

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

13 MARCH 2023

The meeting commenced at 3.15 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor: Shane Moore (Vice-Chair) (In the Chair)

Councillors: Rachel Creevy, Helen Howson, Peter Jackson, Sue Little, and Cameron Sharp.

Also Present: Councillor Mike Young as substitute for Councillor Tom Cassidy in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.
Councillor Ben Clayton.

Officers: Tony Hanson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Kieran Bostock, Assistant Director, Place Management
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services
Phil Hepburn, Community Safety and Operations Manager
Zoe Craig, Environmental Health Manager (Environment Protection)
Rachael Readman, Senior Trading Standards Officer
Steve Hilton, Communications and Marketing Team
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

35. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Tom Cassidy

36. Declarations of Interest

None.

37. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023

Received.

38. Local Transport Plan 2022/23 Out-Turn and 2023/24 Programme *(Assistant Director, Place Management)*

Type of decision

Key Decision test (ii) applies. Forward Plan Reference No. NRS 02/23.

Purpose of report

To inform Neighbourhood Services Committee of the current position with the Local Transport Plan Delivery Plan, progress made under the Local Transport Plan delivery programme during 2022/2023, and to identify potential schemes for 2023/2024.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Place Management reported that the third Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026, set out how a safe and sustainable transport system could be delivered within Hartlepool. It was recognised that funding, particularly in the short to medium term, was significantly reduced from the second LTP period and, while this represented a significant barrier to delivering the Council's aspirations for improving the transport network in Hartlepool, it provided opportunities to work more closely with our partner organisations for the overall benefit of the Borough.

Individual scheme type allocations for 2022/23, along with the allocations for 2023/24 were shown in Appendix 1 to the report, while the works identified for delivery during 2022/2023 were shown at Appendix 2, along with proposed schemes for 2023/2024 (subject to further committee reports where necessary). The Assistant Director commented that while demand significantly outstripped the funding available there was still a significant amount of work being undertaken across the town.

A Member questioned a scheme that had been included in last year's list but had not yet been implemented and not in this year's list. The Assistant Director stated that there were schemes still being designed but not yet implemented and those would go ahead as the money had already been identified for them. The Assistant Director confirmed the normal ward Member consultation would be undertaken once the scheme had been designed and before implementation. A number of Members raised questions around schemes within their wards including bus stop renewals and the potential of a crossing in Elizabeth Way in Seaton Carew. The Assistant Director reminded Members of the process for getting a scheme to be considered in line with the previously approved prioritisation matrix.

Decision

That the works and schemes delivered during 2022/2023 be noted, and the anticipated budget breakdown for 2023/2024 be approved.

39. Five Year Highway Maintenance Programme *(Assistant Director, Place Management)*

Type of decision

Key Decision test (i) and (ii) applies. Forward Plan Reference No. NRS 03/23.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for a 5 year Highway Maintenance Programme, determined by carriageway condition surveys and following Department for Transport recommended asset management processes.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Place Management reported that for the financial year 2023/2024 the capital grant allocation for highway maintenance was the same as the 2022/23 allocation – £1,525,747. This was made up of Highways Maintenance formula funding, Incentive Fund and Pot-hole Fund allocations, and the Council had now received a multi-year settlement of the same amount, up to and including 2026/27.

The roads and footways included in the maintenance programme were those that are in the most need of repair. The priorities may change, however, over the coming years, as one highway can deteriorate more quickly than another. The highway network was constantly deteriorating through increased traffic volume, greater vehicle weights, the weather and the disturbance of the structure of the road through the digging of utility trenches. The key to maintaining the highway network successfully was to monitor the condition, and at the best time, apply the most cost effective treatment to maximise the life of the road. The Council achieved this through both planned and reactive maintenance based on an assessment of need, and making use of the latest available processes and techniques.

The rolling 5-year programme submitted with the report was based on the multi-year settlement now received, and assumed that this would continue for Year 5 of the programme.

Members raised some concerns at not receiving feedback on issues raised through the Councillors Portal. The Assistant Director stated that reports received were visited by inspectors. Issues such as trip hazards would have priority. Members were advised, however, that staff were involved in preparation work for the Tall Ships weekend which may account for the delays in some responses coming through, though the Assistant Director stated he was confident that any issues reported were inspected in a timely manner.

A Member noted that the recommendation in the report sought delegation to the Director to make changes to the programme if necessary. The

Member commented that no feedback had been provided to the Committee on any such decisions. The Assistant Director assured Members that if the delegation were used, Members would be informed but it had not been used for several years, hence why no feedback had been provided.

A Member raised concerns around the condition of the highway in Roxby Close, Seaton Carew. The Assistant Director stated that Roxby Close had been inspected and would be dealt with when its condition brought it to the top of the priority list however it was currently on the list to be addressed in future years. Members questioned the funding and from where it was allocated. The Director stated that the funding came via the Tees Valley Combined Authority based on government direction. Hartlepool was a high performer in terms of the funding allocated for highway maintenance and this was reflected in the amount of money awarded. Deviating from the government guidance on highway maintenance could be counter-productive.

Decision

1. That the proposed programme set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved, and it was noted that this will fully commit the funding available in 2023/2024 using the most cost effective materials available.
2. That any changes to the proposed programme be delegated to the Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee, and that any changes be shared with the Members of the Committee.

40. Air Quality Strategy (*Assistant Director, Regulatory Services*)

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To inform Neighbourhood Services Committee of the current position regarding air quality in the Borough and to present members with a draft Air Quality Strategy for their consideration. To request approval for the draft strategy to undergo a process of consultation prior to submission as a key decision to the forward plan.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services reported that Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had notified officers that, in addition to the submission of Annual Air Quality Status Reports (ASRs), a local Air Quality Strategy must be produced in 2023. While air quality did have a significant effect on public health and was high on the government's

agenda, air quality monitoring results across the Borough were good and were consistently below objective levels set by Government.

The Assistant Director reported that informal consultation was undertaken with officers from various departments and agreement sought for proposals identified in the Air Quality Strategy. The submitted draft version of the Air Quality Strategy would be open for public consultation and following this exercise the final document would be brought back to a future Committee for approval.

A Member commented that air quality in Seaton Carew was not good at all with significant odour problems that could be blamed on commercial operators in the town. The problem for residents was that the regulation of those companies lay with the Environment Agency and not the local authority. The Assistant Director stated that officers were aware of the odour problems in Seaton Carew and that the regulation of those did lay with the Environment Agency. The elected Member stated that their concerns had been raised with the Director of Public Health.

A Member asked if there was any benchmarking data alongside the Air Quality Strategy that could be used for comparator purposes. The Assistant Director stated that comparator information was shared between the Tees Valley authorities and the Environment Agency did publish some information on its website. Members also discussed the potential for action to be taken if monitoring through the strategy revealed problems that needed to be tackled.

Decision

That the contents of the Air Quality Strategy be noted and the document approved for public consultation.

41. Elwick Road – 20mph Speed Limit *(Assistant Director, Place Management)*

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the implementation of a 20mph speed limit on Elwick Road between Catcote Road and York Road, and report objections following the advertisement of the Traffic Regulation Order.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Place Management reported that concerns had been raised by residents regarding the speed of traffic travelling on Elwick Road, and a request to implement a 20mph speed limit was subsequently

made by a Ward Member. The section of Elwick Road concerned was between Catcote Road and York Road.

This stretch of road is a mixture of residential homes, a school and a section of commercial properties. The speed limit on the road is currently 30mph, which is the default limit for an urban road with street lighting. Since 2017 there have been 5 recorded injury accidents on these roads (4 slight and 1 serious). Following discussions with the Police and other members of the Traffic Liaison Group, it was proposed to consult on the introduction of a 20mph speed limit.

The consultation exercise produce eight objections to the proposals which included comments around policing and current lack of enforcement and the need for a low traffic neighbourhood as an alternative. There were also six letters of support citing the improvements to pedestrian safety and a reduction in accidents. Social media articles led to a mixed response with comments around greater enforcement and physical traffic calming measures. This location was, however, a main road and not an appropriate site for physical traffic calming measures.

The Assistant Director stated that the accident record of this section of Elwick Road did give cause for concern and consultation did show there was support for the 20 mph proposal, while acknowledging this was not universal. The Police, as the agency with the powers for speed enforcement, were in favour of the proposal.

Members expressed support for the proposal though suggested that continued data needed to be gathered to monitor if the 20 mph zone was having the desired effect. Members noted the discussions at the Traffic Liaison Group and the wish of Cleveland Police to subject the whole section of Elwick Road to the 20 mph scheme. Members were concerned that in the past the Police had suggested that 20 mph zones could not be adequately enforced and while there were obvious safety benefits here, there was the potential for criticism if it wasn't enforced. The Assistant Director stated that officers did meet regularly with the Police and these comments would be put forward.

There was no dissent to the following decision.

Decision

That the proposed 20mph speed limit on Elwick Road be implemented.

42. Local Plan Authorities Monitoring Report 2021/22 (Assistant Director, Place Management)

Type of decision

Non-key Decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform Neighbourhood Services Committee of the Local Plan Authorities Monitoring Report (AMR) 2021/22.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Place Management reported that the AMR is a statutory Local Development Framework (LDF) document which reviewed the progress made on the implementation of policies in the Local Plan and generally assesses their effectiveness and the extent to which they were being implemented.

Members welcomed the report but commented that while it contained positive information consideration should be given in the future to presenting it in a more easily understandable way for the general public. The Chair echoed the comments and noted how the Director of Public Health's annual report had evolved over recent years.

Decision

That the Local Plan Authorities Monitoring Report 2021/22 be noted and endorsed as part of the Local Development Framework.

43. Restriction of Vehicular Access to Land at the Rear of West View Road *(Assistant Director, Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key decision.

Purpose of report

To prohibit vehicular access to the area of land to the rear of 166 – 294 (evens) West View Road, Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services reported that there had been a number of reports of fly-tipping taking place in an area of land behind 166 – 294 (evens) West View Road. A number of deliberate fires had also been set. CCTV monitoring had reduced the fly tipping temporarily and Ward Councillors had approached officers seeking a more permanent solution to the problem.

Access to the area was gained through a narrow lane between 278 and 280 West View Road. There was also access to a number of garages on the rear gardens of some of the properties and it was noted that some other vehicles parked on this land. Enquiries had been undertaken with the Legal Department and they had advised that residents have no formal rights of

access, nor have any licences to allow vehicle access been granted. Any current access arrangement was, therefore, informal and historical but could have been established for a number of years.

A gate on the access point had been trialled in the past but was frequently left unsecure allowing free access and it was now proposed to close this access point to vehicles using bollards while still allowing access by foot as the area was regularly used by dog walkers. Consultation with residents showed there was support for this proposal.

A ward Councillor shared some additional photographs of some recent fly-tipping on the land and echoed her strong support for the residents and proposed closure of the access road. The Chair commented that he had seen the fly-tipping problems first hand and supported the proposal though sought assurance those who used the lane for access to garages etc. had sufficient notice to remove their vehicles.

Decision

1. That the prohibition of vehicular access to the area of land behind 166 – 294 (evens) West View Road (accessed by the lane between numbers 278 and 280) be approved.
2. That Legal Services be asked to prepare the necessary legal documentation to facilitate the closure.

44. Pay and Display Parking Machines – Disability Access *(Assistant Director, Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

This report is submitted for information and follows a Full Council Motion / Question for clarification in relation to the accessibility of the pay and display parking payment machines that the Council operates within our Off Street Car Parks and managed parking sites.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services reported that at Council on 15th December 2022, it was reported by an elected member that several wheel chair users had contacted him highlighting difficulties in accessing town centre car parking meters. Therefore it was agreed, with no dissent, that the issue be referred to this Committee.

The Council operated 60 pay and display machines located in both off street car parks and on street sites. The pay and display machines have a

recognised working life of approximately 10 years and a significant number of the machines in use in Hartlepool have already exceeded this period. Therefore, plans were already in place for a phased upgrade of the stock.

In December 2021, Members approved a decision to remove the then free parking concession offered to Blue Badge holders. As a consequence officers carried out an assessment of all pay and display stations and identified 5 of the 60 that may require some alterations in order to assist with disability access. The findings identified a number of concerns which varied from a lack of safe hatched area in front of the machine to potentially addressing the height of the machine to making them more wheelchair accessible. It was highlighted that in many of Hartlepool's more popular town centre car parks there were often several payment machines so in most cases alternative payment stations could be available should one be unavailable or be less accessible. In addition, the sites all accept payment via the mobile phone payment provider "RINGO".

Members questioned the time frame for the replacement programme. Officers indicated that the procurement process was still at an early stage with a lead in for new machines being at least 4 to 6 months. A Member considered asking the disabled to use another machine was simply unreasonable. Payment either had to be as convenient as possible by placing machines near the disabled bays or by going back and removing the fee for disabled blue badge holders. Members also commented that using RINGO cost users more and could be seen to be further penalising blue badge holders.

Decision

That the report and the actions taken to meet the short and long term accessibility for disabled and blue badge holders required to pay to park be noted.

45. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

Tall Ships 2023

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services highlighted that the Tall Ships weekend was now only 15 weeks away. Many of the department's staff were becoming more involved with the arrangements for the event so the Director asked that Members bear with staff during this period as while queries and emails would be responded to, they may not be as prompt as Members were used to.

A Member commented that it was not fair on residents or elected Members that queries were not being replied to promptly and where staff were being diverted to the Tall Ships event, there should be back-filling to maintain services.

In concluding the meeting the Chair noted this was the last meeting of the Committee for the Municipal Year and he thanked Members for their input into the meetings of the Committee during the year.

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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