

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

18 October 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, Sue Little and Amy Prince

Also Present:

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Marjorie James and Councillor Tony Richardson was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Lee Cartwright

Councillor Shane Moore

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Kieran Bostock, Transport and Infrastructure Manager
Peter Frost, Highways, Traffic and Transport Team Leader
Steve Hilton, Senior Public Relations Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

27. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors James and Cartwright.

28. Declarations of Interest

None.

29. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2019

Received.

In relation to Min 25 – Any Other Business – Stranton Chapel Refurbishment Works - it was noted that a report would be submitted to the November meeting of this Committee.

30. Local Safety Schemes Update (*Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services*)

Type of decision

Key decision – tests (i) and (ii) apply. Forward Plan Reference No RN17/19

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the prioritisation and delivery of safety schemes across Hartlepool for 2019/20.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee was advised that following approval of a number of local safety and safer routes to school schemes in March 2019, two schemes had been delayed which had therefore allowed further schemes to be brought forward in 2019/20. Given that the level of demand for safety schemes outstrips the Local Transport Plan budget all potential schemes, as set out in Appendix 1, had been prioritised using a criteria based on factors such as accident data, speed survey results, the presence of a school/playground, higher pedestrian usage and community concerns raised.

A programme of potential safety schemes had been developed, subject to approval by Members, at Wynyard Road, King Oswy Drive, Catcote Road and West Park School, details of which were included in the report. The total cost of the schemes would be approximately £120,000 and would be funded from the Council's Local Transport Plan.

In the discussion that followed officers responded to a number of queries raised in relation to the report. Clarification was provided in terms of how schemes were prioritised using the points based scheme. A Member raised concerns, on behalf of residents, regarding the tight junction and speeding issues at Sinclair Road and sought assurances that this would be considered. Assurances were provided that the team would explore these concerns under the relevant criteria and prioritisation process.

Concerns were also raised regarding the current crossing facilities at Wynyard Road shops, the fading double yellow lines and inappropriate parking on pavements creating visibility and safety problems when exiting the Wynyard Road junction. The need to consider additional car parking provision as part of the proposals for Wynyard Road was also suggested. The Committee was advised that the issues raised would be explored whereupon feedback would be provided following the meeting and would

include consultation in terms of the options available with Local Ward Members following the detailed design process.

Members spoke in support of a number of safety schemes including speeding concerns on Rossmere Way and Avondale Gardens to which the Transport and Infrastructure Manager provided an update on timescales for progressing these schemes, which was subject to funding and prioritisation, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report. In response to comments raised regarding the need for driving awareness across the town, the Chair agreed to take these comments on board.

Decision

- (i) The Committee noted the oversubscribed LTP budget and the requirement for prioritisation.
- (ii) It was noted that the proposed list was live and further schemes may be deliverable should savings within the 2019/20 programme be identified.
- (iii) That the proposed safety scheme programme be approved for 2019/20.
- (iv) That the concerns of Members, in relation to Sinclair Road and Wynyard Road, as detailed above, be noted and actioned as appropriate.
- (v) That the issue of driver awareness across the town be considered.

31. Savings Programme 2020/21 *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To enable Members to consider proposals to achieve savings in 2020/21 and to provide feedback on these proposals to the Finance and Policy Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods presented the report which provided background information to the Council's budget strategy

and the report that had been considered by Finance and Policy Committee on 30 September 2019 setting out the initial budget forecast for 2021 and 2021/22 reflecting information available at that time. Government had issued a one year Spending Review for 2020/21 on 4 September 2019 which, at a national level, provided additional resources for Councils, including children and adult social care. Additionally, the Government had confirmed the Adult Social Care precept would continue for 2020/21 at 2%. This was the first increase in net funding for nine years. In summary, the 2020/21 budget was being prepared on the back of nine years of austerity, a period which saw a reduction in Government funding from £46.4m in 2013/14 to £25.5m in 2019/20, a reduction of £20.9m for Hartlepool. An assessment of available national information had been completed and it was estimated that there would be an increase in Government grant funding allocated to Hartlepool of £1.997m and implementation of the 2% social care precept would provide £0.836m. After reflecting local pressures of £0.639m the 2020/21 forecast deficit had reduced from £4,830m to £2.636m.

Work on the Innovation and Efficiency Strategy work streams had identified proposed savings of £2.345m of which 65% (£1.421m) would be achieved by reducing overhead costs and from income generation. Further proposals for addressing the remaining gap of £0.291m would be submitted to a future meeting of Finance and Policy Committee and would be based on achieving £0.100m from reviewing fees/charges and £0.19m from a further review of expenditure budgets.

An initial assessment indicated a revised 2021/22 deficit of £0.855m which may increase if looked after children pressures could not be contained within the increased base budget provision. Since 2015 the Council has had to manage an increase in the number of looked after children, a 77% increase, although officers had worked to mitigate the financial impact and the cost increase had been limited to 45%.

In response to the financial challenges over the last nine years the Council had made significant changes to modernise services and achieve efficiency savings which had included a reduction in the workforce of 500 posts. The savings and efficiencies implemented cannot be repeated and against this background the Council faced an increasingly challenging financial position in 2020/21 and future years. Whilst the one year spending review for 2020/21 provided some recognition of the pressures on children and adult social care services, this did not address the impact of the permanent cuts in Government funding over the previous nine years, although it did reduce the scale of the cuts required next year.

The Director went on to provide a breakdown of the savings/income generation proposals for this Committee of £657K in 2021 and £178K in 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix B of the report.

Members considered in detail the savings proposals and expressed a number of views/queries/comments which included the following:-

- (i) In relation to the proposals to introduce a charge for the collection of garden waste, a Member indicated that he could not support this proposal.
- (ii) A Member requested additional information in relation to other service areas under the remit of this Committee to enable alternative proposals to be worked up and presented to Members, referring to the budget line “other” in the budget book. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods agreed to provide this information prior to the November meeting of this Committee.
- (ii) Reference was made to previous discussions by this Committee in relation to the future waste disposal contract arrangements and suggestions around local authorities developing an in-house waste disposal scheme, the financial benefits of which were highlighted. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods advised that a report had recently been considered by Finance and Policy Committee on 14 October setting out the proposals for the Tees Valley local authorities in relation to future waste disposal, the detail of which would be provided following the meeting.
- (iv) A lengthy debate ensued in relation to the proposed garden waste collection charges during which there were differing views expressed by Members.
- (v) Clarification was provided in relation to how the proposed garden waste collection scheme would operate along with details of other proposals included in the report. It was suggested that permits be issued with Council Tax bills and the timescales for mattress/bulky waste collections be examined. The benefits of introducing a chargeable permit scheme for none Hartlepool residents to dispose waste at the Household Waste Recycling Centre was discussed. The Director advised that legally the Council had to provide a service to the residents of the borough and not outside.
- (vi) The Director confirmed that Members were to note the detail of this report, provide comments which would be presented to the Finance and Policy committee along with other savings in December.
- (vii) The process as to whether the budget information should be reported back to Neighbourhood Services or direct to Finance and Policy Committee was debated.
- (viii) Members discussed at length alternative income generation opportunities during which further information was requested in relation to the detail around proposed fees and charges. A Member commented on the need to explore alternative options to avoid responsible residents being hit with additional charges and options could include a review of car parking charges and enforcement fees.

- (ix) With regard to the proposed changes to opening hours at the Household Waste Recycling Centre, views were expressed that other alternatives be examined such as a reduction in the working day to avoid closures two days per week and that proposals should reflect the level of demand on bank holidays.
- (x) Assurances were sought that the proposals relating to any reduction in working hours at the Household Waste Recycling Centre would not adversely affect staff and that redeployment opportunities would be explored.
- (xi) The Director provided clarification in response to queries raised in relation to grass cutting, litter picking and the costs of traffic management arrangements on the A689. Concern was also expressed in relation to an ageing workforce and concerns around the proposed move from mechanical street cleansing to manual.
- (xii) In concluding the debate, Members requested further information in relation to the following:-
 - budget book information in relation to “other”
 - detailed information on the innovation and efficiency strategy workstreams specifically on the £100,000 savings from fees and charges and details of £191,000 from review of expenditure budgets
 - details of current vacancies held across Neighbourhood Services
 - details on the impact on the proposal to move to manual street cleansing on the workforce.
- (xiii) Members supported the move towards perennial wildflower seeds from annual, the introduction of a free permit scheme for Hartlepool residents at the Household Recycling Centre, the proposal to recover full wheeled bin costs from implementing revised charges to fully recover the costs of replacement bins and introduce a new charge for new builds and bin exchanges which were currently provided free of charge and expand the trade waste service and review charges.
- (xiv) Further discussion ensued in relation to the decision making process and how the additional budget information requested by Members should be considered. The Leader commented on the value of input to the budget process from Members and indicated that all contributions from this Committee would be welcomed. A Member placed emphasis upon constitutional responsibilities, indicating that decisions relating to the Neighbourhood Services element of the budget fell within the remit of Neighbourhood Services and therefore requested that the budget information, as outlined above, be reported to the next meeting of this Committee.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members, as outlined above, be noted and be utilised to formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee.
- (ii) That a report be provided for Members' consideration to the next meeting of this Committee to include the following additional budget information:-
 - budget book information in relation to "other"
 - detailed information on the innovation and efficiency strategy workstreams specifically on the £100,000 savings from fees and charges and details of £191,000 from review of expenditure budgets
 - details of current vacancies held across Neighbourhood Services
 - details on the impact of the proposal to move to manual street cleansing on the workforce.
- (iii) Members supported the move towards perennial wildflower seeds from annual, the introduction of a free permit scheme for Hartlepool residents at the Household Recycling Centre, the proposal to recover full wheeled bin costs from implementing revised charges to fully recover the costs of replacement bins and introduce a new charge for new builds and bin exchanges which were currently provided free of charge and expand the trade waste service and review charges.
- (iv) That the suggestions of Members be actioned as appropriate.

32. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair reported that the next meeting would be held on Friday 15 November 2019 at 11.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 12.25 pm

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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