

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

13 MARCH 2020

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

**Present:**

Councillor John Tennant (In the Chair);

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

Also Present: Councillor Lesley Hamilton (Vice-Chair of Audit and Governance Committee)  
Councillor Tony Richardson.

Officers: Tony Hanson, Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services  
Sylvia Pinkney, Head of Public Protection  
Sarah Scarr, Heritage and Countryside Manager  
Kieran Bostock, Transport and Infrastructure Manager  
Peter Frost, Highways, Traffic and Transport Team Leader  
Angela Armstrong, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Steve Hilton, Communications Team  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services team

### **59. Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **60. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **61. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2020**

Received.

## **62. Anti-Social Behaviour in Hartlepool – Final Report** (Vice-Chair of Audit and Governance Committee)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To present the Audit and Governance Committee's finding following completion of its investigation into Anti-Social Behaviour in to Hartlepool.

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

The Vice-Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee presented the final investigation report and recommendations agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 5 March 2020 which had been circulated to the Members of the Committee. The report was also to be presented to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership at its meeting on 20 March 2020.

The next steps in the process would involve the development of a detailed Action Plan to allow the Committee to formulate an informed view on each of the recommendations in the investigation report. Whilst the Committee's response to the report would normally be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee within 28 days of its receipt, it was recognised that this would not be possible in light of the forthcoming elections and purdah. The Committee was requested, therefore, to receive the report and at its first meeting of the new Municipal Year formulate a response to its recommendations, based upon the Action Plan provided. The Committee's response to the report would then be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee and the implementation of its recommendations monitored on a six monthly basis.

### **Decision**

That the report be received pending consideration of a detailed Action Plan at the Committee's first meeting of the new municipal year to consider the implementation of the report's recommendations.

**63. 5 Year Highway Maintenance Programme** *(Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services)*

**Type of decision**

Key Decision test (i) and (ii) applies. Forward Plan Reference No. RN01/20.

**Purpose of report**

To seek approval for a 5 year Highway Maintenance Programme, determined by carriageway condition surveys and following Department for Transport recommended asset management processes.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services reported that for the financial year 2020/2021 the capital grant allocation for highway maintenance was expected to be broadly similar to 2019/20 (£1,188,000), though this was yet to be confirmed by government. The new 5 year programme had been prepared assuming a similar level was to be allocated each year.

Due to the large number of roads having the same condition rating, results were also supplemented by rating assessments carried out in house on the basis of Highway Inspector's reports to determine the schemes that should be given priority within the 5 year programme. Consideration had also been given to requests received from members of the public and Elected Members, through the Community Forums or directly to Officers.

Appendices to the report set out the programme of works proposed.

**Decision**

1. That the proposed programme, as set out in the appendices to the report be approved, and it was noted that this would fully commit the funding available in 2020/2021.
2. That any changes to the proposed programme be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee.

## **64. Local Transport Plan 2019/20 Outturn and 2020/21 Programme** *(Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision test (ii) applies. Forward Plan Reference No. RN 02/20.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Neighbourhood Services Committee of the progress made under the Local Transport Plan delivery programme during 2019/2020, and to identify potential schemes for 2020/2021.

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

The Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services reported that the third Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026, set out how a safe and sustainable transport system could be delivered within Hartlepool. The strategy was not limited to the five year timescale of previous LTP's but was designed to look towards 2026 and evolve over this period. This extended timescale ensured that the LTP was aligned with regional strategies and local development frameworks.

In March 2015, the final year of the LTP Delivery Plan (2011-2015) was completed. A subsequent LTP Strategic Delivery Plan (2015-2021), had already been approved at the Neighbourhood Services Committee meeting on 16th March 2015, covering the 6 year period, (indicative allocations only, for the final 3 year periods) which were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. Year 5 (2019/2020) of the Strategic Delivery Plan (2015-2021), would be completed in March 2020, and Year 6 (2020/21) would commence in April 2020. Appendix 2 to the report detailed the works delivered during 2019/2020, and also included proposed schemes for 2020/2021 (subject to further committee reports where necessary).

A new Strategic Delivery Plan would be developed over the coming year for approval in 2021, once an indication had been forthcoming from government on the future direction of Local Transport Plans.

### **Decision**

1. That the works / schemes delivered during 2019/2020 be noted, and the proposed budget breakdown for 2020/2021 be approved as set out in the appendices to the report.

2. That any changes to the proposed programme be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee.

**65. Allotment Review Update** (*Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services*)

**Type of decision**

Key Decision – Test (ii) – General Exception Notice applies.

**Purpose of report**

To consider the referral from Full Council on the 12th September 2019 for this Committee to carry out a review of the Authority's Allotment Service and consider the opportunities available to bring forward proposals for the development of a sustainable funding structure to support the Allotment Service, and more recently a referral from Full Council 20th February 2020 when it was agreed by Members that a report would be submitted to the Neighbourhood Services Committee before the end of the municipal year and the issue in relation to the location of allotments in the departmental structure would be considered at the next meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services reported that following the Council referrals a number of changes to allotment rules and regulations and site management were proposed. There had been a Members' Seminar and meetings of the Allotments Focus Group where, following the comments of allotment holders, it had been agreed that any changes proposed would not be introduced until 1 April 2021 and not 2020 as stated in the report.

The changes proposed were detailed more fully in the report and briefly included the following amendments: -

- Once a person becomes a registered partner on a plot, they may not become a partner on any further plots and plot allocation would be restricted to one plot per person.
- Allotment Associations would be required to provide information on how they were run, details of members and appointments and their financial accounts.
- There were currently no allotment sites in Hartlepool that were self-managed, though Woodcroft had been for a ten year period from 2003. It was proposed that officers would look to promoting self-managed sites.

- Clarification would be provided in the rules that would allow the inspection of allotments and any sheds, greenhouses etc for reasons such as; animal welfare, chemical storage, Health and Fire safety, tenancy/land management while not interfering with an allotment holders 'quiet use and enjoyment of their allotment garden'.

Members welcomed the prevention of sub-letting which had been the cause of some significant issues and the inspection of allotments to prevent criminality and to ensure fire safety and health and safety. There was concern at the original intention to introduce the new rules from this April but Members supported the proposed date of 1 April 2021. Members did seek additional information on subletting and the Assistant Director stated that he would supply Members with those details following the meeting.

Members noted the reference to the changes to the management structure approved at Finance and Policy Committee but stated that without full details of those decisions, which were not available in the meeting, no note could be taken of them, so reference to them should be removed.

In terms of the dispute resolution process, some concern was expressed at the inclusion of an independent Chief Officer reviewing the process in light of their already high workloads. It was suggested that after the Chief Officer review stage, an additional stage should be introduced where Members had an opportunity to determine a resolution to any complaints. It was suggested that this be through the Audit and Governance Committee. Complainants would still have the opportunity to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman after such process. This addition to the resolution process was agreed by Members on a majority vote.

In relation to the inspection of allotment sites, there were a number of allotment holders present at the meeting who considered this to be a move too far and there was a lengthy debate on the pros and cons of inspections. Members acknowledged the reluctance of some allotment holders but considered the inspections appropriate in light of the Council's duties in relation to fire safety at allotment sites and ensuring the Fire Brigade had the right information on chemicals and Gas bottles that may be on the site. There were also issues around the general storage of gas bottles and chemicals that the authority had to be aware of in light of its duty to protect the wider general public. The Assistant Director assured Members and allotment holders that this was not a means to get at allotment holders and was likely to be used sparingly, however, it was essential to allow officers to carry out their duties appropriately.

## **Decision**

1. That the proposed changes to the Allotment Rules and Regulations of Tenancy as outlined in the report be approved.

2. That the proposal to introduce a dispute resolution process involving a Chief Officer as detailed in the report be approved with the addition of a referral to the Audit and Governance Committee for the final consideration of a complaint/dispute by a Member Sub Committee.
3. That the proposal to move the service to Adults and Community Based Services department, that had been considered in a separate report to the Finance and Policy Committee and referred to full Council, be noted.

**66. Review of Civil Enforcement Provision** (*Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key decision.

**Purpose of report**

On 31st October 2019, Full Council referred the following motion to Neighbourhood Services Committee:

“That the Neighbourhood Services Committee explore the costs and delivery of introducing two separate enforcement teams, as part of this year’s budget process.”

On 17th January 2020 Neighbourhood Services Committee it was agreed by this Committee:

“That a report be provided to this Committee, prior to the end of the current municipal year, in relation to the costs and delivery of two separate enforcement team’s in relation to dog fouling and littering.”

The purpose of the report was to enable Elected Members to consider the review.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services reported that the Civil Enforcement Team was made up of a Team Leader, two Supervisors and eight Civil Enforcement Officers with an annual cost of £239,000. However, over the last twelve month period there had been a number of vacant Civil Enforcement Officer posts and as such the team had only been fully staffed since the beginning of February 2020.

Over recent months Officers had been in discussions with Thirteen Group who had offered to fund two additional civil enforcement officer posts for period of eighteen months. While these additional posts would carry out the full range of duties, as part of the pilot project with Thirteen Group, the additional resource would be directed to, and dedicated towards,

environmental enforcement work such as littering, dog related offences and fly tipping.

The report considered the suggestion to create two enforcement teams and how that could be achieved and the Assistant Director highlighted there would be a significant additional cost associated with that.

Members considered that two separate enforcement teams could not be justified but did wish to see greater enforcement in relation to dog fouling as this was the primary issue for the public. Members acknowledged the issues enforcement officers could have when dealing with members of the public but an ability to deal with confrontation was a key part of the role. It was suggested that an increased use of bodycams would help in this regard. The Assistant Director stated that officers were working with staff in the team on improved monitoring and increased enforcement. Members reinforced their total support to staff should they be subject to any threatening behaviour or abuse to follow that through to prosecution if necessary.

The Assistant Director highlighted the use of the FirmStep software utilised by the Council for the recording of service requests through the website and the Contact Centre. These reports could be forwarded onto enforcement officers out on duty and those officers could also use it to report other issues into the department.

The Assistant Director suggested that in light of the new posts in partnership with Thirteen, and the changes being introduced that a further update report be brought to Members in six months' time.

### **Decision**

1. That the additional officers being recruited to the service as part of a pilot project with Thirteen Group be noted and that consequently no further changes are carried to this service at present;
2. That Members receive an update report on progress in 6 months;
3. That approval be given to a campaign being undertaken to encourage the public to provide us with more detailed information to allow us to be more effective in this role.

## **67. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

None.

The Chairman closed the last meeting of the Committee in the Municipal Year by commenting that much had been achieved in the service over the



year and by thanking Members and Officers for their input into making this the case.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 25 MARCH 2020**