

# **FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

## **AGENDA**



**Monday 8 January 2018**

**at 10.00 am**

**in the Council Chamber,  
Civic Centre, Hartlepool.**

**MEMBERS:** FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, Clark, Cranney, Fleming, Hunter, James, Lindridge, Loynes, Moore, Smith and Thomas.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

**3. MINUTES**

- 3.1 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 22 November 2017.
- 3.2 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 16 October 2017.
- 3.3 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership held on 20 October 2017.

**4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS**

- 4.1 Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy - *Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Director of Finance and Policy*

**5. KEY DECISIONS**

No items.



**6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

- 6.1 Council Tax Base 2018/19 - *Director of Finance and Policy*
- 6.2 Irrecoverable Debts - Sundry Debts and Housing Benefit Overpayments-  
*Director of Finance and Policy*

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

No items.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

FOR INFORMATION

Future meeting dates –

Monday 12 February, 2018 at 10.00 am  
Monday 12 March, 2018 at 10.00 am



# **FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

22 NOVEMBER 2017

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

**Present:**

Councillor Christopher Akers Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Alan Clark, Kevin Cranney, Tim Fleming, Marjorie James,  
Jim Lindridge, Brenda Loynes, Shane Moore and Stephen Thomas.

Also Present: Councillor John Tennant.  
Jonathan Gibson, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Officers: Gill Alexander, Chief Executive  
Chris Little, Director of Finance and Policy  
Claire McLaren, Assistant Director, Corporate Services  
Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services  
Penny Thompson, Head of Service, Children's Hub and Partnerships  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

### **75. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Dave Hunter.

### **76. Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting Councillors Christopher Akers-Belcher, Alan Clark, Kevin Cranney and Shane Moore declared personal interests in relation to Minute No. 84 "Filling the Holiday Gap scheme 2017".

Later in the meeting during the discussions at Minute 88 "Departmental Annual Procurement Report Follow Up Actions", Councillors Christopher Akers-Belcher and Stephen Thomas declared personal and prejudicial interests and left the meeting for part of the debate.

### **77. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October, 2017**

Confirmed.

**78. Minutes of the meeting of the Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet held on 27 July, 2017**

Received.

**79. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018/19 to 2019/20 and Financial Outlook from 2020/21** (*Corporate Management Team*)

**Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework.

**Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to update the MTFS and to enable Members to finalise the detailed 2018/19 budget proposals to be referred to Council on 14th December 2017.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Finance and Policy indicated that as the report will be referred to Council as part of the budget proposals, the report detailed much of the information that had been reported to the Committee on 24th July 2017 and 18th September 2017. The report restated the budget deficits still to be identified for 2018/19 and 2019/20 and the significant financial risks including the issues around children's social care budgets which the Local Government Association (LGA) had predicted would be in deficit nationally by £2bn by 2020/21.

There were still significant issues that could be affected by government policy decisions and the impact of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget earlier in the day also need to be assessed. There were announcements relating to funding for the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and a rise in the national living wage to £7.83 per hour; the council's budget proposals had been set on an anticipated rise to £7.85 per hour.

The Director stated that, as previously reported, the Government did not include legislation in the Queen's speech to introduce 100% Business Rates Retention, or set out a timetable for completing a Fair Funding Review (FFR) to underpin the implementation of 100% Business Rates Retention. The FFR is critically important to addressing imbalances in service needs and the level of Business Rates and Council Tax income generated by individual councils. In late October 2017 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued an initial work plan for completing the FFR to enable a new funding formula and 100% Business Rates retention to be introduced. The FFR work plan table implied that individual authorities would not know the detailed impact of the FFR until summer or autumn at the earliest 2019. The work plan shows that the

results from the children's services review will not be completed until October 2019, which is only six weeks before the provisional local government funding settlement announcement for 2020/21. This timetable makes financial planning for 2020/21 extremely challenging as key funding allocations would not be known until about eight weeks before the 2020/21 budget needs to be set. Further updates would be provided to Members when more information becomes available.

The Director went on to highlight the strategy proposed for managing the residual budget deficits for 2018/19 and 2019/20 and the risks around the budget for Looked After Children. The Director also drew Members attention to the sections of the report relating to the Five Year Capital Plan, the Risk Issues and the Robustness of Budget Forecasts including the Director of Finance And Policy's Professional Advice, required by statute. In terms of consultation, the Director highlighted the minutes of the consultation meetings held with representatives of the business community and Trade Union representatives which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

In concluding the Director highlighted the diagram in the report conclusions which highlight the shift in funding from central government grant to council tax. The table showed how, since 2013/14 when 50% business rate retention had been introduced, the level of central government grant had fallen from £46.4m, 47% of the Council's overall budget, to £25.4m, 31% of the Council's anticipated budget for 2019/20. In the same period, the amount of Council Tax raised by the authority had risen from £30.8m in 2013/14, 31% of the Council's overall budget, to £40m, 49% of the Council's anticipated budget for 2019/20.

At the same time as managing significant cuts in funding Councils had also faced increased financial pressures from unfunded legislative changes, for example the National Living Wage. In addition, demand for services, particularly over the last few years in relation to Adult Services and Children's Services has increased. The Government recognised the Adult Social care pressures through the Adult Social Care Council Tax precept and the provision of additional funding in the March 2017 budget, though this was front loaded and, therefore, did not provide a permanent solution to Adult Social Care financial pressures. The Government had not provided additional funding for Children's Services and this issue was becoming a priority for Local Government.

To address the significant financial challenges facing the Council in 2018/19 and 2019/20 the Council approved a multi-year financial strategy in February 2017. This strategy was critically dependant on:

- Implementing planned Council Tax increases in line with the Government's policy of continuing to shift the funding of local services from Government grant (i.e. national taxation) to Council Tax. This included the Social Care precept;
- Achievement of forecast housing growth;

- The phased use of reserves to help manage budget reductions over the period 2017/18 to 2019/20 and;
- Achieving proposed savings.

The proposals set out in the report detailed changes to the approved 2018/19 and 2019/20 savings to reflect changes in circumstances since February. In addition, further savings proposals were outlined to address departmental pressures and to make a contribution towards addressing the remaining 2018/19 budget shortfall to enable a balanced budget to be set.

The Chair of the Children's Services Committee commented that the budget cuts to the council of over £21m over the past five years was beginning to make many services unsustainable. Councils and the LGA had written to the Minister and 'we' are now told that there will be a report in 2019; children's services needed additional financial support now. The Member welcomed the recommendations (vii) and (viii) (as set out in the report – Decisions 4(vii) and 4(viii) below) relating to the Child and Family Poverty Reserve. In relation to recommendation (viii) the Member questioned if the funding from TVCA for the Centre for Excellence in Creative Arts (CECA) had yet been approved. The Director of Finance and Policy indicated that no final decision had been made, though he understood the issue was being progressed by TVCA.

A Member raised the issue referred to in the report of the proposed closure of the Inspirations Garden Centre. The Chair stated that the garden centre had proved to be unsustainable as a business. There was greater scope for the Council to benefit through the sale and development of the land and this would be the subject of a further report to Members as proposed.

A Member referred to the identified budget pressure relating to the increase in Members Allowances which amounted to an additional £74,000. Several Members had indicated that they did not wish to take all of some of the proposed increase and the Member questioned if the amount of the budget pressure was still correct. The Director stated that the budget had to take into account the position if all the Members accepted the allowance increase. Any reduction in that pressure would be reflected within the overall budget outturn.

The Member also referred to the Beach Lifeguards and questioned if alternative means of delivering the service at a reduced cost to the authority could be explored, such as working in partnership with the RNLI as was the case in Redcar and Cleveland. The Chair indicated that the suggestion would be examined by the appropriate Policy Committee.

The Chair referred to Appendix D to the report and questioned the position in relation to replacement vehicles and whether leasing was considered as an alternative to purchase. A Member commented that a report on this issue had not been considered by the Neighbourhood Services Committee. The Director of Finance and Policy stated that when vehicles were sold the income generated was used to offset costs within the trading account for

the Transport Service. Alternatives to purchase were examined but the Authority had found in the past the conditions and penalties set by leasehold companies did not always make this an attractive alternative, particularly when prudential borrowing costs were so low. The Regeneration and Neighbourhoods department had been managing the use of vehicles to extend their 'life' beyond the payback period of the borrowing. It was agreed that a report on the proposed vehicle purchases be considered by the Neighbourhood Services Committee prior to any acquisitions being made for 2018/19. The Chair also requested that in 2019/20 and future years, a report be submitted to the Neighbourhood Services Committee on the proposed schedule of replacement vehicles prior to the inclusion of proposals within the MTFS report to this Committee. The Chair also stated that any income generated from vehicle sales should be returned to the general fund.

### **Decision**

1. That future proposed schedules of vehicle replacements be considered by the Neighbourhood Services Committee prior to their inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Strategy submitted to this Committee. The Neighbourhood Services Committee should also consider the best means of acquiring any such vehicles (leasing or prudential borrowing) to determine the best cost benefit to the Authority; and that such report also detail the income generated through the disposal of end of life/use vehicles. Any income generated from the sale of end of life/use vehicles should in future return to the General Fund and not departmental reserves, or be netted off against the cost of replacement vehicles.
2. That the Neighbourhood Services Committee examines potential alternative means of providing the Lifeguards Service including working in partnership with other safety organisations.
3. That a report be submitted to this Committee detailing potential proposals for the remainder of the 'Your Say, Our Future' capital investment budget and also how additional funding could be added to the fund from other capital funds – Housing Hartlepool and Section 106 monies.
4. That the following proposals be referred to full Council on 14th December 2017:-
  - (i) That as approved by this Committee on 18th September 2017, to note that the 18 months period stated by the owners to the Compulsory Purchase Order Inspector for completing the works on the Longscar Hall in Seaton Carew expires in December 2017. As these works had not commenced Council approval is sought to transfer the £0.600m of funding previously earmarked for this project to the overall Regeneration capital budget for the town;

- (ii) That the departmental savings proposals for 2018/19 and 2019/20 detailed in Appendices B and C to the report be approved, including the closure of Inspirations Garden Centre, and that Council notes that these proposals are largely unchanged from the initial savings proposals approved in February 2017;
- (iii) That the new 2018/19 and 2019/20 corporate savings detailed in paragraph 4.4 of the report be approved;
- (iv) That Council notes that further savings will need to be identified to address the currently forecast residual budget deficit for 2019/20 of £1.363m and that Council also notes that this deficit may increase to £3.863m if additional Government funding is not provided for Children's Services pressures, or demand for these services cannot be reduced;
- (v) That Council notes that if the Government ends the public sector pay cap of 1% and does not provide additional funding that each additional 1% increase above the current cap will increase costs by £0.400m per annum, which may increase the current 2018/19 and 2019/20 budget deficits;
- (vi) That Council notes that as 2018/19 is the third year of a four year settlement for Local Government there are unlikely to be any changes to the previously announced Government funding allocations for 2018/19. In the unlikely event that there are any changes when the 2018/19 Local Government Finance Settlement is issued details will be reported to a future meeting;
- (vii) That Council approves the proposal that the one-off residual balance on the Community Pool reserve (£24,000) and recurring External Audit fee saving (£20,000) are transferred to the Child and Family Poverty Reserve and that delegated authority is given to Finance and Policy Committee to determine use of these resources;
- (viii) That Council approves the recommendation agreed at the Joint Finance and Policy / Children's Services Committee meeting on 12th June 2017 that if the submission to the Tees Valley Combined Authority for funding towards the Centre for Excellence in Creative Arts is successful that all/part of the £136,000 Trading Standards fine income will not be needed for that project and will be transferred to the Child and Family Poverty Reserve;
- (ix) That Council approves the detailed capital expenditure proposals detailed in Appendix D to the report, which reflects the issues detailed in section 5 of the report. That Council



notes that any changes to the provisional scheme/programme specific Government allocations will be reported to the relevant Policy Committee once final allocations are known;

- (x) That Council notes the advice of the Director of Finance and Policy in relation to budget risks and robustness advice detailed in section 6 of the report.

## **80. Local Council Tax Support 2018/19** *(Director of Finance and Policy)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

The purposes of the report were to:

- (i) Update Members on the operation of the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme and the scheme's future financial risks associated with the Government's national welfare reforms; and
- (ii) Set out a proposed LCTS scheme for 2018/19;

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

The Director of Finance and Policy reported the background to the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme operated by Hartlepool Borough Council and comparisons with the LCTS schemes operated in other Tees valley authorities. The report outlined the progressive, though gradual reduction in the numbers of households receiving LCTS and the collection levels of council tax from those households.

In determining a LCTS scheme for 2018/19 Members were required to ensure it was financially viable and sustainable in future years. The report set out the required detail to make such a decision and the Director indicated that based on the current operation of the scheme, the proposed budget allocation and the LCTS Risk Reserve the scheme could be recommended for continuation at 12%. The Director highlighted the support provided by operating a 12% scheme, compared to a 20% scheme.

The Director highlighted the future impact that Universal Credit implementation will have on Housing benefit administration. The Director indicated that the situation would continue to be closely monitored and reports brought to Members when more information was available.

Members supported the proposal and indicated that Council should be proud of the record on LCTS in maintaining the 12% scheme which a Member calculated had put over £7m back into the poorest households in the town.

### **Decision**

1. That the future financial and administrative risks associated with the Local Council Tax Support scheme be noted;
2. That the proposal that the 2018/19 Local Council Tax Support scheme involving a cut of 12% to be referred to full Council in December 2017 for adoption.

## **81. Medium Term Financial Strategy - Review of Reserves as at 31st March 2017** *(Corporate Management Team)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To enable Members to consider:

- (i) the detailed review undertaken by the Corporate Management Team of the existing reserves that are held to manage financial risks or one-off commitments; and
- (ii) the Corporate Management Team recommendations in relation to the areas where risks have reduced, enabling reserves to be released to either support the Medium Term Financial Strategy over the period 2018/19 to 2019/20, or to fund other one-off priorities.

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

The Director of Finance and Policy reported that as in previous years the Review of Reserves report highlighted the findings of an Audit Commission national report published early in 2013 on the level of reserves that Councils hold and the decisions Councils make relating to them. Whilst, the Audit Commission report was published in 2013 the report identified a range of questions which remain relevant and help Members in their decision making on reserves, which includes a 'good-quality, annual review to ensure the purpose and level of reserves align with medium-term financial planning'.

As reported in previous years the starting point for the reserves review is the Statement of Accounts which details the total reserves held by the Council at the end of the financial year. For this review the relevant Statement of Accounts shows the position at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 and at that date the Council held total reserves of £51.935m. This is £8.924m lower than the balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 of £60.859m. This is a reduction of nearly 15%, which reflected the planned use of reserve approved with the MTFS.

In summary reserves held at 31st March 2017 consist of six components,

as summarised in the following table. The table also included details of the forecast balance at 31st March 2017 and 31st March 2021 and shows that reserves will reduce significantly over the next few years as these resources are used to support the MTFS and to fund approved one-off commitments.

Summary of reserves at 31.03.17 and forecast at 31.03.21

31.03.16 £'m		31.03.17 £'m	31.03.21 forecast
4.753	<u>Un-earmarked General Fund Balance</u> The 31.03.21 forecast assumes this reserve is maintained over the period to manage in-year risks and is based on any unavoidable usage being repaid.	4.526	4.526
5.781	<u>Budget Support and Investment Reserves</u> The 31.03.21 reflects current planned use to support the MTFS and fund one-off capital investment.	15.227	0
3.916	<u>School Balances</u> Individual schools will determine usage.	2.439	2.439
0	Housing Revenue Account Balance	0.538	0.385
6.517	<u>Earmarked Capital Reserves</u> The 31.03.21 forecast reflects use of this reserve to fund approved capital commitments re-phased from 2016/17 to 2017/18 or futures years.	6.295	0
<b>20.967</b>	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>29.025</b>	<b>7.350</b>
39.892	<u>Earmarked Revenue Reserves</u> Details of planned usage up to 31.03.21 are provided in the appendices to the report. The forecast balance reflects those reserves where it is difficult to determine the phasing of commitments. This figure will reduce as these commitments are incurred over the next 3 years.	22.910	6.457
<b>60.859</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>51.935</b>	<b>13.807</b>

The Director reminded Members that a comprehensive review of reserves had been completed last year and in the majority of cases the reserves were fully committed and there had been no changes in circumstances to enable resources to be released. The reserves falling into this category account for 56% (£29.025m) of the Council's total reserves.

The remaining 44% (£22.910m) of the Council's reserves had been reviewed to identify areas where the original financial risk or financial commitment the reserve was established to fund had reduced. This review had identified net resources of £1.084m which could now be released, as detailed in Appendices A to E to the report. The Director suggested that any decision on the use of the released reserves should be delayed at this time and a decision taken as part of the 2017/18 outturn strategy.

A Member sought clarification from the Director that in an emergency situation, the Council only had £4.5m in reserve for such situations. The

Director confirmed this would be the case. Some would see that as a resource that could be used to maintain services but using reserves too quickly would only build problems for the future.

The Chair referred to recommendation (v) and the choice on whether the £24,000 residual balance of the Community Grant Pool reserve should be allocated to supplement the Capital Investment reserve or supplement the Child and Family Poverty Reserve and proposed that the funds be transferred to the Child and Family Poverty Reserve. This was supported by Members.

### **Decision**

1. The Committee noted that a comprehensive review of existing reserves and risks has been completed and this has identified that one-off resources of £1.084m can be released;
2. The Committee noted the potential issues which may need to be funded using the available one-off resources as detailed in section 6 of the report;
3. The Committee noted that at this stage there was insufficient information available on a range of financial risks facing the Council in 2018/19, including actual pay awards and continuing Looked after Children pressures, which may need to be a first call on the one off resources referred to in recommendation (i) to avoid having to make in-year budget cuts in 2018/19. Therefore, it was agreed that a strategy for using these resources is delayed and considered as part of the 2017/18 Outturn Strategy, when more information was available;
4. The Committee approved the allocation of £150,000 released from the review of Education Reserves to partly fund the creation of an Education Innovation Fund reserve and that Council approval be sought to delegate authority to Children's Services Committee to approve a strategy for using these resources.
5. That the £24,000 residual balance of the Community Grant Pool reserve be allocated to the Child and Family Poverty Reserve.

## **82. Strategic Financial Management Report - as at 30th September 2017** *(Corporate Management Team)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

The purposes of the report were to inform Members of:

- i) 2017/18 Forecast General Fund Outturn;

- ii) Corporate Income Collection Performance; and
- iii) 2017/18 Capital Programme Monitoring.

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

The Director of Finance and Policy reported that an assessment of the forecast 2017/18 outturn had been completed and an over spend of £0.250m was anticipated. Details were provided in Appendix A to the report, which also included details of the actual 2016/17 outturn. The 2017/18 outturn had been prepared to reflect expenditure incurred to date and forecast to be incurred in the rest of the financial year. As Members would be aware from previous years significant elements of the Council's budget were demand led and affected by expenditure over the winter months, including care costs in relation to older people and winter maintenance. The outturn forecasts would be closely monitored and regular updates would be reported to this Committee. The forecasts needed to be considered in the context of the complexity of managing a gross General Fund budget of £260m and a net budget of £73m.

The Director indicated that the forecast General Fund revenue budget over spend of £0.250m mainly reflected Children's Services pressures and potential Regeneration and Neighbourhoods income shortfalls. To address the forecast deficit the following options were being explored and further details will be reported to a future meeting:

- identify 'discretionary spending' which can be stopped, or delayed;
- reserves review has been completed. One off funding may need to be allocated to offset the overspend;
- capitalise existing revenue spending.

In relation to collection of Business Rates and Council Tax, these issues were impacted by the significant changes implemented in April 2013 and the ongoing difficult economic climate. At the 30th September 2017 Council Tax collection levels were stable at 54.12% slightly down on this stage last year and that business rates collection at 53.12% was slightly up on this stage last year. It was anticipated that robust recovery action pursued over the remainder of the financial year would ensure in-year collection targets were achieved.

The position in relation to achieving the capital receipts targets continued to be monitored closely. The proposed sale of land at Hart was anticipated to be the largest capital receipt to be achieved over the next three years (i.e. 2017/18 to 2019/20) and would be received in instalments over the period 2018/19 to 2020/21. Therefore, there would continue to be a reliance on prudential borrowing until these monies were received. As it was not anticipated that there would be any significant increase in the Bank of England Base Rate, the cost of using prudential borrowing would be marginal. These additional costs could be accommodated from within the overall centralised estimates budget.

The Chair referred to the decision earlier in the meeting and indicated that a report be submitted to this Committee detailing potential proposals for the remainder of the 'Your Say, Our Future' capital investment budget, plus funding secured from Housing Hartlepool and section 106 receipts.

### **Decision**

1. That the report be noted.
2. The Committee noted the forecast 2017/18 General Fund Revenue budget overspend of £0.250m and noted that details of the options being explored to address the forecast overspend as detailed in paragraph 5.10 of the report, would be reported to a future meeting.
3. That the proposal to use of the under-spends in relation to the North Central Hartlepool Regeneration scheme (£0.110m) and Brierton site (£0.021m) to reduce the capital receipts target be approved.
4. That the use of £11,000 from the unallocated Building Condition Fund budget be approved to fund the additional cost of the Carnegie boiler replacement as detailed in paragraph 9.12 of the report.

## **83. Council Plan 2017 – 2020 - Quarter 2 Performance Report** *(Chief Executive)*

### **Type of decision**

Non Key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to update Finance and Policy Committee of the progress made against the Council Plan 2017-2020 at the end of quarter 2 2017/18 and to seek Members approval to a number of changes/updates to the plan.

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

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services reported that a summary of progress at the end of quarter 2 2017/18 was included as Appendix 1 to the report and Members were requested to note the key achievements made this quarter as set out by strategic priority in the info-graphic on page 1 of Appendix 1.

The six strategic priorities within the Council Plan are underpinned by 45 key deliverables. A set of milestones (actions) have been identified for each key deliverable and in total there are 229 milestones in the plan. At the end of quarter 2, the progress against the milestones within the Council Plan showed that 38% were complete, 54% were in progress and 8% not started. The Assistant Director highlighted that of the milestones that were

currently in progress, 37 had missed or would miss their due dates, which represented 16% of all of the milestones in the plan. At quarter 2 this was not unexpected but there were a number of milestones that were off target and this was in the main due to overly ambitious and/or unrealistic deadlines being set. It should be noted that the 37 missed milestones were contained within 17 key deliverables with a number of key deliverables having multiple missed milestones due to subsequent actions being dependent on the first being achieved within the timescale prescribed.

There are currently 74 performance indicators within the Council Plan. At the end of quarter 2 data was available against targets for 40 performance indicators and currently 35% were on target, 22.5% had made acceptable progress and 12.5% would not hit their target.

The Chair suggested that the info-graphic did show a positive picture for the authority and that a positive press release around the info-graphic should be progressed.

### **Decision**

1. That the overall progress made on the Council Plan 2017-20 at the end of Quarter 2 2017/18 as set out in the report and the key achievements as set out in the info-graphic on page 1 of Appendix 1 to the report be noted.
2. That the info-graphic on page 1 of Appendix 1 to the report be the basis of positive press publicity on the Council's performance.
3. That the notes provided on the 37 milestones that had missed or would miss their due dates, the proposed date changes and the proposed removal of 1 milestone as set out in pages 2 - 14 of Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
4. That the notes provided on the five performance indicators that had been identified as areas for improvement and the proposed removal of one performance indicator as set out in pages 15-16 of appendix 1 to the report be approved.

## **84. Filling the Holiday Gap scheme 2017** (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non Key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide Members with the key outcomes from the 2017 'Filling the Holiday Gap' (Holiday Hunger) community grant scheme, delivered over the 6-week school summer holidays.

Based on the early findings from the monitoring and evaluation process, the report set out some future proposals and next steps, if Members feel that a similar scheme should be funded over Christmas, Easter and summer 2018.

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

The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services reported that Members at the meeting of this Committee on 10 February, 2017 approved that £42,000 would be allocated to the community ring-fenced reserve for summer 2017 with revised criteria. The community ring-fenced resource supported 18 individual summer activity schemes in total, through the provision of healthy meals and snacks. The report detailed the allocation of funds to each project. The grants panel agreed that £3,100 from any under-spend could be allocated towards the provision of healthy cooking skills training to enhance the project and build local capacity.

The Director indicated that there had been an increase in the number of individual children benefiting from the schemes from 2,689 in 2016 to at least 5,111 in 2017. A total of 19 staff from 11 different organisations attended the one-day cooking skills training delivered by the Children's Food Trust. A full evaluation report of the 2017 'Filling the Holiday Gap Scheme' would be published shortly and made available to Members.

As part of the evaluation and monitoring process, organisations were asked if they would be interested in delivering a similar scheme during significant holiday periods such as Christmas and Easter – all organisations indicated that they would consider this if additional funding was made available. Some groups already provide Christmas activities but this was limited by staff capacity and resources, so additional funding could enable better support to be provided to a greater number of residents.

If all eighteen organisations were given pro-rata funding to cover the two-week Christmas holidays, this would amount to a maximum of £14,000. With a £4,500 under-spend from the summer budget, this equated to approximately £10,000 required from the Child and Family Poverty reserve.

The Director, therefore, proposed that members agree to allocate a further £14,500 towards a Christmas 2017 'Filling the Holiday Gap' scheme, with any further under-spend being utilised to support an Easter scheme at the end of the 2017/18 financial year. It was also proposed that Members agree to allocate the remaining £9,000 to support the Hartlepool Foodbank over the Christmas/January 2018 period.

The Chair welcomed the report and the proposals, particularly the support to the Hartlepool Foodbank. The Chair indicated that after hearing from a number of the organisations, he considered that the organisations should be given greater flexibility to issue food parcels rather than meals. This would also take the pressure of the Foodbank. This proposal was



seconded and supported by the Committee.

Members restated their support for the scheme and the extensions proposed in the report. Members were critical that much of the need for people to turn to the Foodbank stemmed from government policy and austerity.

Members welcomed the support to the scheme that had come from allotment holders providing fresh produce for families to cook meals from scratch. Following a suggestion from a Member, the Chair indicated that he would write to the allotment societies around the town thanking them for their support as Leader of the Council and on behalf of all Members.

### **Decision**

1. The Committee noted the findings of the report and supported the proposals for future delivery of a holiday provision scheme.
2. The Committee approved the provision of another ring-fenced non-recurrent community resource for Christmas 2017 through the Child and Family Poverty Reserve. This included another £10,000 being made available, plus the £4,500 under-spend from the summer 2017 budget.
3. The Committee approved the granting of £9,000 for Hartlepool Foodbank over the Christmas/January 2018.
4. The Committee supported the Leader of the Council writing, on behalf of all Members to thank the various allotment societies in Hartlepool for their continued support for the holiday hunger schemes.

## **85. Child and Family Poverty – Update** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

### **Purpose of report**

To update members on the national position regarding child poverty and on local progress to tackle child and family poverty in Hartlepool.

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

The Head of Service, Children's Hub and Partnerships reported that the 'poverty line' is defined as 60% of the median income. In the UK, median income for a couple with two children is £623 per week. 60% of that is £374 a week. Families with less than £374 per week are, therefore, classed as living in poverty. This is total income and not disposable income and

covers the cost of housing, bills, clothing, food and so on.

Approximately 21% of children in the UK (or 2.8 million) are now classed as living in poverty, two thirds of whom are from working families. Ongoing planned changes to welfare and benefits are predicted to impact further on the numbers of children affected.

While many families living in poverty are 'workless' around 62% of children living in poverty live in a household where at least one parent works.

In the North East there are approximately 132,000 children living in poverty and this equates to around 24% across the region. In Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Newcastle this figure rises with some of the highest levels of poverty outside of London. The most up-to-date figure for Hartlepool was 32%, with Children in workless households numbering 21.24%.

Details of the current action being taken in Hartlepool and across the northeast were outlined in the report, though the Head of Service indicated that it was not a comprehensive outline of all the work ongoing as with the wide range of groups and work in this area, that would be difficult to define.

The Head of Service indicated that the main issues arose in certain wards in the town, as members would expect, and these correlated closely to the most deprived wards. Foodbank referrals were also on the increase, with the Children's Hub being one of the largest referrers to this service.

The Head of Service also highlighted the work being undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who continued their presence in Hartlepool at Hartfields Retirement Village. The Foundation had in 2016 made a commitment to supporting social investment in the town and this had included the provision of a dedicated Community Development Worker.

Members welcomed the report and considered that the Council needed to gain some recognition of the work it was undertaken, often with partners, in alleviating the problem of child and family poverty. Reference had been made to the delivery of services through the Community Hubs and a Member sought some clarification as to the works being undertaken at the South Community Hub and sought a meeting of Manor ward councillors with the Interim Director of Public Health. Members suggested that this be extended to neighbouring wards in light of the area the hub served.

The Chair referred to the Discretionary Housing Benefit budget and the increasing calls on that fund. The Chair was concerned that no family should be turned away from help because the budget had been exhausted and suggested that if the budget needed to be topped up, then that should happen. The Head of Service indicated that the budget was carefully monitored and it was likely that all of the budget would be spent by the end of the financial year.

A Member of the public questioned if Universal Credit had been fully rolled

out in Hartlepool. The Head of Service stated that around 1000 families had moved to the new system though there were an element of 'legacy benefits' to remain. The transfer had gone much quicker than anticipated and it was expected that the full system would be in place by 2020.

The Chair sought to clarify one element in the report. The report referred to a Social investment scheme involving Hartlepool Borough Council and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, where up to £450,000 had been allocated to purchase residential houses for Syrian refugees as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme. The Chair wished it to be recorded that the Council had not been given £450,000 but was supporting the housing scheme for Syrian refugees.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **86. Departmental Annual Procurement Report Follow Up Actions** (*Director of Finance and Policy*)

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the additional information requested by the Finance and Policy Committee in relation to the Departmental Annual Procurement Reports (DAPR's) submitted on 18 September 2017.

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

The Director of Finance and Policy submitted a report outlining the additional information requested by Finance and Policy Committee when it originally considered the Annual Procurement report at the meeting on 18 September 2017.

Members indicated that they wished to discuss some of the information provided in the exempt appendices to the report. The appendix 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).

The appropriate resolution was moved and agreed by Members and the meeting moved into closed session.

During the discussion in the exempt section of the meeting, Councillors Christopher Akers-Belcher and Stephen Thomas declared personal and

prejudicial interests and left the meeting for the remainder of the debate.

### **Decision**

Details are set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

## **87. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 88 – Departmental Annual Procurement Report Follow Up Actions – This item contains 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).

## **88. Departmental Annual Procurement Report Follow Up Actions** *(Director of Finance and Policy)* This item contains 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).

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the additional information requested by the Finance and Policy Committee in relation to the Departmental Annual Procurement Reports (DAPR's) submitted on 18 September 2017.

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

The Director of Finance and Policy submitted a report outlining the additional information requested by Finance and Policy Committee when it originally considered the Annual Procurement report at the meeting on 18 September 2017.

During the discussion in the exempt section of the meeting, Councillors Christopher Akers-Belcher and Stephen Thomas declared personal and

prejudicial interests and left the meeting for the remainder of the debate.

**Decision**

Details are set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

**89. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

None.

The meeting concluded at 4.45 pm.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 1 DECEMBER 2017**

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

## MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

16 October 2017

The meeting commenced at 5 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Representatives of Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group, Dr Timlin (In the Chair)

### **Prescribed Members:**

Elected Members, Hartlepool Borough Council – Councillors Buchan and Clark  
Representatives of Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group – Dr Andrea Jones

Interim Director of Public Health, Hartlepool Borough Council – Dr Paul Edmondson-Jones

Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services, Hartlepool Borough Council – Sally Robinson

Director, Adults and Community Based Services, Hartlepool Borough Council – Jill Harrison

Representatives of Healthwatch – Ruby Marshall and Margaret Wrenn

### **Other Members:**

Representative of Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust – David Brown

Representative of GP Federation – Fiona Adamson

Also in attendance:-

Representatives of the following organisations:-

Healthwatch – Lynn Allison, Christopher Akers-Belcher, Liz Fletcher, Carol Sherwood and Stephen Thomas

Clinical Commissioning Group – Nicola Childs and Lisa Tempest

Hartlepool Carers – Christine Fewster

York University – Brian Loader, Dr Nathan Manning, Dr Amanda Mason-Jones

Young People from the Digital Futures Project.

Artists involved in the Digital Futures Project – Stuart Langley, Suzie Devey and Diane Watson.

Hartlepool Borough Council Officers - Kimberley Butler, Leigh Keeble, Dr Esther Mireku, Juliette Ward and Amanda Whitaker

## **23. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor C Akers-Belcher, Leader of Council  
Elected Member, Hartlepool Borough Council – Councillor Thomas  
Representative of Hartlepool Voluntary and Community Sector – Tracy Woodall  
Representative of Cleveland Police – ACC Jason Harwin

## **24. Declarations of interest by Members**

Dr Timlin and Councillor Clark declared an interest due to their involvement in the Project.

## **25. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 4 September 2017 were confirmed.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

## **26. Young Futures Project Update** (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

A report had been circulated which provided the Board with an update of the Young Future's project. It had been decided following work by the Dudley Youth Health Research group, presented at the Healthwatch England Conference, that Hartlepool would develop a similar model. The model had focused on engaging with young people around their experiences of health and social care and understanding their experiences and expectations for ongoing development of services. Based on the Dudley model, it had been decided to train young people to research the health and social care issues for young people. To allow this approach, Healthwatch, Hartlepool Borough Council and York University had compiled a proposal for Young Future's project and had been successful in a bid for funding from the Economic and Social Research Council.

The Board was advised that recruitment and involvement of young people had commenced using a variety of techniques, providing young people with information around aims, commitment and involvement of the project. Twenty two young people had attended a two day residential at York University which had provided an opportunity for the young people to understand the aims of the project in more depth. Throughout the residential the young people had learned more about research methods and their importance. Once themes had been decided, an outline of their project had been planned. Since returning to Hartlepool the groups had sustained their commitment and had met a number of times to continue with their research and development of their project area. An online survey had been developed which all three groups had contributed to, covering all three group's area of work.

Groups had focused on generic themes of young people's experience of mental health problems, mental health and social care provision and activities that made young people feel good about themselves and contribute to emotional wellbeing. Following the data collection, the three groups had developed art work that represented their findings. The art work was on display at the Board meeting.

At the meeting, the Board was advised of further information relating to the background to the project and project information. Brian Loader, Senior Lecturer provided an overview of the involvement of York University and reflected on the Project. An overview of the project was also provided by way of a film which was shown to the Board at the meeting.

Young people representatives presented the following:-

- Information and key findings regarding young people's experience of mental health
- Information and key findings on young people's experience of mental health services
- Information and key findings on the impact of leisure activities on emotional wellbeing

Following a facilitated group work session when groups addressed a number of key questions associated with the Project, the Board received feedback from the Groups which included the following:-

- Practical measures including more input into locations for young people to go, increased use of young inspectors and targeted websites.
- Teachers and other professionals to be trained so that they are more aware of mental health issues and that young people be involved in training to ensure professionals know how to be accessible to young people.
- Increased accessibility and communication associated with Hartlepool Now website and the availability of the Family Services directory to ensure more 'front facing'.
- Use of social media compared to use of websites.
- In terms of leisure facilities, the promotion of free gym memberships, reviewing the criteria (the current threshold is aged 14), promotion of rewards schemes and inclusion in Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Benefits associated with involvement in music in terms of promoting social and emotional wellbeing. It was highlighted that there were issues associated with the cost of purchasing instruments. The reopening of the Northern Lights Academy was highlighted as a new development in relation to creative arts.
- It was considered that there was a need for more low level support eg. The training of youth workers to provide support.
- Difficulties arising from booking a GP appointment were highlighted including issues associated with feelings of intimidation. It was suggested that there needed to be improved access to school nurses



and also drop in sessions targeted to young people.

- The operation of a 'one stop shop' in Lambeth was highlighted in terms of a safe environment where there was no stigma attached to attending. The one stop shop in Middleton Grange Shopping Centre was highlighted as being a provision for young people which is used by many young people although it was recognised that there was potential to further develop that offer.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the period of waiting time to be seen by CAHMS and that the service appeared to only treat young people with the highest levels of need.
- The need for a consistent approach to be adopted across all schools although funding was identified as a significant barrier.

The artwork displayed at the meeting was highlighted to the Board in terms of the displayed images, posters and ceramics.

Prior to the meeting closing, expressions of appreciation were expressed to all those who had attended and contributed to the meeting with particular reference to the young people and the Council's youth workers/participation team.

### **Decision**

- (i) Board members noted the report and discussed the findings of the project including how the data collected can be used to improve services for young people.
- (ii) The Board recommended that the implications of the research findings are reflected in the ongoing refresh of the Hartlepool Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- (iii) The feedback from the Groups was referred to York University for further consideration.

## **27. Any Other Business**

None

Meeting concluded at 6.30 p.m.

CHAIR

## **SAFER HARTLEPOOL PARTNERSHIP MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

20 October 2017

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)  
Councillor Steve Thomas  
Clare Clark, Head of Community Safety and Engagement  
Chief Superintendent Alastair Simpson, Cleveland Police  
Chief Inspector Nigel Burnell, Chair of Youth Offending Board  
John Bentley, Safe in Tees Valley  
Steve Johnson, Cleveland Fire Authority  
Jean Golightly, Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees Clinical  
Commissioning Group

Rachelle Kipling was in attendance as substitute for Barry Copping, Carole Johnson as substitute for Paul Edmondson-Jones and Ann Robertson as substitute for Julie Allan

Also present: Councillor Alan Clark, Hartlepool Borough Council  
Helen Baker, Cleveland Police

Officers: Rachel Parker, Community Safety Team Leader  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **29. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Barry Copping, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, Hartlepool Borough Council, Paul Edmondson Jones, Interim Director of Public Health, Hartlepool Borough Council, Julie Allan, National Probation Service, John Graham, Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company and Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services, Hartlepool Borough Council.

### **30. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **31. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2017**

Confirmed.

### **32. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Min 25 – Youth Justice Strategic Plan

With regard to Minute 25 relating to the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, the Member from the CCG sought clarification on the discussions regarding blast at the last meeting to which the Chief Superintendent updated the Partnership on the debate. It was noted that discussion had included the way in which partners and services worked together in terms of cross-agency working, information sharing and the opportunities to test the level of Partnership problem solving. An action had been allocated to the Chief Inspector of Neighbourhoods (Chair of the Youth Offending Board) to provide feedback to the Partnership on the level of engagement and information sharing in terms of addressing anti-social behaviour.

In relation to Minute 28 regarding the Substance Misuse Sub-Group update, a representative from the Public Health Department apologised for the misunderstanding at the last meeting and sought the Partnership's views on a way forward. The Chair indicated that this report should be considered at the next meeting of the Partnership in December.

#### **Decision**

- (i) That the Chief Inspector of Neighbourhoods (Chair of the Youth Offending Board) provide an update report to the next meeting in relation to the effectiveness of cross-agency working including the level of information sharing and communications across partnerships in terms of addressing anti-social behaviour.
- (ii) That the Substance Misuse Sub-Group update report be submitted to the next meeting of the Partnership.

### **33. Domestic Abuse Strategic Group Update including Presentation on Victim Withdrawal Rates** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

#### **Purpose of report**

To provide an overview of activity undertaken by the Hartlepool Domestic Abuse Strategy Group during 2017.

To receive a presentation on victim withdrawal rates as a key area of work undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Sub-Group.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Head of Community Safety and Engagement introduced the report which provided background information to the purpose of the Domestic Abuse Group. The Partnership was referred to the action plan, appended to the report, which provided an update on progress to date and incorporated the four key strategic objectives in terms of prevention of abuse, partnership working, provision of services and pursuing perpetrators.

It was reported that good progress had been made against the Domestic Violence and Abuse Action Plan. Details of work that had been carried out to date together with future work was outlined. The importance of training for front line staff was highlighted.

The representative from the Public Health Department commented on the benefits of the White Ribbon Campaign and the Interim Director of Public Health's involvement and experience in this area. It was envisaged that a small working group would be developed together with an outline plan, an update of which would be presented to the next meeting of the Partnership.

In support of the report, a representative from Cleveland Police, who was in attendance at the meeting, provided the Partnership with a presentation in relation to victim withdrawal rates which was a key area of work undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Sub-Group. The presentation focussed on the following:-

- Statistical Information - 14,500 incidents of Domestic Abuse reported in Cleveland last year which equates to 12% of all recorded crime
- How to better protect victims – 55% of victims withdraw their support for a prosecution
- Results of Victim Survey undertaken to continually improve service provision
- Analysis – Voice of the Victim
- What works
  - My sister's Place (MSP)
  - Independent Domestic Abuse Advisory Services
- Response – Victim Engagement Strategy
  - Prepare/Prevent/Protect/Pursue
- Assess Impact Success

Partnership Members welcomed the initiative and commented on the benefits as a result. A query was raised as to the potential reasons for

higher rates of children witnessing domestic abuse in Hartlepool than other areas in the Tees Valley. The representative from Cleveland Police advised that the launch of Operation Encompass in Hartlepool may be a contributory factor as well as the demographics of households given that the number of children in households in Hartlepool was greater than neighbouring areas. It was acknowledged that there was more work to do to gain a better understanding of this issue.

In the lengthy discussion that followed, the representative responded to issues raised in relation to the presentation. Clarification was provided regarding the roles and responsibilities of the IDVA Co-ordinator and recently appointed Independent Chairs as well as the funding arrangements. The benefits of the IDVA Co-ordinator post were also outlined. In response to a query raised regarding the referral arrangements, the representative provided clarification regarding the circumstances in which a safeguarding referral could be made. The importance of prevention was emphasised and the Chair was keen to utilise any publicity material available to assist with prevention. The representative outlined the current promotion arrangements and referred to a recently developed Hollie Guard mobile phone application which was available to vulnerable victims and agreed to provide this information following the meeting. The Chair suggested that the community safety and prevention information, including details of Clare's Law, be publicised in the December edition of the Council's Hartbeat magazine.

In concluding the debate, the Head of Community Safety and Engagement reported that whilst the number of incidents of domestic abuse reported to the Police continued to be of concern, data collected by Cleveland Police did, however suggest a reduction in the number of MARAC repeat referrals, details of which were set out in the report. The increase in the number of referrals to the Outreach element of the specialist domestic abuse service was also indicative of an increased awareness amongst statutory services of the wider help available for victims and their families.

The Chair thanked the representative for an informative presentation.

### **Decision**

- (i) The contents of the report and progress made to date against the Domestic Violence and Abuse Action Plan be noted.
- (ii) The contents of the presentation and comments of Members were noted.
- (iii) That an outline plan in relation to the White Ribbon Campaign be submitted to the next meeting of the Partnership.
- (iv) That information relating to the Hollie Guard Mobile Phone application be provided to Partnership Members following the meeting.

- (v) That community safety and prevention information, including details of Clare's law, be publicised in the December edition of the Council's Hartbeat magazine.

### **34. Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy (Draft)** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

#### **Purpose of report**

To consider and comment on the Council's Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy (Draft)

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

The report set out the background to the development of the Council's Draft Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy, attached as Appendix 1.

The strategy had been informed by the views expressed last summer through Your Say, Our Future and the recent Voluntary and Community Sector Survey. It had also been developed to reflect what worked well in Hartlepool and elsewhere and to build upon the strong foundations that were already in place in the town.

The strategy had been prepared in the style of a plan on a page. This was intended to ensure that the strategy was simple and easy to understand and could be used as an easy reference document. An action plan would sit alongside the strategy to set out what specifically would be done to ensure that the vision of the strategy was delivered. Some examples of what might be included were set out within the draft strategy. The action plan would be further developed following the 8 week consultation period with a final draft being presented to Finance and Policy Committee in January 2018 and final approval by Council expected in March 2018.

Details of the consultation arrangements were provided, as set out in the report.

With regard to the proposed consultation and engagement process and the proposals to utilise community hubs as a basis for key consultation the Chair commented that community hubs should include the Centre for Independent Living and the strategy should reflect the Council's commitment to the Tees Valley City of Sanctuary.

#### **Decision**

- (i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.

- (ii) That the strategy should include reference to the Centre for Independent Living as a basis for key consultation and the Council's commitment to the Tees Valley of Sanctuary.

### **35. Hate Crime Update** (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To update the Safer Hartlepool Partnership on the level of reported hate incidents and crimes across Hartlepool.
2. To inform the Safer Hartlepool Partnership of the publication of new public policy statements by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on how it will prosecute hate crime and support victims in England and Wales.

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

The Community Safety Team Leader presented the report which provided the background to concerns reported nationally about rising reports of hate crimes linked to the EU Referendum and the Partnership's request for a report in September 2016 outlining the current trends in relation to hate crimes and incidents in Hartlepool. The report highlighted that although numbers remained low, there had been an increase in racially motivated incidents in Hartlepool over the period April 2015 to July 2016.

On a national level these concerns had been responded to by the CPS initiating a 13 week consultation with a view to publishing revised policy statements covering a number of strands of hate crime, as detailed in the report.

It was reported that further analysis had been undertaken to investigate the prominence of hate crime reported and detailed information for the period September 2016 to August 2017 was provided, with 167 hate crime incidents recorded by the police in Hartlepool which represented an increase of 17 incidents when compared to the same period the previous year. Information as a comparator with the previous year was also provided in relation to racially motivated incidents which were following an increasing trend with incidents increasing by 22%.

The Partnership was advised of the key points contained within the newly revised Policy Statements, published in August 2017, in relation to prosecuting hate crime

Following presentation of the report, the Community Safety Team Leader responded to queries raised in relation to hate crime figures by type.

The Chief Superintendent commented on the potential reasons for an

increase in hate crime which included links to the EU referendum and changes to the way in which hate crime was recorded. The increase in the use of social media provided an opportunity for individuals to air their views and there had been an increase in on-line racist related comments following Brexit which had also contributed to the growth in hate crime. Partnership Members were briefed on the recent measures introduced by the police to tackle hate related crime. Given that hate crime was still under reported, the rise in hate crime figures could be viewed as a positive measure. In relation to the higher number of terrorist attacks nationally in the last year, positive community action, in response to such consequences had been evident.

The Chair questioned whether any analysis had been undertaken in terms of the level of hate crime attributed to social media. In response, the Chief Superintendent indicated that whilst the majority of hate crime was linked to public order offences on the street, a significant level of unreported hate crime was taking place on line, details of which would be presented to a future meeting.

Emphasis was placed upon the importance of encouraging individuals to report such issues and the need to promote third party reporting centres. Clarification was sought in terms of what could be done, as a local authority, to ensure the relevant information was provided to assist in securing a successful prosecution. Members were advised that the vision did provide a reporting mechanism for hate crime, which the police were currently reviewing and would include exploring links with local processes.

The need to widely promote how issues of this type could be reported via social media was suggested and the Chair requested that this be taken forward by the Communications Group.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the trends in relation to hate crime, and incidents in Hartlepool be noted.
- (ii) That the comments of Members, as outlined above, in relation to the implications of the CPS's Public Statements for Hartlepool, and how the Partnership might raise awareness of the changes to the prosecution of hate crime and encourage more victims of hate to come forward, be noted.
- (iii) In recognition of the severity of hate crime, that measures be taken to ensure that the Council's own Policies and Procedures complement the Crown Prosecution Service's new Public Policy Statements.
- (iv) That the Crown Prosecution Service be invited to attend a future meeting of the Partnership to provide feedback on the impact of the



new policy statements.

- (v) That the Chief Superintendent provide statistics on the level of hate crime that could be attributed to social media to a future meeting of the Partnership.
- (vi) That the Communications Group be requested to explore the most appropriate methods of reporting hate crime via social media.

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

The Chair reported that the next meeting would be held on Friday 8 December 2017 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 12 noon.

CHAIR

# FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

8<sup>th</sup> January 2018



**Report of:** Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and  
Director of Finance and Policy

**Subject:** COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COHESION  
STRATEGY

---

## 1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 Budget and Policy Framework.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the updated draft Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy to Members for them to agree it as a draft for final consultation.

## 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In Hartlepool we have a strong tradition of working with our communities to improve and develop services. As an organisation we recognise the importance of engagement in our work and the need for this to be delivered appropriately throughout our Departments through a single, organisational approach. We also recognise the importance of cohesion within our communities and our role in supporting and developing this.

3.2 The Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy - set out in the budget and policy framework of the constitution under the remit of the Finance and Policy Committee - is a new strategy to be developed by the Council during 2017/18. Members of the Committee agreed the purpose and remit of the strategy and also the timetable for development at their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

3.3 A first draft of the Strategy was agreed by Finance and Policy Committee as a draft for consultation at their meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Following this meeting an 8 week consultation ran until 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

#### 4. CONSULTATION ON FIRST DRAFT

4.1 The draft Strategy was subject to an 8 week consultation which included:

- An online survey
- Presentations to the Community Forums on the 18<sup>th</sup> October
- A report to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership on the 20<sup>th</sup> October
- Presentation to the Learning Disability Partnership Board on the 24<sup>th</sup> November

4.2 In addition discussions around social action and community engagement, which are key elements of the Strategy, took place at the public Your Say, Our Future event on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November and the Staff Sounding Board on the 28<sup>th</sup> November. These discussions have particularly informed the proposed actions within the Strategy. The Youth Council also received information on the consultation and agreed to consider and respond to the online survey individually.

4.3 **Appendix 1** provides a summary of the consultation responses.

#### 5. PROPOSED FINAL DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COHESION STRATEGY

5.1 The proposed final draft Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy for consultation is set out in **appendix 2**. This takes on board the views expressed in the recent consultation as well as the views expressed last summer through Your Say, Our Future and the recent Voluntary and Community Sector Survey. It has also been developed to reflect what works well in Hartlepool and elsewhere and to build upon the strong foundations that are already in place.

5.2 The following is a summary of the changes made to the Strategy following the recent consultation:

- The Council's role to support and encourage community action and to work to develop a supportive environment where local people who want to get involved in improving their local area are able to do so has been more clearly explained.
- References have been changed from town to Borough to reflect our rural communities.
- The vision has been expanded to include reference to the Borough being a friendly as well as welcoming and inclusive place to live.
- Reference has been made to the role of the Centre for Independent Living, the Youth Council and local resource and community centres.

- The purpose of the new model for providing support to the Voluntary and Community Sector has been included which is to encourage communication and collaboration within the sector.
- The Council's commitment to the Tees Valley of Sanctuary has been included.
- In order to use more positive language reference is made to building and maintaining good relationships and working to build trust in those relationships.

5.3 In addition some of the comments from the consultation will be used to inform how we do future activities such as the use of social media or our approach to consultation.

5.4 This final draft of the Strategy includes an action plan setting out specifically what the Council will do to ensure that the vision of the strategy is delivered. The actions within the plan also reflect some of the feedback from the consultation.

## 6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 The Committee is asked to consider the proposed final draft Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy and approve it as draft for consultation. This stage of the consultation will run for 2 weeks from 12<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

6.2 The timetable for the next steps after this 2 week consultation period is as agreed by Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017:

Who	What	When
Finance & Policy Committee	Consider feedback from consultation and agree final strategy for approval by Council.	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2018
Council	Consider final strategy for approval	15 <sup>th</sup> March 2018

6.3 It should be noted that this strategy has implications for all Policy Committees and as such this should be reflected in the constitution.

## 7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The activities proposed within the strategy will provide mitigation to a number of corporate risks within the Council particularly those in relation to consultation, engagement and reputation of the Council.

## **8. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial considerations – all activity will be undertaken within existing resources.

## **9. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no legal considerations.

## **10. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY**

- 10.1 There are no child and family poverty implications at this stage.

## **11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 11.1 We recognise the need to take into account the needs of vulnerable groups when engaging with the community. Any activity will consider the equality and diversity needs of all those with protected characteristics.

## **12. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS**

- 12.1 Staff will be given every opportunity to engage and will be actively encouraged by the Council to do so. In addition proposals for training will enable staff to be better equipped to deliver the council's priorities.

## **13. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 13.1 There are no asset management considerations.

## **14. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 14.1 Finance and Policy Committee is requested to consider and agree the final draft Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy for consultation as set out in appendix 1.

## **15. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 15.1 Finance & Policy Committee is the responsible committee for the Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy.

## **16. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 16.1 Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy – report to Finance and Policy Committee 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy – report to Finance and Policy Committee 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

## **17. CONTACT OFFICER**

Denise Ogden  
Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
01429 523300  
[Denise.ogden@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:Denise.ogden@hartlepool.gov.uk)

Chris Little  
Director of Finance and Policy  
01429 523003  
[Chris.little@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.little@hartlepool.gov.uk)

**Draft Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy – Summary of Consultation****Online Survey**

There were 88 responses to the online survey of which 91.7% described themselves as residents, 9.7% as representatives of the VCS and 6.9% as other. Other included an officer from Thirteen Group, an employee, an independent voluntary community support provider, a villager and a resident and VCS representative. 98.6% of those taking part said that they were responding as individuals.

When asked about the vision of the strategy comments included:

- There is a need to get out, meet and listen to the community.
- We need to develop and improve our communications particularly our social media links
- It is important to involve children and young people in this work.
- Community centres are important.
- There is a need to be realistic about what can be done and we should ensure what we propose is achievable.
- We should encourage people from different backgrounds to understand each other's beliefs and what's important to them – this could be done through Council hosted workshops for representatives to share their experiences with others.

When asked whether we had identified the right actions to focus on to improve how we involve and listen to our communities 82.9% answered yes. Comments about anything else that the Council should be doing under this priority included:

- Consultation should be early in the process so that residents don't feel that we are just paying lip service or ticking a box.
- We should explain specifically how we intend to listen to communities.
- Be seen and listen to people's views.
- People want to see action not talking.
- There is a role for partners/partnerships in this activity – we need to link to others like schools, colleges, police, fire and health.
- We need to communicate / promote this work better – one proposal was to have a central notice board in Middleton Grange to display new information/plans/proposals.
- The role of Councillors in engaging with their wards and responding to people is important.
- Training for council staff that are not used to working with residents/communities.
- Use positive language rather than start on a negative 'rebuilding trust'.
- Concerns around the challenge of doing this and also about wasting time and money to do it.

When asked whether we had identified the right actions to focus on to improve how we support community action 74.0% answered yes. Comments about anything else that the Council should be doing under this priority included:

- Should refer to the help that partners such as Thirteen and Home Group can play in supporting community actions.

- Council should have points of contact to offer support and guidance around this activity.
- Council could provide technical assistance (IT) or act as a focal point where skilled individuals could donate their services for the benefit of the community.
- Use existing residents groups as ambassadors to areas where such groups don't already exist so that the whole town is covered and they feed up to wider action groups (north/south).
- Bring local groups together to share ideas and successes.
- Listen to everyone, not just the moaners.
- Concerns were raised regarding resources – need to be realistic and make things simple.
- Concerns that the Council should be doing this improvement work not expecting communities to do it.

When asked whether we had identified the right actions to focus on to improve how we build strong and inclusive communities 75.7% answered yes. Comments about anything else that the Council should be doing under this priority included:

- Using other approaches to engage households such as questionnaires as round table forums might scare some people away.
- Include reference to trust as well as building understanding between communities.
- Actively encourage young people to take part.
- Provide more myth-busting information.
- Use social media.
- Listen and act.
- Need a holistic approach – people of all backgrounds, similar and different.
- Concerns around anti-social behaviour.

### **Community Forums**

The draft Strategy was presented to the Community Forums on the 18<sup>th</sup> October and the following comments were made:

- Query about how the commitments in the strategy would be met given the staffing reductions across Neighbourhood Services and acknowledgement of the difficulties faced by the Council in light of budget cuts – it was acknowledged that reduced resources were an issue but that the strategy was designed to help residents and recognise the role played by the Voluntary Sector.
- It was questioned whether it was compulsory for ward councillors to attend their ward surgeries – it was noted that they should be there if possible but that individual ward councillors could make their own separate arrangements.
- It was suggested that Councillors might go back into schools to discuss the strategy with the Children – it was agreed that this would be looked into.

### **Safer Hartlepool Partnership**

The draft Strategy was presented to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership on the 20<sup>th</sup> October and the following comments were made:



- It was recommended that the Strategy include reference to the Centre for Independent Living as a basis for key consultation and the Council's commitment to the Tees Valley of Sanctuary.

### **Learning Disability Partnership Board**

The draft Strategy was presented to the Learning Disability Partnership Board on the 24<sup>th</sup> November. They agreed with the priorities and added:

- Listen to people
- Give people choice
- Take a targeted approach – don't assume one way of engagement suits everyone
- Make things easy to understand
- Go out to people – don't expect them to come to you
- Work to develop community champions – deliver training to them
- Have neighbourhood reps as volunteers on Council
- If you ask us about something then do something with it or show us how you've listened
- Use questionnaires
- Don't just do consultations 9-5 Monday to Friday – be more flexible
- Help people be a good neighbour – show them what it means?
- Learn from others good work – have other councils done something similar – can you learn from that?
- Community not just about where people live – communities of interest as well
- Go into schools
- Focus on what is good not what is bad
- Don't just want to be with people with a disability – more interested in being with people who have similar interests

### **Your Say, Our Future – Public**

Discussion around social action and community engagement, which are key elements of the Strategy, took place at the public Your Say, Our Future event on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November. The following comments were made:

- Recognised that the Council's role is a leadership one – to create the conditions and environment to enable the VCS to come forward and deliver social action.
- Identified the need to communicate better around this work using social media, video/audio technology such as vlogs and you tube channels. This should include promoting links to other organisations and promoting what other people (who are doing it for themselves) are doing – role models.
- Noted that engagement is the starting point and that people need to see the impact of their opinions on what is done in the town.
- Should look at staff volunteering - 5 hours a year could make a big difference.
- Put Hartlepool first and Council second.
- As well as looking at what works we should look at what didn't work, why not and what we will do differently – experiment until we get it right like Hartlepool Action Lab example.

- Opportunity around Community Organisers funding – training people to take control of their own lives and taking action.

### **Your Say, Our Future – Staff Sounding Board**

Discussion around social action and community engagement, which are key elements of the Strategy, took place at the Your Say, Our Future Staff Sounding Board on the 28<sup>th</sup> November. The following comments were made:

- Recognise the need for the Council to support or make it easier/clearer for those in the VCS who are looking to host events which will be good for the town e.g. Wintertide Festival, Headland Carnival etc. This could be through a single point of contact in the Council for events.
- Need to recognise those who put time in to improve the town – award from the Mayor and an event/photo opportunity.
- Would welcome the introduction of a staff volunteering scheme – some events which contribute to council priorities will struggle to go ahead without volunteers e.g. Big Lime Triathlon.

## Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy 2018-2021

### Introduction to consultation draft:

Consultation on the first draft of the Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy took place between 22<sup>nd</sup> September and 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The views expressed during that consultation have been considered and this is the revised final draft.

A 2 week consultation on this draft will be open until **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018** and you can tell us your views by completing our online survey:

TBC

Please let us know what you think - we look forward to hearing your views.

Cllr Christopher Akers-Belcher  
Leader of the Council

Gill Alexander  
Chief Executive

## Introduction

As a Council we appreciate that our society is changing. We live in a time when we have more connected people who are demanding greater participation in shaping the lives of their own communities. We recognise that the Council has a critical role to play in providing strong community leadership which enables our residents to participate in shaping Council priorities, influencing local decisions, designing and transforming services and taking individual or collective action to respond to local priorities.

One of the strengths of Hartlepool is its people and the sense of community that is evident wherever you go in the Borough. We recognise that one of our key roles as a Council is to work to support and encourage this community spirit and local pride to improve the Borough and meet local needs. The Council alone cannot do everything that needs to be done to make Hartlepool the best it can be. We recognise that our communities are often better placed to understand what needs to be done in their area and also to put in place their own solutions. We need to join forces with our community and partners to achieve our ambition. As a Borough we all have a responsibility to look after our community and maximise the limited resources that we have on the right things.

As a Council we want to build upon the success of the Your Say, Our Future programme and roll this approach out across the Council. Our intention is to continue the Council's move towards more collaborative and participatory ways of working where our communities are able to get more involved or lead their own changes. We are keen to ensure that there is an open dialogue between the Council and our communities. We recognise that our role is to help develop a supportive environment where local people who want to get involved in improving their local area are able to do so.

This Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy sets out how the Council will work to:

- **engage** with our communities so that they can have an active role in shaping the future of Hartlepool by influencing local decisions and co-designing services
- **support** our communities to take part and deliver on local priorities by providing them with opportunities to develop their skills, confidence, and local networks and work to develop an environment where they can make change happen for themselves
- **strengthen** the bonds between our communities, improve tolerance and understanding and reduce tensions

The following pages summarise what we see as our role and sets out our commitment to it. We want to be clear about what we will do, how we will do it and also how we will know if we have been successful. The final part of the strategy is our action plan which identifies the specific actions we will take in order to ensure the delivery of this strategy.

We will regularly monitor progress against the action plan and the identified measures of success and feed back to both elected members and our communities.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COHESION STRATEGY 2018 – 2021

OUR VISION	HARTLEPOOL HAS A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT WHERE PEOPLE FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS GET ALONG AND WORK TOGETHER TO INFLUENCE LOCAL DECISIONS, RESPOND TO LOCAL NEEDS AND ENSURE THAT THE BOROUGH IS A FRIENDLY, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE PLACE TO LIVE.		
OUR PRIORITIES	WE WILL INVOLVE AND LISTEN TO OUR COMMUNITIES	WE WILL SUPPORT COMMUNITY ACTION	WE WILL BUILD STRONG AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
<b>WHAT WILL WE DO?</b>	<b>Working with our communities we will...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build and maintain good relationships and work to build trust in those relationships.</li> <li>• Listen and respond to our communities focussing on developing solutions together.</li> <li>• Involve our communities at an early stage so that they can influence local decisions and help design services that meet local needs.</li> <li>• Work to understand our communities and their needs better.</li> <li>• Promote better communication ensuing that we have a two-way conversation.</li> </ul>	<b>Working with our communities we will...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen individual, organisational and community capacity.</li> <li>• Build and strengthen opportunities for people to come together in their communities.</li> <li>• Build and develop the existing strengths within communities giving them the opportunities and support needed to develop.</li> <li>• Develop the skills, confidence and understanding of our communities so that they can tackle issues on their own or with our advice and support.</li> <li>• Support communities to take part and deliver improvements.</li> </ul>	<b>Working with our communities we will...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen understanding and relationships to ensure that people from all different backgrounds get on well together.</li> <li>• Promote better understanding between communities.</li> <li>• Celebrate and value diversity.</li> <li>• Tackle negative behaviour.</li> <li>• Reduce tensions and promote community confidence and tolerance.</li> </ul>
<b>HOW WILL WE DO IT?</b>	<b>Our approach will include...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Your Say, Our Future</b> – we will hold a programme of roundtable events across the town and invite our communities to come along and discuss issues of town-wide importance.</li> <li>• <b>Community Forums (North and Coastal and South and Central)</b> – we will continue to develop our two Community Forums as focal points for local consultation on the provision of Council services and neighbourhood issues.</li> <li>• <b>Hartlepool Online Panel</b> – we will work to develop the online panel to promote our consultations to our community and we will improve our online presence through social media and the Council's website.</li> <li>• <b>Community Hubs including the Centre for Independent Living</b> – these will provide face to face access to the Council across the Borough and will be the base for key consultation activities and outreach into our most vulnerable communities.</li> <li>• <b>Consultation Groups</b> – we will focus on reaching out to our communities through existing groups and channels and establish and strengthen relationships to ensure that dialogue is two-way. This will include our Youth Council.</li> <li>• <b>Training</b> – we will provide our elected members and staff training to improve and develop their communication and engagement skills.</li> </ul>	<b>Our approach will include...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Hubs including the Centre for Independent Living</b> – One the roles of Community Hubs will be to develop and foster links with local community groups and provide space for communities to come together.</li> <li>• <b>Infrastructure support</b> – we will develop a new model for providing support to the voluntary and community sector encouraging communication and collaboration within the sector.</li> <li>• <b>Building community capacity and promoting social action</b> – supporting and promoting opportunities for local people to contribute to their local community. We will work with local organisations, local resource and community centres, 'friends of' groups, volunteers and individuals and support them to come together to help improve their lives and their communities through social action.</li> </ul>	<b>Our approach will include...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hartlepool in Unity</b> – a programme of positive activities supported by our Cohesion Officers. This will include events bringing people from different backgrounds together.</li> <li>• <b>Better promotion of our Third Party Reporting Centres</b> – to provide safe spaces for the reporting of hate crime so that negative behaviour can be addressed and tackled.</li> <li>• <b>Victim Services Officer</b> – providing support to those who do come forward to report hate crime.</li> <li>• <b>Hartlepool Community Safety Team</b> – development of a joint team involving the Council, Police and Fire Service who will work together to build safer communities. Focusing on vulnerable communities the team will intervene early to prevent problems from getting worse.</li> <li>• <b>Training</b> – we will develop equality and diversity training.</li> <li>• <b>Promotion</b> – we will promote key events and awareness days for equality and diversity and be a welcoming town for new arrivals.</li> <li>• <b>Commitment to the Tees Valley of Sanctuary</b> – welcoming and providing support to refugees and those seeking sanctuary in the area.</li> </ul>
<b>WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?</b>	<b>We will know we're succeeding if...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people feel that they can influence decisions that affect their local area.</li> <li>• More people attend our Your Say, Our Future events.</li> <li>• More people sign up to the Hartlepool Online Panel.</li> <li>• More young people are involved in the Youth Council.</li> <li>• More people are turning out to vote at local elections.</li> </ul>	<b>We will know we're succeeding if...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people are using the Community Hubs.</li> <li>• We have a strong and active voluntary and community sector.</li> <li>• More people are satisfied with their local area.</li> </ul>	<b>We will know we're succeeding if...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people agree that people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together.</li> <li>• More people feel that they belong to their local area.</li> <li>• More people feel part of the local community.</li> <li>• There are more reported incidents of hate crime because people have the confidence to report it.</li> <li>• There are fewer repeat victims of hate crime.</li> </ul>

**Action Plan:****WE WILL INVOLVE AND LISTEN TO OUR COMMUNITIES**

<b>What?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Agree the annual programme for Your Say, Our Future events.	Performance and Partnerships Manager	April 2018
Develop a regular newsletter to provide feedback on Council consultations undertaken through the Hartlepool Online Panel.	Performance and Partnerships Manager	April 2018
Update map of local groups including Resident's Associations and 'Friend's of' and agree communication approach.	Community Safety and Engagement Manager	April 2018
Widen participation in the Youth Council and strengthen links with other youth groups and school councils.	Development Manager	April 2018
Develop training opportunities for staff and elected members to develop community engagement and communication skills.	Performance and Partnerships Manager	May 2018
Undertake a promotional campaign to encourage membership of the Hartlepool Online Panel.	Performance and Partnerships Manager	June 2018
Review the Council's approach to public involvement and participation.	Performance and Partnerships Manager	July 2018

**WE WILL SUPPORT COMMUNITY ACTION**

<b>What?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Develop a proposal for a staff volunteering scheme for the Council.	Performance and Partnerships Manager	April 2018
Promote opportunities for training such as that available for Community Organisers.	Community Safety and Engagement Manager	May 2018
Review the new model for providing support to the voluntary and community sector.	Economic Regeneration Manager	October 2019
Review the Community Hubs model.	Director of Public Health	July 2019

**WE WILL BUILD STRONG AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES**

<b>What?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Agree the annual Hartlepool in Unity programme of activity.	Community Safety and Engagement Manager	May 2018
Undertake a promotion campaign against hate crime and promoting the Third Party Reporting Centres.	Communications and Marketing Manager	June 2018

# Finance and Policy Committee

8<sup>th</sup> January 2018



**Report of:** Director of Finance and Policy

**Subject:** COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018/19

---

## **1. TYPE OF DECISION / APPLICABLE CATEGORY**

1.1 Non key decision.

## **2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

2.1 The report seeks member approval as required by statutory regulations to a calculated Council Tax Base for 2018/19 which will be used for Council Tax billing purposes.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Council is required by law to calculate its Council Tax Base for the forthcoming year, and inform the major precepting authorities Cleveland Police Authority and Cleveland Fire Authority and local precepting authorities (Parish Councils), before 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018. The Council Tax Base is expressed as the number of Band D equivalent properties.

3.2 The amount of Council Tax levied on each Band D property located in the Borough of Hartlepool is calculated by dividing the total amount of the precepts determined by this Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Cleveland Fire Authority on the Collection Fund in 2018/19, by the Council Tax Base. The amount of Council Tax payable for other bands is determined by applying a fixed proportion of the Band D amount. A separate report on the calculation of the amount of Council Tax payable for each band for 2018/19 will be submitted to Council as part of the budget process.

3.3. To calculate the Council Tax Base it is necessary to:

- (a) Calculate "the relevant amount" for the year for each valuation band in the valuation list. For each band this represents the full year equivalent of each chargeable dwelling in that band, taking into account entitlement to, exemptions, disability reductions and discounts.

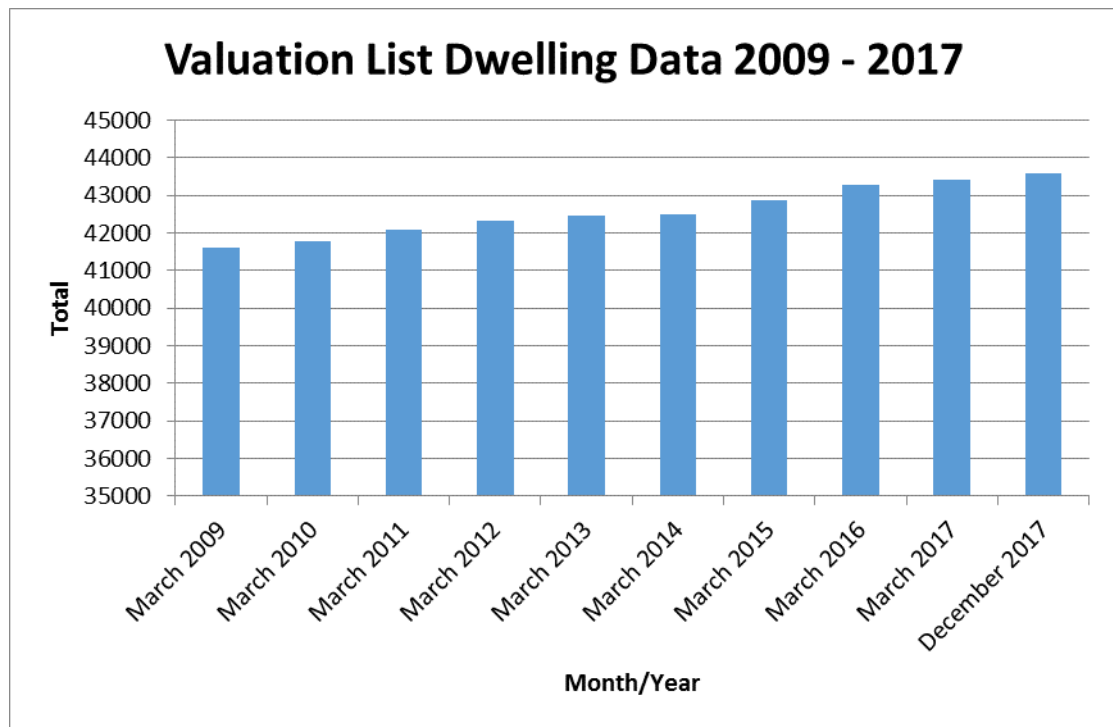
- (b) The relevant amount for each band are expressed in terms of Band D equivalents.
  - (c) Calculate the Empty Homes Premium impact across all valuation bands in equivalent Band D's.
  - (d) The relevant amounts for each band (b) are then added together with (c) and the total is multiplied by the Council's estimated collection rate for the year.
- 3.4. As part of the Government's welfare reforms, Councils are required to determine and operate their own local schemes for providing support with Council Tax. Under these arrangements, there is a requirement to adjust the Council Tax Base to reflect the impact of the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. Members have approved a 12% LCTS scheme for 2018/19, which maintains this support for the fifth year.. The LCTS adjustment is expressed in terms of an equivalent number of Band D's within each Appendix.
- 3.5. In setting the Tax Base the Council is required to consider the effectiveness of its arrangements for collecting Council Tax and factor in an adjustment to avoid a deficit on the statutory Collection Fund. This is reflected in the detailed calculation of the Council Tax base detailed in the Appendices to this report and reflects in-year collection rates for full Council Tax Payers and households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support.
- 3.6. Whilst, the in-year collection rate adjustment reduces the Council Tax base the Council continues to achieve a long term collection level of over 99.2% after 5 years.

## 4 PROPOSALS

- 4.1. The Medium Term Financial Strategy assumes increases in the Council Tax Yield in 2018/19 from a Council Tax increase and also from increases in the number of properties within the Borough. The 2018/19 Tax Base proposals have factored in housing growth the equivalent of 452 Band D properties. This growth is forecast to be delivered from new builds at various developments across the Borough and the completion of properties within the Carr Hopps regeneration area.
- 4.2. Numbers of dwellings within the Borough (as notified to the Council by the Valuation Office Agency VOA) has continued to incrementally grow year on year as shown in the graph below. Growth in 2016/17 was suppressed reflecting the decision by the VOA to remove 124 Band A properties within the Carr Hopps regeneration area from the valuation / billing list as these properties were either subject to demolition or substantial refurbishment and were not capable of occupation. The



graph shows the total number of dwelling increased by approximately 2,000 between March 2009 and December 2017, which equates to an annual increase of approximately 230.



- 4.3 Since the LCTS scheme arrangements were introduced in 2013/14 the Band D Council Tax base increased from 21,701 in 2013/14 to 23,569 in 2017/18, an increase of 1,868. This equates to an average annual increase for these five years of 374. As detailed in paragraph 4.1 the forecast increase for 2018/19 is 452 Band D properties, which is above the average for the last five years. However, the growth forecast for 2018/19 is anticipated to be achievable.
- 4.4. Given the importance of additional Council Tax yield to supporting the budget, it is proposed that actual numbers of properties brought onto the valuation list by the VOA are reported to Finance and Policy Committee in 2018/19 as part of the regular performance monitoring reports.

## 5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Tax Base forecast is predicated on sustained housing growth within the Borough over the coming years. Planning permissions have already been granted for a further 4,500 properties (including 800 flats) but the actual construction of these properties is dependent on a range of factors including:

- the ability to borrow finance to buy a new home;

- the overall health of the housing market;
- interest rate forecasts;
- the desire of house builders to build new dwellings as opposed to just “sitting” on land banks and “drip feeding” new dwellings to keep house prices at a balanced level;
- the availability of skilled trades to complete properties within reasonable timescales

## **6 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1. The Council must budget to avoid a deficit on its statutory Collection Fund. In determining the 2018/19 Council Tax Base a number of underlying assumptions have been made to achieve this requirement. As part of the Council’s Financial Governance framework programmed monitoring reviews of Collection Fund Council Tax yield will be undertaken during 2018/19.
- 6.2 The recommended 2018/19 Council Tax base was reflected in the MTFS report considered by the Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017.

## **7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 7.1 To comply with statutory responsibilities the Council must determine the Council Tax Base for the forthcoming financial year by 31<sup>st</sup> January. This report ensures this responsibility is discharged.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 There is no requirement to consult on these proposals.

## **9. CHILD / FAMILY POVERTY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE)**

- 9.1 There are no child / family poverty considerations.

## **10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE)**

- 10.1 There are no equality and diversity considerations.

## **11. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no staff considerations.

## **12. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 12.1 There are no asset management considerations.

### 13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 It is recommended that Members:

- a) Approve a Hartlepool BC Council Tax Base for 2018/19 of 24,021.0 as detailed in Appendix 1.
- b) Approve a Council Tax Base for 2018/19 for Parishes who intend to levy a precept upon the Council's Collection Fund as detailed in Appendices 2 to 9:

Dalton Piercy	104.0	Elwick	583.1
Greatham	575.5	Hart	317.0
Newton Bewley	33.4	Headland	721.5
Brierton	13.2	Claxton	16.1

- c) Note the proposed arrangements for monitoring and reporting of growth in the number of properties in the Borough.

### 14. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 To enable the Council to discharge its statutory responsibilities.

### 15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 There are no background papers.

### 16. CONTACT OFFICER

John Morton  
 Assistant Director (Finance and Customer Services)  
 01429 523093  
[John.morton@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:John.morton@hartlepool.gov.uk)

## 6.1 Appendix 1

line	VALUATION BAND	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	No. of properties in band		23,945	7,344	6,185	3,224	1,664	678	452	57	43,549
2	Exempt dwellings (excl Class B )		396	108	57	29	15	5	10	0	620
	Class B		216	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	228
3	Demolished dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS		23,513	7,234	6,128	3,195	1,649	673	442	57	42,891
5	Disabled reductions		134	86	69	59	24	11	12	13	408
6	Effectively chargeable	134	86	69	59	24	11	12	13	0	408
7	ADJ CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS	134	23,465	7,217	6,118	3,160	1,636	674	443	44	42,891
8	25% discounts	39	11,186	2,707	1,673	661	270	88	38	3	16,665
9	50% discounts	10	48	17	22	16	6	9	13	1	142
10	Empty Properties undergoing Repair (50% disc)	0	90	24	18	10	6	3	5	0	156
11	Properties 100% discount	0	480	120	48	48	12	0	0	0	708
12	1 month empty unfurnished No discounts	85	11,661	4,349	4,357	2,425	1,342	574	387	40	25,220
13	TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS	119.25	20,559.50	6,509.75	5,675.75	2,977.75	1,561.50	646.00	424.50	42.75	38,516.75
14	Ratio to Band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
15	BAND D EQUIVALENTS	66.25	13,706.33	5,063.14	5,045.11	2,977.75	1,908.50	933.11	707.50	85.50	30,493.19
					Adjustment for Empty Homes Premium						77.67
					Estimated collection rate (%)						98.5
					Council Tax Base						30,112.3
					LCTS Adjustment						-6,391.3
					Tax Base Growth						300.0
					Tax Base 18/19						24,021.9

## **6.1 Appendix 2**

[illegible]

**ELWICK**  
**CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2018/19**  
**12% LCTS Cut**

**6.1 Appendix 3**

line	VALUATION BAND	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	No. of properties in band		25	33	66	109	79	85	90	39	526
2	Exempt dwellings		2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	5
3	Demolished dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	<b>CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>521</b>
5	Disabled reductions		0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	6
6	Effectively chargeable	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	6
7	<b>ADJ CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>521</b>
8	25% discounts	0	14	10	19	36	19	13	3	3	117
9	50% discounts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
10	Empty Properties undergoing repair 50% disc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Former Class C 100% Disc 1 month	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	No discounts	0	9	23	49	71	60	71	85	34	402
13	<b>TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>19.50</b>	<b>30.50</b>	<b>63.25</b>	<b>98.00</b>	<b>74.25</b>	<b>80.75</b>	<b>87.75</b>	<b>36.75</b>	<b>490.75</b>
14	Ratio to Band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
15	<b>BAND D EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>13.00</b>	<b>23.72</b>	<b>56.22</b>	<b>98.00</b>	<b>90.75</b>	<b>116.64</b>	<b>146.25</b>	<b>73.50</b>	<b>618.08</b>
					Empty Homes Premium						2.56
					Estimated collection rate (%)						98.5
					Council Tax Base						611.3
					LCTS Adjustment						-28.2
					Adjusted Tax Base						<b>583.1</b>

## **6.1 Appendix 4**

line	VALUATION BAND	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	No. of properties in band		182	421	181	82	36	10	5	1	918
2	Exempt dwellings		2	6	1	0	0	0	1	0	10
3	Demolished dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	<b>CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>		<b>180</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>908</b>
5	Disabled reductions		4	5	3	2	1	0	0	1	16
6	Effectively chargeable	4	5	3	2	1	0	0	1	0	16
7	<b>ADJ CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>908</b>
8	25% discounts	2	102	175	46	18	6	1	0	0	350
9	50% discounts	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3
10	Empty Properties undergoing repair 50% disc	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
11	Former Class C 100% Disc 1 month	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
12	No discounts	2	78	237	131	61	29	9	4	0	551
13	<b>TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>155.42</b>	<b>368.75</b>	<b>166.50</b>	<b>75.50</b>	<b>33.50</b>	<b>9.75</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>817.42</b>
14	Ratio to Band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
15	<b>BAND D EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>1.94</b>	<b>103.61</b>	<b>286.81</b>	<b>148.00</b>	<b>75.50</b>	<b>40.94</b>	<b>14.08</b>	<b>7.50</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>678.39</b>
					<b>Empty Homes Premium Estimated collection rate (%)</b>						<b>0.67</b>
					<b>Council Tax Base</b>						<b>668.9</b>
					LCTS Adjustment						-93.4
					<b>Adjusted Tax Base</b>						<b>575.5</b>





**NEWTON BEWLEY**  
**CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2018/19**  
**12% LCTS Cut**

6.1 Appendix 6

line	VALUATION BAND	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	No. of properties in band		3	1	8	6	10	5	1	0	34
2	Exempt dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Demolished dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	<b>CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>
5	Disabled reductions		0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
6	Effectively chargeable	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
7	<b>ADJ CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>
8	25% discounts	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	4
9	50% discounts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Empty Properties undergoing repair 50% disc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Former Class C 100% Disc 1 month	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	No discounts	0	2	2	6	6	9	4	1	0	30
13	<b>TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>6.75</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>9.75</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>33.00</b>
14	Ratio to Band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
15	<b>BAND D EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1.83</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>11.92</b>	<b>6.86</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>35.83</b>
					<b>Empty Homes Premium</b>						<b>0</b>
					<b>Estimated collection rate (%)</b>						<b>98.5</b>
					<b>Council Tax Base</b>						<b>35.3</b>
					LCTS Adjustment						-1.9
					<b>Adjusted Tax Base</b>						<b>33.4</b>

**HEADLAND**  
**CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2018/19**  
**12% LCTS Cut**

**6.1 Appendix 7**

line	VALUATION BAND	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	No. of properties in band		1324	289	78	23	7	2	1	0	1724
2	Exempt dwellings		20	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	28
3	Demolished dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	<b>CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>		<b>1304</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1696</b>
5	Disabled reductions		8	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	16
6	Effectively chargeable	8	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	16
7	<b>ADJ CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1300</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1696</b>
8	25% discounts	2	630	90	22	3	3	0	0	0	750
9	50% discounts	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
10	Empty Properties undergoing repair 50% disc	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
11	Former Class C 100% Disc 1 month	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
12	No discounts	4	659	191	54	17	4	2	1	0	932
13	<b>TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS</b>	<b>6.50</b>	<b>1138.25</b>	<b>259.00</b>	<b>70.50</b>	<b>19.25</b>	<b>6.25</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1502.75</b>
14	Ratio to Band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
15	<b>BAND D EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>758.83</b>	<b>201.44</b>	<b>62.67</b>	<b>19.25</b>	<b>7.64</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1058.00</b>
					Empty Homes Premium						<b>2.83</b>
					Estimated collection rate (%)						<b>98.5</b>
					<b>Council Tax Base</b>						<b>1044.9</b>
					LCTS Adjustment						-323.4
					<b>Adjusted Tax Base</b>						<b>721.5</b>

**BRIERTON**  
**CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2018/19**  
**12% LCTS Cut**

**6.1 Appendix 8**

line	VALUATION BAND	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	No. of properties in band		0	5	5	2	3	0	0	0	15
2	Exempt dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Demolished dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	<b>CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
5	Disabled reductions		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Effectively chargeable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	<b>ADJ CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
8	25% discounts	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
9	50% discounts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Empty Properties undergoing repair 50% disc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Former Class C 100% Disc 1 month	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	No discounts	0	0	3	4	2	3	0	0	0	12
13	<b>TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>14.25</b>
14	Ratio to Band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
15	<b>BAND D EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>13.39</b>
Empty Homes Premium											<b>0</b>
Estimated collection rate (%)											<b>98.5</b>
<b>Council Tax Base</b>											<b>13.2</b>
LCTS Adjustment											<b>0</b>
<b>Adjusted Tax Base</b>											<b>13.2</b>

**CLAXTON**  
**CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2018/19**  
**12% LCTS Cut**

**6.1 Appendix 9**

line	VALUATION BAND	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	No. of properties in band		2	0	1	6	2	2	1	1	15
2	Exempt dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Demolished dwellings		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	<b>CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
5	Disabled reductions		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Effectively chargeable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	<b>ADJ CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
8	25% discounts	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	6
9	50% discounts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Empty Properties undergoing repair 50% disc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Former Class C 100% Disc 1 month	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	No discounts	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	1	1	9
13	<b>TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>5.50</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>13.50</b>
14	Ratio to Band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
15	<b>BAND D EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>5.50</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>15.86</b>
Empty Homes Premium											<b>0.5</b>
Estimated collection rate (%)											<b>98.5</b>
<b>Council Tax Base</b>											<b>16.1</b>
LCTS Adjustment											0
<b>Adjusted Tax Base</b>											<b>16.1</b>

# Finance and Policy Committee

8<sup>th</sup> January 2018



**Report of:** Director of Finance and Policy

**Subject:** IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS - SUNDRY DEBTS  
AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS

---

## 1. TYPE OF DECISION / APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 Non key decision.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The report seeks member approval to write out a number of debts considered irrecoverable. The Council's financial procedure rules provide that any debt due to the Council of £1000 or more can only be written-out with the express permission of Members

## 3. BACKGROUND

### Sundry Debt

3.1 The Council each year bills about £27m of sundry debts. The Council's performance in collecting these debts is positive with 98.6% of debts collected within the year they are billed. Furthermore, longer term collection of sundry debt continues to be very positive, with over 99% of sundry debts raised being fully recovered within 2 years.

3.2. Whilst the Council continues to vigorously pursue recovery there are some sundry debts that become irrecoverable and this report seeks approval to their write out.

### Housing Benefit Overpayment

3.3. The Council administers Housing Benefit on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions and each year makes awards totalling about £37m to about 10,000 households in the Borough. Housing Benefit is a complex means tested type of financial support that relies on the claimant informing the Council as their personal circumstances change so that the value of their awards can be adjusted. Sometimes there are delays in the Council receiving and validating information resulting in historical overpaid benefit.

- 3.4. Where Housing Benefit awards are reduced, the level of any overpayment of benefit is calculated which is recoverable from the claimant. Where the claimant continues to be in receipt of Housing Benefit, recovery is made from ongoing benefit at a standard rate as advised by the DWP, currently £11.10 per week or £18.50 per week for proven fraud overpayment cases. For those claimants no longer in receipt of benefit, they are invoiced and subject to the same recovery arrangements as sundry debts.
- 3.5. By their nature, recovery of housing benefit overpayment debts is challenging. The Council continues to pursue recovery in a firm but fair manner and will seek to avoid hardship by negotiating realistic and affordable repayment arrangements. Repayment in some instances will take a number of years which increases the risk of non collection. This report seeks approval to write out of the Council's financial accounts a number of housing benefit overpayments for the reasons set out in Appendix A.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

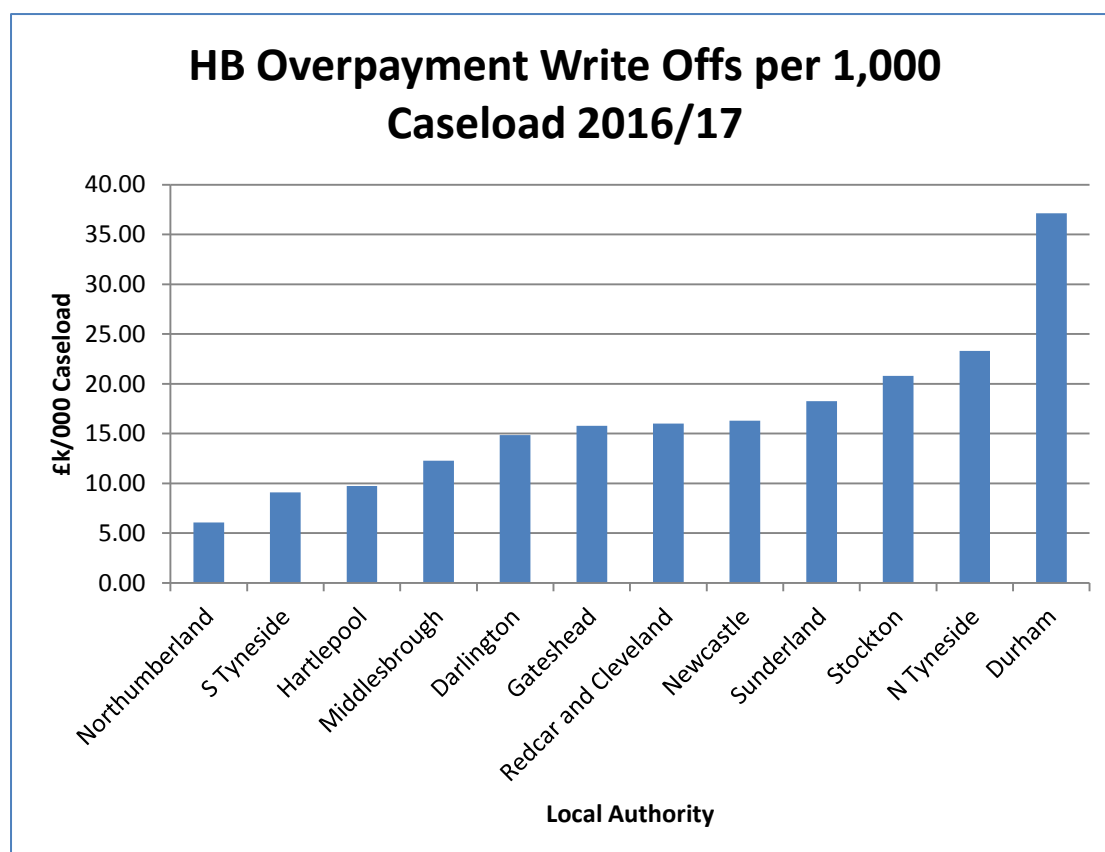
- 4.1 Writing off these sundry debtor and housing benefit overpayments now considered irrecoverable will assist in ensuring that the debtors balances within the annual statement of accounts are fairly stated. Historical accounting provisions have been created against which these debts can be written off. These risk management arrangements are consistent with statutory requirements and accounting good practice.

#### **5 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no risk implications.

#### **6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 In terms of the annual value of sundry debts raised (£27m) and housing benefit overpayments created (£1.2m), the amount proposed for write out in this report continues to be very low. Contextually, in 2016/17 Hartlepool BC wrote off £99,000 of housing benefit overpayments relating to a number of financial years, as non recoverable, ranking the Council the lowest in financial terms out of the 12 North East councils (the average was £394,000).
- 6.2. However, as benefits caseloads vary between Councils a more appropriate measure of levels of housing benefit overpayments written out is to consider write outs in £ thousands per 1,000 caseload. Comparative data for the 12 NE Councils as obtained from national DWP statistics is shown below. Hartlepool ranks third lowest on this measure.



6.3 The external auditor in giving an opinion on the Council's financial accounts needs to be satisfied that debtors are fairly stated within the Council's Balance Sheet and that there are effective arrangements for identifying any debts considered irrecoverable and that they have been written out of the Council's accounts. All of the debts proposed for write out within this report can be covered by the existing provisions.

6.4. The following debts are now considered irrecoverable and are recommended for write out for the reasons set out:

**Housing Benefit Overpayments** – absconder / deceased / miscellaneous – Appendix A £72,719.55 \*\*

**Sundry Debts** – deceased / bankrupt / debt relief order / absconded - Appendix B - £22,835.36 \*\*

**\*\* Appendices A and B contain exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely (para3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.**

All debts submitted for write out from the accounting records have been comprehensively scrutinised by officers.

## **7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 There are no legal considerations.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

8.1. There is no requirement to consult on these proposals.

## **9. CHILD / FAMILY POVERTY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE)**

9.1 There are no child / family poverty considerations.

## **10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE)**

10.1. There are no equality and diversity considerations.

## **11. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS**

11.1. There are no staff considerations.

## **12. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

12.1 There are no asset management considerations.

## **13. RECOMMENDATIONS**

13.1 That Members agree to write out irrecoverable:

- a) Housing Benefit Overpayments totaling £72,719.55 as detailed in Appendix A;
- b) Sundry Debts totaling £22,835.36 as detailed in Appendix B.

## **14 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

14.1 To ensure the appropriate accounting treatment of debtors within the Council's financial systems and financial accounts.

## **15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

15.1 There are no background papers.

## **16. CONTACT OFFICER**

John Morton  
Assistant Director Finance and Customer Services  
01429 523093  
[John.morton@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:John.morton@hartlepool.gov.uk)