

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

22 JULY 2021

The meeting commenced at 10.05 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor: Cameron Stokell (In the Chair)

Councillors: Rob Cook, Rachel Creevy, Helen Howson, Brenda Loynes and Darren Price.

Also Present: Councillor Jim Lindridge as substitute for Councillor Peter Jackson in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.
Councillor Angela Falconer.

Officers: Tony Hanson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Kieran Bostock, Assistant Director, Place Management
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services
Steve Hilton, Communications and Marketing Team
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Peter Jackson.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2021

Received.

4. The Role and Remit of the Neighbourhood Services Committee (*Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the role and remit of the Neighbourhood Services Committee as set out in the Council Constitution and the service areas of the authority that fell under its management. Members requested that a copy of the presentation be shared with all Members following the meeting.

In discussing the contents of the presentation a Member asked about the changes introduced to the brown (garden waste) bins. The Director stated that the reduction to a four-weekly collection had been brought in as part of the changes during the Covid-19 Pandemic and in compliance with health and safety guidance which required waste collection crews to ride in a separate vehicle to the waste collection vehicle; this required an additional vehicle and driver for each waste collection vehicle. Until the guidance changed it would prove very difficult to move back to normal operations and the safety of staff was paramount. Some other nearby local authorities had recently suspended their garden waste collections completely as a result of staffing challenges due to the pandemic. The Assistant Director, Place Management stated that some staff leave had been cancelled in order to keep crews operating and a service provided for Hartlepool residents.

The operation of the Burn Valley Household Waste Recycling Centre was discussed. The Director stated that the move to the appointments based system had proved to be very successful. In response to Member questions the Director stated that the closure of the centre on Monday and Tuesday was introduced as part of the budget cuts agreed in 2019/20 and introduced on 1st April 2020. The operation of the site was being reviewed with the potential for allowing cars with trailers. The problems of fly-tipping were also discussed and the Director again called for help from the public in tackling fly-tippers. The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services commented that there was a multi-agency working group looking at the issue but it was a problem without a single solution. In relation to the bulky waste collection service, Members welcomed the expansion of the service and the much reduced waiting times but asked if consideration could be given to extending the reduced cost concession to the elderly.

Members also discussed issues around –

The camera car and the driver training awareness courses provided by HBC on behalf of Cleveland and Durham Police forces;

Dog waste bags;

Over-grown verges, footpaths and weeds;

Resurfacing of footpaths;

The operation of the Councillor Portal and feedback on completed jobs.

At the end of the meeting Members added their congratulations to officers and front line workers for keeping services running during the pandemic and requested that their comments be shared with all staff by the Director.

Decision

That the presentation and the discussions be noted.

5. Home to School Transport Policy Review (*Assistant Director, Place Management*)

Type of decision

Key decision, test (ii). Forward plan reference RN04/20.

Purpose of report

To advise Members of a refresh to the Councils Home to School Transport Policy in order to meet the Governments statutory guidance – July 2019. The report refreshed the Councils Policy in line with the guidance, to clearly detail the duties of the local authority and ensure that parents and other stakeholders are fully informed.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Place Management reported that in July 2019 the Department for Education carried out a consultation on the statutory guidance for Home to School travel and transport for children of compulsory school age. The revised guidance replaced the 2014 guidance and aims to ensure that transport policies inform parents effectively of the Local Authorities duties and any assistance that may be provided. There had been no changes to Home to School Transport Legislation. All details within the Guidance refer to existing legislation for home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age.

The Councils submitted revised Policy had considered all elements of the guidance and ensured that it complied with the new guidance and clearly advised parents and stakeholders of the four categories of eligibility. There have been no changes to the contents of the policy itself, the changes reflect the Department for Educations requirement for policy documents to be clearer in their offer to parents only.

The Chair of the Children’s Services Committee commented that he was fully supportive of the new policy document. The Chair also highlighted that the Hartlepool policy went further than the statutory requirements.

A Member raised the issue of support for passengers that required assistance and/or had a carer with them when they travelled. The Assistant Director stated that each individual SEND child has a personalised plan which detailed their specific needs. If assistance was required this would be identified in the plan and come in the form of a parent or a passenger assistant. Drivers may assist when using wheelchair lifts etc. but they were employed to drive and not provide passenger assistance.

It was also questioned if it was normal for transport to collect carers on route rather than them joining with the child they were assisting. The Assistant Director stated that it would be route dependent; if it was on the route and caused no diversion, then this would be facilitated where it didn't provide a logistical impact.

The following decision was agreed without dissent.

Decision

That the refreshed Home to School Transport Policy, as submitted, be approved.

6. Trading Standards Service Plan 2021/22 (*Assistant Director, Regulatory Services*)

Type of decision

Non Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To approve the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2021/22.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services presented the Trading Standards Service annual Service Plan detailing the previous performance of the Service, the main challenges facing it and a plan of work to be undertaken in the forthcoming year. The Service Plan details the Trading Standards Service's priorities for 2021/22 and highlighted how these priorities would be addressed.

The Assistant Director gave a brief overview of how the service plan related to the priorities around –

- Rogue Traders
- Scams and Cons
- Product safety
- Tackling Underage Sales
- Counterfeiting and illicit tobacco
- Animal Welfare
- False Descriptions
- Weights and Measures, and
- Misleading prices.

The Assistant Director also highlighted the changing environment for many of these issues as more rogue traders moved to selling on the internet and through social media.

The work undertaken in protecting the vulnerable was also highlighted including the work, some in conjunction with Adult Services, around using call blockers to protect people from telephone scams.

The huge amount of work undertaken around the Covid-19 Pandemic was also outlined in the report. Staff were still providing significant support to local businesses and contact tracing. Public Protection Officers had dealt with 2065 Covid related complaints/requests for guidance in 2020/21 and carried out 2469 contact tracings.

The Chair welcomed Service Plan and commended staff on their work during the pandemic. The following decision was agreed without dissent.

Decision

That the Trading Standards Service Plan for 2021/22, as submitted, be approved.

7. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 23 September 2021 commencing at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 11.40 am

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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