

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

15 FEBRUARY 2016

The meeting commenced at 2.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Christopher Akers Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Allan Barclay, Kevin Cranney, Marjorie James, Carl Richardson, Chris Simmons, George Springer.

Also Present: Councillor Jim Lindridge as substitute for Councillor Kaylee Sirs in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

Officers: Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor
Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Clare Clark, Community Safety and Engagement Manager
David Hart, Strategic Procurement Manager
Kerry Trenchard, Strategy and Performance Officer
Julian Heward, Public Relations Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

148. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Brenda Loynes and Kaylee Sirs.

149. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Simmons declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 156 as a Director of West View Advice and Resource Centre and left the meeting during its consideration.

Councillor James declared a personal interest during consideration of Minute No. 155 as the Council's appointed executive member of the North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO).

150. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January, 2016

Confirmed.

151. Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 30 November, 2015

Received.

152. Minutes of the meeting of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership held on 20 November, 2015

Received.

153. Council Plan 2016/17 – Proposals for Consideration
(*Chief Executive, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration and the Director of Public Health*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

To provide the opportunity for the Finance and Policy Committee to consider the proposals that fall under the remit of the Committee for inclusion in the 2016/17 Council Plan.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that, as in previous years, detailed proposals for the Council Plan were being considered by each of the Policy Committees throughout January and February in respect of their areas of responsibility. A further report would be prepared for Finance and Policy Committee on the 14th of March detailing the comments/observations of each of the Committees along with Departmental responses and a full draft of the 2016/17 Council Plan.

The Council Plan would then be presented to Council for agreement on the 17th March. It was proposed that any additional updates or changes agreed by the Finance and Policy Committee on the 14th of March would be noted when the report is presented to Full Council.

The Outcomes that include activities that fall under the remit of the Finance and Policy Committee are:

- Reduction in the prevalence of family and child poverty
- Health Improvement - people are helped to live healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices and reduce health inequalities
- Health Protection - Health Protection: the populations health is protected from major incidents and other threats, whilst reducing health inequalities
- Healthcare public health and preventing premature mortality - reduce

the number of people living with preventable ill health and people dying prematurely, whilst reducing the gap between communities

- Hartlepool has reduced crime and repeat victimisation
- There is reduced harm caused by drugs and alcohol misuse
- Communities have improved confidence and feel more cohesive and safe
- Offending and re-offending has reduced
- Local people have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation
- Deliver effective customer focused services, meeting the needs of diverse groups and maintaining customer satisfaction
- Maintain effective governance arrangements for core business and key partnerships
- Maintain the profile and reputation of the Council
- Deliver effective Member and Workforce arrangements, maximising the efficiency of the Council's Democratic function
- Ensure the effective implementation of significant government policy changes.

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

The Chair and Members of the Committee raised the following comments/issues relating to the plan –

- Policy Committees should have an opportunity to approve or amend their section of the plan following the initial consultation stage and before the comments/amendments were forwarded to the Finance and Policy Committee. The Assistant Chief Executive stated that the development of the plan in 2016/17 would include that additional phase and the Chair proposed an addition to the recommendations to include the proposal formally.
- The Chair of the Children's Services Committee referred to the two new indicators around ensuring children that were eligible for free school meals were registered was included with a target to be confirmed. The Member understood this was a key action already and questioned if the target was to be 100%. The Director of Child and Adult services stated that the indicator was to ensure that everything was being done in relation to the take up of free school meals and that there was ongoing monitoring. The Chair of the Children's Services Committee commented that ensuring all children entitled to free school meals were registered with the school was key to ensuring the school received the 'pupil premium' for that child.
- A Member questioned the action relating to the introduction of "a healthier catering commitment scheme and roll out to relevant businesses" and what that entailed and what was to be achieved within the timescale set. The Director of Child and Adult Services indicated that this was health action and she would ensure an appropriate

response to the question was forwarded to the Member.

- The inclusion on NI 117 “Proportion of 16-18 year olds not in employment, education or training” was questioned as there was now a statutory duty to ensure all such young people were in education training or employment. It was indicated that the indicator was still part of the national indicator set and therefore it still required monitoring.
- A Member questioned the Public Health action “Work with key partners to progress the provision of a replacement facility for Mill House Leisure Centre” and when it was expected this would come about. The Chair stated that any decision on the future of the Mill House Leisure Centre would be taken by full council.
- A Member questioned the Public Health action “Ensure implementation and delivery of the National Child Measurement Programme” and if this was linked to the national child obesity programme. The Assistant Chief Executive indicated that it was and the programme was being led by the Public Health department.
- A Member sought the attendance figures monitored under ACS PO59 “Overall average attendances at Mill House, Brierton and Headland Leisure Centres” broken down for each venue individually.
- The Chair sought the completion date for action “Develop Mayoral Combined Authority Constitution to enable devolution deal” be brought forward from March 2017 to December 2016.
- The Chair suggested that following the announcement of the closure of the Courts in Hartlepool, the new risk in relation to “Relocation of key criminal justice services out of the area that currently have a base in Hartlepool (Court Services and Community Rehabilitation Company)” would require very close monitoring to measure the impacts of the court closure on reoffending rates. The use of ‘pop-up courts’ as suggested by government would also need assessing and monitoring.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their comments which would be taken on board as part of the development process of the Council Plan.

Decision

1. That Members’ comments and observations be included in the presentation of the overall Council Plan 2016/17 to Finance and Policy Committee on 14th March 2016.
2. That Policy Committees have an opportunity to approve or amend their section of the council plan following the initial consultation stage and before the comments/amendments are forwarded to the Finance and Policy Committee as part of the development of future plans.

154. Community Safety Plan 2014-17 (Year 3) *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

To consider the Community Safety Plan 2014-17 (Year 3) and its referral to Council for adoption.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Community Safety and Engagement Manager reported that the Community Safety Plan (Year 3) provided an overview of progress made by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership during 2015-16 with an update on end of year performance. The plan set out some of the Partnership activity undertaken to reduce crime and improve safety during the last twelve months and incorporated the 2016-17 annual priorities as recommended in the annual Partnership strategic assessment.

Progress made against the Community Safety Plan (Year 3) would be managed and monitored by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership, through quarterly performance reports and a review of Partnership Task Group/Sub Group Action Plans. The Community Safety Plan incorporated performance indicators for 2016-17, along with a proposed delivery structure to progress the 2016-17 priorities.

A member of the public queried the priorities and measures around acquisitive crime and if these included violence. The Community Safety and Engagement Manager stated that violent crime was recorded separately and acquisitive crime related only to property crime.

Decision

1. That the content of the Community Safety Plan 2014-17 (Year 3) be noted and endorsed.
2. That in accordance with the budget and policy framework, the Community Safety Plan 2014-17 (Year 3) be referred to full Council for adoption.

155. Pay Policy 2016/17 (*Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To obtain endorsement, of the proposed changes to the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2016/17 in advance of Council approval being sought on 17 March 2016.

To seek approval to amend the Assistant Director/Head of Service Chief

Officer Pay and Grading Structure from a broad banded structure to a shorter structure consisting of four bandings.

To highlight the proactive approach taken by the Council to improving the pay of its lowest paid employees through the increase to the Hartlepool Living Wage.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive highlighted the principle changes to the pay policy which centred on the living wage and the Assistant Director/Head of Service Chief Officer Pay and Grading Structure.

The pay policy has been updated to reflect some of the changed metrics in relation to the Living Wage decisions taken previously by Finance and Policy Committee. It had been updated to reflect national pay awards, the new national living wage with effect from 1 April 2016, and revised pension contributions. The Council was taking a proactive approach to increasing the Hartlepool Living Wage for its lowest paid employees to £7.88 per hour with effect from 1 December 2015.

The main change within the policy related to the Assistant Director/Head of Service Chief Officer Pay and Grading Structure. Following a recent North East Regional Employers' Organisation (NEREO) survey relating to Chief Officer Pay Structures, it became evident that Hartlepool was the only authority in the Region to have single Chief Officer band for the roles beneath the Chief Executive and Directors.

The report set out a proposal to move away from the current broad banded pay and grading structure to a more sophisticated and shorter structure with four Chief Officer Pay Bandings. This was based upon up to date Chief Officer Job Evaluated outcomes. This would move the Council to a similar structural position to the other Authorities across the Tees Valley and therefore eliminate the Council's competitive disadvantage in this area. It would also provide the Council with greater operational and strategic flexibilities and provide a more robust and competitive pay strategy to retain and attract high calibre staff.

The proposed shorter Chief Officer pay bandings, would also reduce the differential between the top of the green book pay structure and the lowest point of the Chief Officer pay structure, which is currently £16,865. Under the proposal the differential would reduce to £3,455 providing a more balanced and equitable pay and grading structure which reflects internal and external conditions.

Under the preferred approach, all of the existing Assistant Director/Heads of Service in the Chief Executives Department would remain in Band A (as per the Job Evaluated outcomes). Two posts currently protected at the bottom of the Chief Officer pay and grading structure would move into Band C (as per Job Evaluation outcomes) with no increase or detriment.

Councillor James declared a personal interest as the Council's appointed executive Member of NEREO, the North East Regional Employers Organisation.

The Chair referred to section 13.1 of the proposed revised pay policy (appendix B to the report) in relation to agency workers and suggested that it should be re-worded to reference the change to the national minimum wage and the introduction of the national living wage.

The Chair commented that the current remit of the elected Member Appointments Panel was somewhat limited and should be amended to include the appropriate Policy Committee Chair or Vice-chair in the appointment process for Chief Officers and Directors. Also, as Policy Chairs were having to work more closely with officers below the chief officer structure, the appropriate Policy Committee Chair, or Vice-chair, should be included in the appointment process of all Band 15 and above officers. The Assistant Chief Executive commented that these changes would require amendments to the Constitution which would need to be referred to Council as part of the Monitoring Officer's review of the constitution.

Decision

1. That the change of the Assistant Director/Head of Service Chief Officer Pay and Grading Structure from a broad banded structure to a shorter structure with four bandings, as set out in Paragraph 6 of the report, be approved.
2. That the proposed draft 2016/17 Pay Policy (Appendix B) be approved and referred to Council for approval subject to the inclusion of an appropriate reference to the introduction of the national living wage in the section relating to agency workers (13.1)
- 3 That Council considers, as part of the review of the Constitution process, amending the membership of the Appointments Panel to include the Chair (or Vice-chair) of the appropriate Policy Committee in the membership of the Panel when appointing Directors, Assistant Directors or Chief Officers.
- 4 That Council considers, as part of the review of the Constitution process, that the appointment of all Band 15 and above posts should include the Chair (or Vice-chair) of the appropriate Policy Committee in the appointment process.

Councillor Simmons left the meeting in accordance with his declaration of interest at Minute No. 149.

156. Contract for the Provision of Benefit Advice and Financial Support Services *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Director of Child and Adults)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To consider the future commissioning of the Council's Benefit Advice and Financial Support Service delivered by the West View Advice and Resource Centre (WVARC) under a contract due to expire in March 2016.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Child and Adult Services reported that following reconfiguration of the Community Pool grant programme in 2012, Universal Welfare Benefits and Financial Support was introduced as a Council commissioned service. WVARC was successful in securing the contract in 2012, and again in 2014, and following satisfactory performance, the current contract was extended for a further year, and is due to expire in March 2016. The annual contract value for the service is £110,000. Funding had been identified through the Child Poverty Fund to continue with the contract during 2016/17 but as the contract would expire in March 2016 with no further option to renew, there was a need to consider how the 2016/17 Benefit Advice and Financial Support Service would be procured to cover this period.

The report set out detailed evidence of need for the service and the scope of the current contract. The service was also subject to a detailed performance framework with monitoring reports being submitted on a quarterly basis. During 2014/15 there were:

- 4,927 service appointments attended by individuals, with the majority of these appointments involving clients seeking welfare advice.
- The total number of individual clients accessing the service during 2014/15 was 3,463, of which 1,653 were new clients.
- There was roughly a 60/40% split between females and males respectively.
- The number of dependants under 19 assisted totalled 1,498.
- 448 clients were lone parents.
- The age of those accessing the service ranged from 17 to 65+ years.
- The number of people with a disability accessing the service totalled 993 and those with a long-term illness totalled 916.
- The majority of clients were of white British ethnic origin, although access to the service by the BME population was also evident.

Data relating to the first two quarters of this financial year demonstrated a

similar level of clients accessing the service compared to the previous year with a comparable number of appointments undertaken. The map at Appendix A to the report developed from using the monitoring information provided by WVARC also highlighted the geographical distribution of clients accessing the service in the first two quarters of this financial year, and the types of advice and support provided.

The service also received extremely positive feedback, details of which were included with the report together with some example case studies showing the breadth of the service delivered to clients. The report also included some details of the additional services offered by WVARC and the community delivery of the service.

In light of the detailed considerations set out in the report, the Director proposed that a Contract Procedure Rules Exemption Order is sought to enable WVARC to deliver the Council's Financial Advice and Support Service during 2015/16 through finance identified in the Child and Family Poverty Fund.

Members commented that WVARC provided an excellent service to residents particularly through services based in the community. It was suggested that in extending the contract, the service should also look to meeting the Council's obligations under the Armed Forces Covenant through training workers to work with armed forces personnel and their families that had returned to the town or were already based here.

The Chair suggested that measurable targets should be introduced for the work undertaken with those people who had been sanctioned by the DWP. The Chair requested that when these statistics became available they should be circulated to Members.

Decision

1. That for the reasons outlined in the report, that a Contract Procedure Rules Exemption Order be approved to enable West View Advice and Resource Centre to deliver the Councils Financial Advice and Support Service during 2016/17 through finance identified in the Child and Family Poverty Fund.
2. That West View Advice and Resource Centre be requested to extend their advice services to include specific advice and support for armed forces personnel and their families living in or returning to Hartlepool.

Councillor Simmons returned to the meeting.

157. Corporate Procurement Strategy and Policy Document and Supporting Revisions to the Contract Procedure Rules (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To present Committee with an updated Procurement Strategy and Policy document and amended Contract Procedure Rules for review, comment and/or endorsement.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that Procurement Strategy and Policy document 2015 – 2018, submitted as an appendix to the report, had been developed following a review of several existing strategic procurement documents; the aim of the review being to update and amalgamate the existing documentation.

During the review process a proposal to change the threshold at which formal written quotations were required was considered. It was proposed that the threshold be raised from the current £2000 level, to a new level of £5000. In practical terms this would mean that previously where council officers would have to use the e-quotation system for expenditure over £2000 and invite a minimum of 3 companies to quote, they would now only have to undertake this process where the expenditure was in excess of £5000.

An analysis of other Council's procurement thresholds demonstrated that this proposal is consistent with the majority or practices in place amongst the other north eastern councils.

A further change which has been incorporated was the new EU public procurement thresholds which come into effect from 1 January 2016.

In addition to reviewing thresholds, a further element had been added to the document, this being the requirement that officers must submit a CPR (Contract Procedure Rule) exemption form in the event that they wished to use a third party provider when an in-house service provider was available. This amendment provided flexibility for officers where it could be demonstrated that in-house services were not the optimum solution to their requirement. It also provided an audit trail and visibility of these decisions by reporting any such exemptions on a quarterly basis to Finance and Policy Committee.

The Assistant Chief Executive indicated that in order to ensure that the

Procurement Strategy and Policy document and the Contract Procedure Rules (CPR's) were synchronised, there were a number of complimentary changes proposed for the CPR's which were set out in the report and supporting appendix.

A Member suggested that in the amended Contract Procedure Rules, under the Informal Procedure for Contracts under £5000, the reference to 'reasonable enquiries' should be changed to 'robust enquiries'. This was supported by the Committee.

Decision

That the proposed Procurement Strategy and Policy document and changes to the Contract Procedure Rules as reported together with the proposed amendment to the Informal Procedure for Contracts under £5000 be approved.

158. Workers Memorial Day *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To present a request from the Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee for the Council to continue to recognise and support Workers Memorial Day on Thursday 28 April 2016.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that a letter had been received (copy attached to the report as an appendix) from the Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee seeking the Council's support to the Workers Memorial Day arrangements for 28 April 2016.

Decision

1. That the Council promotes a minutes silence in all public buildings and to Council staff at 12.30pm on Thursday 28 April 2016, in remembrance of 'those workers who have lost their lives through industrial accident or disease'.
2. That the Council authorises the lowering of flags on public buildings on Thursday 28 April 2016.
3. That the Council allows the sale of the Workers Memorial Day Remembrance forget-me-not purple ribbons on Council premises to staff and public.

4. That the Council supports the promoting / publicising of the event to the wider public.
5. That the Council authorises the use of Council Premises on Thursday 28 April 2016 for the service and for guests before / after the Workers Memorial Day Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony.

159. Corporate Procurement Quarterly Report on Contracts *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To satisfy the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules with regard to the Finance and Policy Committee:

- Receiving and examining quarterly reports on the outcome of contract letting procedures including those where the lowest/highest price is not payable/receivable.
- Receiving and examining reports on any exemptions granted in respect of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that the table at Appendix A to the report detailed the required information for each procurement tender awarded since the last quarterly report. Appendix B to the report provided details of the required information in relation to Contract Procedure Rules exemptions granted since the last Corporate Procurement Quarterly Report on Contracts. The table at confidential Appendix C to the report included the commercial information in respect of the tenders received. Appendix C 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).

Decision

That the report be noted.

160. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Monday 14 March 2016 at 9.30 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The Chair reminded Members that the meeting scheduled for Monday 22 February, 2016 at 9.30 am had been cancelled.

The meeting concluded at 3.10 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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