

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

14 MARCH 2022

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor Shane Moore (In the Chair)

Councillors: Paddy Brown, Tim Fleming, Brenda Harrison, Jim Lindridge, Sue Little, David Nicholson, Amy Prince, Cameron Stokell and Mike Young.

Also Present: Councillor Rachel Creevy as substitute for Councillor Jonathan Brash in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Managing Director
Hayley Martin, Chief Solicitor
Chris Little, Director of Resources and Development
James Magog, Assistant Director, Finance
Claire McLaren, Assistant Director, Corporate Services
Beverley Bearne, Assistant Director, Development and Growth
Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning
Jill Harrison, Director of Adult and Community Based Services
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services
Tony Hanson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Ed Turner and Steve Hilton, Communications and Marketing Team
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

78. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jonathan Brash.

79. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Young, Harrison and Little declared personal interests.

80. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2022

A Members questioned why minutes did not refer to specific Members by name or political groups. The Chief Solicitor stated that it was custom and practice not to name Elected Members in minutes other than by position,

unless specifically requested. Political group names were also avoided where possible to remove any overt politicisation of the minutes.

81. Capital Receipts Strategy (*Director of Resources and Development*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to seek approval of a Capital Receipts Strategy to support Capital Programme inflation contingency.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Resources and Development outlined a proposed new Capital Receipts Strategy to support the Capital Programme based on the proposed sale of council owned land and property set out in an appendix to the report. As part of the MTFS recommendations approved by Council existing one off resources of £1.680m, plus what can be raised from additional capital receipts over the next 2 to 3 years would be earmarked as a capital inflation contingency. Based on achievement of forecast additional capital receipts the total capital inflation contingency is £5.680m which included additional potential capital receipts in the years 2022/23 to 2024/25 of £4m. The contingency would help manage inflation risk in relation to a capital programme in excess of £100m.

A Member requested that the individual land and property sales should only be approved as detailed proposals were brought forward for each site. The Director stated that would be the case. The Managing Director added this approval was required to actively market the sites.

There was no dissent to the following decisions.

Decision

1. That the proposed land sales detailed in Appendix A be approved, subject to recommendation 2;
2. That separate reports for each individual land/property sale being submitted to this Committee once tenders have been received and assessed;
3. That that progress in achieving land sales be noted and reported within the regular financial monitoring reports.

82. Domestic Abuse Strategy (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

Key Decision (test (i)/(ii)) Forward Plan Reference No. CJCS 124/21.

Purpose of report

To seek Finance and Policy Committee to approval the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022.

To seek approval to the recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Services – which includes Safe accommodation and support services.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning reported that the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy submitted with the report had received wide ranging consultation and included the input of those that had utilised the past services to gain a better understanding of the support they required. The Safer Hartlepool Partnership had considered the strategy on 6 March and had made no additions/amendments to the draft document. The Assistant Director highlighted that the strategy reflected the new statutory requirements placed on the local authority as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It was highlighted that further statutory guidance from Government was still awaited.

The Assistant Director also sought the Committee's approval to commence a commissioning process for domestic abuse support services as the current contract was due to expire in September 2022. A service specification will be produced which will be based on our priorities set out in the strategy. It is proposed that a contract will be for three years with an option to extend for a further two years dependent on performance and budget. This will allow for continuity for services users and offer stability for the provider to develop innovative services to meet need.

Members acknowledged the positive impact these services had had over recent years. Members did consider that some additional work may be required to support and identify male victims of domestic abuse as they did this was significantly under-reported. The Assistant Director acknowledged this and also commented that there may still be some under-reporting of cases following the Covid-19 pandemic. There would also be some work with the perpetrators of domestic abuse specifically round removing the abuser from a family home rather than the victim and children.

There was no dissent to the following decisions.

Decision

1. That the Domestic Abuse Strategy, as detailed at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. That the recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Services – which includes Safe accommodation and support services – be approved.

83. Borough Hall Capital Project (*Director of Adult and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

Key Decision, test (i). General Exception Notice applies.

Purpose of report

To update the Finance and Policy Committee regarding the Borough Hall Capital Project and approve the grant offer of £1.8m from HM Treasury.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services reported that the Finance and Policy Committee on 30 January 2020 approved the allocation of Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) Funds for the development of a number of cultural assets including the Borough Hall. In January 2021 Members agreed that IGF Funding allocated to develop a number of Cultural Assets should be reallocated to focus on the delivery of the Borough Hall so that a scheme could commence. Since then, HM Treasury had offered an additional funding grant of £1.8m in March 2021 which had now been secured from the Arts Council, England as the administrative body for this funding.

This additional funding would ensure that improvements could be made to additional areas of the Borough Hall outside of the mechanical and engineering, cosmetic and ventilation requirements and ensure some of the ancillary spaces that make a significant difference to securing performers and improving customer experience can be fulfilled.

Terms and Conditions that accompany the £1.8m grant from the Arts Council were required to be approved by Finance and Policy Committee. These Terms and Conditions included the requirement for a Deed of Covenant between Hartlepool Borough Council (the organisation), and Arts Council England (as funder) with restriction on title over the freehold of the Project Asset for a period of 20 years.

There was a total £3m investment for capital improvements. £1.8m from DCMS and £1.2m previously approved through Capital Investment Programme. Revenue funding would continue to be required to run the project. This would be further detailed in the Business Case to be

produced. The future Business Case would require approval from Finance and Policy Committee. This would then enable Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to approve the IGF grant for drawdown.

The Chair commented that it had been disappointing the previous works had not commenced due to the Covid-19 pandemic but this new additional funding would allow the Council to re-animate a valued community asset. Members welcomed the proposals. There were questions around the future marketing of the venue and the Assistant Director stated that while there was expertise within the Council, the department and the Communications Team would also have input from neighbours and 'critical friends' in developing an appropriate marketing strategy. Members also questioned the restrictions included with the Arts Council grant funding and the Assistant Director undertook to share further information with Members.

There was no dissent to the following decisions.

Decision

1. That the update regarding the refurbishment of the Borough Hall be noted.
2. That the funding agreement with Arts Council England for the £1.8m grant be approved.

84. Sale of Land at Coronation Drive *(Director of Resources and Development)*

Type of decision

Key Decision (test (i)) Forward Plan Reference No. CE 74/21.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the sale of residential development land at Coronation Drive.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Resources and Development reported on the sale of the 5.6 ha (13.82 acres) of land adjoining Coronation Drive and Warrior Drive and set out the history of the site, its remediation needs and the previous attempts to sell the land. Following discussions with a major developer specialising in residential urban regeneration, a substantial offer for purchase of the land was received in late 2020. A report was considered by Committee on 15th March 2021 which noted the offer received and allowed the developer to investigate the site further to assess the detailed remediation required. This also required the submission of this further report to enable Members to consider the proposed sale terms in relation to the actual value of the capital receipt and section 106 contributions.

The Director outlined the proposed scheme now put forward for the land which would require full planning consideration and the details of the proposed S.106 agreement which were set out in confidential appendices to the report. The appendices 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).

The Director stated that the Council's own technical officers had examined the proposals put forward by the proposed purchaser and could assure Members that the proposed remediation scheme was appropriate for the site. Members questioned this aspect of the proposal referring to the previous problems encountered by the Council with nearby land that had been contaminated and required remediation after houses had been constructed. The Managing Director assured Members that everything would be done ensure the developer removed the contamination on the site. The statutory requirements around removing contamination on proposed housing sites were now much different and stricter than in the past.

It was also suggested that ward Councillors should be involved in the process of determining the schemes supported by the S.106 monies. The Managing director confirmed this would be the case and a Seaton Ward Councillor stated that they had already been consulted.

There was no dissent to the following decisions.

Decision

1. That the sale of the land in the terms set out 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. The Committee noted that this capital receipt would form part of the Capital Receipts Strategy as approved at Minute No. 81.

85. Land Rear of Sovereign Park (*Director of Resources and Development*)

Type of decision

Key Decision (test (i)) Forward Plan Reference No. CE 79-22.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to release a restrictive covenant on land at the rear of Sovereign Park and for the sale nearby land fronting Seaton Lane.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Resources and Development reported that the Council had been approached by Hansteen Property Investment Ltd regarding the release of a covenant on land they own at Sovereign Park which was part of a much larger area of undeveloped land. Hansteen Property Investments Ltd specialises in industrial property and the Hansteen land was identified as employment land within the current Local Plan, but site conditions made it presently unviable for commercial/industrial development. Hansteen had in the past marketed their land for sale for industrial purposes but without any success, and they had also not been able to develop the land directly for industrial use due to severe financial viability issues and lack of demand.

Use of the land for housing was, however, considered to be viable, and able, through careful design, to overcome the various challenges of the site. This was because of the higher end use and selling price of housing compared to industrial purposes. The purchase of the land by the developer would still be subject to planning approval and the release of a restrictive covenant restricting the use of the land to industrial development.

Following lengthy negotiations terms had, therefore, been proposed for the Committee's consideration and approval to release of the restrictive covenant. The terms proposed for the covenant release and land sale were set out in a confidential appendix to the report. 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).

Members welcomed the proposal and commented that there had been incidents of anti-social behaviour associated with the development which would be resolved. Members noted that there was also a public right of way across the land. The Managing Director stated that this would be considered at the planning stage.

There was no dissent to the following decision.

Decision

That the covenant release and sale of the land on the terms set out in 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).

86. Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility – Local Authority Special Purpose Vehicle *(Managing Director)*

Type of decision

Key Decision (test (i) and (ii) apply) Forward Plan Reference No.CE75/21.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report included:

- (i) An update to Members regarding all aspects of the TV ERF project (including planning, landowner, procurement process, the development of the Project Agreement and other project documents).
- (ii) The rationale for setting up the Local Authority Special Purpose Vehicle and how this will be governed as well as the commercial principles as to how costs / liabilities shall be shared between the seven Councils over the term of the Project.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Managing Director reported on the culmination of a number of years work bringing together seven North East local authorities to procure a contractor to design, build, operate and finance a new Energy Recovery Facility to be located in the Tees Valley (TVERF). All existing waste treatment / disposal contracts were due to expire in 2025/26 and, therefore, a new Residual Waste Treatment Contract must be procured in order to allow for the new facility to be constructed and fully commissioned in preparation for this. The service commencement date for the new facility is the 1 April 2026.

A detailed project update, detailed description of the proposals and reasons for recommending were contained within the confidential report submitted with the agenda papers. The report 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).

The Managing Director stated that this was an exciting development for the North East providing a renewable electricity source equivalent to powering over 60,000 homes. The facility is being designed to be Carbon Capture and Underground Storage ready in preparation for the connection to the East Coast Cluster, meaning that the facility has the potential to be among the first purpose-built facilities that incorporates CCUS technology and could become a negative carbon dioxide emitter by the end of 2027.

Contributing significantly to the Councils ambitions to become carbon neutral.

The Chair welcomed the proposals set out in the report. The Chair stated that this development and the proposals now brought to Members were all due to the drive of the Managing Director and her team. This was a huge scheme, both regionally and nationally significant, and had been delivered by the Managing Director of the smallest authority involved in the project. The Chair congratulated the Managing Director and her team for delivering this project.

Members welcomed the proposals put forward in the reports and also echoed the Chair's comments in relation to the work of the Managing Director. There were questions in relation to the end date for the contract and the return of the facility from the contractor to the local authorities. The Managing Director stated that the contract would require the contractor to ensure the facility was continually 'up-to-date' and in compliance with current and future regulations.

The Managing Director thanked Members for their comments and highlighted the support she had received from the Director of Resources and Development and others during the development of the scheme.

There was no dissent to the following decisions.

Decision

1. The Committee noted the following point.

The seven Councils entered into and fully executed the First Inter Authority Agreement on 24th July 2020 to procure a contractor to design, build, finance and operate a new Energy from Waste Facility in the Tees Valley. The decision to proceed to Financial Close and enter into the Project Documents was delegated to the 'Project Board' (consisting of representatives from each of the seven Councils), whilst recognising that each Council will need to obtain approval individually through its governance process, in order for that Council to enter into the Project Documents.

2. The Committee approved the creation of the Local Authority Special Purpose Vehicle (LA SPV)

A Local Authority Special Purpose Vehicle (LA SPV) is required to be established as a Limited Company incorporated and registered at Companies House. It will be the Contracting entity representing the seven Councils (the Shareholders) and will enter into the Project Agreement with the successful Contractor and the lease with STDC (Teesworks) for the site.

3. The Committee approved the Council entering into the Shareholders' Agreement and delegated authority to the Managing Director (in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee and Director of Resources and Development and Section 151 Officer) to finalise and agree.

The regulation and management of the LA SPV shall be governed by the Shareholders' Agreement (SHA). Each Council (Shareholder) will be required to formally enter into the Shareholders' Agreement approximately three months in advance of the Project Agreement being entered into with the successful Contractor (Financial Close).

4. The Committee noted the following point.

There will be a Service Level Agreement between HBC and the other councils to provide support services to the LA SPV. The Service Level Agreement is required to be formally entered into by the seven Councils in parallel with the Councils entering into the Shareholders' Agreement.

5. The Committee noted the following point.

The terms of the commercial arrangements between the seven Councils (the Shareholders) in relation to the LA SPV shall be defined and governed by the Waste Supply and Support Agreement (WSSA). The WSSA is required to be formally entered into by the seven Councils (Shareholders) in parallel with the LA SPV awarding the Contract and entering into the Project Agreement with the successful Contractor.

Members approved the delegation of authority to the Managing Director (in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee and Director of Resources and Development, Section 151 Officer) to finalise and enter into the Waste Supply and Support Agreement with the LA SPV and to provide Delegated Authority from the Councils' perspective for the LA SPV to award the Contract and enter into the Project Agreement with the successful Contractor (Financial Close), and to enter into the 50-year lease with STDC (Teesworks) for the site.

6. Members approved the delegation of authority to the Managing Director (in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee, supported by Director of Resources and Development and Chief Solicitor) to enter into the Council Guarantees.

Each Council will be required to enter into two 'Council Guarantees'. The first will be to provide resilience to the LA SPV and to provide comfort to the Contractor that the LA SPV is fundamentally robust to meet its obligations under the Project Agreement. The second is to

underwrite the LA SPV's obligations (rent etc.) under the 50- year lease for the site.

7. Members approved the delegation of authority to the Managing Director (in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee, supported by the Director of Resources and Development and Chief Solicitor) to finalise and agree the Business Plan and provide sufficient resources to allow the LA SPV to reach Financial Close and then to monitor and manage the Contract on behalf of, and with, the Councils for the term.

A Business Plan for the LA SPV has been produced which details the 'structural' and operational costs of the Company.

87. HR Policy – Revised Bereavement Policy and Procedure *(Assistant Director, Corporate Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key Decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to seek Finance and Policy Committee approval for a revised Bereavement Policy and Procedure.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services reported that the current Bereavement Policy was to grant 3 days as standard to all employees and a further 2 days for extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the manager with criteria around the closeness of the relationship. An employee could also receive a paid half day to attend a funeral. It was proposed to revise the policy to incorporate up to 4 weeks paid leave for all employees on the death of an immediate relative, which included the new 2 week statutory entitlement for Parental Bereavement. Time off (1/2 day paid leave) to attend a funeral would remain in the policy.

The Chair and Members welcomed the proposed revisions to the policy.

There was no dissent to the following decision.

Decision

That the submitted revised Bereavement Policy and Procedure be approved.

88. ICT Contract 2023 Progress Update (*Director of Resources and Development*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to update Finance and Policy Committee on preparations for the new ICT contract from October 2023 and for members to consider the weighting of Social Value in assessing tender submissions.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Resources and Development reported that the Committee agreed on 12 July 2021 for an independent Value for Money (VFM) review of the current contract with NEC to be carried out by SOCITM Advisory Limited. It was also agreed that an update report would be provided once the VFM review was complete. The VFM review had been completed and the Corporate Management Team had considered the findings and recommendations. The VFM report confirmed that the Council's existing contract provides VFM as the cost per user of £2,437 compares favourably with comparative authorities which range from £2,500 to £3,500. Further work needed to be undertaken to determine if there is a business case to increase ICT spend in terms of improving services and / or, increasing efficiency. This will be subject to a future report to Members.

The report set out the revised project plan and key milestones for the new contract. In terms of the social value element of the contract, the report detailed the issues that were considered to impact on both the financial and non-financial benefits of social value. With the impact of recent events in Ukraine, rising energy prices and increasing inflation it was proposed that an evaluation criteria of 10% Social Value be retained for the new contract.

The Chair commented that the changes made in working practices due to the Covid-19 pandemic had never been envisaged at the commencement of the contract and questioned if there was to be some flexibility to be included in the new contract for the potential changes in the future. The Director commented that the change to working at home hadn't been the smoothest but the current contract had been driven solely by price last time which was why Hartlepool's comparative spend was at the lower end of the scale.

Some Members were concerned at the differentiation between social value to Hartlepool and what could be seen as a genuine corporate social responsibility for those companies that may come forward for the contract. The Managing Director referred to the recent meeting of the Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee which had approved an Officer Working Group to look at the wider issues around social value.

Members commented that there was a need to input more money into robust IT systems. On social value some Members expressed a desire to see more local businesses involved. There was also a need to ensure contractors internal policies were up-to-date and reflected current legislation.

There was no dissent to the following decisions.

Decision

1. That the progress made to date and revised timetable be noted.
2. That the proposal to maintain the existing contract evaluation weighting 10% for Social Value with the remaining 90% weighting determined in conjunction with SOCITM to reflect current evaluation methods be approved.

89. Workers' Memorial Day *(Assistant Director, Corporate Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to present a request from the Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee (HJTUC) for the Council to continue to recognise and support Workers Memorial Day on Thursday 28th April 2022.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services reported that a letter had been received from HJTUC (which was appended to the report) seeking Council support for the arrangements for Workers Memorial Day.

The Chair commented that he was very supportive of the arrangements for Workers Memorial Day and the request for support for events from the HJTUC and considered that the Council should commit to those for future years so the request did not need to come before Members each year.

There was no dissent to the following decisions.

Decision

1. That approval be given to promoting a minutes silence in all public buildings and to staff/public at 12.30pm on Thursday 28th April 2022 in remembrance of 'those workers who have lost their lives through industrial accident or disease'.

2. That approval be given to lowering of flags on public buildings on Thursday 28th April 2022
3. That approval be given to promoting / publicising and assisting with the event.
4. That approval be given to the use of Council Premises on Thursday 28th April 2022 for the service and for guests before / after the Workers Memorial Day Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony.
5. That these arrangements be supported in future years.

90. Council Tax Energy Bills Rebate (*Director of Resources and Development*)

Type of decision

Non Key decision.

Purpose of report

The report sought to;

- Provide members with an update on the operation of the non-discretionary Council Tax Rebate scheme that covers council tax bands A-D; and
- Seek member approval for the Discretionary Scheme that covers the approach to council tax bands E to H and households where no council tax liability exists.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Resources and Development outlined the announcement from government on the 3 February 2022 of a package of support to help households with rising energy bills. Detailed scheme guidance was issued on the 23 February 2022. In addition to a £200 discount on energy bills to be repaid over 5 years, the package included two support streams administered by Local Authorities;

- A £150 non-repayable rebate to households in council tax bands A-D known as the Council Tax Rebate; and
- A £144 million discretionary fund for billing authorities to support households in need but are not eligible for the main scheme.

The report set out the details of the Discretionary Scheme as it was understood by officers at the date of the meeting though there was the potential of further changes to the scheme by government. In light of this, the Director tabled two further options to the three set out in the report for Members consideration in relation to the Discretionary Scheme. These additional options would only apply if the government formally confirmed

changes to the scheme that they have recently indicated they will make. The Director requested that Members consider two decisions, one for the current situation and one if the scheme details were changed by government.

The Chair thanked the Director and the Assistant Director (Finance) and their team for their work on these two announcements from central government which would require significant work to implement. The Chair stated that he had given the options in the report a lot of thought and had decided to propose to Members that the Committee support Option 3, the payment of £150 to all Band E properties as he considered it presented a benefit to the greatest number of households across the town. The Chair also stated that he would propose this option regardless of whether the government may amend the scheme regulations prior to implementation. This proposal was seconded. Members spoke to support this option.

The Committee considered the first decision requested by the Director of Resources and Development and on a majority vote of 9 for with 1 abstention, the adoption of Option 3 was agreed.

In relation to the second decision requested by the Director, in relation to the option to follow if the government subsequently changed the scheme further, on a majority vote of 9 for with 1 abstention, the adoption of Option 3 was agreed.

Decision

1. That the Council Tax Rebate Scheme and eligibility criteria for the main scheme applying to Band A to D properties be noted.
2. That with regard to the Discretionary Scheme as it currently stands at the date of this meeting, the proposals set out in section 5 be approved, and that Option 3, the payment of £150 to all Band E properties, be adopted.
3. That with regard to the Discretionary Scheme, if the Government revised the scheme following the date of this meeting, the proposals set out in section 5 be approved, and that Option 3, the payment of £150 to all Band E properties, be adopted.

91. COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Scheme (CARF) (Director of Resources and Development)

Type of decision

Non Key decision.

Purpose of report

The report sought member approval for a discretionary Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund Scheme (CARF) for Non-Domestic Ratepayers for the 2021/22 financial year following notification of a government Section 31 grant.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Finance reported on a proposed discretionary Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund Scheme (CARF) for Non-Domestic Ratepayers for the 2021/22 financial year following notification of a government Section 31 grant. The government had confirmed it would not change legislation regarding business rates reliefs, as such Local Authorities were required to provide relief using discretionary powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. In doing so it is up to Local Authorities to devise their own local scheme and implement it. The relief is available to reduce chargeable amounts in respect of 2021/22.

The government will reimburse Local Authorities to the amount of relief provided via a Section 31 grant, so long as guidance is followed, up to the maximum allocation provided. For Hartlepool that allocation is £1,585,445 and a detailed scheme was set out in the report. All eligible business will be written to during March with an award notice and revised bill.

A member questioned if there was any 'resilience reports' showing how many businesses had survived the pandemic due to the support provided by government. The Director commented that there was no specific information but that an analysis of business rates may provide some information. The belief was that it had helped but officers had been focussed on making the payments to businesses rather than gathering information.

Members were concerned that some smaller businesses such as taxi drivers and mobile hairdressers may have missed out on any support from the various schemes the government had promoted. The Assistant Director stated that the scheme now reported, relied on businesses having premises registered for business rates, however, for discretionary business grants the Council had supported smaller businesses including those mentioned.

The Chair thanked the Finance team for their work in administering the various government support schemes and the new scheme reported today which would also create a significant amount of work.

There was no dissent to the following decision.

Decision

That the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund Scheme (CARF) scheme as proposed be approved, including that delegated approval be given to the Director of Resources and Development to vary the level of relief to

maximise the relief awarded in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee and the Managing Director.

92. Tall Ships 2023 Progress Report *(Director Adults and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide an update on Tall Ships 2023 and to share progress to date on local planning to be a host port for Tall Ships 2023.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services provided a detailed update on the work around the Tall Ships event in 2023.

Members welcomed the update and supported as many young people becoming involved in the event as possible. Members suggested considerations around parking and improvements around the site, particularly access for the disabled. The Managing Director stated that officers would be working with local communities on parking. Members also requested that publicity and social media communications encourage young people and local residents to be involved in the event.

Decision

That the update report be noted.

93. Council Plan 2021-2024 – Progress Update *(Managing Director)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide an update to Finance and Policy Committee on the progress made on the delivery of the Council Plan and to share with the Committee the latest version of the Strategic Risk Register.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Managing Director submitted a detail report on the progress made on the delivery of the Council Plan.

Decision

That the report be noted.

94. Corporate Procurement Quarterly Report on Contracts (*Chief Solicitor*)

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

The Chief Solicitor provided a detailed update on contracts and tenders approved in the last quarter.

Decision

That the report be noted.

95. Staff Safety Progress Update (*Assistant Director, Corporate Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to present Finance and Policy Committee with an update in relation to improvements made to staff safety.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services provide the Committee with an update on the work that had been undertaken to date by the Staff Safety Forum and details of the number of reports of physical and verbal violence and aggression towards Council staff. Details of the key actions that had

been progressed since the last report to the Committee in 2020 were also set out.

Decision

That the report be noted.

96. A19 Grade Separated Junction, Elwick Bypass and Hartlepool Western Link *(Managing Director)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

The report provides an update on the A19 Grade Separated Junction, Elwick Bypass and Hartlepool Western Link scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Managing Director provided a detailed update on the progress to date on the Western Link Scheme and the negotiations with land owners. The Managing Director indicated that it may be necessary to progress to Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) for some land but this would be the subject of a further report requiring formal approval. The Chair thanked the Managing Director for the update and hoped that negotiations could be concluded positively rather than requiring CPOs.

Decision

That the report be noted.

97. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.

**H MARTIN
CHIEF SOLICITOR**

PUBLICATION DATE: 23 MARCH 2022