

# **FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

13 AUGUST 2020

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and was an online remote meeting in compliance with the Council Procedure Rules Relating to the holding of Remote Meetings and the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

**Present:**

Councillor Shane Moore (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, James Brewer, Paddy Brown, Brenda Harrison, Jim Lindridge, Sue Little, Ann Marshall, Leisa Smith, John Tennant, and Mike Young.

Also Present: Councillor Tony Richardson and Edwin Jeffries (HJTUC).

Officers: Gill Alexander, Chief Executive  
Neil Wilson, Deputy Chief Solicitor  
Chris Little, Director of Finance and Policy  
Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services  
Jill Harrison, Director of Adult and Community Based Services  
Denise McGuckin, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Kieran Bostock, Interim Assistant Director, Place Management  
Ed Turner, Communications and Marketing Team  
David Cosgrove and Denise Wimpenny, Democratic Services Team

### **15. Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **16. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Little declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. 21 "Home to School Transport - Concessionary Seats" as her husband's business was a contracted transport supplier.

During the meeting Councillor C Akers-Belcher declared a personal interest as an employee of Hartlepool Healthwatch during the discussions under Minute 20 "COVID19 Recovery and Renewal Plan".

## **17. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020**

A Member raised a query in relation to the information requested at Minute No. 10 regarding the support provided to the homeless during the emergency period. The Chair confirmed they were set out in the report “Provision of Accommodation for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping During COVID-19 Response” later on the agenda.

Minutes confirmed.

## **18. Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 9 March 2020**

Received.

## **19. Financial Position Update 2020/21 to 2023/24** *(Director of Finance and Policy)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with updates on:

- (i) the forecast 2020/21 General Fund outturn;
- (ii) the financial impact of Covid-19;
- (iii) General Fund budget 2021/22 and futures years outlook;
- (iv) the Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22;
- (v) the Housing Revenue Account 2021/22 and future years.

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

The Director of Finance and Policy reported that the Covid pandemic will have an adverse impact on the financial position and future financial resilience of all councils. The scale of the impact in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the measures that will need to be adopted to address these financial challenges will depend on the financial support measures provided by the Government, which continue to evolve and will not be finalised until later in the year.

The Director outlined the main aspects of his detailed report to the Committee highlighting the measures the Council would need to take to mitigate the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the detailed recommendations set out in the report.

The Chair thanked Members for the difficult decisions they had taken earlier in the year on the Council budget which had placed the Council in a much

better financial position than it could have otherwise been in due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members discussed the need to consider the financial situation of many families in Hartlepool and, therefore, the potential to explore seeking Government support for a fully funded Council Tax freeze next financial year, together with the maintenance of the current LCTS scheme. It was suggested that a review of all non-statutory services needed to be undertaken with a view to alternative service delivery options where this would provide savings. The costs of the current building stock also needed to be reviewed in light of the potential continuation of the home-working arrangements that had been implemented during 'lock-down'.

The loss of income in the leisure sector was also raised with a request to share with Members the detailed cost associated with running the leisure sector of the Council together with details of the potential income associated with a reduced capacity re-opening in line with government restrictions. A full review of fees and charges had also been raised during the discussions on the budget earlier in the year and Members noted this was not included within the report.

Members also requested a review of Planning arrangements and the current Section 106 scheme to determine if changes are needed to potentially trade-off a lower S.106 payment against the potential gain in Council Tax income of new properties.

The development of the Community Pot was welcomed by Members. It was suggested that the potential use of Government Covid-19 Grant monies for local welfare schemes be further investigated to add to the pot together with any underspends on Members Allowances.

The Director of Finance and Policy undertook to supply the information requested by Members. In relation to the LCTS and the fees and charges, he commented that these were resource intensive and though would be undertaken if that's what Members agreed. In relation to the Government Covid-19 Grant monies for local welfare schemes, the Director stated that a review if scheduled and the bulk of those monies had been allocated already and should unemployment increase there would be further households eligible to receive the support. The current casework would need to be assessed but Members could be assured that the grant would go out to help people in the town directly.

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods commented that the Government had recently announced a consultation on major changes to the planning system including S.106 monies and a response to the consultation was being developed and would be agreed with the Leader, Chair of Regeneration Services Committee and the Chair of Planning Committee prior to submission.

On the wider issues of the reviews of fees and charges, non-statutory services, out-sourcing and alternative delivery models, and the financial

impact of staff working at home, the Director of Finance and Policy stated these were significant pieces of work which would take some time to deliver. The Corporate Management Team had already started some work around some of these issues but there were capacity concerns. The issues around staff working at home had already been identified but it also needed to be acknowledged that for quite a number of staff this in itself posed some mental health concerns; it simply didn't work for everybody or every service.

Questions around the increase in the numbers of looked after children (LAC) were addressed by the Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services who indicated that part of the growth in numbers was down to the government stating that there should be a pause on children/young people leaving care. The significant reduction in Court activity had also affected the numbers and the progress of many cases. The services were also concerned at the potential spike in figures as children returned to school in September as most children had 'not been seen' by authorities for over five months.

During debate Members indicated their support for the maintenance of the current LCTS scheme at 12% and also the lobbying of government for a specific grant to allow a 'freeze' of council tax in the next financial year.

Councillor Young stated his wish to be involved in the Boards supporting the allocation of the Community Pot and also in relation to the Business Support Fund. Following a request for clarification from Councillor Young that Councillor Smith appeared to oppose this request, Councillor Smith advised that she did not believe anyone with any interest should sit on a Panel. Councillor Young requested that it be recorded that he would be seeking legal advice on the comments made by Councillor Smith.

The Chair sought the Committee's support to the Council being part of a lobbying group within the Local Government Association for Unitary Authorities. Other local authority structures had lobbying groups and the one representing District Authorities had proved very successful in lobbying for additional funds for their councils from Government during the Covid-19 emergency.

In relation to the recommendations set out in the report Members agreed that both elements of recommendation (ix) should be retained acknowledging that this may require an additional meeting of the Committee. Members acknowledged the comments of the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods around the consultation on the Government's proposed changes to the Planning system and requested that once the submission to the consultation had been forwarded, the Committee should consider what measures could be taken in the interim prior to the changes in primary legislation to accelerate housing growth in Hartlepool.

The recommendations were agreed without dissent.

## **Decision**

### **2020/21 General Fund Forecast Outturn**

1. The Committee noted that it was anticipated that increase Looked after Children costs could be funded from underspend in other budgets.

### **Financial Impact of Covid-19**

2. The Committee noted that it was currently anticipated that Government grant funding should cover forecast Covid costs and irrecoverable sales, fees and charges income, although the position may change if there is a local lock down or second wave outbreak.
3. The Committee noted that the forecast Collection Fund deficit would not be funded from Government grant and based on current forecasts Council resources of £2.154m would need to be allocated to address this funding shortfall, as detailed in paragraph 5.6 of the report.

### **General Fund Budget 2021/22 and future years**

4. The Committee noted the pandemic has had an adverse impact on the Council's financial position and the forecast funding shortfall for 2021/22 is between £2.886m and £5.086m, including a forecast recurring income shortfall of £1.150m arising from the continued impact of Covid 19 in 2021/22.
5. The Committee endorsed the proposed strategy to fund this shortfall from reserves, whilst noting this was not a permanent strategy and deferred a deficit until 2022/23 to provide a longer lead time to identify budget cuts and clarity over recurring national funding.
6. The Committee approved the suggested submission to the Spending Review Submission and Letter to Simon Clark MP – Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government detailed in paragraph 6.25 of the report, including lobbying for a fully funded 2021/22 Council Tax freeze grant and noting that if this was not provided Council Tax would need to increase in line with Government set referendum limit to protect services.
7. The Committee agreed that the Council should support the establishment of a special interest group for unitary councils within the Local Government Association to provide a forum for sharing experiences and promoting the financial issues facing unitary councils.

### **Local Council Tax Support scheme 2021/22**

8. The Committee noted the increase in households eligible for LCTS (Local Council Tax Support) in 2020/21 and 2021/22;
9. The Committee approved a recommendation to Council to maintain the existing LCTS scheme at 12% and the Local Welfare Support budget for 2021/22 to provide financial certainty and stability;

#### Housing Revenue Account

10. The Committee agreed a freeze of HRA (Housing Revenue Account) rents for 2021/22 should be recommended to Council and the Committee noted the additional forecast capital investment detailed in paragraph 8.3 of the report.

#### Community Pot

11. The Committee approved the establishment of a Community Pot of £225,000 to be funded from the one off resources as detailed in paragraph 10 of the report and:
  - earmarked £25,000 to support a programme of activities for Young People and delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee to approve the use of this fund;
  - noted that proposal for allocating the remaining £200,000 would be made by Finance and Policy Committee.

## **20. COVID19 Recovery and Renewal Plan** (*Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision (tests (i) and (ii) apply). General exception applied.

### **Purpose of report**

To consider the Council's COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal Plan and operating framework and initial investment priorities.

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

The Chief Executive reported that the overarching goal of the COVID19 Recovery and Renewal Plan was to work towards achieving our ambition to grow a healthy, prosperous and inclusive Borough. The Recovery Plan was, therefore, also a plan to renew the local economy and build a better future for the Borough.

The Plan sets out strategic objectives and a framework for engaging partner agencies across the following themes:

1. Health and Social Care
2. Business Economy, Skills & Jobs
3. Community Wellbeing and Financial Inclusion
4. Education and Vulnerable Children
5. Environment and Infrastructure
6. Organisational Change and Resilience
7. Communications
8. Financial Recovery

Working groups will be established involving partner agencies, representatives of the voluntary and community sector and faith communities and business leaders as appropriate and will report through to appropriate Council committees and Boards. Each working group will develop and deliver dynamic action plans which will adapt to changing circumstances.

Hartlepool Borough Council entered the COVID19 crisis from a position of relative strength. However, tackling the social and economic impact of COVID19 and addressing the significant social, economic and health inequalities in the Borough will require a major fiscal stimulus. We will need to focus our efforts on attracting investment from the Town Deal and High Street Funds alongside other national programmes. In addition we will need to work hard with the Tees Valley Combined Authority to attract further devolved funds so that we can properly address the priorities set out in this Recovery Plan over a three year period.

A proposed £500,000 Business Support Fund was already earmarked as part of the TVCA Indigenous Growth Allocation and would be re-purposed towards COVID-19 recovery. A proposed £225,000 Community Fund would also be established, as reported in the previous agenda item, bringing together New Burdens funding, Release of Family Poverty Reserve, the Ward Member Budget underspend at 31 March 2020, and Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for food and essential suppliers.

Members welcomed the plan and identified the need to provide support to the business community as being key to the recovery from the Covid 19 emergency and that strong links with the Combined Authority and the devolvement of further financial support were key to this.

Members also strongly expressed their support to the workforce particularly to providing appropriate mental health support for those working at home or redeployed from their normal duties. Senior officers and Team Managers needed to ensure regular contact with staff to maintain normal interaction and reduce the feelings of isolation that home working may cause some. Members noted the responses to the staff survey and suggested that further re-engagement be undertaken to gain an improved response rate. Officers stated that there was regular contact with home workers but took on board Members comments.

The Chief Executive commented that as well as the work undertaken with the voluntary sector during the Covid 19 emergency which had made a significant impact, the work of the Council's own Support Hub had to be highly commended. The Hub had been developed and implemented very rapidly and had worked closely with the voluntary sector and other partners to provide some very essential support and services to the vulnerable in the town. The Support Hub was still available to support people should they need it even though the lockdown restrictions had eased.

The Chief Executive acknowledged Members comments around future service delivery commenting that there were likely to be a significant number of services that may never return to their previous operation model. Demand may have permanently changed and the future may involve some exciting new models of service delivery with outsourcing being used if it could provide the right level of service and savings.

The Chief Executive supported the comments around the mental welfare of staff working at home and in new ways. Working at home was not for everyone and it had to be acknowledged that many people simply worked better when physically with other people. Others benefitted from the space and time to think clearly. A wider conversation was, therefore, needed around how and if home working could be incorporated into new service delivery models.

The Chair of the Regeneration Services Committee stated his support for the Business Support Fund commenting that it needed to compliment the work around the Town Deal. The work in Church Street was also an area of concern with some businesses being unable to proceed with some of the work associated with the Church Street redevelopment.

Councillor C Akers-Belcher declared a personal interest as an employee of Hartlepool Healthwatch during this item.

The recommendations in the report were agreed without dissent.

## **Decision**

The Committee:

1. Noted the feedback from the wide-ranging consultation that had been undertaken with partner agencies, the voluntary and community sector and faith communities, our staff and elected members.
2. Considered and endorsed the Hartlepool COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal Plan and operating framework.
3. Approved the creation of a single community fund up to £225,000 to support community-led initiatives aimed at tackling the social and



economic impact of COVID-19 and providing new out-of-school and holiday opportunities for vulnerable children and young people.

4. Approved the re-framing of the £500,000 business revolving loan fund to provide a grant scheme to assist local businesses adapt to the new economic environment and to invest in re-animating the visitor and tourist economy and assets.

## **21. Home to School Transport - Concessionary Seats**

*(Director of Children and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide Finance and Policy Committee with further information in relation to the provision of concessionary seats on home to school transport, as requested at the meeting of Council on 30 July 2020 and to outline proposals for autumn term 2020.

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

The Director of Children and Joint Commissioning Services reported that the Council had a duty to provide free Home to School travel assistance to students who are eligible under the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspection Act 2006. The Education Act 1996 provides a statutory obligation on local authorities to provide home to school travel assistance free of charge to all eligible students of compulsory school age. The obligation on the Council to provide home to school travel assistance is limited to the child attending their nearest suitable school. The Council has no obligation to make arrangements to transport non-entitled children to school.

Over recent years, the practice within the Council has been that home to school transport is arranged for entitled pupils, and any spare seats on buses are then made available to non-entitled students for a charge, under a concessionary seat arrangement. Concessionary seats are not always available, are not guaranteed and may be removed if an eligible child makes application.

The Director referred to the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) came into force in January 2020 and meant that where a fare was being charged for travel and there were more than 22 seated passengers, the vehicle would need to be wheelchair accessible as well as meeting more general accessibility requirements. Not all the buses used for school transport met these regulations and new vehicles had been procured but these had been delayed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. At the meeting, the

Director updated the Committee indicating that the new vehicles would now be delivered in late October.

A letter was sent to all parents and carers who have previously accessed or requested concessionary travel arrangements on 16 July 2020. This letter gave parents and carers advanced notice that the Council was uncertain as to whether there would be an opportunity to offer concessionary travel for the 2020/21 academic year due the potential need for social distancing on school transport, the anticipated increase in the number pupils of eligible for travel assistance arising from the impact of COVID 19 and PSVAR issues. The current position is that it is likely the Council will be able to provide some concessionary travel permits on the home to school buses, although indications are that capacity will be lower than in previous years. The report went onto outline the numbers of children affected and the situation in the general market around home to school transport.

The Council had been in discussion with The English Martyrs Catholic School and Sixth Form College to seek to work together to resolve the challenges posed by the current situation for parents and pupils. The school had undertaken a survey of parents and received 169 expressions of interest for school transport; this number is significantly greater than the number of non-eligible pupils issued with a concessionary travel permit in the 2019/20 academic year (107).

At the meeting, the Director reported that the Council had been informed that it was eligible for the recently announced exemptions to PSVAR, and such an exemption would be applied for as a matter of urgency. In light of this, the Director proposed that the Committee approve the proposal that the Council re-commences charging for concessionary travel permits, to the available capacity, as the Council was eligible for an exemption and an application had been submitted.

Members commented on the provisions of the Education Act 1996 and disagreed with the acceptable walking distances for school children and considered that a local review be undertaken to develop a policy more appropriate to Hartlepool. A Member also commented that they did not support school children having to pay to go to school and the Council should look to providing subsidised school transport or free bus passes for all school children. The lack of consultation on the reported proposals was also criticised with the suggestion that full consultation should be undertaken before the committee reached a decision.

Members discussed the different approach taken by different schools in the town noting that Dyke House School provided school buses for all their pupils at their own cost. The issue of children attending schools within a cluster model was also discussed, particularly the impact on school children from Seaton Carew who through the cluster model approach led to them attending Dyke House School when the closest secondary school was Manor School. The Director commented that many parents when choosing

a school for their children did not always consider the impact of that decision on transport.

Members discussed the issues around the choices of schools in providing transport for pupils and the financial consideration around those decisions. There was concern that widening the provision of school transport would shift the costs from schools to the Council which would then be another budget pressure. The meeting also discussed the potential of support from the Tees Valley Combined Authority particularly through the Tees Flex Service.

Recommendation 1 in the report was agreed by the Committee without dissent. In relation to the amended recommendation 2 “that the Committee approves the proposal that the Council re-commences charging for concessionary travel permits, to the available capacity, as the Council is eligible for an exemption from the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) and such an application had been submitted”, in accordance with Rule 8 of the Council’s Procedure Rules Relating to the Holding of Remote Meetings, a recorded vote was taken.

Those for:

Councillors James Brewer, Paddy Brown, Brenda Harrison, Jim Lindridge, Sue Little, Ann Marshall, Leisa Smith, John Tennant, and Mike Young.

Those abstaining:

None.

Those against:

Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher.

### **Decision**

1. That the contents of this report as requested by the meeting of council on 30 July 2020 be noted.
2. That the Committee approves the proposal that the Council re-commences charging for concessionary travel permits, to the available capacity, as the Council is eligible for an exemption from the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) and such an application had been submitted

## **22. Proposed Appointment of an Assistant Coroner (*Chief Solicitor*)**

### **Type of decision**

Non-key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek agreement to the proposed appointment of an Assistant Coroner by Middlesbrough Council (as the Relevant Authority) for the Teesside and Hartlepool Coroner Service area.

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

The Deputy Chief Solicitor reported that as a direct result of the lockdown, inquest hearings have had to be suspended and, therefore, there is now a backlog of inquests waiting to be heard. As the country enters its recovery phase, the Senior Coroner has indicated the necessity of addressing this backlog.

The Chief Coroner suggests that most Coronial Services require four to six Assistant Coroners. The Tees and Hartlepool Coroner Service currently has only two active Assistant Coroners. The Senior Coroner for the Tees and Hartlepool Service has identified, therefore, the need to appoint at least one additional Assistant to deal with the extra work and to ensure resilience for the Service.

Where the coroner area consists of more than one local authority, the relevant authority (formerly known as the lead authority) must consult the other authorities. Middlesbrough BC have, therefore, written to Redcar and Cleveland Council, and Stockton and ourselves to request their support for the appointment of an additional Assistant Coroner. The Chief Coroner must then also consent to the appointment of all coroners, as must the Lord Chancellor.

Ordinarily it would be necessary to hold an open competition for an Assistant Coroner, however, the Chief Coroner has recently made provision for local authorities to appoint Assistant Coroners without the need for an open competition (Chief Coroner's guidance 26.03.20). This decision has been made to assist Coroner's Services deal with all of the extra work that the Covid-19 pandemic has, understandably, brought. It is proposed to utilise this guidance to directly appoint the appointment of a local solicitor and Assistant Coroner due to his experience and familiarity with the role.

The cost of the coroner's service is shared between the four authorities and should Hartlepool approve the appointment, 'our' share of the current cost would be in the region of £3000 per annum.

The following decision was agreed without dissent.

### **Decision**

That Hartlepool confirms its agreement with the proposal that Middlesbrough Borough Council is to appoint an additional Assistant Coroner for the Teesside and Hartlepool Coroner Service area.

## **23. Provision of Accommodation for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping During COVID-19 Response** *(Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the Finance and Policy Committee with further information regarding the provision of accommodation for those who were homeless and rough sleeping during the COVID19 response, as requested at the meeting of Finance and Policy Committee on 29 June 2020.

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

The Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services reported on the arrangements put in place following the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness, Luke Hall, MP. wrote on 26 March 2020 to all local authority Chief Executives announcing the appointment of Dame Louise Casey to lead the Government's response to COVID-19 and rough sleeping to help make sure that everyone was brought in off the streets to protect their health and stop wider transmission of the virus.

Following the Ministerial announcement, an approach was made to Families First North East, an organisation that was in the process of developing supported accommodation for young adults at Melbourne Hotel. At that time, the accommodation was vacant and could be mobilised to provide accommodation, staffing and support within 24-48 hours.

The report set out the details of the arrangements made with the Melbourne Hotel, the service provided and the numbers of people supported both at Melbourne Hotel and by the Housing Advice Team.

The cost of the provision of temporary supported accommodation at the Melbourne Hotel was £57,613. The vast majority of this cost arose from the provision of 24 hour staffing arrangements which enabled those referred to receive an appropriate level of support and guidance and the service to receive referrals on evenings and weekends to immediately respond to those found to be homeless or rough sleeping. All costs have been covered from Government grant funding provided to the Council specifically to cover costs associated with the COVID19 response. As detailed in the MTFS report elsewhere on the agenda the Government Covid19 grant covers all expenditure incurred by the Council responding to the pandemic. There are no ongoing costs associated with provision at the Melbourne Hotel.

Members sought details of the length of stay of the various individuals and the family group accommodated at Melbourne Hotel. The Director undertook to supply these details to Members.

Members questioned the numbers of homeless referred to in the report as previous reports indicated that the figures were much lower. The Director stated that many of those counted may not have presented as 'immediately' homeless but may have had tenancies at risk of termination for example. There were 'sweeps' undertaken with Cornerstone to identify and offer assistance to anyone rough sleeping. There were, however, a number of people that 'presented' during the day as being on the streets begging but had accommodation to go to at night.

A Member questioned whether Cornerstone or the Home Group could not have been in a position to offer accommodation to those that had presented as homeless. The costs of those accommodated at the Melbourne Hotel were very high. There were also some people who were refused by the Melbourne Hotel and were sent to other bed and breakfast provision. The Director stated that officers did work closely with the two organisations referred to but the accommodation provided was additional capacity to meet the urgent need created by the Government's requirement to 'home' all homeless people within such a tight timescale.

A Member also referred to some of the anti-social behaviour complaints that had arisen from neighbours of the Melbourne Hotel during this period and the poor response they were given by the Community Safety Team. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods stated she would follow up on those comments with the Councillor after the meeting.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **24. Provision of Food during the COVID19 Response** (Director of Adult and Community Based Services)

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the Finance and Policy Committee with further information regarding the provision of food during the COVID19 response, as requested at the meeting of Finance and Policy Committee on 29 June 2020.

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

The Director of Adult and Community Based Services reported that in the early stages of the Council's COVID19 response, access to food household

essentials was a significant challenge with shortages in supermarkets and organisations experiencing difficulties accessing goods through established supply chains, such as providers of school meals. Local Authorities were directed to establishing 'shielding hubs' to support those covered by the shielding guidance, and it was also recognised that there were people who did not fall under this guidance who would require substantial support to access food, household essentials and medication.

Hartlepool Support Hub was established at very short notice in the early weeks of the COVID19 response in order to support the local population, including those who were shielding. As well as providing access to food, the Support Hub has enabled people to access advice and information, emotional support and befriending services, prescriptions, continence products, hearing aid batteries, pet food, newspapers, books and much more. The report set out in detail the provision of Emergency Food Parcels, Weekly Food Boxes, Hot Food Deliveries, and the National Food Box Scheme. The report also included some of the very positive feedback received by the hub from those people and families supported.

The Director stated that the support from the Hub would continue and officers were still working with people who may still have some residual needs despite the lockdown restrictions being eased. The Director also highlighted that all the costs associated with the support given through the Hub had been met by the grant from Government for the Covid-19 response.

Members welcomed the report and the extra detail it provided and congratulated all involved in the Support Hub for the excellent support they had provided during the Covid-19 emergency. The Director thanked Members for the comments and would share them with the staff in the Hub and those involved in the provision of the wider response to the Covid-19 emergency. Many staff had adapted to new and very different roles very quickly and with great enthusiasm and should be commended for their hard work during this period. Members also commented on the excellent work of the local foodbanks during this period and also recently by Councillors Smith and Little in the preparation and distribution of food parcels as part of the summer holiday hunger scheme.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **25. Corporate Procurement Quarterly Report on Contracts** *(Director of Finance and Policy)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

To satisfy the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules with regard to the Finance and Policy Committee:

- Receiving and examining quarterly reports on the outcome of contract letting procedures including those where the lowest/highest price is not payable/receivable.
- Receiving and examining reports on any exemptions granted in respect of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

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

A report outlining the Council's procurement activity since the previous quarterly report was submitted highlighting the delay caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. Details of the individual contracts were set out in appendices to the report. One appendix to the report contained exempt information under Schedule 12A of the 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).

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

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

None.

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on 21 September 2020 commencing at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 12.52 pm.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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