

# **FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

25 JANUARY 2021

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, Jim Lindridge, Sue Little, Ann Marshall, Leisa Smith, John Tennant, Stephen Thomas and Mike Young.

Also Present: Councillors Bob Buchan, Tom Cassidy, Brenda Harrison, Helen Howson, Marjorie James, Ann Marshall, Amy Prince, Carl Richardson, Tony Richardson and Cameron Stokell.

Edwin Jeffries, Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Managing Director  
Hayley Martin, Chief Solicitor  
Chris Little, Director of Resources and Development  
James Magog, Assistant Director, Finance  
Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services  
Craig Blundred, Director of Public Health  
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning  
Tony Hanson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services  
David Cosgrove, Denise Wimpenny, Democratic Services Team

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

None.

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

Councillor Car Richardson declared a personal interest.

### **61. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2020**

Confirmed.

**62. Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 7 September 2020**

Received.

**63. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021/22 and 2022/23** *(Director of Resources and Development)*

**Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

**Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to enable Members to approve the MTFS proposals, including the 2021/22 recommended Council Tax level, to be referred to Council.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Resources and Development presented an over view of his detailed report setting out the background to the current financial position, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's one year Spending Review for 2021/22 announced on 25 November 2020 and its impact on local government, and the proposals for the General Fund Budget for 2021/22.

The Director provided an update in relation to the 2021/22 Covid-19 grant and a letter sent by the Department of Health and Social Care to all Chief Executives and Directors of Adult Social Care regarding the use of this grant to help councils address Covid-19 pressures and support the care sector in 2021/22.

The government had announced a core spending power increase of 4.5% for all local government but an Institute of Financial Studies (IFS) analysis of Government figures shows that 87% (£1.918 billion) of the core funding increase will come from a Council Tax increase and the implementation of a Adult Social care precept to the referendum levels the government had set – 2% and 3% respectively.

For Hartlepool the Government's figure is a 4.1% cash-terms increase and an assumption that 80% of this increase will be funded from a Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept. Hartlepool's figures are lower than the national figure owing to the lower ability to raise additional income from Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept. The report went on to set out the detailed context of the government's announcement covering the Social Care grant 2021/22 and Adult Social Care precept, Council Tax Referendum limit 2020/21, New Homes Bonus (NHB) 2020/21 allocations, and Covid-19 Expenditure Pressures Grants.

The Director set out the options Members had to consider in relation to the proposals for Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept for 2021/22. These ranged from a 0% increase for both to the referendum limit for both – 2% and 3% respectively. The Director detailed the impact of the options, including the impact on use of the Budget Support Fund in 2021/22 and the amount therefore available to then support the 2022/23 budget, and the level of deficit deferred to 2022/23.

The Director highlighted that the Government had indicated that the Adult Social Care precept could be deferred for one year.

The Director set out his 'budget robustness' advice to Members. The Director stated that to ensure the Council was in the best financial position for 2021/22 and the ensuing financial years, his advice was to utilise the maximum precept increases the government had suggested. His advice was that any proposals to increase total Council Tax (including the Adult Social Care precept) by less than 3% would not in my professional opinion be robust. The report detailed the reasons for this advice, which included the reduction in future financial flexibility and the resources available to meet unexpected financial shocks. .

The remaining sections of the report, including the proposed Capital Budget for 2021/22 were outlined by the Director.

The Chair opened the debate by thanking the Director for his detailed report and advice, which was echoed by other Members. The Chair stated that Members had for some time been considering a 'pause' in the financial burden placed on local council tax payers and while this would be against the advice of the Director it would allow some breathing space for the hard-pressed community that had suffered significantly during the pandemic. The Chair therefore proposed a 0% increase in Council Tax and that a decision on implementing a 3% Adult Social Care Precept be deferred until 2021/22. This was seconded by Councillor Tennant.

There was general debate around the proposed 0% increase with all Members supporting the proposal.

There was detailed discussion around the proposal for the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme. The Director's report stated that for 2021/22 the Government is providing additional one off funding to help Councils meet the increased costs of providing LCTS and to also potentially provide additional one off support to LCTS households in 2021/22. The Council has already determined to maintain the 2021/22 LCTS scheme at 12%, which provides higher support than the other Tees Valley councils; currently 17.5% in one council and 20% in the other three.

Hartlepool has been allocated £1.869m of the national 2021/22 funding. Based on an assessment of the number of forecast eligible LCTS eligible

households it is estimated £0.872m needs to be allocated to offset the forecast 2021/22 Council Tax reduction to protect the budget.

After reflecting this commitment the balance of the grant is £0.997m. This amount could be carried forward to 2022/23 to offset the continuation of a higher number of LCTS households, as recovery to pre-Covid levels may be phased over a number of years. This would provide the most robust option for the Council's budget, but would not provide any additional support to LCTS households during 2021/22, which will be a particularly challenging year for low income households.

The report indicated that when account is taken of the one off resources carried forward from 2020/21 of £0.3m, the total available funding was £1.297m

It was proposed and seconded that £0.985m of these resources be utilised to support the budget deficit created by the proposal for a 0% Council Tax increase. There was concern expressed by some Members that this would mean that the poorest household in the town who had not had to face paying any Council Tax in the current year due to the allocation from the 2021/22 scheme, would now be asked to start paying again at a time when the government was proposing to remove the additional £20 per week Universal Credit uplift introduced to assist households during the pandemic.

There was also lengthy discussion around the bulky waste scheme proposal set out in the budget report. Some Members were concerned at the costs being proposed and suggested a reduction. It was agreed that the proposal and suggestions made by Members needed further consideration and the Chair agreed that the proposal be reconsidered by the Committee before the end of the financial year. This was supported by Members

Members also requested details of the expenditure on Covid-19 Grant monies from central government and a report on the Neighbourhood Investment Plan. Members also suggested that the Neighbourhood Investment Plan be discussed at a Members' Seminar and the Managing Director undertook to re-consult Members on their ward priorities which may have changed since the previous consultation that had developed the NIP.

The Chair moved the meeting to the recommendations set out in the report and the proposals made at the meeting.

In relation to the proposal for a 0% Council Tax increase in 2021/22 and the deferment of a decision on the implementation of an Adult Social Care Precept increase of 3% to 2022/23; -

Those for:

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

Those abstaining:  
None.

Those against:  
None.

The proposal was, therefore, carried unanimously.

In relation to the proposal to utilise £0.985m of the one-off government Council Tax Losses and Local Council Tax Support Scheme grant to support the 2021/22 budget deficit thereby maintaining the current LCTS scheme at 12% and providing no additional support for Local Council Tax Support in 2021/22: -

Those for:  
Councillors James Brewer, Paddy Brown, Jim Lindridge, Sue Little, Leisa Smith, John Tennant, and Mike Young.

Those abstaining:  
None.

Those against:  
Christopher Akers-Belcher, Ann Marshall and Stephen Thomas.

The proposal was, therefore carried.

The remaining recommendations in the report were agreed without dissent.

## **Decision**

1. The Committee noted the following:
  - (i) The Government have proposed a 2% core Council Tax referendum limit, plus a 3% Adult Social Care precept. Continuation of the Adult Social Care precept for a sixth year continues to shift part of the funding of these services onto Council Tax;
  - (ii) Government figures shown that 87% of the forecast 2021/22 national increase in Core Funding is predicated on all authorities implementing Council Tax increases in line with national Referendum Limits, including the Adult Social Care precept.
  - (iii) If Council Tax is not increased in line with national Council Tax limits the national Core Funding increase of 4.5% will not be achieved and core funding will only increase by 0.6%.
2. That the following proposals be referred to full Council for approval:

## Revenue Budget

- (i). That the robustness advice detailed in section 11 of the report be noted, including the advice in relation to the 2021/22 Council Tax increase and Adult Social Care precept.
- (ii). That Council approves a core Council Tax freeze, no increase in the Adult Social Care for 2021/22 and no additional support for Local Council Tax Support, which Council (17.09.20) approved to maintain at 12%, and approve that the resulting 2021/22 budget deficit of £5.197m is funded from:-
  - a. The use of £0.985m of Government Grant detailed in the MTFS report;
  - b. The use of £4.212m of the Budget Support Fund in 2021/22;
  - c. That it is noted this will result in a forecast 2022/23 deficit of £5.639m, including the deficit deferred from 2022/23, as detailed in the MTFS report);
  - d. That it is noted the above measures will leave an uncommitted Budget Support Fund balance to support the 2022/23 budget of £4.416m, which will help the Council manage the deficit deferred to 2022/23;
  - e. That it is noted the core Council Tax freeze for 2021/22 will reduce recurring resources by £0.854m as the 2021/22 Government Council Tax referendum limit is year specific;
  - f. That it is noted that the LCTS scheme of 12% continues to provide higher recurring support than the other Tees Valley councils, where one councils has a 17.5% scheme and three have 20% schemes.
- 3. That the proposal from the Neighbourhood Services Committee for an annual ward bulky waste pilot scheme (1 per ward) be deferred for further consideration by this Committee before the end of the financial year.

## 2021/22 Covid-19 Expenditure Pressures Grant

- 4. That Council notes it has been allocated £3.178m of one off funding to address continuing Covid pressures in 2021/22 and 2022/23, and approve use of this grant will be subject to separate reports to Finance and Policy Committee for consideration and approval.
- 5. That Council approval be given to that if any of the above grant is not needed to fund additional service and financial pressures it is used to replace use of the Budget Support Fund, which will put the Council in a better financial position to manage future financial challenges and risks, and will help mitigate the ongoing financial impact of Covid on the Council.

## Reserves

6. That Council approval be given to the establishment of a Budget Support Fund as detailed in the report and note the use of this reserve in 2021/22 will reflect recommendation to freeze the core Council Tax level and the Adult Social Care precept (as detailed in Revenue Budget recommendation above).

## Capital

7. That Council approval be given to the provision of a cash flow loan to the NMRN to the value of the TVCA funding allocated for the development of a new exhibition space of £5m and delegate authority to the Managing Director to complete the necessary legal agreement with the NMRN to secure repayment of the loan, either from the TVCA funding, or directly from the NMRN in the unlikely event the detailed business case does not comply with TVCA requirements.
8. That Council approval be given to the proposal to re-allocate Council funding previously allocated for the Town Hall, Borough Hall and Art Gallery projects towards the Borough Hall projects, as detailed in the report. To note officers will continue to seek to secure external funding for the Town Hall and Art Gallery projects.
9. That Council approval be given to the proposal that the uncommitted capital receipts of £0.680m (which are anticipated to be received early in 2021/22) are held in the earmarked Capital Funding Reserve as a capital contingency until contracts are awarded for the major approved capital projects, and the position on external funding is clearer. Details of any proposal to use this funding would be reported to Finance and Policy Committee for approval.
10. That Council approval be given to the business case capital schemes and note the indicative specific capital grant allocations detailed in Appendix D to the report, and in line with the policy adopted in previous years, delegate authority to the relevant Policy Committee to determine, in compliance with the relevant grant conditions, the allocation of the actual capital grants once these are known;
11. That a report on schemes to be funded from the approved Neighbourhood Investment Plan capital budget of £1m delayed owing to Covid-19 be submitted to Finance and Policy Committee before the end of the financial year following a Members Seminar.

## **64. Towns Fund- Hartlepool Town Investment Plan** (Director of Resources and Development)

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision tests (i) and (ii) apply. Forward Plan Reference No. RN07/20.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to seek approval from the Finance and Policy Committee for the Hartlepool Town Investment Plan. The Town Investment Plan responds to the invitation from Government to develop proposals for a Town Deal of up to £25m.

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

The Managing Director reported that the Investment Plan had been recently considered in detail by the Regeneration Services Committee and a draft of the plan was set out as a confidential appendix which contained exempt information under Schedule 12A 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).

Members welcomed the proposed plan and congratulated all those involved in the Board that had led the development of the bid, particularly the Towns Deal Board Chair, Alby Pattison. Members questioned the due diligence that would be undertaken around the potential redevelopment of the Wesley Chapel and the Managing Director assured members this would form part of the work of the Board if the bid was approved.

The Chair added his thanks to the Towns Deal Board and its Chair, Alby Pattison for the excellent bid submitted.

The following recommendations were agreed without dissent.

### **Decision**

1. That the content of the Town Investment Plan included in the confidential appendix to the report be approved. The appendix contained exempt information under Schedule 12A 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).
2. That the submission of the Town Investment Plan to the Government by the 29th January 2021 deadline be approved.



3. That public engagement strategy detailed in appendix 2 to the report be noted.

## **65. Brownfield Housing Fund – Lynn Street Housing Development** *(Director of Resources and Development)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision test (i)) applies - Forward Plan Reference CE73/20.

### **Purpose of report**

The report updated the Committee on the submission of the Lynn Street development scheme to the Brownfield Housing Fund (BHF) awarded to and administered by the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

The report sets out scheme proposals, including costs and business case, and sought approval from the Finance and Policy Committee to refer the proposed prudential borrowing required to support the provision of new affordable homes to Council.

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

The Director of Resources and Development reported that in June 2020, the Government launched 'A New Deal for Britain' which is a key part of the Government's Covid 19 recovery strategy. The £400m Brownfield Housing Fund (BHF) was aimed at bringing brownfield land into development to support the delivery of a greater number of new homes to meet local needs which would otherwise not be brought forward by the market. As part of this strategy, £19m was secured by The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to support development of housing schemes on brownfield land over the next 5 years.

Tees Valley Local Authorities have submitted potential schemes and a shortlist of year 1 sites has been agreed. The Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) owned Lynn Street/Whitby Street scheme has been shortlisted for funding to deliver in year 1 following a robust appraisal process. BHF can support demolition, remediation, partial relocation and site preparation costs which currently render a brownfield site unviable. The timescales for delivery and target number of new homes have been set out by MHCLG and will be monitored by TVCA.

The Lynn and Whitby Street scheme is located in the heart of Hartlepool Town Centre in the Headland and Harbour Ward within the strategically important Innovation and Skills Quarter (ISQ). The scheme comprises three individual sites, linked geographically, with a total area of 1.33ha all owned by HBC. The sites are currently occupied by the Council depot (Lynn St), a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centre (Whitby Street) and a derelict Grade II Listed Market Hotel. The overall scheme comprises the 3

sites and if approved, demolition and site remediation will occur funded by BHF to facilitate the development of 47 new build affordable homes.

Full details of the proposal and the projected time frames was set out within the report. The major concern was that the timescales associated with the BHF are such that they considerably limit the options of how the funding can be spent and which sites would be taken forward. At the present time only the Lynn Street scheme in Hartlepool met the criteria and was sufficiently advanced to be deliverable within the timescales.

Members welcomed the proposed scheme congratulating officers on bringing the scheme forward in the tight timescales set by the BHF. A Member questioned if all the housing proposed would include gardens and if it was possible to increase the number of bungalows from 7 in the proposals. The Managing Director indicated that she would confirm the issue of gardens after the meeting. The number of bungalows in the development was at the maximum that would still make the development financially viable. There were other forthcoming bungalow developments in the town.

A Member proposed that the meeting move into closed session to allow questions on the exempt appendices to the report, the Chair, therefore, sought a proposal to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

### **Decision**

That further consideration of the details contained within the confidential appendix to the report be undertaken in closed session.

## **66. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 67 – Brownfield Housing Fund – Lynn Street Housing Development – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A 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).

**67. Brownfield Housing Fund – Lynn Street Housing Development** *(Director of Resources and Development)*

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A 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).

**Type of decision**

Key Decision test (i)) applies - Forward Plan Reference CE73/20.

**Purpose of report**

The report updated the Committee on the submission of the Lynn Street development scheme to the Brownfield Housing Fund (BHF) awarded to and administered by the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

The report sets out scheme proposals, including costs and business case, and sought approval from the Finance and Policy Committee to refer the proposed prudential borrowing required to support the provision of new affordable homes to Council.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

Details are set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

**Decision**

The meeting returned to open session to consider the recommendations set out in the report.

**The meeting returned to open session.**

**68. Brownfield Housing Fund – Lynn Street Housing Development** *(Director of Resources and Development)*

**Type of decision**

Key Decision test (i) applies - Forward Plan Reference CE73/20.

**Purpose of report**

The report updated the Committee on the submission of the Lynn Street development scheme to the Brownfield Housing Fund (BHF) awarded to and administered by the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

The report sets out scheme proposals, including costs and business case, and sought approval from the Finance and Policy Committee to refer the

proposed prudential borrowing required to support the provision of new affordable homes to Council.

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

The meeting returned to open session and the Chair put the recommendations within the report to the meeting.

The following recommendation was agreed without dissent.

### **Decision**

1. That the proposals for the scheme at Lynn Street, Hartlepool and the associated application for the Brownfield Housing Fund administered by Tees Valley Combined Authority be noted.
2. That the scheme be referred to Council for approval of the required prudential borrowing of £4.744m to facilitate development of 47 affordable homes at Lynn Street, Hartlepool.
3. That the submission of a bid to Homes England for affordable homes funding be approved.

## **69. Sale of Land at Seaton Lane** *(Director of Resources and Development)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision - General Exception Notice Applied.

### **Purpose of report**

To obtain a decision in relation to a request to purchase land.

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

The Director of Resources and Development reported that in December 2018 the Committee approved the disposal of two parcels of land fronting Seaton Lane, one to the east and one to the west of the Golden Meadows housing estate. The land totalled approximately 3.71 acres (1.5 ha) and was considered suitable for residential development. In making the decision to sell the land, the Committee considered two offers for the land and accepted a proposal to receive a housing stock offer whereby properties constructed on the site would be transferred to the Council as affordable housing stock for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and a capital receipt to the General Fund when the land was transferred. This development is progressing and the Council is scheduled to receive three properties in December 2021 and the final two properties in December 2022.

The existing developer has approached the Council to acquire further land to extend the scale of their current development as shown on the submitted plan. The current proposal was based on the offer of housing stock, whereby properties would transfer to the Council in lieu of a cash payment for the land. Whilst yet to be identified, the stock would be from the existing estate currently under construction by the developer. Details of the proposed offer were set out in a confidential appendix to the report which contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (paragraph 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The Director asked the Committee to indicate its preference for officers to pursue in relation to the proposal from the developer, whether to transfer the land, subject to the condition set out below, or not to progress with that option and to complete the necessary work to enable the whole site to be put up for sale at a later date.

Conditions of sale:

- Timescale for completion of development and a schedule confirming the agreed properties that will be transferred to the council;
- Confirmation of value and equivalent number of properties to be transferred;
- Arrangement for release of legal title in land to ensure the Council's financial position is protected, including the impact of the developer not being able to complete the site for whatever reasons;
- Actual sales price, net of section 106 contributions and any potential abnormal costs;
- Conditions precedent of purchase i.e. satisfactory planning permission is secured.

Members questioned how long the remaining issues with the developer would take to conclude and the Director stated that much would depend on the developer's response to the Council's stance and the conclusion of planning issues but there was a commitment from officers to conclude the matter as quickly as was feasible.

The following recommendation was agreed without dissent.

### **Decision**

1. That Option 1 as set out in the report be supported – agreement in principle to transfer the land to the current developer on the terms detailed in the confidential appendix 2 to the report which contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (paragraph 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

2. That authority be delegated to the Managing Director to complete the detail legal arrangements to protect the Council's financial position in consultation within the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee, the Director of Resources and Development and Chief Solicitor.

**70. Council Tax Base 2021/22** (*Director of Resources and Development*)

**Type of decision**

Non-Key Decision.

**Purpose of report**

The report sought member approval, as required by statutory regulations, of a calculated Council Tax Base for 2021/22 which would be used for Council Tax billing purposes.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Resources and Development reported that the Council was required by law to calculate its Council Tax Base for the forthcoming year, and inform the major precepting authorities, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland and Cleveland Fire Authority, and local precepting authorities (Parish Councils), before 31 January 2021. The Council Tax Base is expressed as the number of Band D equivalent properties. Appendices to the report set out the necessary statutory calculations together with those for each of the precepting parish councils.

The proposed Tax Base for the Council area for 2021/22 is 24,384. This was a reduction of 498 (2%) from the current base. This reduction reflected the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the relevant amount in the Council Tax Base calculation.

In accordance with Rule 8 of the Council's Procedure Rules Relating to the Holding of Remote Meetings and statutory regulations, a recorded vote was taken.

Those for:

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

Those abstaining:

None.

Those against:

None.

## Decision

1. That a Hartlepool BC Council Tax Base for 2021/22 of 24,384 be approved as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. That a Council Tax Base for 2021/22 for Parishes who may levy a precept upon the Council's Collection Fund be approved, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report:

Brierton	13.2	Greatham	584.3
Claxton	13.6	Hart	328.6
Dalton Piercy	118.4	Headland	727.7
Elwick	803.9	Newton Bewley	28.9

## 71. Tees Valley Freeport Bid Update *(Managing Director)*

### Type of decision

Non-Key decision.

### Purpose of report

The report provided an introduction to the Tees Valley's approach to the Freeport's bidding process, the principles its bid would be based on, and the coalition of local partners required to make it a success.

The report sought Members approval to support the Tees Valley Freeport Bid which includes Tees Port and Hartlepool Port.

### Issue(s) for consideration

The Managing Director reported that the proposed Tees Valley bid for Free Port Status would include Hartlepool Port in the bid. The bid would be based on our strengths in clean growth and build on our work in decarbonisation of the chemical and process, offshore, and energy sectors. It will harness the power of the Tees Valley's highly skilled workforce, the expertise of our University and technical institutions, and our established and emerging industrial clusters. The bid was being led by Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) in partnership with the regions five local authorities, and PD Ports in its role as the Strategic Harbour authority.

The Managing Director thanked the Leader for his work in ensuring that Hartlepool was included in the bid. If the Council does not support this bid there was a risk that Hartlepool Port would not be considered as part of the proposal which would be detrimental to the local economy as businesses could relocate to Tees Port due to the incentives Freeport status provides businesses.

Members welcomed the bid and the inclusion of Hartlepool Port in the bid. Members sought assurance that there would be appropriate checks and

balances in place should the bid be successful for the future operation of the port. The Managing Director indicated that there would be such checks and balances and appropriate scrutiny through the Combined Authority. Members indicated that a presentation to a future Members Seminar would be welcomed to include an outline of the bid and the local benefits that could be derived from a 'freeport'.

The following recommendation was agreed without dissent.

**Decision**

That the Tees Valley Freeport bid be supported.

**72. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

None.

Members commented on the recent programme of Members' Seminars which were proving to be very positive and enhanced Member decision making. The Managing Director thanked Members for the comments and indicated that the programme of monthly seminars would continue.

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 15 February 2021 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 am.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 4 FEBRUARY 2021**