

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

**20 SEPTEMBER 2019**

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Councillor John Tennant (In the Chair)

Councillors: Stephen Akers-Belcher, Dave Hunter, Marjorie James, Sue Little and Amy Prince.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 (ii) Councillor Tony Richardson was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Lee Cartwright

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Kieran Bostock, Transport and Infrastructure Manager  
Chris Parkin, Head of Finance (Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Community Service)  
Peter Frost, Highways, Traffic and Transport Team Leader  
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

### **18. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were submitted by Councillor Lee Cartwright.

### **19. Declarations of Interest**

None

### **20. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2019**

Received.

### **21. Highways and Street Works Permit Scheme** (*Assistant Director (Environment and Neighbourhood Services)*)

**Type of decision**

Key Decision test (i) and (ii) applies. Forward Plan Reference No. RN08/19.

## **Purpose of report**

To advise Members on the requirement from Department for Transport (DfT) for the introduction of a 'permit scheme' to replace the existing notice system for licencing works on the highway.

To seek approval from Members for the introduction the Hartlepool Permit Scheme covering all highways and street works.

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

The DfT confirmed in late 2018 that they require all Local Authorities to move to a Permit Scheme for highways and street works operations. The permit system will replace the current street works notice and requires utilities to pay a fee for every permit application or subsequent variation. Any operator who requires work in the highway will need to apply for a permit and this includes the Council's own highways works although there is no charge levied against our internal departments.

Following the direction from DfT that permit schemes were to become mandatory in 2020 the North East Councils have collectively been working together to produce a system that offers continuity across the region. As such a significant amount of work has been undertaken since early 2019 on a regional basis to develop the scheme presented. In line with the requirements from DfT, the anticipated 'go live' date for the Hartlepool Permit Scheme will be in spring 2020.

Under a Permit Scheme, the highway authority's activities undertaken by itself, its partners or contractors are also treated in the same way as a statutory undertaker, to demonstrate parity across all works. Performance Indicators will be produced to show that all works are being treated equally however internal charging is not required. Permits will be required for all works which require excavation in the highway and also for other activities that need temporary traffic management setting up.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to works promoters for any errors or inaccuracies with permits, where works over-run beyond the designated timescale, for incorrect traffic management and where reinstatement works are not to the required standard. Penalty notices are also issued to Council works where appropriate, but as with permit applications no fee is charged.

As part of the work undertaken by the North East authorities a fee matrix was developed to determine the appropriate level of fees. DfT have set maximum fee levels that can be charged, although it is not recommended that authorities use these in the first instance, as this would leave no scope for possible increases when reviewed in future years. The Fee Structure summary document was submitted as an appendix to the report showing the proposed Hartlepool fee levels for different types of work.

Members were supportive of the proposed permit scheme and requested that an inspection procedure be included as part of the process citing previous concerns around utility companies' failure to return areas where work had been carried out to a suitable state. They also asked that the process be as transparent as possible so companies were not able to shift responsibility for failure to take action to the Local Authority. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that inspections could be included as part of the Hartlepool scheme. The basic scheme had been formulated on a regional approach. A member requested details of the potential income to cost ratio for the scheme. The Transport and Infrastructure Manager advised that the scheme had been developed considering the previous 10 years utility works in Hartlepool.

### **Decision**

That the proposed Hartlepool Permit Scheme be approved with the addition of an inspection regime as part of the process.

## **22. Church Street Small Grant Scheme** *(Assistant Director (Environment and Neighbourhood Services))*

### **Type of decision**

Non Key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

As part of the 2019/20 MTFS approved by Council on the 21st February it was agreed that any under spend arising from the Business Support Grant scheme and emergency works to 16 Church Street would be transferred to complement the Townscape Heritage scheme to cover the whole of Church Street / Church Square.

The function to approve Conservation Grants lay with this committee and, therefore, Members approval was sought for the terms of the proposed grant scheme.

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

In 2018/19 the Council provided a Compensation Grant Scheme for those businesses who were affected by the public realm works in Church Street and Church Square. Those grants provided an option to businesses to apply for a small grant to repair and decorate the front elevations of their premises. This scheme was now complete with a budget underspend of £81,000. Council have approved £60,000 of the underspend to fund

emergency works to 16 Church Street (formerly ‘Shades’) with the remaining balance of £21,000 to be available for a small grants scheme to complement the existing Townscape Heritage Scheme.

A small heritage grant scheme was proposed, to support businesses or property owners looking to make their properties structurally sound, watertight, and repair and restore traditional details. Grants would be offered at 75% of the cost of the works including any professional advice that may be required. The maximum grant would be capped at £7,000. Full grant criteria would be drawn up using heritage principles.

The scheme would be open to properties on Church Street and Church Square. Properties which were already applying or planning to apply to the Townscape Heritage Grant Programme would not be eligible to apply. This was to provide an opportunity for those properties outside of the scheme priority area to benefit from assistance.

A member referred to the advice within the report that this scheme had no relevance to child and family poverty, commenting that by making improvements to the local economy and potentially creating jobs it could have a positive impact on child and family poverty. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhood acknowledged these comments, saying that the wider implications of decisions were not always given due consideration.

A member expressed his support for the scheme and raised concerns around conservation issues in Hartlepool. The erosion of areas, whether natural or through the actions of residents, meant that history was being lost and asked that support be considered as part of the budget process.

A member requested an update on the former Shades Hotel. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that there were no plans to sell the property and emergency works were being carried out to prevent deterioration and officers were working with Heritage England in developing a funding bid. The Director confirmed a private occupier was being sought

### **Decision**

That the terms of the Grant Scheme as reported be approved.

## **23. Strategic Financial Management Report** *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Director of Finance and Policy)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

The report informed Members of the 2019/20 forecast General Fund Outturn, the 2019/20 Capital Programme Monitoring and also provided details for the specific budget areas that the Committee was responsible for. Details of the specific budget areas the Committee was responsible for are provided in Appendix A to the report.

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

The report detailed in a 2019/20 departmental revenue budget over spend of £850,000 was forecast. This mainly reflected continuing Looked after Children pressures. The Neighbourhood Services Departmental over spend was reported as £200,000. Appendix A to the report showed a forecast £125,000 overspend within the areas the Neighbourhood Services Committee was responsible for. This overspend is predominantly a result of shortfalls in income and changes in demand in relation to SEND home to school transport provision.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **24 Any Other items which the Chair considers are urgent**

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay

## **25. Any Other Business – Forward Plan (October 2019-January 2020)**

### **Stranton Chapel Refurbishment Works**

A member referred to item 16/19 (Stranton Chapel Refurbishment Works). They felt that the detail contained with the Forward Plan did not properly equate with guidance given by members previously and requested that Members Seminar be held in order that there be clarification of future plans for the facility. A discussion followed during which concerns were expressed that insufficient respect was being shown to the deceased and their grieving families due a lack of parking facilities or places to congregate particularly during inclement weather. A member felt that a refurbishment would be insufficient and either a new crematorium or an extension to the existing building was required. They also noted the 'back-to-back' nature of services being carried out which they felt was not dignified. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods acknowledged these comments and would be happy to arrange a future seminar on this topic.

### **Contaminated Land Strategy Update**

A member referred to item 11/19 (Contaminated Land Strategy Update). They suggested that trees be planted on contaminated land in order to rebalance the environment. The Transport and Infrastructure Manager noted that while a lot of sites designated as contaminated were privately owned this could certainly be considered for Council owned land. A member suggested that the Council's Tree Strategy be updated and presented alongside the contaminated land strategy update. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods confirmed that efforts would be made to consider updates to the Tree and Contaminated Land strategies at broadly the same time if possible.

A member highlighted correspondence that had recently been sent to all councillors around potential sites for 400 additional trees. Concerns were raised at the current strategy of providing small trees which were planted and subsequently damaged. They suggested that these plants be nurtured in a smaller 'nursery' environment before being planted in open spaces. They also noted that a representative of the Woodland Trust, the organisation that supplied the trees, had offered to reconsider their current strategy and suggested that this be looked at before planting sites were identified. This was acknowledged however it was noted that problems with damage were often due to specific locations and some action was better than none.

## **26. Any Other Business – Rossmere Park**

A Councillor requested an update on a dropped kerb at Rossmere Park following an injury to a wheelchair user. The Highways, Traffic and Transport Team Leader confirmed that while this had been scheduled for

November the dropped kerb was due to be put in place as soon as possible.

The Chair noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 18 October 2019 at 11.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 11.40pm.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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