

# **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

## **AGENDA**



**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**at 2.00 pm**

**in Committee Room B,  
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

### **MEMBERS OF AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:**

Councillors Allen, Cook, Cowie, Creevy, Falconer, Feeney, Hall, Loynes, D Nicholson and Smith.

Standards Co-opted Independent Members: - Mr Martin Slimings and Ms Tracy Squires.

Standards Co-opted Parish Council Representatives: Parish Councillor John Littlefair (Hart) and Parish Councillor Alan O'Brien (Greatham).

Local Police Representative.

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

### **2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

### **3. MINUTES**

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022

### **4. AUDIT ITEMS**

4.1 2021/22 Financial Report (including 2021/22 Statement of Accounts) - *Assistant Director, Finance*

### **5. STANDARDS ITEMS**

No items.

### **CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE**

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers. A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone.

The Assembly Point for everyone is Victory Square by the Cenotaph. If the meeting has to be evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.

## **6. STATUTORY SCRUTINY ITEMS**

### **Crime and Disorder Scrutiny**

No Items.

### **Health Scrutiny**

- 6.1 Independent Complaints Advocacy Service – Update - *Contracts Manager from the North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICA)*
- 6.2 Accessibility of Council Services for those with Disabilities and Lifelong Conditions - Council Referral - *Statutory Scrutiny Manager (To Follow)*
- 6.3 Child and Family Poverty - *Statutory Scrutiny Manager (To Follow)*
- 6.4 Final ICB Strategy – Promotion of Consultation – *Statutory Scrutiny Manager (To Follow)*
- 6.5 North Tees and Hartlepool Foundation Trust Update - Verbal Update by representatives of the Trust.

## **7. OTHER ITEMS FOR DECISION**

No items.

## **8. MINUTES FROM THE RECENT MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

- 8.1 To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

## **9. MINUTES FROM THE RECENT MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE RELATING TO PUBLIC HEALTH**

No items.

## **10. MINUTES FROM RECENT MEETING OF TEES VALLEY HEALTH SCRUTINY JOINT COMMITTEE**

No items.

## **11. MINUTES FROM RECENT MEETING OF SAFER HARTLEPOOL PARTNERSHIP**

- 11.1 To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

## **12. REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE**

No items.

**13. DURHAM, DARLINGTON AND TEESSIDE, HAMBLETON, RICHMONDSHIRE AND WHITBY STP JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

No items.

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

For information: -

Forthcoming Meetings: -

Thursday 15 December, 2022 at 10.00 am

Thursday 12 January, 2023 at 10.00 am

Thursday 9 February, 2023 at 10.00 am

Thursday 16 March, 2023 at 2.00 pm

All meetings will take place at the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

# **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

### **29 SEPTEMBER 2022**

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Leisa Smith (In the Chair).

Councillors: Brian Cowie, Angela Falconer, Tom Feeney, Ged Hall,  
Denis Loynes, David Nicholson and Kevin Tiplady

Standards Co-opted Members:  
Mr Martin Slimmings and Ms Tracy Squires – Independent  
Members

Officers: James Magog, Assistant Director (Finance)  
Noel Adamson, Head of Audit and Governance  
Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Manager  
Gemma Jones, Scrutiny and Legal Support Officer  
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

### **32. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rob Cook and Rachel Creevy and Parish Councillors John Littlefair and Alan O'Brien.

### **33. Declarations of Interest**

None

### **34. Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

The minutes were confirmed.

### **35. Treasury Management Strategy Update 2022/23** *(Director of Resources and Development)*

The Assistant Director (Finance) outlined the main aspects of the annual Treasury Management Strategy which included a review of Treasury Management activity for 2021/22 including the 2021/22 outturn Prudential Indicators; and a first quarter update of the 2022/23 Treasury Management

activity. The Assistant Director acknowledged that the section of the report relating to the current economic environment and outlook was somewhat dated now following the Chancellor's mini-budget announcement the previous week with more information expected on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. In terms of the Council's treasury position it was under borrowed by £21m at year end with reserves being used to temporarily fund capital requirements, so as to reduce the impact on the revenue budget. Given the increase in interest rates officers are revisiting investments to ensure returns are temporarily maximised. Whilst borrowing would be required over the coming years there was no current requirement and as such the council was not exposed to increased borrowing costs at this time.

A member referred to the recent news that the Bank of England had purchased gilts. The Assistant Director confirmed this had been the case in order to stabilise market volatility, the value being £60 – 65m. The member commented that increased interest rates could be a significant budget pressure in future years however the Assistant Director advised that the vast majority of borrowing was at a fixed rate and there is no immediate need to borrow, which would allow time for market and borrowing rates to stabilise. A member noted that investments had more than doubled this year. The Assistant Director indicated that this was primarily due to funding for the new leisure centre being secured at a low fixed interest rate, with the funding being temporarily invested pending spend on the scheme. In response to a further question, the Assistant Director confirmed that borrowing tended to be done through PWLB, unless a better rate could be achieved elsewhere, and at a fixed rate so as not to expose the Council to interest risk.

A delay in the signing off of the statement of accounts was noted. The Assistant Director advised that this was a national issue including auditing firm's capacity. An increase in audit fees was not down to this delay, but due to increased audit requirements mainly around asset valuations. Government had provided local authorities with grant to fund the increase. The Chair would be informed when the accounts were signed off.

### **Recommended**

That the 2021/22 Treasury Management Outturn as detailed in the report be noted

That the 2022/23 Treasury Management 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Position as detailed in the report be noted.

## **36. Internal Audit Plan 2022/23 Update** (*Head of Audit and Governance*)

The Head of Audit and Governance reported on progress made to date completing the Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23. Members were referred to details of audits completed together with recommendations, risks identified

and action plans agreed as a result. The Head of Audit and Governance advised that internal audit staff were also providing detailed evidence to Government of payments of the Government's Business Support Grant Scheme and Discretionary Business Support Grant Scheme made to individuals and firms. £36 million had been distributed and £125 thousand needed to be recovered which local authorities had been asked to action. In the event that recovery was unsuccessful this debt would return to central government so would not impact on the Council. The Assistant Director outlined the process by which recovery was attempted. It was anticipated that this work would be completed by the end of the year.

A member queried whether an auditing service was provided to Academies. The Head of Audit and Governance confirmed that Academies could hire the internal audit team to carry these out for a fee but this did not impact upon Council audits.

#### **Recommended**

That the report be noted.

### **37. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Annual Report (including Quarter 1 update) (*Chief Solicitor*)**

The Statutory Scrutiny Manager presented the annual report on the activities relating to surveillance by the Council and policies under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. The report highlighted that in the period 2021/22 there had been 1 RIPA authorisation sought for directed surveillance and 1 non-RIPA authorisation sought. In the first quarter of 2022/23 no authorisations had been sought.

Details were given of an ongoing review of the Council's RIPA procedures and ongoing training. A copy of the Council's amended RIPA policy document was appended to the report.

#### **Recommended**

That the report be noted and the amended RIPA policy approved.

### **38. Health Scrutiny – Hartfield's Medical Practice (part of the McKenzie Group) - closure**

The Statutory Scrutiny Manager advised that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda pending a need for further analysis of the engagement outcomes. The final report was expected to be ready by the end of the year.

**39. Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committees – Outside Body Resignation** (*Chief Solicitor and Monitoring Officer*)

Members were advised that Councillor Falconer had resigned from the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee and a replacement was sought. This would need to be a Conservative or Independent Councillor in order to fulfil proportionality arrangements

**Recommended**

That Councillor Smith be appointed to the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

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

The Chair ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

Members were reminded of the need to schedule a site visit to the Rowan Suite at the University Hospital of Hartlepool. The Scrutiny and Legal Support Officer had identified 2 potential dates and members confirmed their preference as Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October. The Scrutiny and Legal Support Officer to confirm the time.

The meeting concluded at 2.30pm

CHAIR

# AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24 November 2022



**Report of:** Director of Resources and Development

**Subject:** THE 2021/22 FINANCIAL REPORT AND AUDIT  
COMPLETION REPORT

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## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Mazars' Audit Completion Report and the 2021/22 Financial Report.
- 1.2 This will be achieved by considering the following:-
  - i) Background;
  - ii) Audit Completion Report
  - iii) Recommendations.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, all Local Authorities are required to produce the draft annual Statement of Accounts by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022. These regulations have temporarily relaxed the previous deadlines for producing the draft accounts from the 31<sup>st</sup> May and completion of final audited accounts from July to September.
- 2.2 The Financial Report presents the Council's financial position for 2021/22 in a specified format and reflects the Outturn Strategy previously approved by the Council.
- 2.3 The Council completed the draft accounts by 24<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and were presented to this Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022. Members were invited to ask questions and/or seek clarification of information included in the pre-audit report up to today's Committee. For Members' information no issues have been brought to my attention by Members of the Committee.
- 2.4 The Council was informed by its external auditors Mazars that their annual report would not be published by the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Members of this Committee received a copy of their letter which was also published on the Council's website. Mazars have been unable to complete the audit by the statutory deadline owing to outstanding



assurances from the Pension Fund auditors and a national issue in relation to accounting for infrastructure assets.

### 3. AUDIT COMPLETION REPORT

3.1 As Members will be aware the purposes of the Audit Completion Report (ACR) are:

- to share information to assist both the auditor and those charged with governance (i.e. Members of the Audit and Governance Committee) to fulfil their respective responsibilities;
- to provide constructive observations arising from the audit process to those charged with governance;
- to ensure as part of a two way communication process the external auditors, gain an understanding of the attitude and views of those charged with governance at the Council of internal and external operational, financial, compliance and other risks which might affect the accounts, including the likelihood of those risks materialising and how they are managed; and,
- to receive feedback from those charged with governance on the performance of the engagement team.

3.2 A copy of the ACR is attached at Appendix A. However, it should be noted that whilst Mazars have substantially completed their work the audit is not complete. Outstanding areas are highlighted in Section 2 of the ACR.

3.3 This Committee will be provided with an update in relation to any outstanding matters in a follow-up letter prior to the auditor's report being signed. The external Auditors will be present to explain the ACR and answer any questions.

3.4 Section 5 of the ACR includes an Internal Control recommendation regarding redundant user accounts. The recommendation suggests a periodic user access review. Our current procedures disable leaver's access at the beginning of each month. In addition, our IT partners NEC disable all accounts which have not accessed the network for 30 days. The issue identified at audit was a unique situation where the leavers date was amended in the payroll system, albeit on the same day, after the leavers report was run. We have agreed to review our procedures to ensure compliance.

3.5 Two misstatements were identified during the audit, detailed in Section 6 page 19 of the ACR. As the misstatements are not material either individually or in aggregate to the financial statements I have agreed with the auditors not to adjust for these items.

- 3.6 There was one further misstatement and a small number of disclosure amendments identified by the Auditor during the audit and I have agreed to amend the Accounts to reflect these issues detailed in Section 6 pages 20 and 21 of the ACR.

#### 4. CONSIDERATIONS / IMPLICATIONS

Financial Considerations and Risk Implications	Covered in previous paragraphs.
Legal Considerations	None
Child and Family Poverty Considerations	None
Equality and Diversity Considerations	None
Staff Considerations	None
Asset Management Considerations	None

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The external audit has not identified any issues which impact on the level of reserves and it is not expected that any impact will arise from the remaining audit work. An update in relation to the outstanding matters will be presented to a future meeting.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that Members:-
- i) Consider the matters raised in Mazars' Audit Completion Report (ACR) detailed in Appendix A.
  - ii) Note the 2021/22 Financial Report at Appendix B has been updated for the adjustments set out in Section 6 of the ACR.

#### 7. CONTACT OFFICER

Chris Little  
 Director of Resources and Development  
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# Audit Completion Report

Hartlepool Borough Council – Year ended  
31 March 2022

November 2022



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- 02** Status of the audit
- 03** Audit approach
- 04** Significant findings
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Appendix A: Draft management representation letter

Appendix B: Draft audit report

Appendix C: Independence

Appendix D: Other communications

Our reports are prepared in the context of the 'Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' and the 'Appointing Person Terms of Appointment' issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors and addressed to the Council are prepared for the sole use of the Council and we take no responsibility to any member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party. Mazars LLP is the UK firm of Mazars, an international advisory and accountancy group. Mazars LLP is registered by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.



Audit and Governance Committee

Hartlepool Borough Council

Civic Centre

Victoria Road

Hartlepool TS24 8AY

14 November 2022

Dear Committee Members

## Audit Completion Report – Year ended 31 March 2022

We are pleased to present our Audit Completion Report for the year ended 31 March 2022. The purpose of this document is to summarise our audit conclusions.

The scope of our work, including identified significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement, was outlined in our Audit Strategy Memorandum which we presented on 17 March 2022. We have reviewed our Audit Strategy Memorandum and concluded that the original significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement remain appropriate.

We would like to express our thanks for the assistance of your team during our audit.

If you would like to discuss any matters in more detail then please do not hesitate to contact me on 07896 684771.

Yours faithfully

*Gavin Barker*

Gavin Barker  
Director  
Mazars LLP

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# 01

Section 01:

**Executive summary**

# 1. Executive summary

## Principal conclusions and significant findings

The detailed scope of our work as your appointed auditor for 2021/22 is set out in the National Audit Office's (NAO) Code of Audit Practice. Our responsibilities and powers are derived from the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and, as outlined in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, our audit has been conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and means we focus on audit risks that we have assessed as resulting in a higher risk of material misstatement.

In section 4 of this report we have set out our conclusions and significant findings from our audit. This section includes our conclusions on the audit risks and areas of management judgement in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, which include:

- Management override of controls;
- Property, plant and equipment valuation (now more tightly defined to include investment property valuation but exclude the valuation of council dwellings); and
- Defined benefit pension liability valuation.

## Misstatements and internal control recommendations

Section 5 sets out internal control recommendations and section 6 sets out audit misstatements. We found two trivial errors in sample testing that have not been adjusted. If these errors occurred at the same rate across the relevant untested populations the unadjusted misstatements would total £1.3M, which is immaterial. Section 7 outlines our work on the Council's arrangements to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

## Status and audit opinion

We have substantially completed our audit in respect of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022. At the time of preparing this report, significant matters remaining outstanding as outlined in section 2. We will provide an update to you in relation to the significant matters outstanding through issuance of a follow up letter.

Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of the remaining audit work, we have the following conclusions:



### Audit opinion

We anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion, without modification, on the financial statements. Our proposed audit opinion is included in the draft auditor's report in Appendix B.



### Value for Money

We anticipate having no significant weaknesses in arrangements to report in relation to the arrangements that the Council has in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Further detail on our Value for Money work is provided in section 7 of this report.



### Whole of Government Accounts (WGA)

We have not yet received group instructions from the National Audit Office (NAO) in respect of our work on the Authority's 2021/22 WGA submission. We are unable to commence our work in this area until such instructions have been received. We note that there is a significant delay in WGA work, and the current focus is on 2020/21 work, meaning there is likely to be a substantial delay before we will be able to address WGA for 2021/22.



### Wider powers

The 2014 Act requires us to give an elector, or any representative of the elector, the opportunity to question us about the accounting records of the Council and to consider any objection made to the accounts. No questions or objections were received in respect of the Council's 2021/22 accounts.



# 02





Section 02:


**Status of the audit**





## 2. Status of the audit

Our work is substantially complete and there are currently no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion, subject to the outstanding matters detailed below.

Audit area	Status	Description of the outstanding matters
Pensions		We are waiting for assurances from the pension fund auditor. We are unable to sign off until we receive these assurances, which are provided by another audit firm. The pension fund auditor has been unable to confirm a date for reporting to us, and we are concerned that this may be indicative of a potential delay beyond the end of November 2022.
Infrastructure		As the Council is aware, there is a national issue in relation to accounting for infrastructure which has impacted on every local authority related entity with material infrastructure balances. Although this does not impact on the resources available to the Council, and is technical in nature, it could have a significant impact on the financial statements, depending on how it is resolved. We will be unable to issue our audit opinion until a resolution is reached in relation to this. It is now envisaged that the likely solution to this issue will not be available until the end of December 2022 at the earliest.
WGA		We are awaiting group instructions from the National Audit Office. This may impact on the timing of issuing our audit certificate to formally conclude and close the audit as it did in 2020/21.
Closing Procedures		Including reviews of completed work, checking the final version of the financial statements and consideration of any post balance sheet events.

 Likely to result in material adjustment or significant change to disclosures within the financial statements.

 Potential to result in material adjustment or significant change to disclosures within the financial statements.

 Not considered likely to result in material adjustment or change to disclosures within the financial statements.

# 03

## Section 03: **Audit approach**

# 3. Audit approach

## Changes to our audit approach

We provided details of our intended audit approach in our Audit Strategy Memorandum in March 2022. We have not made any changes to our audit approach since we presented our Audit Strategy Memorandum.

## Materiality

Our provisional materiality at the planning stage of the audit was set at £5.9m using a benchmark of 2% of gross operating expenditure. Our final assessment of materiality, based on the final financial statements is unchanged, using the same benchmark.

## Use of experts

Management makes use of experts in specific areas when preparing the Authority’s financial statements. We have used available third-party information to challenge the key valuation assumptions. Furthermore, no changes have been made to the planned approach as outlined in the Audit Strategy Memorandum, except the actuary is now Hymans Robertson replacing AON Hewitt.

Items of account	Management’s expert	Our expert
Property Valuations	Internal valuer from the Council	
Defined Benefit Pension Liability	Actuary – Hymans Robertson	NAO’s Consulting Actuary (PWC)
Financial Instruments	Link Asset Services	

## Service organisations

At the planning stage we did not identify any service organisations which impact on the production of the financial statements. This remains the case at the completion stage.



# 04

## Section 04: **Significant findings**

# 4. Significant findings

- In this section we outline the significant findings from our audit. These findings include:
- our audit conclusions regarding other significant risks and key areas of management judgement outlined in the Audit Strategy Memorandum;
  - our comments in respect of the accounting policies and disclosures that you have adopted in the financial statements. On page 13 we have concluded whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the financial reporting framework and commented on any significant accounting policy changes that have been made during the year;
  - any further significant matters discussed with management; and
  - any significant difficulties we experienced during the audit.

## Significant risks

Management override of controls	Description of the risk
	In all entities, management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, we consider there to be a risk of material misstatement due to fraud and thus a significant risk on all audits.
	<b>How we addressed this risk</b> We addressed this risk through performing audit work over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accounting estimates impacting amounts included in the financial statements;</li><li>• Consideration of identified significant transactions outside the normal course of business; and</li><li>• Journals recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in preparation of the financial statements.</li></ul>
	<b>Audit conclusion</b> Our audit work has provided the assurance we sought and has not identified any material issues to bring to your attention. There is no indication of management override of controls.



# 4. Significant findings

Valuation of Net Defined Benefit Pension Liability	Description of the risk
	<p>The financial statements contain material pension entries in respect of retirement benefits. The calculation of these pension figures, both assets and liabilities, can be subject to significant volatility and includes estimates based upon a complex interaction of actuarial assumptions. This results in an increased risk of material misstatement.</p>
	<p><b>How we addressed this risk</b></p> <p>We discussed with key contacts any significant changes to the pension estimates. In addition to our standard programme of work in this area, we evaluated the management controls you have in place to assess the reasonableness of the figures provided by the Actuary and considered the reasonableness of the Actuary's output, referring to an expert's report on all actuaries nationally.</p> <p>We reviewed the appropriateness of the key assumptions included within the valuations, compared them to expected ranges and reviewed the methodology applied in the valuation. We considered the adequacy of disclosures in the financial statements.</p> <p>We have also sought assurance from the audit of Teesside Pension Fund, which is outstanding.</p>
	<p><b>Audit conclusion</b></p> <p>Subject to the completion of outstanding work, our work has provided the assurance sought. At this stage we have not identified any errors in respect of the valuation of pensions. The main issue to be aware of is that we are awaiting the assurance letter from the Pension Fund auditor and there is uncertainty on when this will be received.</p>

Valuation of property, plant and equipment (excluding council dwellings) and the valuation of Investment Properties	Description of the risk
	<p>The financial statements contain material entries on the Balance Sheet as well as material disclosure notes in relation to the Council's holding of PPE and investment properties. Although the Council uses a valuation expert to provide information on valuations, there remains a high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with these valuations due to the significant judgements and number of variables involved in providing revaluations. In addition, the pandemic has increased the volatility in investment property valuations. We have therefore identified the valuation of PPE and investment properties to be an area of significant risk. However, we have excluded council house valuations as it would take a 61% error to be material and there is extensive data on house prices indicating that the 10% increase in this category in the Council's accounts is reasonable.</p>
	<p><b>How we addressed this risk</b></p> <p>We addressed this risk by considering the Council's arrangements for ensuring that PPE and Investment Property values are reasonable and we used data on valuation trends and relevant indices to assess the reasonableness of the valuations provided by the Council's valuer. We also assessed the competence, skills and experience of the valuer.</p> <p>We discussed methods used with the valuer and used indices provided by NAO's valuation expert (Gerald Eve) to confirm that the assets not revalued are unlikely to have materially changed in value.</p> <p>We tested a sample of the revaluations in year to valuation reports and supporting calculation sheets and ensured that the calculations were correct and source data agreed with floor plans and indices.</p>
	<p><b>Audit conclusion</b></p> <p>We have not identified any material issues to bring to your attention. However, one error was identified in sample testing, which is described on page 19. Moreover, as stated on page 7 our work in response to this significant risk is ongoing, due to a national issue regarding infrastructure.</p>

# 4. Significant findings

## Qualitative aspects of the Council’s accounting practices

We have reviewed the Council’s accounting policies and disclosures and concluded that they comply with the 2021/22 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, appropriately tailored to the Council’s circumstances.

Draft accounts were received from the Council on 6 July 2022 and they were of a good quality. Most of the supporting working papers were provided ready for the scheduled start of the audit on 25 July 2022.

## Significant matters discussed with management

### Post Balance Sheet Events

The financial statements include a £10.6M accounting loss on the transfer of school assets to new academies. The actual conversion date was delayed until May 2022. As the loss is material, management have now agreed to amend the financial statements to remove the £10.6M accounting loss on conversion to academies and add a disclosure note outlining the non-adjusting post balance sheet event. This delay in conversion will be accounted for in the 2022/23 accounts.

### Accounting for infrastructure assets

The Council holds material infrastructure assets within property, plant and equipment on the balance sheet. During 2021/22 a national technical issue arose in respect of accounting for infrastructure assets. Normal custom and practice for (highways) infrastructure assets is that derecognition does not affect asset balances because the assets are expected to have been fully used up before the replacement expenditure takes place; this does require that assets are properly depreciated in line with the requirements of the Accounting Code. This issue arises in part because of limitations on historical information relating to when the assets were first recorded on balance sheets in the early 1990s, and where there have been transfers of assets because of local authority reorganisations. It is also extremely difficult to clearly identify the parts of the assets which are being replaced.

Work is ongoing to provide a sector-wide resolution to the issue. As the balance is material to the Council, we are unable to conclude our audit until a resolution is in place. We will update the Audit and Governance Committee on the outcome as part of our follow-up letter.

## Significant difficulties during the audit

During the course of the audit, we did not encounter any significant difficulties and we have had the full co-operation of management. Management were not always able to meet their target for responding to audit queries and requests for information due to significant resource pressures created by vacancies in the Finance Team and the need to adapt financial plans in response to the rapid increase in inflation. However, the Finance Team and Audit Team worked diligently to overcome these challenges and the only issues likely to preclude delivering an opinion by the target date of 30 November are those beyond the control of either team (national changes on infrastructure and outstanding assurance from the pension fund auditor).



# 4. Significant findings

## Wider responsibilities

Our powers and responsibilities under the 2014 Act are broad and include the ability to:

- issue a report in the public interest;
- make statutory recommendations that must be considered and responded to publicly;
- apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law; and
- issue an advisory notice under schedule 8 of the 2014 Act.

We have not exercised any of these powers as part of our 2021/22 audit.

The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account. No such objections have been raised.





# 05

Section 05:

**Internal control recommendations**

# 5. Internal control recommendations

The purpose of our audit was to express an opinion on the financial statements. As part of our audit we have considered the internal controls in place relevant to the preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures to allow us to express an opinion on the financial statements but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control or to identify any significant deficiencies in their design or operation.

The matters reported are limited to those deficiencies and other control recommendations that we have identified during our normal audit procedures and that we consider to be of sufficient importance to merit being reported. If we had performed more extensive procedures on internal control we might have identified more deficiencies to be reported or concluded that some of the reported deficiencies need not in fact have been reported. Our comments should not be regarded as a comprehensive record of all deficiencies that may exist or improvements that could be made.

Our findings and recommendations are set out below. We have assigned priority rankings to each of them to reflect the importance that we consider each poses to your organisation and, hence, our recommendation in terms of the urgency of required action. In summary, the matters arising fall into the following categories:

Priority ranking	Description	Number of issues
1 (high)	In our view, there is potential for financial loss, damage to reputation or loss of information. This may have implications for the achievement of business strategic objectives. The recommendation should be taken into consideration by management immediately.	0
2 (medium)	In our view, there is a need to strengthen internal control or enhance business efficiency. The recommendations should be actioned in the near future.	0
3 (low)	In our view, internal control should be strengthened in these additional areas when practicable.	1



# 5. Internal control recommendations

## Other recommendations in internal control – Level 3

### Description of deficiency

The user account to access the general ledger for an employee who left the Council on 21 December 2021 was not disabled until February 2022, although network access was removed on 24 January 2022. The employee had not accessed the ledger after leaving the Council and returning their IT equipment in December and we understand that the delay in removing their access was due to a change in their leaving date not being communicated to the Systems Support Team in advance of the leaving date.

### Potential effects

Active user IDs of the resigned employees renders the financially significant applications and the underlying data vulnerable to unauthorized access from within the organization. It may also lead to sharing of user IDs and passwords of resigned employees. Moreover, it may not be possible to assign responsibility and accountability for any transactions conducted using such IDs. The risk is low because equipment must be returned upon leaving and network access is automatically removed a month later.

### Recommendation

Redundant user IDs should be disabled from the relevant applications and active directory in a timely manner and a periodic user access review should be conducted to ensure that any redundant user accounts are identified and revoked to further reduce the risk.

### Management response

The Council is comfortable this was a one off situation. There was a delay in suspending Integra access but our other secondary controls mitigate the risk and prevented access to the ledger. Notwithstanding this, we will review our procedures again to ensure compliance.

## Follow up on previous internal control points

We did not raise any internal control points in the prior year.

# 06

Section 06:

## **Summary of misstatements**

# 6. Summary of misstatements

This section outlines the misstatements identified during the course of the audit, above the trivial threshold for adjustment of £177,000. The first table outlines the misstatements that were identified during the course of our audit which management has assessed as not being material either individually or in aggregate to the financial statements and does not currently plan to adjust.

The second table outlines the misstatements that have been adjusted by management during the course of the audit.

Unadjusted misstatements		Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Balance Sheet	
		Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)	Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)
1	Dr: Property, Plant and Equipment			875	
	Cr: Revaluation Reserve				875
The accounts included a £11K loss in respect of land at one asset, but the valuer's report excluded tennis courts valued at £129K and the asset register understated another parcel of land by £46K. Accordingly, the accounts should have included a revaluation gain on the asset of £164K. The error was identified through sample testing. If the error was extrapolated across the entire population of land and buildings the Council's Property, Plant and Equipment would have increased by £875,000.					
2	Dr: Short Term Debtors			461	
	Cr: Adult and Community Based Service Income		461		
We found income relating to services provided in 2021/22 was recorded in 2022/23 for one transaction tested with a value of £17K. If the error was extrapolated across the relevant population income and debtors would have increased by £461,000.					
Total unadjusted misstatements			461	1,336	875

# 6. Summary of misstatements (Continued)

## Adjusted misstatements

		Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Balance Sheet	
		Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)	Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)
1	Dr: Property, Plant and Equipment			10,614	
	Cr: Other Operating Expenditure		10,614		
The Council accounted for a transfer of assets at two schools that converted to academies in May 2022 as an adjusting post balance sheet event. Our view is that the event was non-adjusting and thus the schools should have remained on the Council's balance sheet at 31 March 2022. The loss should have been recognised in 2022/23 rather than 2021/22.					
Total adjusted misstatements			10,614	10,614	

# 6. Summary of misstatements (Continued)

## Disclosure amendments

During our review of the financial statements we have identified amendments that were required to disclosures. The Council has made these amendments, the most significant of which were:

- 1. Narrative Report – The extent of slippage on the capital programme in 2021/22 was not initially explained in the financial commentary;
- 2. Note 3 (Estimation uncertainty) initially indicated that material estimation uncertainty included arrears and income shortfalls. Although these estimates represent significant financial risks they do not represent significant risks of material adjustment to the accounts;
- 3. Note 4 (Post balance sheet events) did not initially explain the nature of the £10.6M loss on conversion to academies in May 2022;
- 4. Note 7b (Expenditure and income Analysed by Nature) initially showed £7,415K of other services expenses as employee benefits;
- 5. Note 11 (Members Expenses) did not initially explain that members expenses increased because of 3 additional members in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21;
- 6. Note 29 (Capital Grants Received in Advance) did not initially break down a material ‘other’ figure of £6.4M
- 7. Note 46 (Financial instruments) initially transposed two figures in respect of the increase in interest payable of borrowings of £912K and the increase in interest receivable on variable rate investments of £458K; and
- 8. Note 53 (Defined Benefit Pensions Schemes) initially indicated that the longevity at 65 for future pensioners for discretionary benefit arrangements was nil. However, this was estimated in the actuary's report as 22.9 years for men and 25.3 years for women.

Management also identified several errors in the draft accounts and corrected working papers prior to the start of the audit. All of these were in the collection fund. The draft accounts overstated NNDR income by £1,359K due to relief not being deducted, showed £188K of transitional relief within NNDR income rather than separately, showed the contribution from central government to previous year's NNDR deficit as £5,724K when it should have been -£5,181K and showed the contribution from Cleveland Fire Authority to the previous year's NNDR deficit as £439K when it should have been -£104K.



# 07

## Section 07: **Value for Money**



# 7. Value for Money

## Approach to Value for Money

We are required to consider whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out and sets out the reporting criteria that we are required to consider. The reporting criteria are:

- **Financial sustainability** - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services
- **Governance** - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks
- **Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness** - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

At the planning stage of the audit, we undertake work to understand the arrangements that the Council has in place under each of the reporting criteria and we identify risks of significant weaknesses in those arrangements. Although we describe this work as planning work, we keep our understanding of arrangements under review and update our risk assessment throughout the audit to reflect emerging issues that may suggest significant weaknesses in arrangements exist.

We did not identify any risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements as part of our planning work or our work to date.

Where our risk-based procedures identify actual significant weaknesses in arrangements we are required to report these and make recommendations for improvement. Where such significant weaknesses are identified, we report these in the audit report.

The primary output of our work on the Council's arrangements is the commentary on those arrangements that forms part of the Auditor's Annual Report. We intend to issue the Auditor's Annual Report within 3 months of signing the audit opinion on the financial statements.

## Status of our work

We are yet to complete our work in respect of the Council's arrangements for the year ended 31 March 2022. At the time of preparing this report, we have not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements that require us to make a recommendation, however, we continue to undertake work on the Council's arrangements.

Our draft audit report at Appendix B outlines that we have not yet completed our work in relation to the Council's arrangements. As noted above, our commentary on the Council's arrangements will be provided in the Auditor's Annual Report.



# Appendices

A: Draft management representation letter

B: Draft audit report

C: Independence

D: Other communications

# Appendix A: Draft management representation letter

To be provided to us on client headed note paper  
[Date]

Dear Gavin

**Hartlepool Borough Council - audit for year ended 31 March 2022**

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Hartlepool Borough Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2022 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 (the Code) and applicable law.

I confirm that the following representations are made on the basis of enquiries of management and staff with relevant knowledge and experience (and, where appropriate, inspection of supporting documentation) sufficient to satisfy myself that I can properly make each of the following representations to you.

**My responsibility for the financial statements and accounting information**

I believe that I have fulfilled my responsibilities for the true and fair presentation and preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Code and applicable law.

**My responsibility to provide and disclose relevant information**

I have provided you with:

- access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other material;
- additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
- unrestricted access to individuals within the Council you determined it was necessary to contact in order to obtain audit evidence.

I confirm as Director of Resources and Development (Section 151 Officer) that I have taken all the necessary steps to make me aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that you, as auditors, are aware of this information.

As far as I am aware there is no relevant audit information of which you, as auditors, are unaware.

**Accounting records**

I confirm that all transactions that have a material effect on the financial statements have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements. All other records and related information, including minutes of all Council and committee meetings, have been made available to you.



# Appendix A: Draft management representation letter (continued)

## Accounting policies

I confirm that I have reviewed the accounting policies applied during the year in accordance with Code and International Accounting Standard 8 and consider these policies to faithfully represent the effects of transactions, other events or conditions on the Council's financial position, financial performance and cash flows.

## Accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value

I confirm that any significant assumptions used by the Council in making accounting estimates, including those measured at current or fair value, are reasonable.

## Contingencies

There are no material contingent losses including pending or potential litigation that should be accrued where:

- information presently available indicates that it is probable that an asset has been impaired or a liability had been incurred at the balance sheet date; and
- the amount of the loss can be reasonably estimated.

There are no material contingent losses that should be disclosed where, although either or both the conditions specified above are not met, there is a reasonable possibility that a loss, or a loss greater than that accrued, may have been incurred at the balance sheet date.

There are no undisclosed contingent gains which should be disclosed.

All material matters, including unasserted claims, that may result in litigation against the Council have been brought to your attention. All known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements have been disclosed to you and accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the Code and applicable law.

## Laws and regulations

I confirm that I have disclosed to you all those events of which I am aware which involve known or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, together with the actual or contingent consequences which may arise therefrom.

The Council has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that would have a material effect on the accounts in the event of non-compliance.



# Appendix A: Draft management representation letter (continued)

## Fraud and error

I acknowledge my responsibility as Director of Resources and Development (section 151 Officer) for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

I have disclosed to you:

- all the results of my assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud;
- all knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the Council involving:
  - management and those charged with governance;
  - employees who have significant roles in internal control; and
  - others where fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.

I have disclosed to you all information in relation to any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the Council's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

## Related party transactions

I confirm that all related party relationships, transactions and balances, have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the Code and applicable law.

I have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which I am aware.

## Impairment review

To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing to indicate that there is a permanent reduction in the recoverable amount of the property, plant and equipment below their carrying value at the balance sheet date. An impairment review is therefore not considered necessary.

## Charges on assets

All the Council's assets are free from any charges exercisable by third parties except as disclosed within the financial statements.



# Appendix A: Draft management representation letter (continued)

**Future commitments**

I am not aware of any plans, intentions or commitments that may materially affect the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities or give rise to additional liabilities.

**Subsequent events**

I confirm all events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which the Code and applicable law, require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.

Should further material events occur after the date of this letter which may necessitate revision of the figures included in the financial statements or inclusion of a note thereto, I will advise you accordingly.

**Covid-19**

I confirm that the Council has carried out an assessment of the potential impact of the Covid-19 Virus pandemic on the Council, including the impact of mitigation measures and uncertainties, and that the disclosures in the Narrative Report fairly reflects that assessment.

**Going concern**

To the best of my knowledge there is nothing to indicate that the Council will not continue as a going concern in the foreseeable future. The period to which I have paid particular attention in assessing the appropriateness of the going concern basis is not less than twelve months from the date of approval of the accounts.

**Unadjusted misstatements**

I confirm that the effects of the uncorrected misstatements are immaterial, both individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole. **Please attach an Appendix of any unadjusted misstatements to this letter.**

Yours faithfully

Director of Resources and Development (Section 151 Officer)



# Appendix B: Draft audit report

## Independent auditor’s report to the members of Hartlepool Borough Council

### Report on the audit of the financial statements

#### Opinion on the financial statements

We have audited the financial statements of Hartlepool Borough Council (‘the Council’) for the year ended 31 March 2022, which comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows, the Housing Revenue Account, the Collection Fund and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31st March 2022 and of the Council’s expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22.

#### Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor’s responsibilities section of our report. We are independent of the Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC’s Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Director of Resources and Development’s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Council’s ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Director of Resources and Development with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.



# Appendix B: Draft audit report (continued)

## Other information

The Director of Resources and Development is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the other information included in the Statement of Accounts, other than the financial statements and our auditor’s report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

## Responsibilities of the Director of Resources and Development for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts, the Director of Resources and Development is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. The Director of Resources and Development is also responsible for such internal control as the Director of Resources and Development determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Director of Resources and Development is required to comply with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 and prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis, on the assumption that the functions of the Council will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The Director of Resources and Development is responsible for assessing each year whether or not it is appropriate for the Council to prepare its accounts on the going concern basis and disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern.

## Auditor’s responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor’s report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Based on our understanding of the Council, we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to the Local Government Act 2003 (and associated regulations made under section 21), the Local Government Finance Acts of 1988, 1992 and 2012, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and we considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements.





# Appendix B: Draft audit report (continued)

We evaluated the Director of Resources and Development’s incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls) and determined that the principal risks were related to posting manual journal entries to manipulate financial performance, management bias through judgements and assumptions in significant accounting estimates and significant one-off or unusual transactions.

Our audit procedures were designed to respond to those identified risks, including non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) and fraud that are material to the financial statements. Our audit procedures included but were not limited to:

- discussing with management and the Audit and Governance Committee the policies and procedures regarding compliance with laws and regulations;
- communicating identified laws and regulations throughout our engagement team and remaining alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout our audit; and
- considering the risk of acts by the Council which were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

Our audit procedures in relation to fraud included but were not limited to:

- making enquiries of management and the Audit and Governance Committee on whether they had knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- gaining an understanding of the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud;
- discussing amongst the engagement team the risks of fraud; and
- addressing the risks of fraud through management override of controls by performing journal entry testing.

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above and the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of irregularities including fraud rests with management and the Audit and Governance Committee. As with any audit, there remained a risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations or the override of internal controls.

We are also required to conclude on whether the Director of Resources and Development’s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate. We performed our work in accordance with Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statement and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom, and Supplementary Guidance Note 01, issued by the National Audit Office in September 2021.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council’s website at [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor’s report.



# Appendix B: Draft audit report (continued)

## Report on the Council’s arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

### Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required to report to you if, in our view, we are not satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2022.

We have not completed our work on the Council’s arrangements. On the basis of our work to date, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in December 2021, we have not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements for the year ended 31 March 2022.

We will report the outcome of our work on the Council’s arrangements in our commentary on those arrangements within the Auditor’s Annual Report. Our audit completion certificate will set out any matters which we are required to report by exception.

### Responsibilities of the Council

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

### Auditor’s responsibilities for the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We are required under section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Council’s arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

We have undertaken our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in December 2021.

### Matters on which we are required to report by exception under the Code of Audit Practice

We are required by the Code of Audit Practice to report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make a recommendation under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we exercise any other special powers of the auditor under sections 28, 29 or 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We have nothing to report in these respects.



# Appendix B: Draft audit report (continued)

## Use of the audit report

This report is made solely to the members of Hartlepool Borough Council, as a body, in accordance with part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 44 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members of the Council those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the members of the Council, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

## Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed:

- the work necessary to issue our assurance statement in respect of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack; and
- the work necessary to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

[Signature]

Gavin Barker – Director  
For and on behalf of Mazars LLP

The Corner  
Bank Chambers  
26 Mosley Street  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 1DF

Date: *to be confirmed*



# Appendix C: Independence

As part of our ongoing risk assessment, we monitor our relationships with you to identify any new actual or perceived threats to our independence within the regulatory or professional requirements governing us as your auditors.

We can confirm that no new threats to independence have been identified since issuing the Audit Strategy Memorandum and therefore we remain independent.



# Appendix D: Other communications

Other communication	Response
Compliance with Laws and Regulations	We have not identified any significant matters involving actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations. We will obtain written representations from management that all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements have been disclosed.
External confirmations	We did not experience any issues with respect to obtaining external confirmations.
Related parties	<p>We did not identify any significant matters relating to the audit of related parties.</p> <p>We will obtain written representations from management confirming that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. they have disclosed to us the identity of related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which they are aware; and</li><li>b. they have appropriately accounted for and disclosed such relationships and transactions in accordance with the requirements of the applicable financial reporting framework.</li></ul>
Going Concern	<p>We have not identified any evidence to cause us to disagree with the Director of Resources and Development that Hartlepool Borough Council will be a going concern, and therefore we consider that the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation of the financial statements.</p> <p>We will obtain written representations from management, confirming that all relevant information covering a period of at least 12 months from the date of approval of the financial statements has been taken into account in assessing the appropriateness of the going concern basis of preparation of the financial statements.</p>

# Appendix D: Other communications

Other communication	Response
Subsequent events	<p>We are required to obtain evidence about whether events occurring between the date of the financial statements and the date of the auditor's report that require adjustment of, or disclosure in, the financial statements are appropriately reflected in those financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.</p> <p>We will obtain written representations from management that all events occurring subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which the applicable financial reporting framework requires adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.</p>
Matters related to fraud	<p>We have designed our audit approach to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud. In addition to the work performed by us, we will obtain written representations from management, and the Audit and Governance Committee (as those charged with governance), confirming that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. they acknowledge their responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud;</li><li>b. they have disclosed to the auditor the results of management's assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud;</li><li>c. they have disclosed to the auditor their knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the entity involving:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Management;</li><li>ii. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or</li><li>iii. Others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements; and</li></ul></li><li>d. they have disclosed to the auditor their knowledge of any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the entity's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.</li></ul>

Gavin Barker, Director  
[gavin.barker@mazars.co.uk](mailto:gavin.barker@mazars.co.uk)

## Mazars

The Corner  
Bank Chambers  
26 Mosley Street  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 1DF

Mazars is an internationally integrated partnership, specialising in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax and legal services\*. Operating in over 90 countries and territories around the world, we draw on the expertise of 40,400 professionals – 24,400 in Mazars' integrated partnership and 16,000 via the Mazars North America Alliance – to assist clients of all sizes at every stage in their development.

\*where permitted under applicable country laws.

4.1 - The 2021/22 Financial Report - Appendix B – Please see separate document.



## AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24<sup>th</sup> November 2022



**Report of:** Statutory Scrutiny Manager

**Subject:** INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS ADVOCACY SERVICE -  
UPDATE

---

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that the Contracts Manager from the North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICA) will be in attendance at today's meeting to provide the Committee with an update in relation to the level and type of complaints from Hartlepool residents being dealt with by the service.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on the 14 March 2018, was introduced to the work of the ICA, as a provider of free, confidential and independent advocacy support to people wishing to raise a complaint about their NHS funded treatment or care.
- 2.2 The Committee noted with interest the level and types of complaints dealt with by the ICA and welcomed the benefits of a support service of this type and requested that an update be provided on a quarterly basis.
- 2.3 The Committee received updates from the ICA in October 2018, February 2019, January 2020, January 2021 and September 2021. An update presentation will be given by the ICS Contracts Manager.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Audit and Governance Committee note the update and seek clarification on any issues, where required.

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

**Contact Officer:-** Joan Stevens – Statutory Scrutiny Manager  
Chief Executive's Department – Legal Services  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Tel: 01429 284142  
Email: joan.stevens@hartlepool.gov.uk

## **Report for Hartlepool Council Audit and Governance Committee 24 November 2022**

**Prepared by Philip Kerr Contracts Manager**

### **Annual update on NHS Complaints Advocacy Service**

The main challenge for the service following the covid pandemic remains the long waiting lists for NHS care and treatment. Most NHS complaints are made following an experience with the NHS. In Hartlepool the demand for the service has still not moved back to precovid levels as experienced in 2018/19.

The service has remained fully functional throughout 2021/22 adhering to any Government guidance and accessibility to the service has not been affected. The information reported within this document is broadly in line with the previous annual report for 2021.

There have been some significant changes to the commissioning of this service from March 22 it is now contracted by Hartlepool Borough Council as a standalone arrangement previously having been delivered through a consortium of local Authorities in the North East. This has opened opportunities to tailor the service as a Hartlepool offer and allow some flexibility in reacting to changes on a more local footprint.

Locally the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust are adopting the new complaints standards as laid out by the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman which will come in to force from April 2023. The pilot results are due to be reported on by the end of this year.

Community face to face work has been limited though will increase in line with any opportunities. From 1<sup>st</sup> July with the implementation of Integrated Care Boards and the wider Integrated care system there will be a need to establish where NHS complaints advocacy is best suited to be placed as the government guidance requires the Boards to consider advocacy within its engagement plans along with the wider Voluntary sector and partners. The first step for this service has been to identify the GP Primary Care Networks and look at the complaint experience and establish some liaison contacts.

The following table demonstrates a clear picture of demand over the last financial year plus the challenges in the first few months of the new year. The active caseload at the end of October in Hartlepool being 16. The regional average expectation is for there to be 16.6 active complaint cases per 100,000 population – on that basis Hartlepool is slightly behind the average. The table below shows

*April-Mar/Apr-Oct	*2021	2022	Total
Enquiries	41	22	63
New advocacy cases	35	12	47
Closed Cases	43	17	60

### **Profile of people who make an NHS complaint in Hartlepool**

Most people making a formal complaint about health services are 46 and above with the highest density by postcode remains in TS 25. Whether there is a specific reason for this would require some population profiling which is out with the scope of this Service.

Age	Number
18-24	1
26-35	8
36-45	6
46-55	12
56-59	3
60-65	8
66-75+	9
Total	47

Postcode	Number
TS24	17
TS25	18
TS26	10
TS27	2
Total	47

The gender split of complaints is 50/50 male/female. No client identified within another gender category.

In addition, 24 complainants indicated they had a pre-existing health-based condition within this total were 2 with mental health issues: 2 with Learning disabilities and 4 with long term conditions. The remaining covered 3 sensory impairment, autism, 10 multiple disability and 2 other (non-disclosed). These protected characteristics apply to the complainant not the party they may be complaining on behalf of.

Employment characteristics	Number
Carers	5
Employed/self employed	13
Retired	11
Unemployed	17
Other( inc prisoners)	1
Total	47

In Hartlepool most complaints (60%) are received from people who are either unemployed or retired who also happen to have a health condition.

This Service is in place and contracted to provide advocacy support to any adult who needs it whether face to face, remotely or with the provision of material to support empowerment and in formats that are accessible. Due to concerns expressed within the Deaf community a Deaf/ deafened advocate was employed from 2019 to specifically support deaf/ deafened people with NHS Complaints. This post remains supported through the Access to Work funding which allows the advocate to employ fully qualified BSL Interpreters (any other specialist Interpreter needed) to support delivery. This is a unique resource position for an advocacy service to have and it is hoped more deaf people will have the confidence to access this.

### **Profile of NHS Bodies complained about plus the complaint concern**

Hartlepool residents made 63 enquiries about how to register a complaint with 47 accessing full advocacy support. There were also 5 additional full support cases from Durham (3) and Middlesbrough (2) residents who had accessed the North Tees Hospitals Trust for care and treatment.

The complaints breakdown **actual** enquiries irrespective of location: -

<b>NHS body</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Themes</b>
North Tees/ Hartlepool	21	*See below
Tees Esk and Wear	6	Mental Health
GP practices (9)	17	**see below
Newcastle Hospitals	2	Communication
South Tees Hospital	10	*** see below
Chemist	1	unprofessional conduct
Dentist	1	Access issues
Teesside Sexual Health service	2	Delay in Service
QE Glasgow	1	Failure to treat
NEAS	1	Multiple aspects
Adult social care	1	Miscommunication

<b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust</b>
Multiple aspects of treatment x 8
Appointment delays outpatients x 2 (1 Hartlepool)
Attitude of staff x 3 (1 Hartlepool)
Communication/ info to patients x 3
Failure to diagnose x 2 (1 Hartlepool)
Long term conditions
Non-referral
Transport

<b>GP Practices</b>
Attitude of staff x 2
Failure to diagnose x3
Failure to follow guidelines x 2
Medication issues x 2
Misdiagnosis
Multiple aspects of treatment x4
Older people
Commissioning
Miscommunication

<b>South Tees Hospitals</b>
Multiple aspects of treatment x 3
Attitude of staff
Appointment delays x 2
Discharge Procedures
Failure to follow guidelines
Communication/Info to patients x 2

There is no one specific service which has real issues with complaints registered against them – historically most NHS complaints in Hartlepool have been Hospital based and this

remains the case. Perhaps there is a willingness to complain around secondary care and not primary care to preserve the relationship with their GP.

Work is happening around profiling GP complaints by Primary Care Network and this will be an area to be reported on in the future. It should also be noted the number of complaints being made against services based out with Hartlepool.

### **Outcomes for Clients**

During the report period 60 cases reached a conclusion and were closed. The number of clients who withdrew early from the complaints process also dropped significantly.

Ombudsman case - viewed as out of time and refused TEWV
ombudsman case - viewed as out of time and refused NEAS
Ombudsman case - no further action as no robust evidence GP Practice
Ombudsman case -refused South Tees
Ombudsman case - upheld - policies and procedures changed -GP Practice
Ombudsman case – viewed as out of time and refused Newcastle Hospitals Trust
Ombudsman case – not upheld referred to Information Commissioner - TEWV
Ombudsman case- not upheld – NTH, TEWV/STH
Ombudsman case – no action taken – Newcastle Hospital's Trust
Ombudsman case - out of remit referred for legal advice- TEWV
Satisfactory outcome after Local Resolution meeting – Hospital x5
Satisfactory written response and apology x 28 all settings
Client did not progress complaint withdrew x 17 – ( 3 legal advice-14 received verbal assurances from their NHS service provider)

#### **• Partnership work**

This is currently undertaken via virtual means – there are benefits as it frees up travel time whilst negatives are the lack of face-to-face contact with some of the most vulnerable groups; and the need to ensure there is a means of ensuring the service is accessible to everyone.

Outreach is offered at the Healthwatch Hartlepool Office though advocates will meet people at any venue of their choice plus home visits subject to any required risk assessments.

The service has a place at the monthly Patient Experience Committee meetings at North Tees Hospital and reports regularly on advocacy and is involved in complaints review work on a periodic basis.

Continued involvement with North East Deaf Network which includes representation from Hartlepool Deaf Centre monthly.

Service also attends the VCS Connector meetings as appropriate.

The PHSO Complaints standards work has been mentioned elsewhere – the Service has representation on the National advocacy working group for these standards.

Wider partnership work nationally has been with NICE contributing to their review of advocacy needs for adults accessing health and social care which will be due for publication later in the year; and as part of the national Advocacy Leaders Forum which opens dialogue with both the Dept of Health and Social Care and Care Quality Commission amongst other

<b>Partners Referral Breakdown</b>	<b>Number</b>
Previous Client	7
Healthwatch****	26
Website/media	3
NHS INC GP	11
PALS /Complaints Dept	5
Word of mouth	5
Solicitor	1
Statutory Organisations	2
Vol Organisations	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>

\*\*\*\*Please note the importance of Healthwatch in Hartlepool to facilitate referrals to the service

### **Summary**

The Service is well positioned to continue supporting Hartlepool residents with well qualified advocates who can help individuals navigate what can be a complicated NHS Complaints procedure. This is reflected in the feedback the service receives when cases are concluded (more than 95% satisfaction) With the change in commissioning of health and social care and new models of delivery the challenge for the service will be to keep up to speed and ensure complaints are directed to the appropriate body. The caveat to this report is the fact that there are other people who choose to go it alone with complaints and the website caters for their needs with a full suite of download material available. Since the pandemic there has been work carried out nationally which indicates the need for all forms of advocacy is paramount and whilst it is recognised the challenges with the cost of living and the impact this causes to NHS services the voices and concerns of people using NHS Services need to be heard to shape the future.

**It is hoped that the Committee find this paper of interest**

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 Freephone: 0808 802 3000  
 Email: [ica@carersfederation.co.uk](mailto:ica@carersfederation.co.uk)  
 Text: 07889 088 284 office  
 What's app: 07738 994 040 (can send us a BSL video) and Deaf Advocate contact number (available Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday)  
 Facebook: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/Northeastnhsica/>  
 Website: [www.nenhscomplaintsadvocacy.co.uk](http://www.nenhscomplaintsadvocacy.co.uk)

## AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24<sup>th</sup> November 2022



**Report of:** Statutory Scrutiny Manager

**Subject:** Scrutiny Investigation into Accessibility of Council Services for those with Disabilities and Lifelong Conditions in Hartlepool – Preparation of Final Report

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Committee's 'Child and Family Poverty' final report.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 On the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Full Council approved the below motion and referred the review to the Audit and Governance for consideration.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and emphasised the extent of pre-existing health inequalities in many towns and cities and particularly those in the North of England. Hartlepool has high numbers of residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions which often impact massively on their ability to access services, facilities and many aspects of day-to-day life which many of us take for granted. This can impact on physical and mental wellbeing and subsequently lead to isolation, loneliness and exclusion.

Over many years Hartlepool Borough Council has developed services and facilities aimed at supporting residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions and has invested in state-of-the-art facilities such as the Centre for Independent Living and worked closely with health and community and voluntary sector partners.

However, much still needs to be done if Hartlepool is to become a truly accessible town for all of our residents and visitors to ensure that the voices of residents living with disabilities and lifelong conditions are sought, heard and incorporated into future Council initiatives which may impact on the future physical, economic and social environment of the town.

To this end, the Labour Group calls upon the Council to agree that the Audit and Governance Committee will examine the contents of the Motion in the next municipal year:

**A review of Council regeneration & development activity and accessibility to services for those with disabilities and lifelong conditions to ensure that any barriers, physical, procedural or otherwise, which may inhibit access**

**to services and day to day living are identified, so that reasonable adjustments can be made”**

### 3. CONDUCT OF INVESTIGATION

3.1 In accordance with the process for consideration of mandatory referrals from Full Council, a meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee was convened on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to receive the referral and ‘scope’ the process for its consideration (including detailed written evidence and extensive public engagement). Further meetings of the Committee were subsequently held on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022, at which evidence / information was received to assist in the formulation of conclusions and recommendations.

3.2 The Committee, at its meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021, considered national and local data in relation to disabilities and lifelong conditions.

#### National Levels of Disability

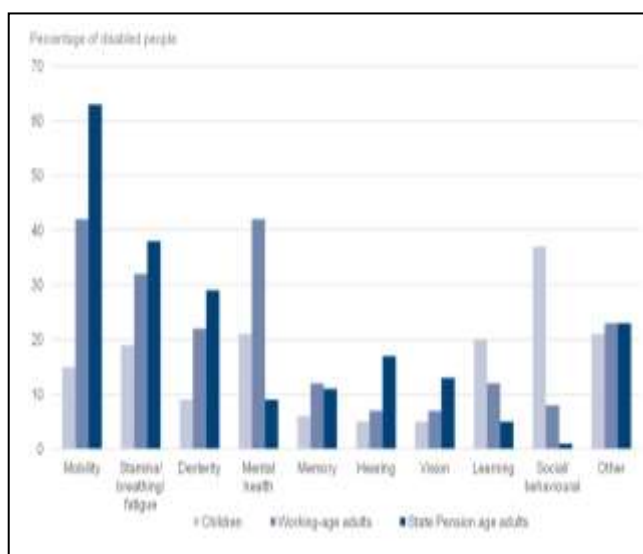
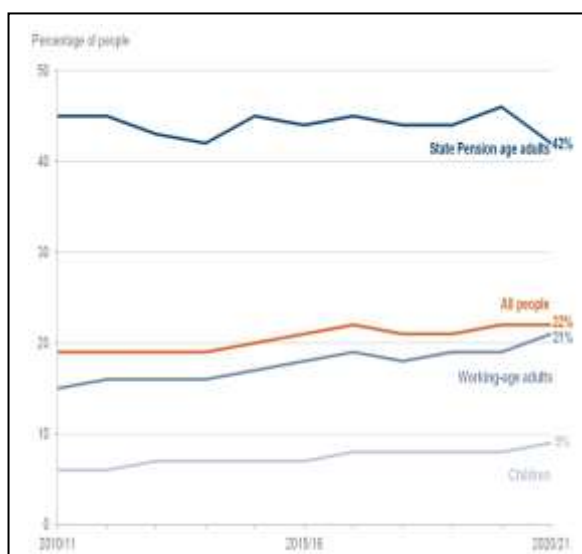
3.3 Members found that nationally, 22% of the population (14.6 million) are disabled, of which:

- 9% of children are disabled
- 21% of working age adults are disabled
- 42% of pension age adults are disabled
- 24% of females reported a disability compared to 20% of males

3.4 Evidence also provided an understanding of impact in terms of the increased costs of living for disabled residents and attitudes, etc. and national disability trends detailed in Tables 1 and 2 emphasised the range of conditions that are included.

Table 1 – National Disability Trends

Table 2 – National Breakdown of Conditions





### Regional and Hartlepool Levels of Disability

- 3.5 The North East of England has the highest proportion of people reporting a disability in England (31%), compared to the national rate of 22%. Disability statistics are not available for Hartlepool, via official sources such as the 2021 Census, ONS or Public Health England. However, national percentages could be extrapolated to provide estimated Hartlepool data which demonstrated that:
- 20,636 people have some form of disability
  - 12,075 working age people are disabled
  - 1,809 children (0-17) are disabled
  - 7,716 adults aged 65 or over are disabled
  - 11,479 females have a disability
  - 9,201 males have a disability
- 3.6 The estimated data needed to be treated with caution, however, the data reinforced to the Committee the importance of having arrangements in place to ensure that Hartlepool Borough Council services are truly accessible.

## **4. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

- 4.1 As part of the evidence gathering process, with significant support from the Council's Performance and Partnerships Team, undertook an extensive consultation and engagement exercise to seek residents' opinions and experiences.
- 4.2 The consultation ran from the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 to the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2022 and was undertaken via a departmental survey, public survey, organisational / professional survey, quick poll, consultation workshops and mystery shopper exercise. Details of the consultation process and results are to be presented via presentation at today's meeting.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 That the Audit and Governance Committee consider the result of the consultation exercise and approve comments and recommendations for inclusion in the final report.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Audit and Governance Committee – Reports and minutes (9 September 2021, 12 October 2021, 11 November 2021, 16 December 2021, 13 January 2022 and 28 February 2022).

**Contact Officer:-** Joan Stevens – Statutory Scrutiny Manager  
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## AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24<sup>th</sup> November 2022



**Report of:** Statutory Scrutiny Manager

**Subject:** Scrutiny Investigation into Child and Family Poverty –  
Final Report

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Committee's 'Child and Family Poverty' final report.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In 2021 the Audit and Governance Committee selected child and family poverty as its primary topic for investigation. The Committee went on to meet formally on five occasions, during 2021/2022, to discuss and receive evidence relating to its investigation.
- 2.2 Based on the evidence provided, and the outcome of Committee discussions, the draft final report, attached at **Appendix A**, has now been produced. Members are asked to approve the content of the draft report, with particular attention drawn to the conclusions and recommendations outlined in Sections 9 and 10 and 11, for presentation to the Finance and Policy Committee and Full Council.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Audit and Governance Committee:
- i) Consider the draft report and seek clarification on any issues, where required; and
  - ii) Approve the draft Child and Family Poverty investigation report (attached at **Appendix A**) for presentation to the Finance and Policy Committee and Full Council.

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

Audit and Governance Committee – Reports and minutes (9 September 2021, 12 October 2021, 11 November 2021, 16 December 2021, 13 January 2022 and 28 February 2022).

**Contact Officer:-** Joan Stevens – Statutory Scrutiny Manager  
Chief Executive's Department – Legal Services  
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# AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT

## CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY IN HARTLEPOOL

NOVEMBER 2022

DRAFT

**Report of:**       **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Subject:**        CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY IN HARTLEPOOL - FINAL REPORT

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## **1.       PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1       To update on the findings of the Audit and Governance Committee's investigation into Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool.

## **2.       SETTING THE SCENE**

- 2.1       As part of the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the Council's Audit and Governance Committee consideration of a range of potential topics for investigation under its statutory health scrutiny responsibilities. One topic identified as being of particular interest to the Committee was Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool.

- 2.2       The Committee was exasperated to find that despite the Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2020, millions of families in the UK are unable to heat homes, pay rent, or buy essentials for their children. The prevalence and impact of poverty on a local, regional and national level continues to rise. Initial data<sup>1</sup> showing that:

- 4.3million children remained in poverty in the UK in 2019/20, which represented an increase of 200,000 from the previous year and up 500,000 over five years;
- In the three years before the Covid-19 pandemic, the North East had the second highest rate of child poverty in the UK at an average of 37% (behind London at 38%, and compared with a UK average of 31%). This equated to 11 children and young people in a classroom of 30 in the North East;
- The North East saw the UK's biggest increase in child poverty from 2014/15 to 2019/20 (rising by over a third from 26% to 37% - meaning child poverty in the North East has risen from just below the UK average to the second highest of any region, after London). One third of this overall increase came between 2018/19 and 2019/20;
- Of the 20 Parliamentary constituencies across the UK with the highest increases in child poverty rates from 2014/15 to 2019/20, more than four fifths are in the North East.

- 2.3       All 12 North East councils are included in the 20 local authority areas across the UK which saw the highest increases in child poverty from 2014/15 to 2019/20 (indeed they make up the top twelve). Hartlepool's rates for the percentage of children in poverty being 27.4% (2014-15) and 37.8% (2019/20) which represents a 10.4% increase over the period.

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Donald Hirsch and Dr Juliet Stone (Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University)

- 2.4 Whilst the pre-covid data was in itself shocking, Members were exceptionally concerned that the true impact on family incomes of the pandemic, changes to national insurance levels and inflation were not yet known. With this in mind, the Committee identified 'Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool' as a critically important, crosscutting, priority issue for investigation by the Audit and Governance Committee. The Committee's decision to focus on this issue was further justified by the cost of living crisis that has faced during 2022.
- 2.5 The Committee met formally on five occasions, during 2021/2022, to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation. A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council's Democratic Services.

### **3. AIM AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INVESTIGATION**

- 3.1 Key to the success of the investigation was clarity in terms of the Committee's aim for the outcome of the piece of work, a defined terms of reference and agreed methods of investigation. All of these were agreed by the Committee on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and are detailed below:-
- i) Investigation Aim:- To evaluate the true impact of child poverty and identify what the Council, and its partners, can do to make the positive changes required to reduce / eradicate it in Hartlepool.
  - ii) Terms of Reference:-
    - a) Agree a definition of child poverty for the purpose of the investigation.
    - b) To gain an understanding from a local, national, regional and peer perspective of the:-
      - i) Scale and extent of child poverty;
      - ii) Causes of child poverty; and
      - iii) Impact of Covid-19.
    - c) To examine barriers out of child poverty and explore their prevalence and impact in Hartlepool.
    - d) To explore the effectiveness of activities and services currently in place to prevent, eradicate and remove barriers out of child poverty:-
      - i) In Hartlepool; and
      - ii) Across other geographical areas and sectors (areas of potential best practice).
    - e) To identify service improvements or additions through which tangible reductions in child poverty levels across Hartlepool can be delivered.

#### **4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

##### **4.1 The membership of the Audit and Governance Committee was as detailed below:-**

Councillors Ashton (replaced by Hall during the course of the investigation), Boddy\*, Cook, Cowie\*, Feeney, B Loynes, D Loynes, Picton\*, Richardson and Riddle.

\* Added to the membership during the course of the investigation.

#### **5. WHAT IS POVERTY**

##### **5.1 The Committee welcomed evidence from the Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare Services, on behalf of the Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services, and as a starting point for its investigation gained an understanding of the drivers of poverty, the ways in which poverty data is presented and potential definitions for the purpose of the investigation.**

###### Drivers of Poverty

##### **5.2 Attention was drawn to the common perception that poverty relates predominantly to the availability of financial resources, and the absence of paid work. It was recognised that money management, and debt, were important contributing factors with most people receiving their financial support from the government monthly, resulting in them struggling to reach the end of the month with enough to pay for food and energy. Debt and interest repayment schedules also meant that residents never had the 'full' amount of benefit to make ends meet.**

##### **5.3 It was, however, clear to the Committee that an array of additional factors also drive poverty. These include:**

- Unemployment - linked to this is skills and abilities of the workforce, ill-health (too sick to work), caring responsibilities and the cost of childcare.
- Low skilled, low paid, part time work, insecure jobs and zero hours contracts, with 75% of children living in relative poverty in households where at least one adult works.
- Housing costs – linked to this is the use of the Private Rented Sector due to lack of availability of social housing and/ or renters unable to meet social housing criteria.
- The benefit system – administratively burdensome, difficult to navigate and currently not able to meet the needs of those that have to use it when times are hard.

##### **5.4 It was not unexpected to find that all of the above drivers are present in Hartlepool, alongside other significant problems around money management and debt. Most people receive their financial support from the government monthly and are struggling to reach the end of the month with enough to pay for food and energy and debt / interest. Repayment schedules often also mean that people never have the 'full' amount of benefit to make ends meet, even at the start of the month.**

i) Impact on the severity of poverty experienced by residents, with the below groups of individuals most at risk of poverty:

- Lone parents.
- Families with young children under the age of five.
- Families with three or more children.
- Families with an adult and/ or child with a disability.
- Black and minority ethnic families.
- Women (more likely to have lower paid work or not work at all due to caring responsibilities).

ii) Quickly escalate poverty from below the minimum income standard to not being able to eat or keep warm, as detailed in Diagram 1 over the page.

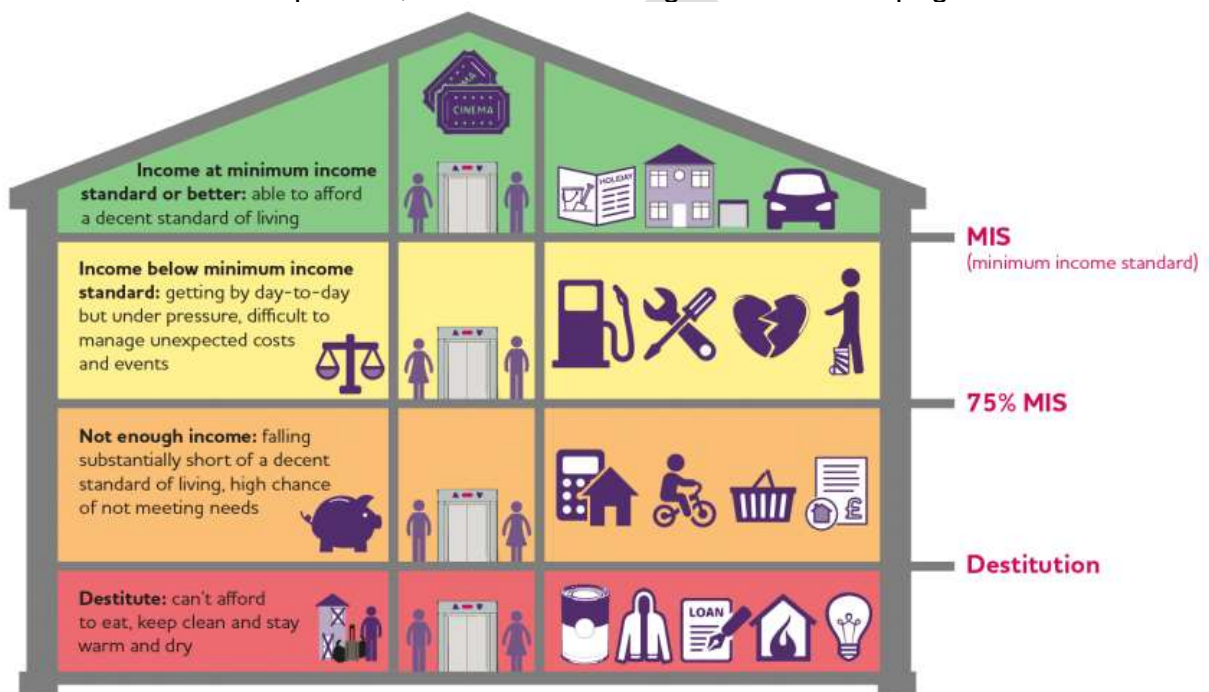


Diagram No. 1 – Levels of Poverty - Joseph Rowntree Foundation

## 6. HOW IS POVERTY DEFINED?

6.1 As part of the process for the identification of a definition of poverty the Committee was surprised to find that no unilaterally agreed definition was applied by bodies / organisations across the sectors. Attention was, however, drawn to the annual Government survey of income poverty in the UK, called 'Households below Average income' (HBAI), which set the poverty line in the UK at 60 per cent of the median UK household income. This formed the base for two potential definitions of poverty for consideration by the Committee:-

i) Relative: the level below which a citizen has the economic capacity to participate fully in the society in which they live and is routinely set as below 60% of the median UK household income. Relative poverty is sometimes described as “relative deprivation” because the people falling under this category are not living in total poverty, but they are not enjoying the same standard of life as everyone else in the country; and



- ii) *Absolute*: when household income is below 60 per cent of the median as it stood in 2011, below which people lack the necessary food, clothing, or shelter to survive. This being a less widely used definition.

6.2 A further consideration in the identification of a definition was the way in which poverty data is produced with two potential indicators used in the form of income 'before' and 'after' housing costs. Members were of the view that calculating poverty 'after' housing costs was the most accurate, and relative, way to measure the true impact on families and on, this basis, the below definition was to be used for the purpose of the investigation:-

*Relative Poverty - The level below which a citizen has the economic capacity to participate fully in the society in which they live and is routinely set as below 60% of the median UK household income. Relative poverty is sometimes described as "relative deprivation" because the people falling under this category are not living in total poverty, but they are not enjoying the same standard of life as everyone else in the country.*

## 7. POVERTY DATA - WHAT DOES IT TELL US?

7.1 At the meeting of the Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021, evidence from the Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare Services provided an understanding of poverty levels across the country, regionally and more specifically in Hartlepool.

7.2 Particular reference was made to data compiled by Loughborough University's Centre for Research and Social Policy<sup>2</sup>, as an independent source of poverty data for over 10 years. The study utilised the 'relative' poverty indicator and Members noted with concern that, as of May 2021, Hartlepool featured 8<sup>th</sup> in the top 20 authorities across the country with the highest increase in relative poverty in a year (See Table 1 below).

### Poverty from a National Perspective






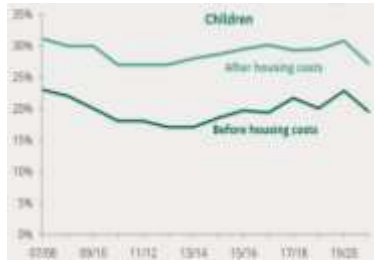
7.3 Data provided gave the Committee an understanding of the noted with interest that:-

- i) Across the UK 31% of children live in a household 60% below median income after housing costs (relative poverty).
- ii) The top 20 local authorities with the highest child poverty rates range from 55.8% (Tower Hamlets) to 39.0% (Lewisham). Middlesbrough features in the top 20 list at 39.4%.
- iii) Across the UK there has been an average 2% increase in relative poverty however, the top 20 authorities with the highest increase in poverty range from Newcastle upon Tyne (12.8% increase in five years) to North Lincolnshire (5.9% increase in five years).
- iv) Levels of poverty had fluctuated over a number of years, as detailed in Table 2 over the page, with attention drawn to the relationship between trends and changes to the tax and benefits regime (e.g. when the Government increased investments in families' social security, there was a notable reduction in child poverty).

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<sup>2</sup> Loughborough University - 'Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs' (May 2021)

**Table 2 - % Over a 3 year average<sup>3</sup>**

Relative Poverty (After housing costs) Percentage of whole population in poverty in England		
Year	% - 3 year average	Poverty Trends
1999/00 - 2001/02	23%	 Between 1998/9 and 2004/5 child poverty rates declined at a steady rate and research studies concluded that this stemmed from a number of policy interventions, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Efforts to increase employment for lone parents;</li> <li>- Additional benefits targeted specifically at children (such as child tax credit; and</li> <li>- Significant investments in early year's education and care.</li> </ul>
2000/01 - 2002/03	22%	
2001/02 - 2003/04	22%	
2002/03 - 2004/05	21%	
2003/04 - 2005/06	21%	
2004/05 - 2006/07	22%	 Between 2004/5 and 2009/10 the child poverty began to drift upwards again at the beginning of this period, but it started to decline again from 2008/09.
2005/06 - 2007/08	22%	
2006/07 - 2008/09	23%	
2007/08 - 2009/10	23%	
2008/09 - 2010/11	22%	 Child poverty rates declined.
2009/10 - 2011/12	22%	
2010/11 - 2012/13	21%	
2011/12 - 2013/14	21%	
2012/13 - 2014/15	21%	
2013/14 - 2015/16	21%	
2014/15 - 2016/17	22%	
2015/16 - 2017/18	22%	 The 2010 Child Poverty Act had been dissolved in 2016 and replaced with the Welfare Reform and Work Act, removing the duty for local authorities to have a Child Poverty Strategy, Needs Assessment and Plan. In addition to this, the government had moved it focus to social mobility, away from its commitment to eradicating child poverty.
2016/17-2018/19	22%	
2017/18-2019/20	22%	
2019/20 - 2020/21	20%	 Child poverty rates declined. 

7.4 Updated data, however, brought to the Committee's attention an unexpected fall in relative, and child poverty, between 2019/20 and 2020/21, although the reduction in relative poverty could have been due to uncertainty in the data over the period of the pandemic. Two potential reasons for the fall had been identified as<sup>4</sup>:-

- i) Median incomes fell due to furloughed workers receiving 80% of their pay and job loss among low paid workers, pushing down the relative poverty line; and
- ii) An increase in benefits such as the £20 per week Universal Credit uplift increased the incomes of benefit recipients.

#### Poverty across the Tees Valley / North East

7.5 Evidence provided demonstrated that:-

- i) Poverty levels across the Tees Valley had increased by between 9.8% and 10.6% between 2014 and 2020 (as detailed in Table 1 over the page).

<sup>3</sup> Source: DWP, [Households Below Average Income](#), 2020/21

<sup>4</sup> the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

**Table 1 – Poverty Levels (Tees Valley - 2021)**

<b>Local authority</b>	<b>2014/15 indicator</b>	<b>2019/20 indicator</b>	<b>% point increase</b>
Middlesbrough	29.2%	39.4%	10.3%
Hartlepool	27.4%	37.8%	10.4%
Darlington	25.7%	36.1%	10.4%
Redcar & Cleveland	26.2%	36.8%	10.6%
Stockton on Tees	25.5%	35.3%	9.8%
<b>UK</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>2%</b>

- ii) 'Child poverty was expected to continue to grow at an alarming rate across the urban areas of the North East, whereas the greatest changes elsewhere are more localised. This was likely to be influenced by the presence in the region of a large proportion of low-paid workers who had only been just above the poverty line, and were being pushed below by the freeze in their in-work benefits.'<sup>5</sup>
- iii) Projections from The Institute for Fiscal Studies suggested that rates would continue to rise and that by 2025 relative poverty would have risen by 50%, unless significant intervention are put in place;
- iv) The North East has the second highest rate of child poverty in the UK at 37% (behind London at 38%)<sup>6</sup>;
- v) The North East saw the UK's biggest increase in child poverty from 2014/15 to 2019/20 (rising from 26% to 37% - meaning child poverty in the North East has increased from just below the UK average to the second highest of any region in that time)<sup>7</sup>; and
- vi) All 12 North East councils are included in the 20 UK local authority areas which saw the highest increases in child poverty from 2014/15 to 2019/20<sup>8</sup>.

### Poverty in Hartlepool

7.6 Members discovered that work with residents had shown that all of the factors outlined in Section 5.3 are experienced in Hartlepool and were shocked to find that in 2021 poverty rates in Hartlepool were such that:-

- i) Destitution is becoming increasingly prevalent in the town and those who are destitute are likely to have the most complex needs, requiring the most intense support:
- ii) Hartlepool featured 8<sup>th</sup>, in the top 20 authorities across the country, with the highest increase in relative poverty in a year (up 10.4% since 2014/15);
- iii) Hartlepool was ranked as 18 in the top 20 towns and cities experiencing destitution. Middlesbrough was 1<sup>st</sup>, Newcastle was 5<sup>th</sup>. According to JRF 1.21% of the total number of residents was destitute<sup>9</sup>;
- iv) 11 Hartlepool children in every classroom of 30 are living on or below the poverty line (37.8%); and

<sup>5</sup> Loughborough University

<sup>6</sup> End Child Poverty coalition

<sup>7</sup> End Child Poverty coalition

<sup>8</sup> End Child Poverty coalition

<sup>9</sup> JRF report Destitution in the UK 2020,

- v) Hartlepool has the second highest growth in poverty across the North East in the last five years.

7.7 With due regard to the overall data provided, attention was drawn to the differing needs of those in poverty and destitution, as detailed in Diagram 1. It was noted that the needs of those in destitution are more likely to be the most complex with a need for the most intense support. As a result of this as the levels of destitution increase in Hartlepool, pressure on services and the budgets that provide them also continue to rise. This is a significant issue as funding challenges continue to face the local authority and the need for a review of welfare service provision to support an effective Child and Family Poverty Strategy was supported by the Committee.

7.8 Whilst it came as no surprise to the Committee that poverty rates in the Tees Valley and Hartlepool continue to be higher than the national average; The failure of national and local activities / interventions to reduce poverty levels below 20% over the last twenty plus years was, however, a contentious issue for Members. Members were also concerned to learn that:-

- i) An increasingly large proportion of the UK was experiencing the very deepest level of poverty;
- ii) The proportion of people living 50% or more below the poverty line being 7% in 2019/20 (compared to 5% in 2000/01);
- iii) Child poverty rates were predicted to rise and that by 2020, relative child poverty would rise by 50% unless significant intervention is put in place<sup>10</sup>;
- iv) There is increasing evidence to show a direct causal link between poverty and the significant levels of rising child protection intervention and numbers of children becoming looked after;
- v) A number children who hover 'above' the relative poverty line live in a low income family (and are ineligible for a free school meal);
- vi) Persistent poverty leads to physical and mental ill health and can lead to low educational attainment;
- vii) Persistent poverty (living in relative poverty for at least three out of the last four years) leads to a greater likelihood of physical and mental ill-health and has a lasting impact on a child's life chances, education and aspirations; and
- viii) The proportion at all other depths of poverty had remained stable, or had fallen over the same time period<sup>11</sup>, reflecting a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable members of communities.

## **8. THE IMPACT ON POVERTY OF COVID-19 AND THE RISING COST OF LIVING**

8.1 With the assistance of the Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare Services, the Committee explored the societal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the

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<sup>10</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies

<sup>11</sup> Commons Library Research Briefing, 29 September 2022

unprecedented pressure placed upon everyone, especially those who were already deemed 'vulnerable'.

8.2 It was clear that the long term societal impacts of COVID-19 were not fully known, however, it was highly probable that it would further exacerbate poverty levels in Hartlepool, with those most severely affected by the pandemic being more likely than average to already be in poverty. The reasons for this being:

- Low paid workers:-
  - Median wages in the sectors shut down by the pandemic were among the lowest in the economy;
  - Low paid workers were less likely to be able to work from home which meant that they were more likely to have lost their jobs or been furloughed; and
- Minority ethnic groups: workers from minority ethnic groups make up a larger than average proportion of the jobs in sectors vulnerable to the coronavirus pandemic;
- Lone parents: lone parents are more reliant on local jobs, and more likely to have struggled with childcare during lockdown;
- Private renters and social renters: private renters have higher housing costs and social renters tend to have lower incomes; and
- People living in areas of the UK where there were already higher levels of unemployment, poverty, and deprivation.

8.3 Members appreciated that interventions had been put in place on a local and national basis to respond to the challenges facing residents (e.g. furlough, business grant support, extra £20 Universal Credit, stay on evictions). There was, however, concern at the time of the investigation that these measures were coming to an end, in particular around the withdrawal of the £20 universal credit support, with evidence showing that 75% of children who live in relative poverty are in a household where at least one adult works.

8.4 Moving forward emphasis was placed upon the importance of the continued provision of measures that are developed / influenced by the use of research<sup>12</sup> in order to identify the correct actions to re-shape life after COVID. Potential measures being:

- Empowering participation, engagement and cooperation to strengthen local capacity and help people to respond and meet local needs. – local 'actors' with a strong sense of social justice.
- Improving the way data and information is shared to enable a shared understanding of facts so that help and support can be directed to the right people at the right time.
- Digital infrastructure as critical to public service not only for communication but for education and employment.

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<sup>12</sup> The British Academy (the UK's national academy for the humanities and social scientist)

- Empowering 'local actors' to work together with a sense of social purpose to help drive a solid strategy for recovery across the board.
- Collaboration with key stakeholders across the town and the region to secure support to change.
- Explore best practice in other areas and harness knowledge, skills and experience of other leading agencies.
- Talking to residents about their experiences and enabling local people to reduce the stigma surrounding poverty and work to effect change.
- Utilise the power of the collective response to influence whole system change.

### Socio Economic Duty

- 8.5 As part of the Committee's examination of ways to reduce poverty, and the consequences of social economic disadvantage, Members gained an understanding of the Equality Act, as a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity, and the statutory obligations contained within it.
- 8.6 Of particular interest was Section 1 of the Act (the socio economic duty) which requires *'public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class.* In considering the potential benefits of adopting the Duty it was noted that the Council would be required to consider how their decisions and policies could increase or decrease inequality that results from socio economic disadvantage. Members learned that from a practical perspective the Council would need to:
- Formally incorporate poverty and socio economic disadvantage in decision making processes and strategies (already incorporated to some degree in Hartlepool's decision making processes and strategies via Poverty Impact Assessment);
  - Recognise the value of engaging with people with lived experience of socio economic disadvantage at all levels of decision making and commit to valuing this engagement in finding new ways of making policy;
  - Work with residents and the voluntary and community sector to develop strategies to tackle socio economic disadvantage; and
  - Identify what works through evaluation, skills sharing and innovative ways of working.
- 8.7 It was noted that voluntary implementation of the duty would complement the anti-poverty, inclusive economy, and equalities approaches already being undertaken by the Council, including to some degree the Poverty Impact Assessments required as part of the process for submission of reports to Committee. However, it was recognised that additional activities would be required and establishment of a working group to look further into what is required to formally adopt the duty, its benefits, how this might reduce poverty and what this means in practical terms for officers of the council prior to adoption of the duty was considered.

## Cost of living

- 8.8 Whilst information provided as part of the initial evidence gathering sessions did not specifically explore the impact of the rising cost of living, additional information provided drew attention to its specific impact on poverty levels.
- 8.9 The correlation between rises in the cost of living and poverty, Members were exceptionally concerned to find that rising prices was expected to increase material deprivation and increase absolute poverty by over 3 million people between 2021/21 and 2022/23<sup>13</sup>. Rising energy / food prices also disproportionately affect low-income households who spend a larger than average proportion of their income on these items<sup>14</sup>.

## **9. ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREVENT, ERADICATE AND REMOVE BARRIERS OUT OF CHILD POVERTY**

- 9.1 Details of the services provided nationally and locally, via statutory, voluntary and community sectors, were provided to the Committee, including examples of Best Practice:
- North East Child Poverty Commission (NEDPC). A network that believes all children should have an equal chance in life and is hosted by Newcastle University. The Committee welcomed confirmation of Hartlepool Borough Council's active involvement in the group and noted the extensive research that had been undertaken into local welfare support (LWS) provision<sup>15</sup> which drew attention to the role of the LWS in the provision of a safety net that the current welfare system does not.
  - Thrive Teesside. An award winning organisation working in Teesside aiming to close the gap between the rich and the poor by supporting low-income communities to enact change.
  - Poverty Truth Commissions. Evidence provided by Tracey Herrington from Thrive Teesside provided Members with an oversight for the Poverty Truth Commission that operates in Stockton on Tees. The aim of the commission being to ensure that local voices are heard and involved in all aspects of day to day service development. They are also places where transformational relationships are formed / nurtured.
  - The Poverty Truth Network. Offers support, advice and guidance to local areas looking to develop a Poverty Truth Commission.
  - 'Addressing Poverty through Lived Experience (APLE)' Collective. Based in Stockton for over 15 years the collective has spoken at national party conferences, etc. and are consulted on matters relating to welfare and lobby tirelessly on issues such as Universal Credit.

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<sup>13</sup> The Resolution Foundation

<sup>14</sup> In 2019/20, households with the lowest tenth of incomes spent 13.8% of their overall spending on food and 7.1% on electricity and gas. In comparison, households with the highest tenth of incomes spending 8.5% of their overall spending on food and 2.5% on electricity and gas.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nechildpoverty.org.uk/news/time-to-strengthen-the-safety-net>

- Brent Council. Levels of poverty led to the establishment of an Independent Poverty Commission bringing together experts, practitioners and people with lived experience of the issues.
- The North of the Tyne Combined Authority. Has embarked on a child poverty prevention programme and have agreed a plan to:
  - Introduce poverty interventions at a school level;
  - Provide welfare and benefit advice in schools; and
  - Work with employers to reduce in-work poverty.

9.2 The Committee was particularly interested in the poverty truth commission model, the basis of which was that lasting social change couldn't happen unless those who experience the struggle participate in generating change ("Nothing about us, without us, for us"). In order to enable the Committee to make an informed decision on the viability of implementing the voluntary duty, evidence was provided on the additional impact of adopting the duty in Hartlepool and the implementation of the practical steps contained within the guide to local authorities. Subsequent clarification was welcomed that the creation of a Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission would not have to involve significant financial input, although it would require a genuine desire to bring residents around the table.

9.3 With due regard to all of the information provided, the value of 'lived experiences' could add to the development of interventions / strategies, this was recognised by the Committee and exploration of the establishment of a Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission was supported by the Committee. The offer of assistance from Thrive Teesside and the Poverty Truth Network in the development of the commission was welcomed by Members.

#### Hartlepool Borough Council Services

9.4 Attention was drawn to the wide range of services offered specifically in Hartlepool. Examples of which include:

- Local Council Tax Support Scheme
- Welfare Support Service (crisis and non-crisis)
- Access to the Trussell Trust Foodbank
- Recycled school uniform
- Holiday Hunger action
- Local Council Tax Support Scheme
- Welfare Support Scheme
- Access to the Trussell Trust Foodbank
- Recycled School Uniform Scheme
- Action against holiday hunger
- Routes to Work
- Community Hubs and navigation to support services
- Social prescribing
- Links to voluntary and community sector services
- And more...

9.5 In addition to these, the Committee discussed the partnerships arrangement the Council participates in, with the aim to tackle poverty. Including but are not limited to:



- 'Hartlepool Food Council' – a group of organisations that aims to reduce food waste and ensure there is adequate food for all;
- 'Hartlepool Financial Inclusion Partnership' – a group of organisations that aims to support residents at risk of exclusion and to secure support from agencies that in turn can help reduce financial burdens; and
- Hartlepool Action Lab (HAL) which provides an opportunity for a diverse range of organisations and individuals to join together to better understand the challenges experienced by people in Hartlepool and develop working solutions to provide routes out of poverty.

### Welfare Support Service

- 9.6 A key element of the Councils support measures is the provision of 'crisis' support to residents via the Local Welfare Support Schemes. Members were shocked to learn over the past 18 months a total of £4,864 of crisis awards, and £2,385 of non-crisis awards had been allocated. Table 3 outlines the allocations in greater detail.

**Table 3**

<b>Crisis awards approved – (daily support) – 4,017</b>	<b>Non Crisis awards approved - (settling into community) – 2,217</b>
1,009 gas / electricity top ups	931 white goods awards (one or more items) 1,209 furniture awards (one or more items) 56 carpets (one or two rooms or a full house) 21 misc. awards (baby items, bedding, clothes, travel etc.)
3,008 shopping vouchers, bags of food, food parcels	
<b>Crisis awards declined - 847</b>	<b>Non-crisis awards declined - 168</b>
Total: 4,864	Total: 2,385

*NB – all 'declined' applicants are supported to gain help elsewhere.*

- 9.7 It was noted that the scheme had been revised on a number of occasions following its creation in 2013 and it was to be looked at again to determine how it can support a plan to reduce poverty. Given the concerns raised around welfare support and proposed budget savings, Members supported an urgent review of welfare support.
- 9.8 Members were impressed by the level of services provided to mitigate the effects of poverty but were exceptionally concerned about the level of foodbank activity. Data showing that from January to December 2021, 1,887 foodbank vouchers had been used. Table 4 breaks down the use of these vouchers.

**Table 4**

<b>Total No. of Food Vouchers - 1,887 (January to December 2021)</b>	
<b>No. of People Supported</b>	<b>Groups Supported</b>
3557 people	218 couples
	116 families
2447 adults	1098 single people
	337 single parents
1110 children.	74 other (including residents seeking asylum and those who were furloughed)

- 9.9 It was apparent to the Committee from the evidence provided that poverty services in Hartlepool are predominantly focused on mitigation and concern was expressed that whilst they help in the 'here and now', they do not lead to impactful change. In addition to this, the continuing increase in the level of child poverty in Hartlepool reinforced the opinion that a mitigation only focus service model is not working. This view was shared by a number of national organisations, including the national Trussell Trust Foodbank and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, with changes planned to move from a 'hand outs' to 'hands up' model.
- 9.10 Despite these concerns, the Committee was keen to emphasise that mitigation services in Hartlepool are exceptional and need to continue going forward. This, however, needed to be in conjunction with an increased emphasis on the provision of prevention and routes out of poverty. The change in emphasis to be delivered alongside a review of the Child and Family Poverty Strategy, the child poverty needs assessment and development of a different response for crisis, poverty and destitution.
- 9.11 It was recognised that considerable amount of work is being undertaken which could deliver examples of best practice and service improvement, however, they are not yet in a position where the impact of change can be effectively evaluated. On this basis, the Committee recommended that when the Child and Family Poverty Strategy currently being developed is reviewed, a review of best practice / service change in other areas should also be undertaken.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS**

- 10.1 The Audit and Governance Committee concluded that:-
- i) Despite the Government's 1999 commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2020, it continues to affect millions of people in the UK, making them unable to heat homes, pay rent, or buy essentials for their children.
  - ii) Child poverty is a cross cutting priority for the council and the reviewed Child and Family Poverty Strategy needs to be grounded in real life experiences, creative and innovative with support from experts, practitioners and residents.
  - iii) The long term societal impacts of COVID-19 are not fully known, however, it is highly probable that this will further exacerbate poverty levels in Hartlepool.
  - iv) Poverty services in Hartlepool are predominantly focused on mitigation which help in the 'here and now' and do not lead to impactful change. Mitigation services in Hartlepool are, however, exceptional and need to continue going forward, in conjunction with an increased emphasis on the provision of prevention and routes out of poverty.
  - v) Learning from the lived experience is at the heart of delivering socio economic equality and the adoption of the voluntary Socio Economic Duty would be a progressive step in tackling poverty, embedding collaboration, partnership working and resident led service design and development of services. It would also complement the anti-poverty, inclusive economy, and equalities approaches already being undertaken by the Council, including to some degree the Poverty Impact Assessments required as part of the process for submission of reports to Committee.

- vi) Additional activities would be required as part of the adoption and implementation of the Socio Economic Duty and a working group should be established to look further into:
- What would be required to facilitate the formal adopt the Socio Economic Duty;
  - What would be the benefits of its adoption;
  - How might it reduce poverty; and
  - What all of the above mean in practical and financial terms for the Council.
- vii) A considerable amount of work is being undertaken by partners that could deliver examples of best practice and service improvement. Whilst the impact of these pieces of work would not be available for consideration as part of the ongoing review of Hartlepool's Child and Family Poverty Strategy, a review of best practice / service change in other areas should be undertaken at a later date as part of a refresh of a refresh of the Strategy;
- viii) The needs of those in destitution are likely to be the most complex, with a need for the most intense support. As levels of destitution increase in Hartlepool, pressure on services and the budgets that provide them continue to rise and a review of welfare service provision is needed to:
- Support an effective Child and Family Poverty Strategy;
  - Move away from responding to crisis; and
  - Focus on impactful interventions that make long term change was supported by the Committee.
- ix) Effective communication with residents (to really listen to them) is essential in the creation of an effective Child and Family Poverty Strategy, and the development of the services that support its implementation. The establishment of a Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission, as an effective way of facilitating this, would not have to involve significant financial input, although it would require a genuine desire to bring residents around the table.
- x) Whilst poverty and the pandemic have combined to hit people who are struggling the hardest, Hartlepudlians are resilient, good neighbours who come together to make change happen. The key to success is trust between people, agencies and organisations.
- xi) Whilst the investigation focused on child and family poverty, the factors that influence poverty, and the challenges identified in this report, are equally applicable across the whole population (individuals, couples, pensioners, etc.).

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has taken evidence from a wide range of sources and is clear in its support for the prevention of Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool. The Committee's key recommendations are that:
- i) Exceptional services are provided in Hartlepool to mitigate the effects of poverty and these are the predominant focus of Hartlepool Council poverty activities. However, going forward, strategies and services need to move towards a more hands up/prevention/route out of poverty focused model lead to deliver more

impactful change. As is being planned by the Trussell Trust Foodbank and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

- ii) The voluntary Socio Economic Duty be potentially adopted with the assistance of a working group that will look into:
  - What is required to facilitate the formal adopt the Socio Economic Duty;
  - What would be the benefits of its adoption;
  - How might it reduce poverty; and
  - What all of the above mean in practical and financial terms for the Council.
- iii) The establishment of a Hartlepool Poverty Truth Commission be progressed with the assistance from Thrive Teesside and the Poverty Truth Network. The purpose being to incorporate lived experience of socio economic disadvantage at all levels of decision making and policy development.
- iv) As and when the outcomes of ongoing national work in relation to best practice and service improvement becomes available, a further refresh of the new Child and Family Poverty Strategy be undertaken.

## **12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 Despite tireless work to mitigate the impact of poverty on children and families in Hartlepool, numbers continue to rise at an alarming rate; and
- 12.2 The societal costs of people living in poverty outweigh the costs of eradicating it. Health, social security, education and aspiration are compromised by poverty.

## **13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 13.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

### Hartlepool Borough Council:

- Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning
- Penny Thompson, Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare Services

### External Representatives:

- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation / Housing Trust (Richard Sorton)
- Thrive Teesside / APLE Collective (Tracey Herrington)
- Incontrol-Able (Michael Slimmings)
- Trussell Trust (Lisa Lavender)

**COUNCILLOR ROB COOK  
CHAIR OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**November 2022**

#### **14. Contact Officer:**

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#### **15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

15.1 The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:

- Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs 2019/20, Hirsch & Stone, Loughborough University, May 2021.
- Shaping the Covid Decade: addressing the long term societal impacts of Covid-19, The British Academy, March 2021.
- Child Poverty Action Group, [www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk).
- UK Poverty 2021/21, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, January 2021.
- North East Child Poverty Commission briefing, Amanda Bailey, Newcastle University, May 2021.
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation - <https://www.jrf.org.uk/>
- Thrive Teesside - <https://thrive-teesside.org.uk/>
- North East Child Poverty Commission - <https://www.nechildpoverty.org.uk/>
- Brent Council - <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/16416717/poverty-commission-report-launched-17-august-2020.pdf>
- Just Fair - <https://justfair.org.uk/>
- The Poverty Truth Network - <https://povertytruthnetwork.org/>
- Audit and Governance Committee Investigation - Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion in Hartlepool (2010)
- Audit and Governance Committee – Reports and minutes (9 September 2021, 12 October 2021, 11 November 2021, 16 December 2021, 13 January 2022 and 28 February 2022).

**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**24<sup>th</sup> November 2022**Report of:** Statutory Scrutiny Manager**Subject:** Final ICP Strategy – Promotion of Consultation**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT****1.1 To:**

- i) Encourage completion of the Integrated Care Partnership Strategy; and
- ii) Formulate a response from the Audit and Governance Committee for submission as part of the consultation process.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 The Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) is an equal partnership between councils and the NHS in the North-East and North Cumbria set up with the aim of joining up health and care services. The ICP is currently developing a strategy setting out its ambitions and goals to improve the health of our communities, as well as how it will make these ambitions become a reality.

2.2 A consultation on the draft strategy is now being undertaken and the Committee is asked to formulate a response to the consultation for submission by the 24<sup>th</sup> November deadline. The draft strategy is available at:

<https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/integrated-care-partnership/>.

2.3 Members are also asked to complete the survey which can be accessed online via the following link: [ICP Strategy \(onlinesurveys.ac.uk\)](https://onlinesurveys.ac.uk/).

**3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 That the Committee formulates a response to the consultation.

**4. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- The survey can be accessed online via the following link: [ICP Strategy \(onlinesurveys.ac.uk\)](https://onlinesurveys.ac.uk/).
- The draft strategy is available at: <https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/integrated-care-partnership/>.

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# HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

## MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

4 JULY 2022

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Prescribed Members:

Elected Members, Hartlepool Borough Council – Councillors Allen and Cook.  
Councillor Buchan as substitute for Councillor Young.  
Councillor Moore appointed Councillor Cook as his substitute and therefore, in accordance with the Constitution, Councillor Cook chaired the meeting.  
Representative of NHS Integrated Care Board – Director of Governance and Partnerships, Dan Jackson  
Director of Public Health, Hartlepool Borough Council – Craig Blundred  
Director of Adult and Community Based Services, Hartlepool Borough Council, Jill Harrison  
Representatives of Healthwatch – Christopher Akers-Belcher and Margaret Wrenn

Other Members:

Assistant Director of Joint Commissioning, Hartlepool Borough Council – Danielle Swainston  
Representative of the NHS England – Dr Tim Butler  
Representative of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust – Stuart Irvine  
Representative of Hartlepool Voluntary and Community Sector – Christine Fewster

Also in attendance:-

Stephen Thomas, Hartlepool Healthwatch

Officers: Dr Philippa Walters, Pharmacist Lead, Public Health  
Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Manager  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

Councillor Cook in the Chair.

### 1. **Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Moore, Leader of Council. Councillor Young.

Dr Nick Timlin and David Gallagher, Representatives of NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group.  
 Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services, Hartlepool Borough Council – Sally Robinson  
 Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council – Denise McGuckin  
 Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, Hartlepool Borough Council – Tony Hanson  
 Representative of GP Federation – Fiona Adamson  
 Representative of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust –Deepak Dwarakanath / Julie Gillon.  
 Representative of Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust – Brent Kilmurray

## **2. Declarations of interest by Members**

None.

## **3. Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 21 March 2022**

Confirmed.

## **4. Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Strategic Partnership held on 29 September 2021**

Received.

## **5. Children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities) Annual Report April 2021-March 2022** *(Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

The Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning submitted for the Board's consideration, the Children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities) Annual Report April 2021-March 2022. The Health and Wellbeing Board has responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of progress for the outcomes of children with SEND. The annual report sets out progress against the requirements within the Code of Practice and areas of development and was a partnership evaluation as the Code of Practice places statutory duties on all partners.

The Assistant Director reported that the Government had instigated a national review for SEND and had stated that proposals would be published in March 2022, though this had not yet happened. In 2015 the Government had commissioned Ofsted and the CQC to inspect SEND arrangement in local areas. Hartlepool had been inspected in October 2016 and found to have significant weakness in its SEND arrangements across the partnership. A written statement of action was produced and a revisit took place in January



2019. Following this a review meeting took place in February 2021 with DfE, NHS England council, CCG, schools and parent representatives. The meeting reviewed progress against the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan. DfE felt that the area had made significant progress and said that formal monitoring was no longer needed and there is no further need for an Accelerated Progress Plan.

The annual report had been completed with the SEND Operational group which consists of: parents, schools, social care, SEND team, commissioning, CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, TEWV (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust), Local authority officers.

### **Decision**

That the SEND annual report be noted and that members understand their responsibilities in relation to SEND.

## **6. HealthWatch Hartlepool Accessing GP Services Consultation Report** (*Hartlepool HealthWatch*)

Hartlepool HealthWatch representatives presented their report on Accessing GP Services in Hartlepool. The report highlighted two key areas of concern: -

- 1) Accessing GP practices by telephone to make an appointment is difficult, time consuming and for some patients poses significant barriers to accessing primary care services in a timely and appropriate manner.
- 2) Patients generally accept that Covid restrictions which saw most GP consultations delivered either on-line or by telephone were necessary to safeguard patients and health professionals and limit infection. However, the consultation showed significant concerns that the return of face to face appointments is too slow, and many patients feel that on-line or telephone consultations are a barrier to receiving the care, diagnostic rigour and reassurance that face to face consultations bring.

It was acknowledged that these problems were not unique to Hartlepool but it was noted that some patients reported more issues at certain surgeries. The move towards more online services during the Covid-19 pandemic did not work for all patients, particularly older people. There also seemed to be a rather slow return to face-to-face appointments despite the lifting of restrictions.

Many people reported difficulty in being able to access appointments 'on the day', often finding that despite phoning at the times requested by surgeries, all appointments had been taken by the time they got to speak to someone. This difficulty in accessing timely medical advice was affecting people and in some instances putting people off seeking early medical advice thus allowing some conditions to get worse. This was a particularly concerning impact. There

was also concern for frontline staff in GP surgeries who were often taking the brunt of patient's frustrations.

The HealthWatch representative highlighted the recommendation set out in the report and commended them to the Board.

During the debate it was highlighted that all the recommendations had been shared with GP surgeries. The Chair suggested that the Board may wish to review the actions from the recommendations to ensure that improvements were being made and suggested an initial review after six months. It was acknowledged that there was a shortage of GPs both locally and nationally but it was clear from the report that the patient experience was not wholly positive. It was suggested that there would need to be follow up surveys in 6 to 12 months' time to assess what improvements had been made and the HealthWatch representative stated that they would wish to do this in collaboration with Health colleagues. A representative also highlighted that there were other means of gaining advice, such as community pharmacists that could assist people and alleviate some of the pressure on GPs.

### **Decision**

1. That the following recommendations from the HealthWatch Hartlepool Accessing GP Services Consultation Report be adopted: -
  - All GP practices in Hartlepool should review current appointment processes and in particular their effectiveness in enabling patients to access appointments/consultations quickly. Hartlepool and Stockton Health (HASH) should provide support as appropriate.
  - Practices should make extended times available for patients to phone and book appointments, the introduction/re-introduction of on-line bookings and evening/weekend arrangements.
  - Patients must be involved in the review process and be consulted about proposed changes to appointment processes.
  - All practices should introduce texting services for Deaf patients to use to book appointments and general communication.
  - All key practice information must be available in accessible formats appropriate to the needs of patients with sensory impairments and other conditions and disabilities.
  - The availability of face to face appointments should be reinstated as quickly as possible in line with government guidelines and safety considerations.
  - Practices introduce/re-visit staff training to increase awareness of the communication needs and preferences of different patient groups (Deaf, visually impaired, people living with dementia, learning disability etc.).
  - Practices ensure that information dissemination systems are as effective as possible, and that patients are fully informed of all appointment (including out of hours) and prescription services and arrangements.

2. That an action plan be developed including a further consultation exercise after 6 months to assess the levels of improvement.

## **7. Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022** *(Director of Public Health)*

The Director of Public Health submitted the final draft of the Hartlepool Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) 2022 for approval prior to its publication before the statutory deadline of 1st September 2022.

The Pharmacist Lead commented that the document was an important tool that would be used in the shaping of local service delivery. It was highlighted that wider service delivery would be changing with the introduction of the new Integrated Care Board across the North East and North Cumbria. The PNA had not identified the need for any new pharmacy in Hartlepool.

There was some discussion around the opening hours of some pharmacies and the Pharmacist Lead stated that there were national contracts based on either 40 hours opening per week, or 100 hours opening per week. Pharmacies were not, however, paid per hour. Some did have additional hours within their contracts.

### **Decision**

1. That the Health and Wellbeing Board approves the final version of the PNA for publication on the Council's website before 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022, subject to minor errata, amendments or updates identified before the publication date.
2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board undertakes a review of the process in relation to Supplementary Statements and in the intervening period continue to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, to approve as required:
  - Publication of minor errata / service updates as on-going notifications that fall short of formal Supplementary Statements to the PNA (for example changes of ownership, minor adjustments to opening hours and service contracts that do not impact on need);
  - Any response on behalf of the Hartlepool Health and Wellbeing Board to NHS E&I invitation to (42 day) consultation on applications to provide new or amended pharmaceutical services, based on the PNA;
  - Any response behalf of the Hartlepool HWB in relation to an application to consolidate pharmacies, and make a statement or representation, to NHS England (within 45 days) stating whether the consolidation would, or would not create a gap in pharmaceutical services provision;

- Following determination on an application to consolidate two pharmacies by NHS England, publication of a supplementary statement reporting that removal of the pharmacy (which is to close from the Pharmaceutical List) will not create a gap in pharmaceutical services and update the map of premises where pharmaceutical services are provided (Regulation 4(2)); and
  - Any initial determination with respect to the potential for either a Supplementary Statement or need for full review. Publication of Supplementary Statements to be ratified by the HWB at suitable periodic intervals (e.g. annually) as required.
3. That the Health and Wellbeing Board including the need to assess ongoing changes which might impact on pharmaceutical need and the assessment thereof and respond by initiating early review or publishing a Supplementary Statement to the 2022 PNA as required.
  4. That the Health and Wellbeing Board continue delegation of authority to Director of Public Health (in conjunction with the Chair of the HWB) as above, to make initial assessments with respect to potential Supplementary Statements or need for full review.
  6. That the Health and Wellbeing Board progress the production of an easy read companion document to the PNA; and
  7. That the Health and Wellbeing Board explores the use of infographic(s) to promote pharmacies, their services (where they are, what is available and how it can be accessed) and how this links into wider primary care and public health provision.
  8. That HealthWatch be asked to explore as part of its work programme for 2022 improved mechanisms to promote understanding / awareness of pharmacy services.

## **8. Better Care Fund Update** *(Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

The Director of Adult and Community Based Services submitted an update the Health and Wellbeing Board on current performance against the Hartlepool Better Care Fund Plan. BCF performance reports were routinely submitted to NHS England on a quarterly basis, however, routine reporting had been suspended over the past two years due to COVID19 and a single year end return was required which followed a different format to previous returns. The year-end return for 2021/22 was submitted in May 2021 and confirmed that all national conditions continued to be achieved, as well as confirming that BCF contributions were in line with national guidance.

### **Decision**

That the Health and Wellbeing Board retrospectively approves the Hartlepool Better Care Fund 2021/22 return.

## **9. Integrated Care Board (ICB) – Update**

The NHS Integrated Care Board Director of Governance and Partnerships gave a presentation to the Board setting out the background to the Integrated Care Boards (ICB), the ICB operating model and the ICB for the North East and North Cumbria, the ICB strategic aims, key functions and Governance. Details of the leadership team and the Board and Committee structure were also set out. The structure of the Integrated Care Partnerships that operated below the ICB structure were also detailed with four ICPs covering North Cumbria; Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland; North of Tyne and Gateshead; and Tees Valley.

HealthWatch representatives indicated that there were some concerns around decision making and how local that would be and how HealthWatch Groups would integrate with the ICP structure. It was indicated that each ICP would be place based. There was also concern around the voice of voluntary sector organisations through the structure. It was indicated that there was a VCS representative on the ICB and it was acknowledged that there needed to be a clear voice and route for VCS organisation.

### **Decision**

That the presentation be noted and shared with Board Members.

## **10. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

The Chair requested that an update be provided at the next meeting on the current situation with Covid-19 and the emerging issue of Monkey pox.

The Board noted that the date of next meeting was Monday 5 September 2022 commencing at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Meeting concluded at 4.20 pm.

CHAIR

# **SAFER HARTLEPOOL PARTNERSHIP MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

18 July 2022

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

**Present:**

**Responsible Authority Members:**

Councillor: Councillor Shane Moore (In the Chair)  
Councillor Tom Cassidy  
Tony Hanson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services  
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services  
Mick Ireland, Cleveland Fire Authority

**Other Members:**

Craig Blundred, Director of Public Health  
Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Also Present: Zoe Kelsey, Cleveland Police  
Neil Harrison as substitute for Jill Harrison

Officers: Phil Hepburn, Community Safety Operations Manager  
Rachel Parker, Community Safety Team Leader  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Jill Harrison, Director of Adult and Community Based Services, Hartlepool Borough Council and Councillor Rob Cook, Appointed Non-Voting Representative of Audit and Governance Committee.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

None.

## **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2022**

Confirmed.

#### **4. Targeted Detached Youth Service** *(Office of Police and Crime Commissioner)*

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

The Chair advised that given the representative from the PCC was not yet in attendance at the meeting this item would be considered later in the meeting.

##### **Decision**

That this item be considered later in the meeting.

#### **5. Safety for Women** *(Assistant Director, Regulatory Services)*

##### **Purpose of report**

This report had been prepared in response to a Member question raised at Full Council on 24 March 2022 seeking reassurance as to the safety of women in Hartlepool. Full Council agreed that the matter would be reported at the next Safer Hartlepool Partnership meeting.

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

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services reported that following a number of high profile cases involving violence against women, the issue of safety of women had become more prominent with the need to introduce measures to protect women from risk of violence while promote and publicise initiatives to ensure their safety. Background information in relation to the position nationally was set out in the report as well as the availability of additional funding to local authorities to help improve the safety of public spaces.

In recognition of the risks posed to women, the Community Safety Team would, in conjunction with other partners, be publicising and raising awareness of issues that make women, and indeed men, more vulnerable to potential violence which included, excess alcohol, drink spiking and promoting the Ask Angela Campaign.

In the discussion that followed, the Assistant Director, Regulatory Services and the representative from Cleveland Police responded to issues raised arising from the report. Some concerns were raised in relation to the importance of prevention and the need to challenge and address the root causes of such violence. Assurances were provided that early intervention and the root causes of violence were considered. Clarification was provided in relation to the challenges around funding arrangements, the

measures in place to reduce domestic violence and victims of violence and to address any issues of misogyny in the workplace.

### **Decision**

That the contents of the report, proposed actions and comments of Partnership Members be noted.

## **6. Safer Hartlepool Partnership Performance – Quarter 3 - October to December 2021** *(Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services)*

### **Purpose of report**

To provide an overview of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership performance for Quarter 3 – October to December 2021 against key indicators linked to the priorities outlined in the draft Community Safety Plan 2021/24.

## **7. Safer Hartlepool Partnership Performance – Quarter 4 – January to March 2022** *(Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services)*

### **Purpose of report**

To provide an overview of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership performance for Quarter 4 – January to March 2021 (inclusive) against key indicators linked to the priorities outlined in the Community Safety Plan 2021/24.

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

The report provided an overview of the Partnership's performance during Quarters 3 and 4, as set out in an appendices to the report. Information as a comparator with performance in the previous year was also provided. In presenting the report, the Assistant Director, Regulatory Services highlighted salient positive and negative data and responded to queries in relation to crime figures by type.

In response to the Chair's comments in relation to the background to the increase in deliberate fires, the Fire Authority representative indicated that the majority appeared to be in grassland areas, details of which were provided. The Assistant Director highlighted that a Multi Agency Group had been established to try to reduce deliberate fires.

A number of concerns were expressed in relation to the continuing problems of motor bikes and quad bikes driving dangerously and unsafely



in the town causing safety/noise nuisance problems. The adverse impact on the community as a result were highlighted. The Police representative indicated that issues of this type represented the highest proportion of anti-social behaviour complaints. The measures in place to tackle these issues were outlined which included multi-agency working and issuing publications to encourage the public to report such incidents. The difficulties identifying the perpetrators were highlighted as well as the limited resources and powers available. Members of the public in attendance raised concerns regarding speeding vehicles and commented on the increase in deliberate fires witnessed resulting in an increase in Fire Service call outs.

### **Decision**

That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.

**Prior to consideration of the following item of business, the Chair advised that given there was no representation from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the targeted detached youth service update item would be deferred to a future meeting of the Partnership (Minute 4 refers).**

## **8. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

## **9. Any Other Business – Verbal Update – Neighbourhood Policing**

The Partnership was provided with an update in relation to recent staffing changes and the structure of the policing team. Inspector Zoe Kelsey, who was in attendance at the meeting, reported on the priorities of the police which included working closely with CID to tackle the increase in burglaries, acquisitive crime and criminal damage and it was noted that the police continued to target areas where there were consistent issues between neighbours. Emphasis was also placed on the need for the public to continue to report any drug related problems.

### **Decision**

That the information given be noted.

## **10. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Monday 12 September 2022 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 2.45 pm.

CHAIR