

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

17 December 2018

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Stephen Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Sandra Belcher, Tom Cassidy, Marjorie James, Brenda Loynes, Ann Marshall and Tony Richardson

Also Present: Councillors Lesley Hamilton, Sue Little, Shane Moore and Carl Richardson

Officers: Tony Hanson, Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services  
Chris Scaife, Countryside Access Officer  
Chris Parkin, Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)  
Steve Hilton, Senior Public Relations Officer  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **46. Apologies for Absence**

None

### **47. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Sue Little declared an interest in Minute 51 and indicated her intention to leave the meeting during consideration of this item of business.

### **48. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2018**

Received

### **49. Minutes of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee held on 11 October 2018**

Received

**50. An Awareness Campaign on the Releasing of Balloons/Sky Lanterns on Council Owned Land**  
(Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services)

**Type of decision**

Key decision – test (ii) – Forward Plan Reference No RN011/18

**Purpose of report**

To inform Members of the Committee about the results of the consultation with the public on the impact of balloon and sky lantern releases. The reason for reporting this issue in December rather than November was due to the fact that consultation did not conclude until mid October and officers then had to formulate a report for Members to then make an informed decision.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services reported on the background to the campaign by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) to raise awareness on the negative impact of balloon releases and the detrimental effect on the environment and particularly marine wildlife. The MCS was encouraging local authorities to look at the banning of these releases on Council owned and managed land, as well as their authority area.

Members were advised that at present, 77 local authorities in the UK had signed up to support the ban on balloon releases, with 4 in the North East of England adopting a non-release policy on all balloon and sky lantern releases on Council owned and managed land.

It was proposed that the Committee considered the results of the public consultation and awareness campaign and a draft policy, attached at Appendix 1, had been produced in response to the feedback received during the consultation which was presented for Members' approval.

The 14 week public consultation and awareness campaign had been carried out between July and the first two weeks of October, details of which were set out in the report. The results showed an overwhelming response in favour of the Council adopting a non release policy of balloons and sky lanterns on Council owned and managed land, details of which were set out in Appendix 3.

94.5% of respondents stated that they supported the proposals, whilst 4% disagreed with this proposal. A wide range of alternatives were proposed, which included bubble releases, memorial benches, candlelit vigils and

flower releases with 90% of respondents in support of the Council's alternative suggestion to plant memorial trees, shrubs and wildflowers.

The Chair, whilst in support of a Memorial Wood at Summerhill, was keen to see the provision of Memorial Woods in other areas of the town explored.

A Seaton Ward Member, who was in attendance and invited to address the Committee, spoke in support of the proposals and shared with the Committee the negative impact of balloon releases on the environment and, in particular, wildlife as well as marine wildlife.

In response to a query as to how this would be policed, the Committee was advised that the policing of non release had caused some concerns and, whilst the need to support the policy was acknowledged, the Council was keen to ensure people were not made to feel they had committed an offence and it was not the Council's intention to pursue this in the same way as litter enforcement issues. The aim was to educate and support individuals to conduct any acts of emotion and commemoration in a more environmental friendly manner.

Emphasis was placed upon on the need for an effective public awareness and education campaign to ensure the public were aware of the policy given the forthcoming Christmas and New Year celebrations. The need for signage in appropriate locations was also suggested.

In concluding the debate, the Chair took the opportunity to thank the team for the effective way in which the campaign had been managed.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the response to the public consultation on the proposal to adopt a policy for the non release of balloons and sky lanterns from Council owned and managed land be noted.
- (ii) The Committee agreed to adopt a policy for the non release of balloons and sky lanterns from Council owned and managed land.
- (iii) That the creation of a Memorial Wood at Summerhill be agreed.
- (iv) That the comments/suggestions raised, in relation to the public awareness and education campaign as well as signage be explored.
- (v) That the provision of Memorial Woods in other areas of the town be examined.

Prior to consideration of the following item of business, Councillor Sue Little left the meeting in accordance with her earlier declaration.

**51. Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 30 September 2018** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Director of Finance and Policy)*

**Type of decision**

For information

**Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the 2018/19 forecast General Fund Outturn, the 2018/19 Capital Programme Monitoring and provide details for the specific budget areas for which the Committee was responsible.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods) presented the report which provided the background and financial reporting arrangements for 2018/19 as well as a summary of the overall Council financial position and General Fund outturn information in relation to the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Services Department.

The report referred to the MTFS report considered by Finance and Policy Committee on 3 September 2018 which highlighted that the financial outlook for the next three years was extremely challenging. The Council faced a 2019/20 budget deficit of £6m and further deficits in 2020/21 and 2021/22. This meant that further extremely difficult decisions would be required over the next three years to set a balanced budget.

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

A Member raised concerns in relation to the crossing arrangements between the north and south at Wynyard which created access difficulties for parents crossing with school children. The Assistant Director advised that discussions were ongoing with Stockton and the developers in this regard. The Chair suggested that officers discuss this issue with local Ward Members following the meeting.

## **Decision**

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That officers discuss the concerns regarding the crossing arrangements at Wynyard with local Ward Members following the meeting.

## **52. Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair reported that the next meeting would be held on Monday 21 January 2019 at 4.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.25 pm.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 21 DECEMBER 2018**