

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

20 SEPTEMBER 2016

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: Paul Beck, Sandra Belcher, Brenda Loynes, Jean Robinson and George Springer.

Also Present: Councillor Allan Barclay as substitute for Councillor Dave Hunter in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Mike Blair, Technical Services Manager
Peter Frost, Highways, Traffic and Transport Team Leader
Clare Clark, Community Safety and Engagement Manager
Jeff Mason, Strategic Policy and Performance Management Manager
Jon Hepworth, Group Accountant (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

26. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Dave Hunter.

27. Declarations of Interest

None.

28. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 July, 2016

Confirmed.

29. Haswell Avenue Traffic Regulation Order Objection (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To report on the consultation carried out with residents on the proposed implementation of double yellow lines on the Haswell Avenue / St Margaret's Grove / St. Joan's Grove junction, and seek approval for a way forward.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Technical Services Manager reported that complaints had been received via Ward Councillors regarding cars parking on Haswell Avenue close to the junctions of St. Joan's Grove and St. Margaret's Grove. This was making it difficult for vehicles accessing and egressing the Groves, particularly larger vehicles such as refuse wagons and emergency service vehicles. Initially, consultation was carried out through the posting of public notices on site and in the local news paper. One written objection was made to the order and the matter taken to the Neighbourhood Services Committee on the 26 July 2016 (Minute No. 20 refers). Members requested further consultation to be carried out with residents to ensure all residents were aware of the proposals and their opinions considered.

The further consultation had been completed and 73 Letters and plans were delivered to residents in Haswell Avenue (south of Windermere Road), St Margaret's Grove and St. Joan's Grove. The Technical Services Manager reported at the meeting that 26 responses supported the proposals with 9 against, a response rate of 48%.

There were a number of residents from the area concerned at the meeting and the Chair invited two representatives, one for the proposals and one against to address the Committee with their concerns. The resident in favour of the proposed yellow lines at the junctions commented that in recent months residents in St Margaret's Grove had missed six refuse collections and had to contact the Council to arrange other collections due to the inability of the refuse vehicle being able to access their grove. The matter had been raised with officers in the refuse and highways teams. It had been suggested that residents take their wheelie bins to the end of the grove for collection but the refuse operators then left the emptied bins across the road blocking access to and from the grove. Residents accepted the area was restricted by its design but considered that the minimal yellow lines to protect the junction corners would be the most acceptable means of allowing access for larger vehicles such as the refuse wagons and emergency vehicles.

The resident against the proposals accepted the issues with the design of the area and the number of parked vehicles. It was, however, due to the number of parked vehicles that he expressed concern at the potential removal of some additional parking due to the yellow lines. The Chair reminded the resident that the Highway Code prevented parking on or near

junctions. The resident acknowledged this but commented that with the number of vehicles in the groves and Haswell Avenue, and his families working hours, the corners were often the only available places to park. The resident did question the potential of permits to allow him to park on these locations if the yellow lines were implemented. The Chair commented that a parking permit scheme could be considered at a later date, but its implementation would require a street by street survey with a clear majority in favour of the introduction of resident parking permits. Such a scheme is not free, there is a charge for permits and having such a permit did not guarantee a parking spot in front of a resident's home.

The Chair indicated that at this point the committee were only being asked to consider yellow lines at the junctions of the Groves. This solution was proposed as the minimum considered necessary to allow access for larger vehicles, such as the refuse wagon and emergency vehicles while maintaining as much on street parking for residents as possible. The Technical Services Manager clarified that the yellow lines would only extend from tangent point to tangent point around the corners so would not extend into the straight sections of Haswell Avenue and the two groves.

The Chair allowed a number of other residents to voice their support or opposition to the proposals. Councillor Cranney, ward councillor for the Foggy Furze ward also addressed the meeting in support of the proposals.

The Chair put the proposals for the implementation of the yellow lines as set out in the report to the Committee. The proposals were supported unanimously. A resident suggested that a small parcel of land near St Aidan's School could be utilised to provide some additional parking spaces. The Chair suggested that this may be an option the ward councillors may wish to examine further in the future.

Decision

That the proposed traffic regulation order for the implementation of double yellow lines around the 4 corners of St Joan's Grove and St Margaret's Grove in Haswell Avenue be approved.

30. Catcote Road Vehicle Activated Sign (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Non-Key decision.

Purpose of report

To report an objection to the location of a vehicle activated sign in

Catcote Road.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Technical Services Manager reported that a vehicle activated sign had been proposed following a serious incident last year, in which a car lost control on the bend just south of the point where the sign is located as shown on the plan appended to the report. As a result the vehicle crashed through the front garden of an adjacent property, and actually collided with the house itself. The resident had also reported other loss of control/ near miss incidents and had campaigned for some form of action to improve road safety on this stretch of road.

The sign is a bend warning sign which would only light up when vehicles were exceeding a certain speed, to highlight the presence of the upcoming bend, and had been installed earlier this year but not connected up to make it operational due to the objection in question.

Immediately following the sign's installation, the resident of the property adjacent to it asked that it be moved 3-4 metres along, as she was planning to widen her driveway and the sign would impede this. This re-location was duly undertaken. Following this, the resident again contacted the Council to say that she was also unhappy with the new location, and wanted the sign removing altogether. The main reason for the resident's objection was concern over potential light pollution into her property, however the Technical Services Manager indicated that the LED's from the sign were mainly visible when travelling towards it, and not from a position to the side.

The resident that had submitted the objection was present at the meeting and addressed the Committee. The resident considered that the sign would create light pollution to her property. After renovating her property recently, the sign would be visible through her front windows particularly when she was sat watching television. The sign only activating when a vehicle approached would be very distracting. The resident indicated that when electricians had turned up to connect the sign to the supply, they stated that the sign was in the wrong place and there was no nearby supply. The resident also complained at the size of the sign which she considered too large.

The Technical Services Manager stated that the sign was correctly placed and the sign would utilise the supply for nearby street lights. The alternative location across the road suggested by the resident would not comply with Department for Transport regulations as it was too far from the bend. In response to the Chair's questions, the Technical Services Manager indicated that there was no consultation carried out on road warning signs. The sign was connected to the supply and simply needed to be switched on.

The Chair put the proposal to keep the sign in its current location to the

Committee and this was supported by a majority of the Members present. The Chair asked officers to continue dialogue with the resident following the sign being switched on.

Decision

That the sign remain in its existing location and be brought into use.

31. Clean and Green Strategy Development *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

To agree a process for the development of a Clean and Green Strategy for Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Community Safety and Engagement Manager reported that in an effort to meet the aspirations of residents in improving the town the development of a Clean and Green Strategy has been identified as a priority within the Council work programme for this year. Development of the strategy would be overseen by the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

The strategy would incorporate local contextual information such as local demographics, community consultation, and an analysis of current demand on Council Services that are involved in managing and maintaining a cleaner, greener Hartlepool. This data would include the recent 'Your Say, Our Future' public consultation results, service requests logged by the contact centre, and national bench marking information. Key Council services impacting on environmental quality would be mapped, alongside some of the key challenges and opportunities facing these services, and the role that the local community could play in reducing demand on Council services, set against a backdrop of continuing reductions in public expenditure.

Key findings would be used to inform the first draft of the strategy which would be presented to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in October. Subject to Committee approval the draft Clean and Green Strategy would then be subject to an eight week consultation period in line with the Voluntary Sector Strategy and Compact. It was proposed that the consultation exercise would comprise of: -

- An online consultation – with links published on the Hartlepool Borough Council website, Facebook and Twitter pages
- The use of local media mechanisms
- Presentations to the Councils Neighbourhood Forums and Hartlepool Youth Council.

It was anticipated that a second draft of the strategy which would include comments from the consultation would be presented to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in January 2017 for comment and approval. The Community Safety and Engagement Manager commented that after further advice, there was the potential that a second round of consultation may not be required and the Plan could be submitted to Council for approval and adoption in February rather than the slightly longer process outlined in the report.

The final strategy would cover a three year period but would be supported by an action plan that would be refreshed and reported to the Neighbourhood Services Committee on an annual basis. The strategy would also be underpinned by a performance framework enabling the success of the strategy to be measured.

The Chair welcomed the report. The Chair requested that officers include an assessment of the needs of the various residential estates around the town and the potential for 'deep clean / winter maintenance' programme to reduce the pressure on ongoing maintenance.

Decision

That the report be noted and that the development process for the development of the Clean and Green Strategy be approved.

32. Car Park – Review of Charges (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

Type of decision

Key Decision. Test (i) and (ii) applies. Reference RN 24/16.

Purpose of report

To seek views regarding the scope of the review of car park charges.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Strategic Policy and Performance Management Manager reported that

at Council on 10 December 2015 (Council Min. No. 106(3) refers) a proposal was made that free parking should be introduced in the Middleton Grange car parks. It was stated that the majority of town centres across the Tees Valley incorporated some free car parking all year round and it was felt that this was needed in Hartlepool for it be competitive as a realistic tourist destination in line with the vision. A motion was moved and seconded 'that Council car parking charges be referred to the Neighbourhood Services Committee for a detailed appraisal to find a way of making Council car parking free of charge.' It was agreed this matter should be looked at as part of the 2017/18 budget considerations.

Car parking income was significant with £1,335,000 having been generated through all forms of parking charges and fines in 2015/16. The annual budgeted income target for the year, however, was £1,460,000 leading to an adverse variance of £125,000. One of the principal reasons for this variance was the inflationary increase that had been added year on year as part of the medium term financial strategy. With parking charges having remained fairly static for a number of years, this target had proved not to be sustainable. All income that was collected from parking fines was currently used to cover the annual running costs associated with the car parks.

As well as maintaining charges in recent years, the Council in conjunction with the shopping centre management and local businesses had introduced several initiatives to encourage trade and boost activity in the town centre. These measures included free parking after 4.00 pm operating throughout the year in car parks integrally linked to the Middleton Grange Shopping Centre, free parking every Sunday and also on Saturdays in December as part of a Christmas shopping incentive to support local traders.

Whilst the proposal made at the Council meeting in regard to making car parking free of charge could be appraised, in more detail, as part of this review. Members were advised of the significant financial implications that could arise if such an option was pursued. An initial analysis indicated that the consequences of abolishing car parking charges would potentially lead to a loss of income to the Council of up to £1.5m per annum. There were also a number of sites which the Council managed under a licence arrangement and abolishing tariff charges may require the separate renegotiating of those licenses. It was, therefore, recommended that this option is not included within the scope of this review.

The Strategic Policy and Performance Management Manager reported that there were various options for making changes to charging policies that could be assessed as part of the review. For example, the Committee may wish to consider adjusting tariffs at existing sites or look at options for introducing charges at those car parks within the borough that are currently free to use. For each option included within the review, a detailed appraisal of the financial implications would be carried out. In addition to this, any other relevant issues identified would also be evaluated such as, for example, the potential impacts on traffic flows or on the work of the enforcement service.

It was anticipated that the options appraisal report would be presented to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in November 2016. This would ensure the financial outcomes of the review could be incorporated into the 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Chair addressed initially the concept of free parking in the town centre. In light of the Council's ongoing financial issues, such a move would be inappropriate. The Chair drew the attention of the Committee to the recommendations and asked members if they were in favour of the recommendation given at paragraph 13.2 in the report "That the option of making Council car parks free of charge is not included within the scope of the review". This was supported unanimously by the Members present.

A Member commented that Stockton Borough Council had introduced two hours free parking at any time of the day and suggested that the review also look at this. There was also the facility to purchase weekly and monthly tickets at a discount. The Member also questioned the suggested loss of £800,000 if two hours free parking was introduced. The Strategic Policy and Performance Management Manager stated that a similar proposal had been considered last year and it was estimated at that time that the loss of income would amount to around £700,000 with an additional loss from fines and other arrangements. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods stated that the suggestion would be examined and accurate figures for any consequences calculated. The Director stressed to Members the potential impacts of any reduction in car parking income and the effects that would have on the department's budget proposals.

The Chair commented that other authorities had 'footfall' arrangements where people paid on use and such schemes should be included within the scope of the review, though it was understood there may be capital costs associated with such schemes. There were also other areas of the town where charges could be implemented to give an overall fairer system across the Borough.

A Member referred to the discussion with the manager of the Middleton Grange Shopping Centre and suggested that he attend a future meeting. The Chair commented that he had met with officers to discuss various issues around parking. The Chair was concerned, however, not to be seen to be favouring one provider over another. The Chair also commented that there was already free parking on a Sunday in the town centre but this was not bringing in additional shoppers; several stores did not open on Sunday, obviously having made the decision it was uneconomic. Free parking in itself may, therefore, not be the answer. A member of the public commented on the various parking charges at other tourist destinations across the northeast and commented that some visitors did gravitate to free parking facilities wherever they were available. The Director indicated that there would be some benchmarking included in the review to inform Members.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments and asked that officers look to include in the review as many options as possible, including an element of free parking and longer term tickets.

Decision

1. That the commencement of a review of car park charges be approved and that specific options relating to limited free parking and longer term tickets be included.
2. That the option of making Council car parks free of charge is not included within the scope of the review.

33 Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 31st July 2016 *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the 2016/17 Forecast General Fund Outturn, 2016/17 Capital Programme Monitoring and to provide details for the specific budget areas that this Committee was responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported on the first quarter financial report for the 2016/17 financial year.

Decision

That the report be noted.

34. Council Plan 2016/17 – Quarter 1 Performance Report *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To inform the Neighbourhood Services Committee of the progress made against the relevant areas of the 2016/17 Council Plan at the end of the first quarter. The report also provided the Committee with an update on progress made so far this year in relation to Civil Enforcement.

The report also considered the future of Neighbourhood Action Days as discussed at the July meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported on the first quarter performance against the four specific areas the Committee had chosen for detailed quarterly updates. Overall progress against those actions, performance indicators and risks that were relevant to the Neighbourhood Services Committee are identified in the appendix to the report.

The Department had also provided an update on recent activities in relation to Civil Enforcement in the performance report. In light of the performance information presented in the appendix to the report it was proposed that the Committee determine a way forward in relation to the future of Neighbourhood Action Days.

The Community Safety and Engagement Manager presented the detailed performance statistics to the Committee particularly highlighting the additional resources allocated by Council at the end of the previous financial year and the positive impact this was having on performance. The range of activities monitored by the enforcement team and their hours of operation (now 8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Saturday) had been extended through a review of the service and the additional officers funded by the resources allocated by Council. The Community Safety and Engagement Manager stressed, however, this was still a relatively small team with only five officers on duty at any one time.

In presenting the performance statistics, the Community Safety and Engagement Manager highlighted that performance on a range of issues was significantly higher in Hartlepool than the other Tees Valley authorities.

In quarter 1 2016/17 (April to June): -

- 94 fixed penalty notices were issued compared with 73 in quarter 4 2015/16
- 1707 parking notices were issued compared with 1379 in quarter 4 2015/16
- 28 abandoned / nuisance / untaxed vehicles removed

From January to June a total of 4 Neighbourhood Action Days took place resulting in –

- 18 parking charge notices and 3 fixed penalty notices being issued
- 5 untaxed vehicles removed
- 20 locations benefiting from dog foul signage
- 8 informal letters issued regarding the front of properties
- 2 incidents of offensive graffiti being removed
- 1 dog foul bin being installed

The Chair welcomed the report as a positive assessment of the difference the Council's investment in enforcement was making across the town. The Chair referred to the discussions earlier in the meeting and hoped that there would be scope to look at introducing the 'deep clean' proposal this autumn. In response to a Member question, the Chair commented that it was unlikely the proposal would be extended to all areas of the town initially and specific areas would need to be selected.

The Director commented that as the performance was so positive in this area and reflected the additional funds allocated by full Council it would be appropriate to share the performance report with all Councillors. The Committee supported the proposal.

A Member commented that their decision to support the finance allocated at Council had been driven by the need to tackle irresponsible dog owners and the statistics reported showed this was achieving that aim. In relation to the Committee's previous discussion on parking charges and the information reported within this report, the Member suggested that there was a need to see more enforcement in relation to parking in the areas away from the town centre as well.

Members welcomed the report and suggested that it would be valuable to see some information broken down by ward. There was a short discussion on dog fouling and the enforcement undertaken in other Council areas and whether this should be introduced in Hartlepool. The Chair indicated that all options would be considered in the future.

Decision

1. That the progress made on the specific areas of the Council Plan relevant to the Committee at the end of quarter 2 as reported be noted.
2. That the update from Community Safety and Engagement in relation to enforcement, as reported be noted.
3. That the Quarter 1 performance report be shared with all councillors.

35. Any Other Items which the Chair Considers Urgent

The Chair indicated that there were no items of business considered urgent.

The Chair advised Members that due to clashes with other Council commitments, the meetings in December and March would need to be re-arranged and that Democratic Services would advise Members of those changes as soon as possible.

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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