

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

16 October 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: John Tennant (In the Chair)

Councillors: Tom Cassidy, Helen Howson, Marjorie James, Sue Little and Amy Prince

Also Present:

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 Councillor Tony Richardson was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Stephen Akers-Belcher

Councillors Carl Richardson and Mike Young

Officers: Tony Hanson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Kieran Bostock, Assistant Director (Place Management)
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)
Neil Wilson, Assistant Chief Solicitor
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services
Sarah Scarr, Heritage and Countryside Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

6. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Stephen Akers-Belcher.

7. Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2020

Received.

Minute 5 – Allotments Service Review and Dispute Resolution Process – Risks and Legal Implications

A Member raised concerns that the minutes of the Allotment Focus Group meetings which fed into the decisions taken by this Committee on changes to allotment rules had not been agreed by allotment holders. Reference was also made to the continuing queries/concerns in the community that the changes to the allotment rules and regulations were unfair and required further review. In relation to comments raised around the Focus Group minutes, the Director agreed to explore this issue following the meeting.

Clarification was provided in relation to the consultation and decision making process by the Neighbourhood Services Committee and Council and assurances were provided that the proposed changes had been presented at a meeting of the Focus Group in December 2019 with the majority of the Group in support of the proposals. A Member indicated that this was not his recollection of the meeting and questioned how the changes could be agreed given that the majority of the Focus Group had disagreed with the proposals.

In concluding the debate, whilst noting the concerns raised, the Chair advised that the matters raised were around the background to the decision and were not an issue in terms of accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting.

8. Budget and Policy Framework

A Member raised concerns as to why this agenda did not include any budget and policy framework items and referred to the requirements set out in the constitution. A discussion followed in relation to the decision making process during which a number of views were expressed including the benefits of sharing Neighbourhoods related budget information to future meetings of this Committee. Clarification was sought from the Assistant Chief Solicitor regarding the constitutional arrangements in terms of the budget reporting process.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12 (x) it was moved by Councillor Cassidy and seconded by Councillor Little:-

“That the meeting proceed to the next item of business”

A Member requested that a recorded vote be taken in accordance with Rule 8 of the Council’s Procedure Rules relating to the Holding of Remote Meetings:-

Those in favour:-
Councillors Cassidy, Little and Tennant

Those against:-
Councillors T Richardson, Howson, James and Prince

It was announced that the vote was lost.

In relation to earlier clarification sought, the Assistant Chief Solicitor advised that this was the Council's 49th remote meeting which was more than other neighbouring authorities and highlighted that there was an opportunity for all Elected Members to raise matters with the Chair in relation to suggested agenda items. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services added that budget reports would normally be presented to Policy Committees in October, however, given the current pandemic the majority of reporting had been considered by Finance and Policy Committee. Assurances were provided that any budget related issues in relation to this Committee would be reported in due course.

Decision

That the concerns raised in relation to the Committee's contribution to the budget proposals be noted and any Neighbourhoods financial/budget related information be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

9. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) *(Assistant Director, Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision test (ii) – Forward Plan Ref No RN8/20

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the results of the consultation exercise carried out in relation to the renewal of the Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO's) already in place in Hartlepool.

To seek the Committee's approval for the renewal/extension of the PSPO's already in place in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were referred to the background to the changes in legislation regarding Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) and the decision taken at the Committee's July meeting to commence consultation in relation to the renewal of PSPO's in place in Hartlepool. Details of existing PSPO's were provided which included some dog controls that were introduced last year and although they were not due to expire in October 2020, it was proposed that they be renewed with the others to enable all PSPO's to run to the same timetable.

The consultation process began on 2 August and continued until 10 October 2020. No responses to the consultation had been received and it was therefore recommended that existing orders be renewed with immediate effect. In addition to the PSPO's already in place, work had commenced on what further PSPO's may be appropriate in Hartlepool and a further report would be brought back to Committee in December.

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services, responded to queries raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to alley gate protection arrangements for residents and the rules and regulations for professional dog walkers. Examples of professional dog walkers not adhering to the rules were shared with the Committee and it was suggested that additional publicity material be provided in relation to PSPO requirements. In response to queries raised regarding the lack of response to the consultation, it was agreed that clarification would be provided following the meeting outlining details of the consultation process. Whilst Members noted existing alley gate signage was already in place, examples of areas where this was not the case were provided. It was suggested that town wide signage be explored and that reminders be provided to residents to lock their gates.

The following recommendations were agreed with no dissent.

Decision

- (i) The Committee approved the renewal of the Public Space Protection Orders currently in place in Hartlepool.
- (ii) That the comments/views of Members, as outlined above, be noted and actioned as appropriate.
- (iii) That information be provided following the meeting in relation to the consultation process together with details of responses.
- (iv) That current alley gate signage be reviewed and reported back to Members following the meeting.

10. Pot Hole and Challenge Fund Schemes *(Assistant Director, Place Management)*

Type of decision

Key decision tests (i) and (ii) apply – General Exception applies

Purpose of report

To seek approval for an accelerated programme of highway resurfacing schemes following the receipt of additional pothole funding totalling £925,000.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Place Management reported that in addition to the 5 Year Highway Maintenance Programme which had been approved by this Committee on 13 March 2020, the Council had been awarded further funding under the Government's Pothole and Challenge Fund. Year 1 of the existing resurfacing programme was currently underway and additional works were proposed on schemes from year 2 of that programme, along with other roads which had deteriorated at a faster rate than anticipated as well as footpaths, details of which were provided.

The Committee's approval was sought for the proposed programme of work, as set out in Appendix 1 with works totalling £925,000. The additional funding had allowed schemes on the existing programme to be accelerated and this would be reflected when the refreshed five year programme would be brought before Committee in 2021.

The following recommendations were agreed with no dissent.

Decision

- (i) That the proposed highway resurfacing schemes appended to the report be approved.
- (ii) That any changes to the proposed programme be delegated to the Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee.

11. Trading Standards Service Plan 2020/21 (*Assistant Director, Regulatory Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To approve the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2020/21.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services reported on the background to the publication of an Annual Service Plan. The Plan for 2020/21, attached at Appendix 1 had been updated to reflect last year's performance and reflect changes in service demand.

Resources would continue to be allocated according to identified priorities. In 2020/21 these priorities would be:-

High Priority – Rogue Traders, Scams and Cons and Product Safety.
Medium Priority – Tackling Under Age Sales, Counterfeiting and Illicit Tobacco, and False Descriptions (of goods and services).
Low Priority – Loan Sharks, Weights and Measures and Misleading Pricing.

Trading Standards were also responding to the changing retail environment and would have a continuing oversight of illegal goods being sold on the internet, increasingly through social media. The department's work in protecting the vulnerable through No Cold Call Zones was provided including the work with banks around vulnerable people drawing large amounts of cash which could be linked to rogue traders. The impact on service delivery as a result of the department's involvement in Covid 19 compliance was also outlined.

In the discussion that followed the Assistant Director responded to queries raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to measures in place to protect the vulnerable from telephone scams. In response to some concern that issues around loan sharks were a low priority, Members were advised of the reasons behind this being identified as low priority given there was a national Illegal Money Lending Team who dealt with the majority of loan shark issues. It was suggested that future reports provide clarity in relation to this issue. Information around the number of loan shark prosecutions was also requested.

In concluding the debate, the Chair suggested that signposting information of national bodies and other scam related departments be provided to Elected Members following the meeting to ensure issues of this type could be dealt with effectively.

The following recommendations were agreed with no dissent.

Decision

- (i) That the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2019/20 be approved.
- (ii) That information be provided following the meeting in relation to the number of loan shark prosecutions as well as signposting information of national bodies and other scam related departments.

- (iii) That future reports provide clarity in terms of the role of the National Illegal Money Lending Team.

The meeting concluded at 10.55 am.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 23 OCTOBER 2020