

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

The Assistant Director presented the report which provided background information to the difficulties for pedestrians trying to cross the busy A179 Easington Road and more recent complaints that had been received from parents wanting a safer route for their children travelling to and from school. Residents and Ward Councillors had asked for a crossing at this point for a

number of years.

As shown at Appendix 1, it was proposed that the crossing be located to the east of the roundabout. It was important to ensure that the crossing was sited a sufficient distance from the roundabout to prevent vehicles queuing back and blocking it but also not too far away to be unattractive for pedestrians to use. The eastbound bus stop would need to be resited, details of which were provided.

With regard to the consultation, letters and plans had been sent to 10 properties in the area of the proposed crossing and no objections had been received.

The Chair advised that since the report had been written two objections to the proposals had been received.

A Ward Councillor, who was in attendance and invited to address the Committee, spoke against the proposals and raised concerns regarding the potential for congestion on the roundabout particularly during rush hour and difficulties for some residents exiting the car park behind Easington Road. The Ward Councillor suggested that the crossing be located further towards the end of Easington Road. In response, it was reported that the timing of the lights could be adjusted and the reasons and benefits of the proposed location were outlined. Members and officers provided clarification in response to further queries raised by the Ward Councillor.

Members further debated the comments made. In considering the issue, the Committee noted the ongoing attempts by Members for the introduction of a crossing at this location, the potential reasons why the concerns in terms of access issues raised by the Ward Councillor had not been highlighted in the consultation results as well as the road safety benefits. Whilst Members supported the proposals, given the concerns raised, it was suggested that the crossing should be monitored for 12 months to determine if any adjustments were necessary.

## **Decision**

- (i) That the proposed puffin crossing on Easington Road, as shown in Appendix 1 be approved.
- (ii) That the crossing be monitored for 12 months and revisited as necessary.

**59. South Fens Proposed 20 MPH Limit** (*Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key

**Purpose of report**

To seek approval for the introduction of a 20mph limit in the South Fens area.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

It was reported that following requests from residents via local Ward Councillors and the Fens Residents' Association, consultation had taken place throughout the area to seek their views on the proposal to introduce a 20mph speed restriction covering the area of South Fens as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. Signage would be placed at the entrances to the area with repeater signage installed within the 20mph limit itself. There would be no physical traffic calming measures installed.

With regard to the results of the consultation, approximately 475 letters were sent out and from the replies received, 215 were in favour of the proposals, 35 were against and 1 was undecided.

It was estimated that the scheme would cost approximately £2,000 and would be funded from the Local Transport Plan budget allocation.

**Decision**

That the proposed 20mph speed limit in the South Fens area , as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved.

**60. Park Avenue Safety Scheme** (*Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key

**Purpose of report**

To seek approval for the implementation of a safety scheme on Park Avenue.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

It was reported that following the provision of a designated car park for Ward Jackson Park within the grounds of the former Tunstall Court building, it had been the intention to improve pedestrian links between the car park and the park. There had also been concerns raised regarding the speed of traffic on Park Avenue and a scheme designed to address both issues had been produced, details of which were set out at Appendix 1.

It was proposed to introduce a raised zebra crossing along with a new access and footpath link into the park. At the northern end of Park Avenue, another road hump was proposed, which would also act as a pedestrian crossing point. It was also proposed to introduce a 20mph speed limit on the southern section of Park Avenue to further improve road safety in the area.

With regard to the results of the consultation, of the four letters that were sent out to the properties adjacent to the scheme, only one response had been received which was in favour of the proposals.

It was estimated that the scheme would cost approximately £40,000 and would be funded from the Local Transport Plan budget allocation.

In the discussion that followed a Member expressed concern in relation to the cost of the scheme given the low level of traffic in comparison to other areas. The Committee was provided with details of costs and it was noted that the need for a new pathway and entrance way into the park had contributed to the increase in cost.

A Member and Ward Councillor expressed support for the scheme and commented on the benefits of extending the 20mph speed restrictions to the White House Public House, the need to address the speed of traffic at the Elwick Road end of Park Avenue and queried whether these issues could be included in the scheme. Following discussion in relation to the feasibility of this option, and given the requirement to consult on such

proposals, it was suggested that the measures be monitored for 12 months and a report be presented to a future meeting of this Committee exploring these issues.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the proposed safety scheme on Park Avenue, as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved.
- (ii) That the safety scheme be monitored for 12 months and the suggestions to extend the 20mph speed restriction and introduce traffic calming measures at the top of Park Avenue, as detailed above, be explored, the findings of which to be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

## **61. Council Plan 2016/17 – Proposals for Consideration** (Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the opportunity for the Neighbourhood Services Committee to consider the proposals for inclusion in the 2016/17 Council Plan that fell under the remit of the Committee.

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

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported on the background to the service planning process and proposals included in the 2016/17 Council Plan that fell under the remit of the Neighbourhood Services Committee. As in previous years detailed proposals were being considered by each of the Committees during January and February. A further report would be prepared for the Finance and Policy Committee on 14 March 2016 detailing the comments/observations of each of the Committees along with a full draft of the 2016/17 Council Plan.

Appendix A provided detail on the proposed actions, performance indicators and risks identified to deliver the outcomes.

### **Decision**

That the proposals reported for inclusion in the Council Plan 2016/17 be supported and be utilised to formulate a response on behalf of the

Committee for consideration by the Finance and Policy Committee on 14 March 2016.

## **62. Allotments Update** *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

The provide the Committee with an update following site visits undertaken by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Committee across the allotment sites of Hartlepool in the spring and summer of 2015.

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

The report provided background information to the decision taken that the Chair and Vice Chair would undertake site visits to allotment sites in response to a number of issues raised in relation to the provision and management of allotment sites through the Council's Neighbourhood Forums.

On the whole site visits were very well attended, the format of which was outlined. The issues raised were collated along with issues encountered during the inspections and those reported to Customer Services and these were currently being used to develop an action plan for each site. Common issues identified were provided as set out in the report and included drainage/flooding problems, complaints about bonfires, fly tipping, horse tail, non-cultivation, slow response to minor repairs, rats, the need for minor repairs to locks, taps and fences and vacant plots.

It was reported that there was a need to extend Stranton Cemetery which would encroach on existing allotments plots on the lower half of Stranton Allotments. Therefore, there would need to be a full review of allotments, with a view to meeting ongoing demand. This would be carried out by officers and reported back to the Committee at a later date.

A number of new developments had been initiated to improve the flexibility of the service and increase communication with tenants, details of which were provided.

The Chair responded to a number of queries raised by a Ward Member in relation to the allotment rules and regulations of tenancy and clarified the background to the reasons behind the requirement that 75% of the plot be used for crop or flower production. It was suggested that any personal concerns by Allotment Holders should be raised with the appropriate



Allotment Association representatives.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) In view of the plans to extend Stranton Cemetery, officers be tasked with reviewing current allotment provision at existing locations and explore alternative options.
- (iii) That the scope of such a review and timescale be agreed by the Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee and Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods.

## **63. 'Respect Your Neighbourhood' – Environmental Crime Campaign Update** *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

For information

### **Purpose of report**

To update the Committee on the current progress to date of the 'Respect Your Neighbourhood' Environmental Crime Campaign.

To consider improvements to the planning of Neighbourhood Action Days, and to agree the 2016/17 Neighbourhood Action Day schedule as attached at Appendix A.

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

The Assistant Director reported on the background to the establishment and purpose of the Respect Your Neighbourhood Environmental Crime Campaign. The Respect Your Neighbourhood Initiative was intended to involve one co-ordinated day of action in each of the 11 wards and could involve various activities, details of which were included in the report. The report provided details of the outcomes/actions taken/enforcement activity by ward as a result of the action days. It was noted that 9 of the 11 annual action days had been undertaken and the reasons why 2 of the action days had not gone ahead was reported. The outcomes demonstrated the effectiveness of the Respect Your Neighbourhood Campaign.

A review of the Neighbourhood Action Days had been undertaken, the outcome of which was set out in the report. It was proposed that an annual schedule for Neighbourhood Action Days outlining the months and wards where Neighbourhood Action Days would take place was agreed in

advance by the Neighbourhood Services Committee. A proposed schedule for 2016/17 was attached at Appendix A. Discussions with Ward Councillors would also take place in relation to the proposed areas for action to ensure flexibility within the Wards.

With regard to the Fens and Rossmere planned day of action in January, a Member for that Ward was of the view that better outcomes would be achieved if this was held in the summer months. A number of views were expressed in relation to the type of activities that should be undertaken as well as the specific areas within wards that required attention. The Chair outlined the process and emphasised the importance of Ward Members working together to reach an agreement on which part of the Ward would take priority. This information should then be fed back to officers to facilitate Members' requirements.

The Committee welcomed the initiative and the Chair took the opportunity on behalf of the Committee to thank the staff involved for their hard work in making the campaign such a success.

#### **Decision**

- (i) That the current progress to date on the 'Respect Your Neighbourhood' – Environmental Crime Campaign and comments of Members be noted.
- (ii) That the proposed changes to the planning of Neighbourhood Action Days, and the 2016 Neighbourhood Action Schedule, attached at Appendix A be agreed.

### **64. The Collection of Sea Coal** (*Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods*)

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key

#### **Purpose of report**

To update the Committee of the findings of the Sea Coal Working Group which was established to pursue the idea of adopting a scheme which would enable the sea coalers to legitimately access the beach to take off the coal to assist with cleansing.

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

The report provided background information in relation to the current scale of the sea coal industry in Hartlepool in response to concerns raised by Members. At a meeting of this Committee in January 2015, Members agreed to pursue the idea of adopting a scheme which would enable the

sea coalers to legitimately access the beach to take off the coal which would assist with cleansing and provide employment for sea coalers.

In order to facilitate this and allow the collection of sea coal, a variation to the Lease had been provisionally agreed with the Crown Commissioners, details of which were included in the report.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the findings of the Sea Coal Working Group be noted.
- (ii) The Committee supported the proposed Deed of Variation and the form of Licence annexed to the Deed which would allow sea coalers to legitimately access the beach to remove sea coal.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 am.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 1 FEBRUARY 2016**