

# **FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

10 OCTOBER 2022

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

**Present:**

Councillor Shane Moore (In the Chair)

Councillors: Moss Boddy, Tom Cassidy, Brenda Harrison, Jim Lindridge, Sue Little, Andrew Martin-Wells, Melanie Morley and Mike Young.

Also Present: Edwin Jeffries, Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Managing Director  
Hayley Martin, Chief Solicitor  
James Magog, Assistant Director, Finance  
Claire McLaren, Assistant Director, Corporate Services  
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  
Steve Hilton, Communications and Marketing Team  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

### **43. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Jonathan Brash and Bob Buchan,

### **44. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **45. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022**

As the minutes had not yet been published, their consideration was deferred to the next meeting.

**46. Death in Service Policy and Procedure** (*Assistant Director, Corporate Services*)

**Type of decision**

Non-Key Decision.

**Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to request Finance and Policy Committee approval for the revised Death in Service Policy and Procedure.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services reported that the Death in Service Policy and Procedure was introduced in 2012. Following the approval and implementation of the Bereavement Policy and Procedure in December 2021 it has triggered a full review of the Death in Service Policy and Procedure to ensure that they are complementary to one another.

The Council recognised the emotional impact that a Death in Service can have, impacting upon family, friends and work colleagues. The revised policy provided clarity on the importance of balancing the sensitivity of the situation, providing support to the next of kin and work colleagues whilst undertaking the practical arrangements such as the need to administer pay. The policy clearly sets out key roles and responsibilities and the Trades Unions had been fully consulted in the revision of the policy which was submitted as an appendix to the report.

Members welcomed the revised procedure and asked if other organisations and companies had similar procedures. The Assistant Director commented that other local authorities did have similar policies. Other Members commented that larger private sector companies did have similar policies for their staff.

The following decision was agreed without dissent.

**Decision**

That the revised Death in Service Policy, as submitted, be approved.

**47. Menopause Policy** (*Assistant Director, Corporate Services*)

**Type of decision**

Non-Key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to request Finance and Policy Committee approval for a new Menopause Policy with a formal launch ceremony on World Menopause Day, 18th October.

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

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services reported that the effects of the menopause on the workforce had been on the national media in recent times. As part of its equality agenda, the Council had invested in training for managers and the wider workforce to be more aware of the symptoms and what can be done to help employees manage this at work. The Council recognised the need to formalise its policy to promote and provide guidance for the workforce. Trade Unions had been consulted and had contributed positively to the formation of the draft policy. It was proposed that, subject to approval of the policy, a joint launch ceremony take place on World Menopause Day on 18th October with senior HBC officers and Trade Union officials.

Members welcomed the new policy document and congratulated the Assistant Director for bringing forward such an inclusive policy that addressed a problem often swept under the carpet. Addressing the menopause in this way was a very positive step for the Council. The Managing Director added that this reflected the Council's aims of protecting the mental and physical health of its most important asset, its staff.

It was noted that few local authorities had a similar policy. A Member indicated that she had requested that the menopause be an issue discussed at a future the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Chair supported the suggestion.

The following decision was agreed without dissent.

### **Decision**

That the Menopause Policy, as submitted, be approved, with a formal launch event to be held on World Menopause Day, 18th October 2022.

## **48. Community Pot Update** (*Director of Adult and Community Based Services*)

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

To update the Finance and Policy Committee regarding the Community Pot grants and the outcomes delivered.

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

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services submitted a report providing Members with a brief summary of the achievements of the various projects funded by the Community Pot of £200,000 agreed by Finance and Policy Committee on 15 February 2021 to support community-led initiatives aimed at tackling the social and economic impact of COVID19.

The Assistant Director highlighted that there were risks associated with allocating one off funding in that it can build expectations and generate longer term demand. The Community Pot application process made clear that this was a one-off resource to support sustainable solutions and applicants were required to provide evidence of an exit strategy. The majority of the projects that received Community Pot funding, which had now ended, had been able to embed their work into the core functions of the groups involved, meaning that the funding had left a real legacy in the town.

The Chair asked for an update on the development of a Credit Union. The Assistant Director commented that with the business case work completed a credit union was much closer. There was an online digital credit union available in Hartlepool but the feedback in the evidence gathering had been that people wanted a high street offer.

A Member noted that there was some significant differences in the allocation amounts; had there been some overlap between projects. The Assistant Director stated that the amounts were what the individual groups had requested in their applications. The allocation highlighted by the Member, 'Supported Housing and Counselling for Homeless and Vulnerable - £15,000', was the amount of additionality that organisation considered they could achieve. Much of the spend across the groups had gone into funding training and developing new collaborative working that would help sustain their future work. The Managing Director added that there had been some targeted funding from elsewhere on homelessness as well.

The Vice-Chair asked if the groups were reporting an impact on their work through the ongoing economic crisis. The Assistant Director stated that officers did work closely with these groups and the wider voluntary sector. Voluntary sector groups were looking at coming together to work in partnership much more and the funding from the community pot had put some good foundations in place to support this.

### **Decision**

That the update regarding the Community Pot grant allocation and the positive outcomes that have been and continue to be achieved for residents be noted.

## **49. Update on Developing Sustainable Solutions to Food Poverty** (*Director of Adult and Community Based Services*)

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

To update the Finance and Policy Committee regarding work that had been undertaken with 'The Bread and Butter Thing' to develop a sustainable solution to food poverty, linked to the role of Community Hubs.

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

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services reported that the identification of food poverty particularly among the working poor and the over 65s during the Council's response to COVID19 led to the acknowledgement that a sustainable solution to food poverty was needed. In August 2020 the Finance and Policy Committee agreed to the undertaking of a procurement exercise which resulted in the awarding of a contract to 'The Bread and Butter Thing'. The legacy of individual hardship as a result of the pandemic and the increasing pressures on people's finances as the cost of living increases means that the contribution of The Bread and Butter Thing remains vital in helping people manage their finances.

The report outlined how 'The Bread and Butter Thing' model worked. There were now five delivery hubs in Hartlepool across the week at Community Hub Central, Community Hub South, Burbank House, St Hilda's Church and the West View Project. There were a total of 3,099 members in Hartlepool and 1,143 volunteer opportunities have been created to date (totalling over 3,400 hours). So far in 2022 a total of 10,061 sets of bags, equivalent to over 311,287 meals have been provided, supporting an average of 60 households at each hub each week.

In the winter of 2021, as agreed by the Finance and Policy Committee, an additional £10,000 was allocated to The Bread and Butter Thing from the Household Support Fund to provide extra food grocery bags. This additional investment allowed The Bread and Butter Thing to support 439 households.

Every week The Bread and Butter Thing reduced the stress of stretched finances. So far Hartlepool residents had benefited from a cumulative saving of over £266,000 by shopping with The Bread and Butter Thing. Feedback from members and volunteers has been overwhelmingly positive.

The report also highlighted the additional support and advice made available at The Bread and Butter Thing venues to help people ensure they

were accessing all available benefits for example. The sites were, however, becoming over-subscribed and The Bread and Butter Thing were having to, on occasions, limit peoples access to every other week. Unfortunately oversubscriptions in Central and South Community Hubs are reaching a level where people can only access the service once every 3 weeks which will have a huge impact on their incomes and ability to provide a healthy, balanced meal for their family.

While welcoming the crucial support The Bread and Butter Thing provided, Members did feel it was greatly concerning that there was such a need for this type of service alongside the foodbanks that operated in Hartlepool. A Member reported that she had been involved in a meeting with officers in relation to a further similar project operated by the Baptist Church that was looking to open in Hartlepool. The Message Trust operated slightly differently in that it offered interim support alongside an emotional support framework to give people their self-respect.

The Assistant Director stated that The Bread and Butter Thing wasn't a foodbank and it's aims were around reducing dependency and, as well as providing good food and fresh vegetables it also looked to provide support and advice to help people move forward and away from a cycle of crises leading to dependency.

A Member commented that schemes seemed to be working in isolation and not in a joined up way and questioned if we were achieving our aims. The Assistant Director stated that while there were some 'frequent fliers' with this kind of support most only used the services for a fixed period of time. The wrap around services were joined up and targeted at lifting people away from a continual cycle of need and dependency. Members asked if there were any statistics to support this and the Assistant Director stated some information was collected but that it was a significant piece of work to collect and analyse them.

The Chair referred to his experiences as a volunteer for the Trussell Trust's foodbank and how people were also signposted to advice and support through other groups and schemes. Members also referred to the extensive range of support and advice that was available at the Community Hubs when The Bread and Butter Thing was there. The Director of Adult and Community Based Services commented that Members were very welcome to visit the Central Hub on a Thursday to see the wide range of support and advice that was available to people and also how busy those services were. The Director undertook to share the weekly programme of events at the hub with Members.

**Decision**

1. The Committee noted the update regarding a sustainable solution for food poverty and the positive progress that had been made.
2. The Committee noted the increased demand for support from The Bread and Butter Thing and the potential of this to increase as the cost of living continued to rise.

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

The Chair highlighted that this was the last meeting of the Committee that the Assistant Director, Corporate Services, Claire McLaren would be attending as she was shortly to leave the Council for a new post. The Chair and all those present thanked Mrs McLaren for her work with Hartlepool Borough Council and wished her well for the future.

The Chair noted that the next meeting of the Committee was Monday 21 November, 2022 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 10.50 am.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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