

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

13 December 2016

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair)

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

In accordance with Council Procedure 5.2 (ii) Councillor Kevin Cranney was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Dave Hunter

Also Present: Town Centre Manager

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Jeff Mason, Strategic Policy and Project Management Manager  
Phil Hepburn, Parking Services Manager  
Chris Wenlock, Parks and Cemeteries Manager  
Alyson Carr, Head of Finance, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **53. Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Dave Hunter.

### **54. Declarations of Interest**

None

### **55. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2016**

Received

## **56. Three Year Savings Programme – Neighbourhoods Division** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

To enable Members to consider the initial 2017/18 savings proposals relating to the Committee's remit to contribute towards achieving the overall savings requirement.

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

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods provided a presentation in support of the savings programme report. The presentation included the issues that had been considered by the Finance and Policy Committee on 2 December in a comprehensive report which brought together the previous separate Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy for revenue and capital to better integrate the Council's priorities and financial plans.

The presentation also included details of the Council's key priorities and 44 deliverables, the five year capital plan together with how this plan would be funded. Members were reminded of Government grant cuts over the last six years which had had a disproportionate impact on more deprived areas including Hartlepool. Given that the Council had already made significant budget reductions over the last six years, it was more and more difficult to balance the budget. Government grants would be cut by a further £9.8m over the next three years which was a cut of 38%. The Council faced a gross deficit of £20.8m and a three year strategy was being developed to address this deficit which aimed to minimise the impact on front line services. However, these measures would not address the whole budget deficit and the remaining deficit would be addressed through a Service Transformation Plan, details of which were provided.

The Director went on to present a detailed and comprehensive report which included a breakdown of the total savings over the last five years, the proposals for delivery of savings in Neighbourhood Services as part of the 2017/18 budget process, the context for achieving savings in 2018/19 and 2019/20, the risks associated with the proposals and the considerations which had been taken into account in developing them.

It was reported that Neighbourhood Services would contribute £1.225m towards achieving the overall savings requirement for the Council over the next three years, £655,000 in 2017/18, £410,000 in 2018/19 and a further £160,000 in 2019/20. Budget pressures were expected to continue and

strategies to manage these pressures were detailed in the report.

Members were advised of the risk, financial, equality and diversity and staffing considerations of the proposals.

Members considered in detail the savings proposals and expressed the following views/queries/comments:-

- (i) In relation to the proposal to increase staff parking charges, a Member was of the view that given the recent changes in contributions of staff car allowances it was not an appropriate time to increase charges and suggested that this issue be considered at a later date. The Committee supported this suggestion and requested that the staff car parking proposal be referred back to Corporate Management Team. The Director outlined the financial implications of this suggestion and the limited options available in achieving the Council's savings target.
- (ii) The Committee discussed the proposals to increase allotment fees during which the Chair and Director responded to issues raised. In relation to some concerns raised by a Member regarding the impact of the proposals, whilst such concerns were acknowledged, Members recognised that Hartlepool's charges had been significantly lower than other local authorities and acknowledged that savings had been identified from an area which would result in minimal impact. Members were of the view that the need to protect jobs was a higher priority and were disappointed to note that the Council had no alternative but to make compulsory redundancies to achieve the required savings target. Following further debate, the majority of Members expressed support in relation to this proposed saving.
- (iii) A number of queries were raised regarding the proposed savings. The Director provided clarification in relation to the waste management arrangements and reiterated the limited options available to achieve the required level of savings given the continuing Central Government cuts.
- (iii) In response to queries raised, the background to the decision taken regarding the Transport Interchange was provided.
- (iv) In relation to the proposal that the budget pressure relating to the Lifeguard Service be funded by introducing seasonal car parking charges, the Chair advised that this pressure should not be met by the Neighbourhood Services Committee and would be considered in further detail under the next agenda item (Minute No 57 refers).

## **Decision**

- (i) The Committee reluctantly agreed the savings proposals with the

exception of the proposals to increase staff car parking charges at this time.

- (ii) That the Corporate Management Team be asked to re-consider the proposal to increase staff car parking.
- (ii) The Committee did not support the proposals to link the introduction of seasonal parking charges at Seaton Carew to the continuation of the Lifeguard Service at Seaton Carew and on the Headland.
- (iii) That the contents of the report and comments of Members, as outlined above, be noted and be utilised to formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee.

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

### **Type of decision**

Key - tests (i) and (ii) apply – Reference RN 24/16

### **Purpose of report**

To consider options for reviewing car park charges.

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

The report provided background information to the Committee's decision in September 2016 that a review of car park charges be undertaken. Benchmarking data indicated that there were variations in approach to setting short stay parking charges across the Tees Valley, details of which were set out in the report.

There were numerous options that could be assessed in a review of charges. Previous comments expressed by the Committee had been taken into account and five different options for change have been appraised:-

1. Introduce 'free first 2 hour' parking in Middleton Grange Shopping Centre car parks.
2. Introduce a flat rate charge of £1 for short stay parking for up to 2 hours.
3. Introduce a flat rate charge of £1 for short stay parking for up to 2 hours which includes a 'free first 30 minute stay' made available at designated town centre car park sites.

4. Introduce a 'free after 3pm' scheme in designated Middleton Grange Shopping Centre car parks. This would enhance the 'free after 4pm' scheme currently in operation.
5. Introduce new summer season charges at car parks at Seaton Carew and Headland.

The advantages and issues arising with each option were provided and explored in detail in the report.

In summary, Members were advised that it was not possible to provide proposals for new car park tariffs which benefited all stakeholders whilst at the same time having a positive impact on the Council's financial position. The review concluded that the combination of options 2 and 5 would appear to be most beneficial to the Council whilst still offering opportunities for increasing visitor dwelling time to town centre shops and businesses.

It was noted that the proposed introduction of new charges at Seaton Carew and Headland, set out in option 5, would support the Council's overall financial position and enable enforcement activity to take place in Seaton Carew to improve poor parking choices and tackle congestion.

Members considered in detail the proposed options. The Director provided clarification in response to queries raised in relation to the restrictions in place in terms of utilising income generated from car parking enforcement.

In response to a query raised regarding the financial implications of implementing option 4, a free after 3.00 pm scheme in shopping centre car parks, the Director advised that such a move would result in a loss of income of approximately £20,000 per annum.

With regard to the option to introduce a 'free after 3pm' scheme in designated Middleton Grange Shopping Centre car parks, Members indicated they were minded to support this proposal, given the potential benefits to local businesses.

The Town Centre Manager, was in attendance at the meeting, and participated in a discussion around the continuation of the Shop Mobility Scheme within Middleton Grange Shopping Centre. The Chair highlighted the need for further discussions with Shop Mobility in terms of a way forward.

The Town Centre Manager raised concerns about 'free after 4.00 pm' currently in operation at a number of shopping centre car parks. He suggested that this proposal would only be sustainable if this applied to all car parks and expressed support for a pay on foot system where vehicles were identified on arrival and payments applied for the time spent in the shopping centre. The Chair indicated that as the report did not contain any information about the impact of extending the number of car parks involved in the current 'free after 4.00 pm' scheme, it was not possible for

the Committee to form a view on this matter, nor could they consider the impact of extending this to a 'free after 3.00 pm' scheme until the figures were known. The Chair requested that a further Committee report be prepared providing the necessary information early in the New Year.

Members expressed their support for Option 2, to introduce a flat rate charge of £1.00 for short stay parking of up to two hours. With regard to Option 5, to introduce seasonal car park charges at Seaton Carew and Headland car parks, whilst the majority of Members supported the proposal to introduce charges at Seaton Carew, they did not support the proposal to introduce charges at the Headland car park. Views were expressed that it was unlikely that introducing such charges at the Headland car park would result in any financial benefits as the car park was rarely full.

Following some concerns expressed by a Member regarding the impact of introducing car park charges at Seaton Carew, it was agreed that this issue be monitored and reviewed by this Committee in 12 months time.

The Chair informed the Committee that she had participated in discussions with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee which had resulted in an acceptance that the Lifeguard Service was a vital service and that the costs of retaining it should not be borne by any single service area. As a result, the Chair proposed that the matter of funding the Life Guard Service at both Seaton Carew and the Headland be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee for further consideration as part of the budget recommendations to Council.

## **Decision**

The Committee approved the following:-

- (i) Option 2 - to introduce a flat rate charge of £1 for short stay parking for up to two hours.
- (ii) Option 5 - the introduction of seasonal car parking charges at Seaton Carew and the impact of such charges be monitored and reviewed in 12 months time.
- (iii) That funding for continuation of the Lifeguard Service at both Seaton Carew and the Headland be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee for consideration as part of the budget recommendations to Council.
- (iv) To continue the existing support for town centre traders through the free parking initiative on Saturdays in December and free Sunday parking all year round.

- (v) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee to consider the following:-
  - a review of season ticket arrangements once the impact of changes to town centre car parking were known.
  - a review of long stay car parking once the changes arising from this review had been fully implemented.
  - the financial implications of introducing a free after 3pm option for all Town Centre car parks.
  
- (vi) That an early report be provided for Members consideration to include:-
  - financial impact information of increasing the number of car parks included in the 'free after 4' scheme.
  - the viability of introducing a 'free after 3' scheme.
  - information to enable Members to agree what parking charges should be levied after the first 2 hours at Seaton Carew.

**58. Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 30 September 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 report provided the background and financial reporting arrangements for 2016/17 as well as a summary of the overall Council financial position and General Fund outturn information in relation to the Neighbourhood Services Department.

Details of the overall budget position for the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services Department was summarised in a table included in the report together with the reasons for the forecast outturn. Further details of specific budget areas were outlined at Appendix A. The report included details of recommended reserves together with planned capital expenditure.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

**59. Council Plan 2016/17 – Quarter 2 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 quarter 2. The report also provided the Committee with an update on the waste and recycling performance.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods reported on the second 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 were identified in the appendix to the report.

The Department had also provided an update on recent activities in relation to waste and recycling.

In presenting the report, the Director highlighted salient points and was pleased to report that performance figures were on track and Members had undertaken a number of robust visits to waste and recycling centres, details of which were provided

The Chair commented on the need to review the current green waste collection dates, given the lengthy autumns to ensure they met community requirements. It was noted that an education and awareness campaign was currently being developed, details of which would be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

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**

- (i) That progress made on the specific areas of the Council Plan relevant to the Committee at the end of quarter 2, be noted.
- (ii) That the update in relation to waste and recycling, as set out in Appendix 1 be noted.

## **60. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Monday 23 January 2017 at the rescheduled time of 4.00 pm.

## **61. Chair's Closing Remarks**

In concluding the meeting, the Chair took the opportunity to wish the Committee and all attendees a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

The meeting concluded at 5.50 pm.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 20 DECEMBER 2016**