



Civic Centre
HARTLEPOOL

18 September, 2023

Councillors Allen, Ashton, Boddy, Brash, Brown, Buchan, Cassidy, Clayton, Cowie, Cranney, Creevy, Darby, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Groves, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Howson, Leedham, Lindridge, Little, Martin-Wells, Moore, Morley, D Nicholson, V Nicholson, Oliver, Reeve, Sharp, Smith, Thompson, Wallace and Young.

Madam or Sir,

You are hereby summoned to attend the COUNCIL meeting to be held on THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2023 at 6.00 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool to consider the subjects set out in the attached agenda.

Yours faithfully

D McGuckin
Managing Director

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COUNCIL AGENDA



Thursday 28 September 2023

at 6.00 pm

**in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Hartlepool.**

- (1) To receive apologies from absent Members;
- (2) To receive any declarations of interest from Members;
- (3) To deal with any business required by statute to be done before any other business;
- (4) To approve the minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 13 July 2023 as the correct record;
- (5) To answer questions from Members of the Council on the minutes of the last meeting of Council;
- (6) To deal with any business required by statute to be done;
- (7) To receive any announcements from the Chair, or the Head of Paid Service;
- (8) To dispose of business (if any) remaining from the last meeting and to receive the report of any Committee to which such business was referred for consideration;
 1. Further Periodic Review of the Council's Constitution – Report of Constitution Committee
 2. Accessibility Of Council Services In Hartlepool For Those With Disabilities And Long Term Conditions – Results Of Additional Consultation – Report of Audit and Governance Committee
- (9) To consider reports from the Council's Committees and to receive questions and answers on any of those reports;

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.

- (10) To consider any other business specified in the summons to the meeting, and to receive questions and answers on any of those items;
- (11) To consider reports from the Policy Committees:
 - (a) proposals in relation to the Council's approved budget and policy framework; and
 - (b) proposals for departures from the approved budget and policy framework;

1. Highlight Leisure Facility – Report of Finance and Policy Committee

- (12) To consider motions in the order in which notice has been received;
- (13) To receive the Managing Director's report and to pass such resolutions thereon as may be deemed necessary;
- (14) To receive questions from and provide answers to the public in relation to matters of which notice has been given under Rule 9;
- (15) To answer questions of Members of the Council under Rule 10;
 - a) Questions to the Chairs about recent decisions of Council Committees and Forums without notice under Council Procedure Rule 10.1
 - b) Questions on notice to the Chair of any Committee or Forum under Council Procedure Rule 10.2
 - c) Questions on notice to the Council representatives on the Police and Crime Panel and Cleveland Fire Authority
 - d) Minutes of the meetings held by the Cleveland Fire Authority held on 24 March 2023 and the Police and Crime Panel held on 13 September 2022, 15 November 2022, 7 February 2023 and 11 July 2023



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

13 July 2023

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm in the Civic Centre

The Ceremonial Mayor (Councillor Moore) presiding:

COUNCILLORS:

Allen	Boddy	Brash
Brown	Buchan	Cassidy
Clayton	Cowie	Cranney
Creevy	Darby	Dodds
Dunbar	Feeney	Groves
Hall	Hargreaves	Harrison
Holbrook	Howson	Leedham
Lindridge	Little	Martin-Wells
Morley	D Nicholson	V Nicholson
Oliver	Smith	Thompson
Wallace	Young	

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Managing Director
Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources
Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Connor Kerr and Steve Hilton, Communications Team
Amanda Whitaker, David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENT MEMBERS

Councillors Ashton, Reeve and Sharp

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor Dodds – allotment Motion – partner on registered allotment, no financial interest

Councillor Moore – Business Report (HDC) – member Board

Councillor Young – Business Report (HDC) – member Board

16. BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE TO BE DONE BEFORE ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

17. MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

The Minutes of Proceedings of the Council held on the 23 March 2023, the Annual Council meeting held on 16 May 2023 and the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 3 July 2023, having been laid before the Council.

RESOLVED - That the minutes be confirmed.

18. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL ON THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

With reference to minute 142 of the meeting held on 23 March 2023, an elected member sought clarification whether a response had been received from the Secretary of State for Health. The Managing Director responded that a response had not been received.

19. BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE

None

20. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair of Council expressed appreciation to Officers, partners and volunteers who had supported the recent Tall Ships event, feedback for which had been amazing. The comments of the Chair were supported by comments from other elected members who referred to the incredible event.

21. TO DISPOSE OF BUSINESS (IF ANY) REMAINING FROM THE LAST MEETING AND TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF ANY COMMITTEE TO WHICH SUCH BUSINESS WAS REFERRED FOR CONSIDERATION.

None

22. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

- (1) Periodic Review of the Council's Constitution – Report of Constitution Committee

The Monitoring Officer presented the report considered by the Constitution Committee regarding proposed changes to the Constitution which had arisen since the previous review of the Constitution. The report also proposed changes to the Constitution to reflect the Peer Review recommendation to "Review existing governance arrangements including Committee delegations and frequency." As the Committee had considered the updated Planning Code of

Practice and changes to Planning Delegations set out in part 3 of the Constitution, members of the Planning Committee had been invited to the Committee meeting to convey their views on the proposed changes. The proposed changes to the Constitution and recommendations of the Committee were set out in the report.

- (i) The following recommendations of the Committee were agreed with no dissent:-

Part 5 – Planning Code of Practice - The Committee agreed the changes to the Code for referral to Full Council.

Part 3 - Responsibility for Functions (Delegation Scheme) - The Committee agreed the proposed changes for referral to Full Council.

Part 4 – Budget and Policy Framework –The Committee agreed a proposal to amend paragraph 7 - virement of revenue budget transfer between 'Directorates' - to replace approval of Full Council with approval of the Finance and Policy Committee.

- (ii) The following changes to the Council Procedure Rules were adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of Council, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 22.2.

Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules - Questions from the Public – The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Council Procedure Rules be amended to incorporate the following:-

“That following the response, the Chair will ask the member of the public if they consider that their question has been answered, if so there will be no debate. If the member of the public states that their question has not been answered, the Chair will allow up to 10 minutes for debate and the Rules of Debate will apply.

Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules - Time and Place of Meetings - The Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the time of meetings of Full Council be changed to 7.00 p.m.

- (iii) Authority was delegated to the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources to make the necessary changes to the Constitution arising from the agreed changes

- (2) Child and Family Poverty Investigation - Final Report – Report of Audit and Governance Committee

The Chair of the Committee presented the salient findings of the Committee's detailed investigation into Child and Family Poverty in Hartlepool. The investigation report had been considered by the Finance and Policy Committee on the 3rd July 2023 and particular support had been expressed for the potential adoption of the Socio Economic Duty, with the creation of a working group. The Committee had also requested that as part of the Head Teachers

Briefing, schools also be encouraged to seek guidance and advice from external source where available, such as the SHINE Trust.

Whilst expressing support for the recommendations, elected members debated and highlighted issues arising from the report.

Full Council approved, with no dissent, the report and its recommendations as detailed in Appendix A, with the additional recommendations of the Finance and Policy Committee.

23. TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS SPECIFIED IN THE SUMMONS OF THE MEETING

None.

24. REPORT FROM THE POLICY COMMITTEES

(a) Proposal in relation to the Council's budget and policy framework

None.

(b) Proposal for Departure from the Budget and Policy Framework

None.

25. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Three Motions had been received:-

1. "The cost of living crisis is getting worse. Energy and food bills remain high, inflation is barely falling and now the threat of rising interest rates on mortgages and rents looms large. Hartlepool people are being hammered. This is a once in a generation crisis, it cannot be business as normal. We must take radical action.

In these difficult times, allotments provide food for families, helping to plug the gap in the financial crises that some families are finding themselves in, as well as providing huge benefits to mental health and wellbeing.

Making them unaffordable inflicts further harm on our town. Labour believes that the unprecedented 100% increase in allotment fees due to come in next year is therefore wholly unjustified.. Moreover, the breakdown in trust between allotment holders and the council cannot continue.

Allotment holders are angry. Labour is on their side.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Cancel the allotment fee rise scheduled for 2024
- Instigate a wholesale review covering all aspects of the allotment service, with allotment holders at the heart of this process.

Signed: Councillors Harrison, Brash, Allen, Boddy, Clayton, Creevy, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Howson, Morley, Thompson, Sharp, Wallace, Dodds, Holbrook, Oliver”

The Motion was moved by Councillor Creevy and seconded by Councillor Harrison

The rationale for the Motion was highlighted by the mover and seconder of the Motion. On moving the motion, full Council was advised that additional money had been identified to fund the proposal, details of which could not be shared at the meeting as by doing so would disclose exempt information.

It was moved by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Smith:-

“That the meeting be adjourned to allow the exempt information, referred to by the mover of the Motion, to be disclosed to all elected members”

The Managing Director clarified that the information related to the surrender of a property lease which had been included in future financial budget projections.

During the ongoing debate, an elected member highlighted a number of issues arising from the Motion and sought clarification regarding the implications of the Motion.

It was moved by Councillor Boddy and seconded by Councillor Young:-

“That the vote be now put”

Following closing comments by the Chair, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion:-

Those for:-

Councillors Allen, Boddy, Brash, Brown, Clayton, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Howson, Little, Morley, Oliver, Smith, Thompson, Wallace and Young

Those against:-

Councillors Buchan, Cassidy, Cowie, Cranney, Darby, Groves, Leedham, Lindridge, Martin-Wells, Moore, D Nicholson and V Nicholson

Those abstaining:-

None.

The vote on the Motion was carried.

2. “Placement Pressures – Children in Care

As well as a 14% increase in the number of children in the care of the Local Authority in England, the needs of these children have changed significantly, with increasing numbers of older children as well as unaccompanied asylum seeking children and children with complex needs. This coupled with a national decline in foster carers has seen a steep rise in the demand for residential care placements and specialist foster care.

Local authorities, are the sole purchasers of placements and in the past few years have seen a drastic increase in the cost of these placements. In 2022 the Competition and Markets Authority reported significant problems in how the placement market works [with:

- a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs
- the largest private providers of placements are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than we would expect if this market were functioning effectively
- some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating a risk that disorderly failure of highly leveraged firms could disrupt the placements of children in care.]

In a poorly regulated sector of the economy dominated by private providers. While many providers are providing quality placements, the focus for some is profitability. Currently a solo placement for a child with highly complex needs can be around £9000 per week and these are often at a distance from the child’s home town. The average weekly cost for residential placement increased by 26% between 2017/18 and 2021/22.

Council welcomes the emerging strategy designed to tackle this issue including:

- Increasing our in-house capacity by opening a new children’s home (with another in development)
 - Constantly recruiting for foster carers and adopters
 - working hard to identify whether there are any members of the child’s family who can care for them should it be necessary for them to be removed from their parents’ care
- Children’s Services has not been allocated adequate funding by the government and the Managing Director has spoken and written to Jill Mortimer MP for Hartlepool who has raised our concerns with Government.

Council therefore resolves to:

- a) write to Jill Mortimer MP for Hartlepool to request an update on actions taken.

- b) write to Claire Coutinho MP (Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing), Michael Gove MP (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)

Signed: Councillors Young, D Nicholson, Martin-wells, Leedham, Cassidy, Cranney, Cowie, Buchan Groves, Darby, Smith, Lindridge, V Nicholson, Brown, Moore, Reeve, Little”

The Motion was moved by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Brown

On moving the following amendment, Councillor Brash advised that there was agreement with the background set out in Motion but there was issue of a lack of detail in the resolutions included therein. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Creevy:-

“Council, therefore, resolves to:-

- a. Write to Jill Mortimer MP for Hartlepool to request an update on actions taken, including what formal written representations she has made to Ministers, what spoken contributions she has made in Parliament on this matter and details of the specific vote in which she opposed the Government’s funding plans for Local Authorities that has led to this crisis
- b. Write to Claire Coutinho MP (Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing), Michael Gove MP (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) to include an outline
 - The significant increase in demand
 - The significant increase in cost
 - The failure of this Government to support these vulnerable children
 - The dramatic increase in child poverty as a contributing factor generally, as highlighted by our Audit and Governance Committee

And to demand

- Legislation is brought forward to fix this ‘poorly regulated sector’
- That funding to Local Authorities is increased to take account of increased demand and costs”

A vote on the amendment was agreed, with no dissent.

A vote on the substantive Motion was agreed, with no dissent.

3. “The Council has a duty, through the Blue Badge scheme, to ensure that people with severe mobility problems caused by visible and non-visible (‘hidden’) disabilities can access goods and services.

The introduction of charges for 'Blue Badge' holders in council car parks, which was instigated without proper consultation with the disabled community, has failed in that duty.

Hartlepool's Community-Led Inclusion Partnership has highlighted a number of issues, particularly around the accessibility of ticket machines.

Moreover, there seems to be a lack of understanding that the choice of a space is severely limited to disabled people.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Suspend Blue Badge Parking charges in council car parks until such time as proper engagement with the disabled community can take place and the issues that they have highlighted can be addressed to their satisfaction.

Signed: Councillors Harrison, Brash, Allen, Boddy, Clayton, Creevy, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Howson, Morley, Thompson, Sharp, Wallace, Dodds, Holbrook, Oliver, Dunbar”

The Motion was moved by Councillor Clayton and seconded by Councillor Brash.

Elected members debated issues arising from the Motion.

It was moved by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Buchan:-

“That the Motion be approved with a time of one month on suspension of charges”

A vote taken by show of hands was lost.

It was moved by Councillor Little and seconded by Councillor Cassidy:-

“That a working group be set up to consider this issue and the suspension of charges be for a period of 3 months”

A vote taken by show of hands was lost.

A vote on the Motion was carried.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

26. OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS

Following the appointments made to Outside Bodies at the Annual Council meeting on 16 May 2023, nominations were sought for remaining vacancies on the following organisations:-

Teesside International Consultative Committee
 Fairtrade Town Steering Group
 Victoria and Jubilee Homes
 Furness Seaman's Pension Fund (4 year Term of office until 2025 – the persons nominated do not have to be Elected Members of the Council)

Following the recent appointment of Councillor Young at the Annual Council meeting to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Local Enterprise Partnership Board, Tees Valley Combined Authority had advised that a Local Authority representative is no longer required as this is now a business board. The Combined Authority had also advised that a representative is no longer required on the Culture and Tourism Thematic Partnership, to which Councillor Buchan was appointed, as this is now an officer led meeting.

In relation to the appointments of Councillor Little to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Transport Committee and Tees Valley Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Tees Valley Combined Authority had indicated that Councillor Little is not permitted to sit on both the Transport Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Notification had been received that Councillor Little would remain the nominated representative on the Transport Committee.

In relation to the appointments of Councillors Martin-Wells, Boddy and Morley to the North East Regional Employers Organisation and Councillor Young to the Executive Committee, notification had been received that Hartlepool Borough Council are only entitled to 3 representatives, one of whom will sit on the Executive Committee. It was reported at the meeting that notification had recently been received that Councillor Martin-Wells had resigned from the organisation.

Following resignation of Councillor Andrew Martin-Wells from the Crustacean Deaths Working Group, Full Council was requested to appoint a replacement member to the working group.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That Councillor Harrison be appointed to the Fairtrade Steering Group.
- (ii) That the following organisations be removed from the outside body list:-
 - Tees Valley Combined Authority Local Enterprise Partnership Board
 - Tees Valley Combined Authority Culture and Tourism Thematic Partnership
- (iii) As there were no nominations to replace Councillor Little on the Tees Valley Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the vacancy on the Committee was noted.
- (iv) That Councillor Young replace Cllr Martin-Wells on the North East Regional Employers Organisation.
- (v) That the requirement for the Chairs of Committees to be an appointment to the Crustacean Deaths Working Group be

removed and the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee, Cllr Brash, be replaced by Cllr Feeney on the Working Group, leaving one remaining vacancy on the Group arising from the resignation of Councillor Andrew Martin-Wells.

27. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The Managing Director had been advised that Councillor Moore is to replace Councillor V Nicholson on the Audit and Governance Committee. A further membership change on the Committee was reported verbally at the meeting that Councillor Smith had resigned from the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the membership changes on the Audit and Governance Committee be approved.

28. ANNUAL COUNCIL

Elected Members were reminded that when the Council dates were agreed at the Annual Council meeting, it was agreed that Annual Council 2024 would be on Tuesday 14 May, 2024 (Annual Council) and the Mayoral Investiture Ceremony would be on 16 May. The approval of Full Council was requested to change those dates to the following week. Consequently the revised dates would be Annual Council 21 May and the Mayoral Investiture Ceremony on 23 May.

RESOLVED – That the change of date of the Annual Council meeting and Mayor Investiture Ceremony to 21 May and 23 May respectively be approved.

29. VIREMENT

The Managing Director reported that an Elected Member had requested that they receive 50% of the Special Responsibility Allowance they are entitled to and that the remaining 50% be used to apply for further grant funding to purchase play park equipment in their ward. As this constituted a virement between Directorates i.e. from Corporate to Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services the Constitution currently required the virement to be approved by Full Council.

RESOLVED – That the virement between Directorates be approved.

30. SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Access to Information Procedure Rules included in the Council's Constitution, Full Council was informed that no special urgency decisions were taken in the period February 2023 – April 2023.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

31. NORTH EAST AND NORTH CUMBRIA INTEGRATED CARE BOARD - 2023/24 APPOINTMENTS

The Managing Director reported receipt of notification that Councillor Moore had resigned from the above Board. At the time of writing the report, the Managing Director had hoped the process for nominations would have been determined. This hadn't happened and nominations would, therefore, be sought to represent the 14 local authorities included within the ICB.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

32. HARTLEPOOL MAYORAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (HDC)

The Managing Director reported that the HDC Board had met 3 times, 20th March, 22nd May and 19th June 2023. The main items discussed and approved by the Board were set out in the report.

It was confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Secretary of State for DHLUC in line with the Council decision regarding the transfer of public assets detailed in the report, and as of yet a response had not been received.

Following presentation of the report, it was highlighted that this item had been included on the Business report as the Extraordinary Council meeting, convened to discuss HDC issues, had been abandoned. Clarification was provided to elected members on the background and concerns relating to this issue.

With the approval of the Chair, the following Motion was circulated at the meeting:-

“That Council resolves to write to the chair of the MDC board to request the following:

Assets

- That public assets, (in full of a percentage thereof) previously owned by the Council will not be sold, transferred or let to any third party from the HDC, without prior approval of this Council.
- That any capital receipt from the sale of a public asset previously owned by the Council be returned to the council to support its budget and delivery of services to Hartlepool people.
- That any revenue (by way of rent or other form) generated by public assets previously owned by the Council be paid to the Council to support its budget and delivery of services to Hartlepool people.

Transparency

- That the elected membership of the HDC board reflects the political balance of the council and therefore the will of Hartlepool people.

- That the remit of Hartlepool Council's Audit & Governance Committee be expanded to include responsibility for the scrutiny of the HDC.

The MDC Constitution requires an elected member from Hartlepool Council to be present in order to make the board quorate.

Therefore, Council further resolves to make attendance by our elected members at the MDC board contingent on these requests being met."

The Motion was moved by Councillor Brash and seconded by Councillor Boddy.

Elected members debated issues relating to responsibility for planning functions, transparency concerns and benefits arising from the remit of the Council's Audit and Governance Committee being expanded to include responsibility for the scrutiny of the HDC. During the debate there was a difference of understanding in relation to responsibility for the planning function which the Managing Director clarified.

A vote taken by show of hands was carried and the Motion agreed.

33. CAPITAL VIREMENT

The Managing Director reported that a capital scheme, fully funded by Conditional grant funding, to replace toilet facilities at Clavering Primary School had been approved by Children's Services Committee on 14 March 2023. Owing to inflationary pressures, amendments to the final works required and the inability of a key contractor to fulfil the order to the required timescale, the budgeted costs had increased from £29,200 to £47,072. The increased costs could be fully met from Conditional grant unallocated contingency, however, as it represented a cost increase of more than £10,000, Council approval was required.

RESOLVED – That the capital virement be approved.

34. DEAD CRUSTACEANS COLLABORATIVE WORKING GROUP

In 2022 Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council established the Dead Crustaceans Collaborative Working Group to facilitate collaborative working across all Tees Valley local authorities in response to the mass mortality crustacean event in 2021. A request has been received from North Yorkshire County Council to take a seat on the working group and a view is being sought from each of the existing member authorities on the expansion of the membership of the group. It was noted that views are to be submitted to the working group to inform consideration of the request from North Yorkshire Council.

RESOLVED – That the addition of North Yorkshire County Council, to the membership of the Dead Crustaceans Collaborative Working Group, be supported.

35. PUBLIC QUESTION

None.

36. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

- a) Questions to the Chairs about recent decisions of Council Committees and Forums without notice under Council Procedure Rule 12.1.

None.

- b) Questions on notice to the Chair of any Committee or Forum under Council Procedure Rule 12.2.

None.

- c) Questions on notice to the Council representatives on the Police and Crime Panel and Cleveland Fire Authority.

None.

- d) Minutes of the meetings held by the Cleveland Fire Authority held on 10 February 2023 were noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.50 p.m.

CEREMONIAL MAYOR

COUNCIL
28 September 2023



Report of: Constitution Committee

Subject: FURTHER PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable Full Council to consider the recommendations of the Committee following a periodic review of the Constitution including proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules which have stood adjourned since the meeting of Full Council on the 13 July 2023.

2. BACKGROUND

This report follows Full Council's consideration of the recommendations of the Committee in response to the periodic review of the constitution. In accordance with Rule 22.2 the recommended changes to the Council Procedure Rules must stand adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of Full Council.

3. PROPOSALS

The Committee has made a number of recommendations in relation to the Council Procedure Rules which are set out below:-

Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules - Questions from the Public - At the meeting of Full Council on 23 March 2023, a Member raised concerns that the constitution prevented public questions and answers from being debated and requested this committee consider amending Rule 9.1 to allow for public questions to be debated.

Recommendation – That the Council Procedure Rules be amended to incorporate the following:-

“That following the response, the Chair will ask the member of the public if they consider that their question has been answered, if so

there will be no debate. If the member of the public states that their question has not been answered, the Chair will allow up to 10 minutes for debate and the Rules of Debate will apply.

Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules - Time and Place of Meetings - At the Annual Council meeting, on 16th May, it was proposed that the commencement time of meetings of Full Council be changed to 7.00 p.m.

Recommendation - The Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the time of meetings of Full Council be changed to 7.00 p.m.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Full Council considers the recommendations of the Committee in relation to changes to the Council Procedure Rules and to delegate authority to the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources to make the necessary changes to the Constitution arising from the agreed changes

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Full Council – 13 July 2023
Hartlepool Borough Council – Constitution (Part 4)

COUNCIL

23RD SEPTEMBER 2023



Subject: FINAL REPORT – ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCIL SERVICES IN HARTLEPOOL FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES AND LONG TERM CONDITIONS – RESULTS OF ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION

Report of: Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To present the:-

- i) Findings of the investigation into Accessibility of Council Services in Hartlepool for those with Disabilities and Long Term Conditions; and
- ii) Decision of the Finance and Policy Committee in relation to the acceptance of the report's recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Audit and Governance Committee undertook a detailed investigation into Accessibility of Council Services in Hartlepool for those with Disabilities and Long Term Conditions.

2.2 The Committee's final report can be accessed via the following link https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/downloads/download/2504/accessibility_of_council_services_in_hartlepool_for_those_with_disabilities_and_long_term_conditions (however, should a paper copy be required this can be obtained from joan.stevens@hartlepool.gov.uk).

2.3 The investigation report was considered by the Finance and Policy Committee on the 3rd July 2023 and it was agreed that a decision in relation to its recommendations would be deferred to allow further public engagement to be undertaken. The requested additional survey was undertaken between the 29th June 2023 and the 8th August 2023.

2.4 The Finance and Policy Committee on the 18th September 2023 considered the results of the additional survey and the re-submitted recommendations of the investigation (as summarised in **Appendix1**). Consideration was also given to the action plan produced in response to each of the recommendations.

- 2.5 A copy of the report considered by the Finance and Policy Committee on the 18th September 2023 is attached at **Appendix 2**.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Full Council note the findings and recommendations of the investigation, as approved by the Finance and Policy Committee on the 3rd July 2023. (Owing to the timing of meetings a verbal update on the proposals referred from Finance and Policy Committee (19.09.22) will be provided at Council (29.09.22)).

4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 4.1 The following background paper(s) were used in the preparation of this report:
- a) Hartlepool Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
 - b) Long Term Conditions – Working Well – Health – Hartlepool Borough Council
 - c) Care Act 2014
 - d) [EQUALITY ACT 2010 PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY.pdf](#)
 - e) Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018
 - f) https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/hartlepool-borough-council/access_guides?vtag=false
 - g) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>
 - h) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>
 - i) Audit and Governance Committee – Reports and minutes
 - j) Accessibility of Council Services for those with Disabilities and long term Conditions in Hartlepool – Final report May 2023
 - k) Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee – 3rd July 2023 and 18th September 2023

5. CONTACT OFFICERS

Joan Stevens – Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Legal Services Department
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 284142
Email: joan.stevens@hartlepool.gov.uk

Appendix 1

- 1) Exploration of some adjustments would require more significant investment and be longer term actions. Other short / medium term actions would be to:-
 - i) Develop a communications campaign to:
 - Highlight the various support schemes and reasonable adjustments that are already have in place;
 - Promote 'One-Stop-Shop' touch points such as the Civic Centre reception and Community Hubs where people can get assistance with everything in one place. Making those who find accessing the Civic Centre aware that the same service can be accessed elsewhere; and
 - Promote the role of Community Hubs and Community Navigators to increase the understanding of the services they offer.
 - ii) Ensure that community buildings and touch points have posters and leaflets on display for a range of disability support groups and charities.
 - iii) Circulate basic guidance to staff on font size and type, use of plain English, how to book an interpreter when one is required and put this information in an easy to find location on the intranet.
 - iv) Create an "accessibility" tile on the intranet homepage so it is easy to find and collate a range of useful accessibility information for staff to be able to find quickly and easily when a disabled person makes contact.
- 2) Equality of access to services for all is a fundamental right and residents with disabilities and long term conditions should not be restricted in terms of the times they can access services or the levels of privacy they can expect. To this end:-
 - i) A Text Relay Service should be introduced;
 - ii) Given the financial restrictions faced by the local authority, the feasibility and benefits, of creation of a pod facility in the Civic Centre be explored to allow residents and officers to use online signing / translation services;
 - iii) The creation of a network of BSL trained staff, to act as first point of contact for volunteers, be explored;
 - iv) Existing TV screens in the Civic Centre reception be used to promote accessibility services and the assistance that is available; and
 - v) The Loop system currently used in council buildings be reviewed to ensure that it is still compatible with modern hearing aids.
- 3) Provide access to a video / telephone translation service (for BSL and other languages) in the Civic Centre, and a private room for the discussion of confidential issues. This facility to be promoted (e.g. via signs on glass partitions

in a similar way to how pharmacies tell customers they can use a private consultation room).

- 4) A review of workforce training be undertaken to explore how disability awareness and an understanding of reasonable adjustments, could be increased, within available resources. As part of this:-
 - i) Accessibility and diversity awareness training to be rolled out as mandatory training for all HBC staff and offered as an option for Councillors as part of the induction process; and
 - ii) Options for training be explored including the use of online packages to allow ease of access and roll out across departments, without the need for an external trainer.
- 5) The newly established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group to be used as a mechanism to share best practice, monitor performance and identify service improvements.
- 6) Improvements to the HBC website be explored to ensure that it is EDI compliant going forward, including but not be limited to:-
 - i) Read options for documents, to allow access by blind or visually impaired residents;
 - ii) Captions / signing on social media posts / videos; and
 - iii) When time-critical videos are posted on social media, and there is not time to set up closed captions, the video should include a text card to say that subtitles will be added. For videos which are not time-critical subtitles should be added before they are uploaded.
- 7) Council reports, documents and forms must be accessible (easy read / screen reader friendly) and going forward clear content guidance should to be provided, and its use promoted, including:-
 - i) Where appropriate, instructions for the inclusion of links to allow the use of screen readers; and
 - ii) Promotion of use of a document accessibility checker.
- 8) A consultation to be undertaken with partners on the potential benefits, and level of support for, the creation of a needs passport / card system that could be used to ensure that officers quickly recognise and respond to any additional support needs.
- 9) The process for creation of the Highlight on the Waterfront development is an example of good practice in terms of engagement / involvement with residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions. This good practice to be rolled out across the development of all services and strategies.

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

18TH SEPTEMBER 2023



Subject: AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
INVESTIGATION - ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCIL
SERVICES IN HARTLEPOOL FOR THOSE WITH
DISABILITIES AND LONG TERM CONDITIONS –
RESULTS OF ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION

Report of: Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee

Decision Type: Non Key

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.
- of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.
- that has an inclusive and growing economy.
- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To present:-

- i) The results of the additional consultation, undertaken at the request of the Finance and Policy Committee on the 3rd July 2023; and
- ii) The Action Plan produced to inform consideration of the investigation's recommendations (**Appendix C**).

2.2 To seek consideration of the re-submitted recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee's investigation, with due regard to the content of the Action Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In June 2022, the Council's Audit and Governance Committee launched an investigation to find out how accessible council services are to people with disabilities, long term conditions and their carers. The Committee's investigation resulted in the formulation of a report containing nine recommendations which was presented to the Finance and Policy Committee on the 3rd July 2023.
- 3.2 During consideration of the Committee's findings, a number of comments were made by members of the Finance and Policy Committee in relation to the process for, and outcomes of, the consultation and engagement process. These included:-
- i) A request for clarity in relation to potential contradictions between public responses through the quick poll and full survey in terms of service satisfaction. It was noted that 78% of people who responded to the quick poll felt that the Council does not do enough to make its services accessible, whilst 55% of those who responded to the full survey had a positive experience in accessing services.
 - ii) Concern about the statistical relevance of the survey results as a basis for the formulation of the Committee's recommendations, given the low level of public response, and absence of organisational responses outside of those submitted by the blind or visually impaired community.
- 3.3 With due regard to point (ii), the Finance and Policy Committee agreed that a decision in relation to the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee would be deferred to allow further public engagement to be undertaken.
- 3.4 In accordance with the wishes of the Finance and Policy Committee an additional survey was undertaken between the 29th June 2023 and the 8th August 2023.

4. CONSULTATION DETAILS

- 4.1 The additional survey was undertaken via Hartlepool Borough Council's engagement platform 'Your Say' with alternative formats provided for the submission of views. These included paper and easy read versions of the survey, the ability to provide telephone feedback and in person meetings with individual groups and organisations.
- 4.2 Involvement in the survey was again heavily promoted via press release, social media, direct emails and telephone calls to as many of the organisations as possible. Across these various mechanisms, invitations to promote and / or participate in the survey, and offers of attendance at meetings of groups and organisations, were extended to:
- All Councillors (members were asked to identify any specific groups / bodies / individuals they would like to be engaged);

- All VCS groups across Hartlepool;
- Hartlepower (including its Sector Connector Group);
- Healthwatch (including 50+ Forum and Mental Health Forum);
- SENDIASS Hartlepool;
- Pathways to Independence;
- Hartlepool Deaf Centre;
- Hartlepool Vision Support;
- Hartlepool Carers;
- Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group;
- Armed Forces Liaison Group;
- The Bridge - Dementia advice and support; and
- CLIP.

4.3 With the approval of the Chair of the Finance, and Policy Committee and the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, the additional consultation focused on four questions:

Q1 - What do you think about the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee?

Q2 - Of the 9 recommendations which do you think we should prioritise to tackle first?

Q3 - Why did you choose that answer?

Q4 - Did you take part in the first consultation held last year?

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS

5.1 The additional consultation closed on the 27th August 2023 with a total of 46 18 responses received. An evaluation of the responses to each of the questions indicates that:

Question 1 - What do you think about the Audit and Governance Committee's recommendations?

- i) Views were largely positive with those who responded of the view that the **recommendations are 'valuable', 'laudable' and 'suitable'**. However, the 'real test' would be their effectiveness / implementation and how the changes are communicated and reviewed.
- ii) There were some concerns that the recommendations did not reach far enough and that the use of technology to support service users would not be helpful to those who did not have a smart phone or access to the internet. One suggestion being that case files should be tagged with relevant information regarding disabilities and access requirements.
- iii) The need for clear communication of accessibility information for buildings and events on the HBC website was highlighted. Some participants stated that staff should be aware of those with various disabilities and be able to sign post appropriately.

Question 2 – Of the 9 recommendations which do you think we should tackle first?

- i) Responses ranked the importance of implementation of the recommendations as:-

Priority 1 (Recommendation 1): Raise awareness of the facilities available for disabled customers and improve information (33.3% of responders – 6).

Priority 2 (Recommendation 4): Improve staff training on disability and accessibility issues (27.8% of responders – 5) and

Priority 3 (Recommendation 8): Carry out a consultation to find out if the creation of a passport / card / lanyard system could be useful for customers to show to staff so that their needs can be quickly recognised and responded to (22.2% of responders – 4).

Priority 4 (Recommendation 2): Reintroduce the text relay service and improve access for customers who are Deaf, have hearing loss or other communication / speech difficulties (5.6% of responders – 1), **(Recommendation 5)**: Use the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group to identify improvements to services (5.6% of responders – 1) and **(Recommendation 6)**: Improve the Hartlepool.gov.uk website to make it more accessible and easier to use (5.6% of responders – 1).

- ii) Whilst not identified as the highest priority for immediate implementation via the survey, the remaining recommendations were recognised as being 'valuable', 'laudable' and 'suitable'.

Question 3 - Why did you chose your priority recommendation?

- i) Responses reinforces the findings of the original consultation (as detailed in the Audit and Governance Committee's Final Report) in that:
- It is not clear what services or facilities are available to people and it is important to communicate where people can get the help and support they need.
 - Staff training on disability and accessibility issues is key, and it is vital that within HBC staff have an awareness, understanding and appreciation of disabilities' and how this can impact on the experience of disabled people. In addition to this improved staff training will give the council a more effective pool of talent and resources to cope in any situation.
 - The use of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group to identify improvements to council services made sense as the group was already established.

Question 4 - Did you take part in the first consultation held last year?

Of the 18 responses received to the additional consultation, 8 (44.4%) had taken part in the original consultation. Despite extensive promotion only 10 new participants had been attracted to the additional consultation and overall response rate had again been low. On this basis, a total of 66 individuals had responded across both surveys and with this in mind the statistical relevance of the consultation results again needed to be recognised.

- 5.2 The anonymous nature of the survey means that it was not possible to show which groups had provided, or actively promoted, responses. In addition to this, the offer of in person engagement had only been taken up by one group, that being the Deaf Centre. The views expressed by the Deaf Centre mirrored those gathered via the survey and are detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 5.3 In summary, it should be noted that the results of the additional consultation supported the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee and. On this basis, the Committee is asked to reconsider the Audit and Governance Committee's final report (**Appendix C**) and approve its recommendations.
- 5.4 An Action Plan (**Appendix B**) has been produced to inform Members in consideration of the investigations recommendations.

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1 No proposals are made in addition to the recommendations outlined in Section 8.

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS / IMPLICATIONS / ELT FEEDBACK

- 7.1 The Executive Leadership Team has considered the recommendations and proposed action plan and has expressed concerns about the resource implications associated with implementation, both from a staffing and financial perspective. In light of the very low rate of responses despite a second attempt at engagement, and the existing work that is underway through the Joint Sensory Support Plan and Joint Sensory Support Group, it is recommended that a proportionate approach is adopted, taking into account affordability.

RISK IMPLICATIONS	Failure to meet in full the requirements of the requirements within the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	Outlined in the Action Plan produced in response to the recommendations of the investigation (Appendix C).
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	None.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	None.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	Since the first equality objectives were published in April 2012 the Council has continued to demonstrate that equality and diversity is a core part of what we do as an organisation. The recommendations of the investigation further demonstrate the Councils' commitment to this.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No implications.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No implications.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No implications.
CONSULTATION	The Committee undertook an extensive extended consultation and engagement exercise to seek residents' views and priorities in terms of the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee's investigation.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Finance and Policy Committee is requested to:-

- i) Note the outcome of the extended consultation process and Action Plan produced; and
- ii) With due regard to the content of the Action Plan, consider the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee, following their investigation into the accessibility of council services in Hartlepool for those with disabilities and Long Term conditions, as detailed below:-
 - 1) Exploration of some adjustments would require more significant investment and be longer term actions. Other short / medium term actions would be to:-
 - i) Develop a communications campaign to:
 - Highlight the various support schemes and reasonable adjustments that are already have in place;
 - Promote 'One-Stop-Shop' touch points such as the Civic Centre reception and Community Hubs where people can get assistance with everything in one place. Making those who find accessing the Civic Centre aware that the same service can be accessed elsewhere; and

- Promote the role of Community Hubs and Community Navigators to increase the understanding of the services they offer.
 - ii) Ensure that community buildings and touch points have posters and leaflets on display for a range of disability support groups and charities.
 - iii) Circulate basic guidance to staff on font size and type, use of plain English, how to book an interpreter when one is required and put this information in an easy to find location on the intranet.
 - iv) Create an “accessibility” tile on the intranet homepage so it is easy to find and collate a range of useful accessibility information for staff to be able to find quickly and easily when a disabled person makes contact.
- 2) Equality of access to services for all is a fundamental right and residents with disabilities and long term conditions should not be restricted in terms of the times they can access services or the levels of privacy they can expect. To this end:-
- i) A Text Relay Service should be introduced;
 - ii) Given the financial restrictions faced by the local authority, the feasibility and benefits, of creation of a pod facility in the Civic Centre be explored to allow residents and officers to use online signing / translation services;
 - iii) The creation of a network of British Sign Language (BSL) trained staff, to act as first point of contact for volunteers, be explored;
 - iv) Existing TV screens in the Civic Centre reception be used to promote accessibility services and the assistance that is available; and
 - v) The Loop system currently used in council buildings be reviewed to ensure that it is still compatible with modern hearing aids.
- 3) Provide access to a video / telephone translation service (for BSL and other languages) in the Civic Centre, and a private room for the discussion of confidential issues. This facility to be promoted (e.g. via signs on glass partitions in a similar way to how pharmacies tell customers they can use a private consultation room).
- 4) A review of workforce training be undertaken to explore how disability awareness and an understanding of reasonable adjustments, could be increased, within available resources. As part of this:-
- i) Accessibility and diversity awareness training to be rolled out as mandatory training for all HBC staff and offered as an option for Councillors as part of the induction process; and

- ii) Options for training be explored including the use of online packages to allow ease of access and roll out across departments, without the need for an external trainer.
- 5) The newly established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group to be used as a mechanism to share best practice, monitor performance and identify service improvements.
- 6) Improvements to the HBC website be explored to ensure that it is EDI compliant going forward, including but not be limited to:-
 - i) Read options for documents, to allow access by blind or visually impaired residents;
 - ii) Captions / signing on social media posts / videos; and
 - iii) When time-critical videos are posted on social media, and there is not time to set up closed captions, the video should include a text card to say that subtitles will be added. For videos which are not time-critical subtitles should be added before they are uploaded.
- 7) Council reports, documents and forms must be accessible (easy read / screen reader friendly) and going forward clear content guidance should to be provided, and its use promoted, including:-
 - i) Where appropriate, instructions for the inclusion of links to allow the use of screen readers; and
 - ii) Promotion of use of a document accessibility checker.
- 8) A consultation to be undertaken with partners on the potential benefits, and level of support for, the creation of a needs passport / card system that could be used to ensure that officers quickly recognise and respond to any additional support needs.
- 9) The process for creation of the Highlight on the Waterfront development is an example of good practice in terms of engagement / involvement with residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions. This good practice to be rolled out across the development of all services and strategies.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To identify opportunities to improve the accessibility of Council services for those with Disabilities and Long Term Conditions.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 The following background paper(s) were used in the preparation of this report:
 - a) Hartlepool Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
 - b) Long Term Conditions – Working Well – Health – Hartlepool Borough

- Council
- c) Care Act 2014
 - d) [EQUALITY ACT 2010 PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY.pdf](#)
 - e) Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018
 - f) https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/hartlepool-borough-council/access_guides?vtag=false
 - g) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>
 - h) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>
 - i) Audit and Governance Committee – Reports and minutes
 - j) Accessibility of Council Services for those with Disabilities and long term Conditions in Hartlepool – Final report May 2023
 - k) Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee – 3rd July 2023

11. CONTACT OFFICERS

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 Hartlepool Borough Council
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 Email: joan.stevens@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 29 th August 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 29 th August 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 6 th September 2023

Deaf Centre Contribution to Additional Consultation

Recommendation 1: Raise awareness of the facilities available for disabled customers and improve information.

Support for Recommendation / Priority – Yes (*High Priority*)

Other comments – *Promotion should include Hartbeat and be provided in person to groups / bodies (e.g. the Deaf Centre), posters and leaflets.*

Recommendation 2: Reintroduce the text relay service and improve access for customers who are Deaf, have hearing loss or other communication / speech difficulties.

Support for Recommendation / Priority – Yes (*High Priority*)

Other comments – *It was noted that most deaf people use standard text services on their mobile phones and whilst the reintroduction of this service was a very positive move, written English was not the first language of many. As such, this service needed to be provided in conjunction with the availability of face to face support.*

Recommendation 3: Provide access to a video / telephone translation service (for BSL and other languages).

Support for Recommendation / Priority – Yes (*High Priority*)

Other comments – *Promotion and training will be essential.*

Recommendation 4: Improve staff training on disability and accessibility issues.

Support for Recommendation / Priority – Yes (*High Priority*)

Other comments – *Training needs to be refreshed annually and should include carers as well.*

Recommendation 5: Use the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group to identify improvements to services.

Support for Recommendation / Priority – Yes (*High Priority*)

Other comments – *Good idea and the continued development of the services to support people is essential.*

Recommendation 6: Improve the Hartlepool.gov.uk website to make it more accessible and easier to use.

Support for Recommendation / Priority – Yes (*High Priority*)

Other comments – *Reference was made to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (<https://accessibility-manual.dwp.gov.uk/accessibility-law/web-content-accessibility-guidelines#:~:text=WCAG%202.1%20is%20a%20list%20of%20criteria.%20Each,make%20up%203%20levels.%20A%2C%20AA%20and%20AAA.>) and the importance of the Council's website achieving a AAA rating, the provision of captions and sub titles was emphasised.*

Recommendation 7: Ensure that Council reports, documents and forms are accessible and easy to read / use

Support for Recommendation / Priority – *Yes (High Priority)*

Other comments – *Comments as per those for recommendation 6.*

Recommendation 8: Carry out a consultation to find out if the creation of a passport / card / lanyard system could be useful for customers to show to staff so that their needs can be quickly recognised and responded to.

Support for Recommendation / Priority – *Yes (Medium Priority)*

Other comments – *It was felt that this would be a good idea, however, it needed to be provided with appropriate training. In addition to this, it was suggested that details of individual support needs could be recorded on council records, in a similar way to that done by hospitals.*

Recommendation 9: Share the lessons learned from the development of the Highlight Leisure centre across all services.

Support for Recommendation / Priority – *Yes (Medium Priority)*

Other comments – *Nothing added.*

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN**NAME OF COMMITTEE:** Audit and Governance Committee**NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY:** Accessibility of Council Services in Hartlepool for Those with Disabilities and Long Term Conditions

+ please detail any risk implications, financial / legal / equality & diversity / staff / asset management considerations

* please note that for monitoring purposes a date is required rather than using phrases such as 'on-going'

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	FINANCIAL / OTHER IMPLICATIONS	LEAD OFFICER	COMPLETION DATE*
<p><u>Identified as the highest priority for implementation.</u></p> <p>1) Exploration of some adjustments would require more significant investment and be longer term actions. Other short / medium term actions would be to:-</p> <p>i) Develop a communications campaign to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlight the various support schemes and reasonable adjustments that are already have in place; - Promote 'One-Stop-Shop' touch points such as the Civic Centre reception and Community Hubs where people can get assistance with everything in one place. Making those who find accessing the Civic Centre aware that the 	<p>i) Communications Plan to be developed with campaign work to begin from August 2023</p>		<p>i) To iv) Connor Kerr / Bev Bearne</p>	<p>March 2024</p>

<p>same service can be accessed elsewhere; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the role of Community Hubs and Community Navigators to increase the understanding of the services they offer. <p>ii) Ensure that community buildings and touch points have posters and leaflets on display for a range of disability support groups and charities.</p> <p>iii) Circulate basic guidance to staff on font size and type, use of plain English, how to book an interpreter when one is required and put this information in an easy to find location on the intranet.</p> <p>iv) Create an “accessibility” tile on the intranet homepage so it is easy to find and collate a range of useful accessibility information for staff to be able to find quickly and easily when a disabled person makes contact.</p> <p>v)</p>	<p>ii) Communications Team to facilitate the distribution of posters and leaflets to community buildings</p> <p>iii) Guides to creating accessible content and booking interpreters are already available on the Equality and Diversity tile on the intranet for staff</p> <p>iv) An Equality Diversity tile is in place on the intranet homepage and links to a range of information including the above</p>			<p>March 2024</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>
<p><u>Identified as the joint fourth priority for implementation.</u></p> <p>2) Equality of access to services for all is a fundamental right and residents with disabilities and long term conditions should not be restricted in terms of the times they can access services or the levels of privacy they can expect. To this end:-</p>				

<p>i) A Text Relay Service should be introduced;</p> <p>ii) Given the financial restrictions faced by the local authority, the feasibility and benefits, of creation of a pod facility in the Civic Centre be explored to allow residents and officers to use online signing / translation services;</p> <p>iii) The creation of a network of BSL trained staff, to act as first point of contact for volunteers, be explored;</p>	<p>i) The Text Relay service is now in use via customer services for all Adult Social Care Team including Adult Safeguarding / ISPA with access to the Relay UK app.</p> <p>The Text Relay system will be introduced in the support hub as soon as a mobile phone is available that has the capacity to run it – a phone is on order.</p> <p>ii) There would be a cost implication to this.</p> <p>Civic Centre - Meeting rooms within the Civic Centre reception area can be utilised as pod facilities – wider issue is access to translation services at point of contact but this is addressed further in the plan.</p> <p>Community Hubs - There is a pod that that could be used in the community hubs for 1:1 and a laptop or tablet could be provided to support video interpretation. This would, however, need to be booked and a pilot of block booking a few hours a week can be trialled.</p> <p>iii) Staff volunteers would be a first point of contact with any complex communication via qualified</p>	<p>Financial implication to be considered by ELT</p> <p>Financial implication to be considered by ELT</p>	<p>Laura Griffiths / Julie Howard / Leigh K</p> <p>Laura Griffiths / Julie Howard</p> <p>Gemma Ptak / Leigh Keeble</p> <p>Laura Griffiths / Julie Howard</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>31 December 2023 (tbc)</p>
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<p>iv) Existing TV screens in the Civic Centre reception be used to promote accessibility services and the assistance that is available; and</p> <p>v) The Loop system currently used in council buildings be reviewed to</p>	<p>translators. There would be a resource implication in setting this up.</p> <p>Currently exploring training provision with the Council's Organisational Development team who are in contact with RNIB and RNID – it is recommended that this be mandatory training for all frontline staff.</p> <p>There is also the potential opportunity to offer BSL training to employees through the Workforce Development Programme and is currently being reviewed.</p> <p>In terms of the Community Hubs staff some level of training would be useful but this would need to be used regularly to be effective.</p> <p>iv) Easy to do with no additional resources (other than loading information.</p> <p>A sign language video could be produced that could be accessible via a range of mediums including web-site and Hartlepool Now.</p> <p>v) Indications as part of the investigation were that new</p>	<p>Financial implications would</p>	<p>Laura Griffiths / Julie Howard</p>	<p>subject to finances)</p> <p>31 December 2023(subject to finances)</p>
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ensure that it is still compatible with modern hearing aids.	hearing aids aren't compatible with the existing system. This action has be allocated to the Building Maintenance team for review.	need to be considered by ELT	Laura Griffiths / Julie Howard	
<p><u>Identified as the joint fourth priority for implementation.</u></p> <p>3) Provide access to a video / telephone translation service (for BSL and other languages) in the Civic Centre, and a private room for the discussion of confidential issues. This facility to be promoted (e.g. via signs on glass partitions in a similar way to how pharmacies tell customers they can use a private consultation room).</p>	<p>- This was specifically requested by the BSL community so I think that this should be referenced and linked to a facility to request a BSL interpreter at the same time – the private room is no use without the translation service.</p> <p>- The provision of a room in the Civic is possible and a standard laptop could be used to provide a video translation service (no other equipment needed and 'Big Word' system is already used for translations). This could also be provided in the central hub.</p> <p>Rooms are in fact already available on request for all residents but this was something that Deaf users really wanted. The question being – why are deaf residents not aware of this – do we publicise it and are staff encouraged to use it) The introduction of a process to ensure that they are taken to a separate room for private signed / translated discussions would be achievable</p>	Financial implications would need to be considered by ELT	Laura Griffiths / Julie Howard	31 December 2023 (subject to finances)

	<p>with a refresh of accessibility awareness training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request for translation services and use of the text service is low (historic use of the video translation service had also been low) but it is unclear if this is because of a failure to engage or that individuals felt that their views aren't heard. - We do not have a person qualified to provide translation services. Having trained staff to be a first point of contact (basic translation / signposting services) would be useful but would have cost implications and demand is unclear. A suggested option, albeit with a financial implication being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A refresh of awareness training • Staff with basic translation services and knowledge of how to access other systems • A pilot scheme for the provision of a trained individual to be located in the Central Hub and / or Civic (drop in sessions half a day a week), demand and success of which could be monitored. This to be publicised as an option to access translators and other options provided (such as text service or video translation, etc.) • Introduction of sign video service to be scoped / considered although 			
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	usage of previous solutions has been historically moderate.			
<u>Identified as the second priority for implementation.</u> 4) A review of workforce training be undertaken to explore how disability awareness and an understanding of reasonable adjustments, could be increased, within available resources. As part of this:- i) Accessibility and diversity awareness training to be rolled out as mandatory training for all HBC staff and offered as an option for Councillors as part of the induction process; and ii) Options for training be explored including the use of online packages to allow ease of access and roll out across departments, without the need for an external trainer.	There may be some courses on Skillsgate that staff can access however we don't have enough licences for all staff so there would need to be a managed process to this.	Financial implications would need to be considered by ELT	Hayley Martin / Gillian Laight	TBC
<u>Identified as the joint fourth priority for implementation.</u> 5) The newly established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group to be used as a mechanism to share best practice, monitor performance and identify service improvements.	A new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group was established at the beginning of the year and this falls under their remit.		Catherine Grimwood / Bev Bearne	Complete
<u>Identified as the joint fourth priority for implementation.</u>				

<p>6) Improvements to the HBC website be explored to ensure that it is EDI compliant going forward, including but not be limited to:-</p> <p>i) Read options for documents, to allow access by blind or visually impaired residents;</p> <p>ii) Captions / signing on social media posts / videos; and</p> <p>iii) When time-critical videos are posted on social media, and there is not time to set up closed captions, the video should include a text card to say that subtitles will be added. For videos which are not time-critical subtitles should be added before they are uploaded.</p>	<p>i) Current website to be replaced and this recommendations will be covered in the specification for the new site</p> <p>ii) and iii) will be completed as recommended</p>		<p>Connor Kerr / Bev Bearne</p>	<p>March 2024</p> <p>December 2023</p>
<p>7) Council reports, documents and forms must be accessible (easy read / screen reader friendly) and going forward clear content guidance should to be provided, and its use promoted, including:-</p> <p>i) Where appropriate, instructions for the inclusion of links to allow the use of screen readers; and</p> <p>ii) Promotion of use of a document accessibility checker.</p>	<p>i) The brand guidelines refresh will include reference to accessible content.</p> <p>ii) MS Word has an in-built document accessibility checker. Instructions on how to use it are on the intranet on the Equality and Diversity tile.</p>		<p>Connor Kerr / Bev Bearne</p>	<p>March 2024</p>
<p><u>Identified as the third priority for implementation.</u></p>				<p>TBC</p>

<p>8) A consultation to be undertaken with partners (attendees to be confirmed) on the potential benefits, and level of support for, the creation of a needs passport / card system that could be used to ensure that officers quickly recognise and respond to any additional support needs.</p>	<p>A number of National Card schemes exists but is not free to access https://www.did-card.co.uk/</p> <p>It would not be possible to respond to a person's unique presentation just by way of showing a card. There are a number of existing schemes that can support identification of a certain condition however people should be considered as individuals in their own right.</p>	<p>Financial implications would need to be considered by ELT</p>	<p>Neil Harrison /John Lovatt</p>	
<p>9) The process for creation of the Highlight on the Waterfront development is an example of good practice in terms of engagement / involvement with residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions. This good practice to be rolled out across the development of all services and strategies.</p>	<p>It needs to be recognised that while this approach has been well received, HBC does not have the staff or funding to take such an in depth approach to every strategy and development moving forward.</p> <p>On this basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of the approach will be scheme specific; - Whilst Highlight can set the benchmark to aspire to, the interventions will be scalable to the size of the project; and - Identification of lead officers for the implementation of the approach will be down to individual project managers, with recommendations coming forward via ELT for consideration by the Capital Programme Board depending on the nature of the scheme. - 	<p>Financial implications would need to be considered by ELT</p>	<p>Kieran Bostock</p>	<p>Complete</p>



**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
FINAL REPORT**

**ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCIL SERVICES IN
HARTLEPOOL FOR THOSE WITH
DISABILITIES AND LONG TERM CONDITIONS**

MAY 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Over many years Hartlepool Borough Council has developed services and facilities aimed at supporting residents with disabilities and long term conditions, including investment in state-of-the-art facilities such as the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) and partnership working with the health and community / voluntary sector. More was, however, needed if Hartlepool was to become a truly accessible town for all residents and visitors, ensuring that the voices of residents living with disabilities and long term conditions are:

- Sought;
- Heard; and
- Incorporated into future Council initiatives which may impact on the physical, economic and social environment of the town.

A Council Motion drew attention to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the extent of pre-existing health inequalities in many towns and cities, in particularly those in the North of England. With particular reference to high numbers of Hartlepool residents with disabilities and long term conditions, attention was drawn to the impact on their ability to access services, facilities and many aspects of day-to-day life which many take for granted. Further impacting on their physical and mental wellbeing and leading to isolation, loneliness and exclusion.

In response to this Motion, Full Council agreed that the Audit and Governance Committee would undertake a review of Council regeneration & development activity and accessibility to services for those with disabilities and long term conditions. This was 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.

Conclusions

- 1) Hartlepool Borough Council has developed services and facilities aimed at supporting residents with disabilities and long term conditions and has invested in state-of-the-art facilities such as the Centre for Independent Living (CIL). There is, however, always more that can be done to ensure that the voices of residents are sought, heard and incorporated into future Council initiatives which may impact on the future physical, economic and social environment of the town.
- 2) Hartlepool staff are to be commended on their activities to support and signpost residents with disabilities and long term conditions. Experience being that where services are easy to access for those with disabilities or long term conditions, they are easier for all to access!
- 3) Accessibility is so much more than just physical access and must be given high priority in the development and provision of services. As such:
 - It is essential to have a clear understanding of Hartlepool's disabled community, its needs and challenges if the right services are to be provided in the right way. Only with this will the true level of need be identified to support the requirement for service change and adjustments.

- Departments need to be supported within the available resources to make any necessary improvements and provided with specialist advice and support where required.
 - The needs of people with disabilities and long term conditions need to be represented in the development and delivery of services. A good example, as identified by the disabled community, is the involvement of CLIP in the development of the Highlight building. This being identified as good practice by the disabled community.
 - Where residents with a disability or long term condition are involved in consultation / engagement as part of the development of services, there is a need to ensure that they are updated on the outcome of consultations and decisions as a matter of course. This should be done at an early stage in the process with participants involved in ongoing conversations throughout the development, deliver and review of services. Not as a one off event.
 - Workforce development is essential in terms of training to increase disability awareness and an understanding of what reasonable adjustments can be made.
- 4) Hartlepool Borough Council should at every opportunity champion the provision of accessible services with its partners, local business' and other organisations across the town.
 - 5) Emphasis needs to be placed on the promotion of the social model of disability, changing attitudes towards disabled people and improving disability awareness.
 - 6) There needs to be a consistent approach to asking people about additional needs at the first point of contact. Services that are accessed regularly by disabled people and those with long term conditions should share best practice.
 - 7) The completion of Impact Assessments to inform the decision making process is an essential part of the service development process. These assessments need to be undertaken as early as possible in the development of services and in order to simplify the process, it has been agreed that the Child and Family Poverty Impact Assessment and Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment will be amalgamated.
 - 8) Many adjustments do not require significant investment in terms of time or resources. A great deal can be achieved by taking a flexible approach to service delivery and making small changes to the way in which things are done. This is where involving disabled people in conversations around service delivery could be particularly beneficial.
 - 9) Subject to compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act, any proposals for the provision of additional activities, or service changes, must be considered alongside the financial challenges facing the local authority and be within available resources.
 - 10) Making every contact count (MECC) needs to be a priority with improved communication between departments to remove the need for residents to repeat their issues.
 - 11) Following calls for involvement in the investigation from groups and individuals across the town, the most significant level of input was received from Hartlepool's Deaf community. The investigation findings have subsequently been heavily influenced by their response and it is recognised that it may be beneficial to undertake further consultation as part of the process for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

- 12) The mystery shopper process was a beneficial element of the consultation process undertaken as part of the investigation and should be used more frequently as a means of assessing lived experiences

Recommendations

- 1) Exploration of some adjustments would require more significant investment and be longer term actions. Other short / medium term actions would be to:-
 - i) Develop a communications campaign to:
 - Highlight the various support schemes and reasonable adjustments that are already have in place;
 - Promote 'One-Stop-Shop' touch points such as the Civic Centre reception and Community Hubs where people can get assistance with everything in one place. Making those who find accessing the Civic Centre aware that the same service can be accessed elsewhere; and
 - Promote the role of Community Hubs and Community Navigators to increase the understanding of the services they offer.
 - ii) Ensure that community buildings and touch points have posters and leaflets on display for a range of disability support groups and charities.
 - iii) Circulate basic guidance to staff on font size and type, use of plain English, how to book an interpreter when one is required and put this information in an easy to find location on the intranet.
 - iv) Create an "accessibility" tile on the intranet homepage so it is easy to find and collate a range of useful accessibility information for staff to be able to find quickly and easily when a disabled person makes contact.
- 2) Equality of access to services for all is a fundamental right and residents with disabilities and long term conditions should not be restricted in terms of the times they can access services or the levels of privacy they can expect. To this end:-
 - i) A Text Relay Service should be introduced;
 - ii) Given the financial restrictions faced by the local authority, the feasibility and benefits, of creation of a pod facility in the Civic Centre be explored to allow residents and officers to use online signing / translation services;
 - iii) The creation of a network of BSL trained staff, to act as first point of contact for volunteers, be explored;
 - iv) Existing TV screens in the Civic Centre reception be used to promote accessibility services and the assistance that is available; and
 - v) The Loop system currently used in council buildings be reviewed to ensure that it is still compatible with modern hearing aids.

- 3) Provide access to a video / telephone translation service (for BSL and other languages) in the Civic Centre, and a private room for the discussion of confidential issues. This facility to be promoted (e.g. via signs on glass partitions in a similar way to how pharmacies tell customers they can use a private consultation room).
- 4) A review of workforce training be undertaken to explore how disability awareness and an understanding of reasonable adjustments, could be increased, within available resources. As part of this:-
 - i) Accessibility and diversity awareness training to be rolled out as mandatory training for all HBC staff and offered as an option for Councillors as part of the induction process; and
 - ii) Options for training be explored including the use of online packages to allow ease of access and roll out across departments, without the need for an external trainer.
- 5) The newly established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group to be used as a mechanism to share best practice, monitor performance and identify service improvements.
- 6) Improvements to the HBC website be explored to ensure that it is EDI compliant going forward, including but not be limited to:-
 - i) Read options for documents, to allow access by blind or visually impaired residents;
 - ii) Captions / signing on social media posts / videos; and
 - iii) When time-critical videos are posted on social media, and there is not time to set up closed captions, the video should include a text card to say that subtitles will be added. For videos which are not time-critical subtitles should be added before they are uploaded.
- 7) Council reports, documents and forms must be accessible (easy read / screen reader friendly) and going forward clear content guidance should to be provided, and its use promoted, including:-
 - i) Where appropriate, instructions for the inclusion of links to allow the use of screen readers; and
 - ii) Promotion of use of a document accessibility checker.
- 8) A consultation to be undertaken with partners on the potential benefits, and level of support for, the creation of a needs passport / card system that could be used to ensure that officers quickly recognise and respond to any additional support needs.
- 9) The process for creation of the Highlight on the Waterfront development is an example of good practice in terms of engagement / involvement with residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions. This good practice to be rolled out across the development of all services and strategies.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Audit and Governance Committee's investigation into the 'Accessibility of Council Services for those with Disabilities and long term Conditions in Hartlepool'.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

- 2.1 On the 25th 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 long term 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".

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

- 2.3 However, it is recognised that more can be done to make Hartlepool a truly accessible town for all of our residents and visitors to ensure that the voices of residents living with disabilities and long term conditions are sought, heard and incorporated into future Council initiatives which may impact on the future physical, economic and social environment of the town.

- 2.4 To this end, the Labour Group called upon the Council to agree that the Audit and Governance Committee 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 long term 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"

- 2.5 In accordance with the process for consideration of mandatory referrals from Full Council, a meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee was convened to receive the referral and 'scope' the process for its consideration (including detailed written evidence and extensive public engagement). Further meetings of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee were subsequently held on the 13 January 2022 and the 28 February 2022 at which the Committee received evidence and information to assist in the formulation of its views, conclusions and recommendations.

3. AIM AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 The Audit and Governance Committee met to receive the referral and agreed that the aim of its investigation would be to *‘Review the accessibility of Council services for those with disabilities and long term 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 in Hartlepool’.*
- 3.2 The Committee also agreed the ‘scope’ of the investigation, including detailed sources of evidence and mechanisms for extensive public engagement which were to be used to inform the formulation of conclusions and recommendations (as set out in Sections 12 and 13 of this report). A detailed record of the issues raised during these meetings is available from the Council’s Democratic Services and a summary of the terms of reference for the investigation are outlined in **Appendix 1.**

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The membership of the Audit and Governance Committee was Councillors Councillors Allen*, Boddy, Cook, Cowie, Creevy*, Falconer*, Feeney, Hall, Loynes, D Nicholson*, Picton, Richardson, Riddle and Smith.

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

5. DEFINITIONS OF ACCESSABILITY, DISABILITY, LIFE-LONG CONDITIONS AND DISCRIMINATION

- 5.1 As a starting point the Committee gained an understanding of what is meant by ‘accessibility’, ‘disability’, ‘life-long conditions’ and ‘discrimination’ for use as a baseline for the investigation.
- 5.2 Members appreciated that as part of discussions a clear differentiation needed to be made between ‘accessibility’ with ‘usability’:
- Usability being the extent to which a product (such as a device, service, or environment) can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals.
 - Whilst accessibility is:-
 - The concept of whether a product or service can be used by everyone and refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments to be usable by people with disabilities. Ensuring both "direct access" (i.e. unassisted) and "indirect access" (compatible with a person's assistive technology).
 - More than just physical access, it is also relates to accessibility of lifetime opportunities (e.g. financial inclusion, routes to employment and transport, etc.).

5.3 It was agreed by Members that consideration of both "direct" and "indirect" access needed to form part of the investigation, however, only one of the protected characteristics laid down within the Equality Act was to be focused on. That being 'disability'.

5.4 It was agreed that the definition of 'disability'¹ to be applied for the purpose of the investigation would be 'a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities'.

5.5 Other definitions were:

- Substantial is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed'; and
- Long term conditions². The effect of an impairment is long-term if:
 - (a) It has lasted for at least 12 months,
 - (b) It is likely to last for at least 12 months, or
 - (c) It is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.



6. NATIONAL EQUALITY LEGISLATION AND HOW IT APPLIES TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

6.1 The Committee explored the legal requirements within the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, as detailed below.

The Equality Act 2010. Protection of people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society; and

The Public Sector Equality Duty. Supporting local authorities in making good decisions, ensuring that they are aware of how different people are affected by their activities and are providing activities that are appropriate, accessible and meet different people's needs.

6.2 Looking specifically at how the Public Sector Equality Duty applies to Hartlepool Borough Council services and activities, Members found that the Council is required to **'ensure that the needs of all individuals are considered in their day to day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.'** There is also a requirement to have due regard to the need to:-

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it:

¹ Equality Act 2010

² kingsfund.org.uk

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and
 - Encouraging persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard to:
- Tackling prejudice; and
 - Promoting understanding.
- d) Publish equality objectives, at least every four years, and information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty.

6.3 The Committee recognised that the Equality Framework³ for Local Government plays a key part in fulfilling these obligations and was interested to find out how Hartlepool Borough Council services perform against the framework. Members also acknowledged the importance of equality as part of the decision making process and the need to:-

- i) Embed the below principles into the decision making processes and activities:-

Knowledge – those who exercise the public body’s functions need to be aware of the requirements of the Equality Duty. Compliance with the Equality Duty involving a conscious approach and state of mind.

Timeliness – the Equality Duty must be complied with before and at the time that a particular policy is under consideration or decision is taken – the Equality Duty cannot be satisfied by justifying a decision after it has been taken.

Real consideration – consideration of the three aims of the Equality Duty must form an integral part of the decision-making process and must be exercised in substance, with rigor and an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.

Sufficient information – the decision maker must consider what information they have and what further information is needed in order to give proper consideration to the Equality Duty.

No delegation – public bodies are responsible for ensuring that any third parties which exercise functions on their behalf are capable of complying with the Equality Duty, are required to comply with it and that they do so in practice and this duty cannot be delegated.

Review – public bodies must have regard to the Equality Duty not only when a policy is developed and decided up but also when it is implemented and reviewed as it is a continuing duty.

³ Equality Framework (<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/equality-framework-local-government-eflg-2021>)

ii) Ensure that key people are aware of the requirements of the Equality Duty:

- Board / Committee members;
- Senior Managers;
- Equality and Diversity staff;
- Human Resources staff;
- Policy makers;
- Communication staff;
- Analysts;
- Front line staff; and
- Procurement and Commissioning staff.

6.4 The Committee gained an understanding of the mechanisms the local authority already has in place to ensure that the principles of the framework are embedded into the decision making processes and activities. Members were familiar with the requirement for completion of various needs assessments as part of decision making processes and it was suggested that it could be beneficial to consider merging the equality and poverty assessments going forward.

6.5 In addition to this, attention was drawn to the availability of awareness training in terms of the provision of services for people with disabilities and long term conditions. This was discussed in greater detail later in the report.

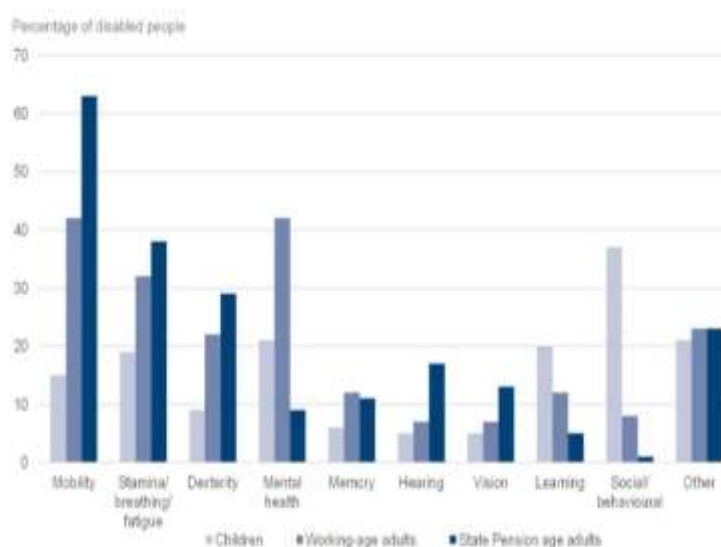
7. DISABILITY AND LONG TERM CONDITIONS - NATIONAL AND LOCAL DATA

7.1 Evidence provided allowed the Committee to compare and contrast data in relation to disabilities and long term conditions on a national and local basis.

National Levels of Disability

7.2 Members noted with interest that Census 2021 results for England showed that in England a smaller proportion, but larger number, of people reporting a disability (17.7%, 9.8 million), compared with 2011 (19.3%, 9.4 million)⁴. Further examination of the data also showed that:

- 18.7% of females report a disability, compared to 16.5% of males
- 59% of people aged 80 and over reported a disability
- 9% of children are disabled⁵
- 21% of working age adults are disabled⁶
- 42% of pension age adults are disabled⁶
- Disabilities cover a range of Conditions



⁴ Census 2021

⁵ UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences – House of commons Research briefing July 2022

7.3 The impact of deprivation on the health and wellbeing of populations was recognised by the Committee, however, Members were concerned to find that whilst 21.6% of 40 to 44 year-olds were disabled in the most deprived areas only 8.1% were disabled in the least deprived areas. Concern was also expressed regarding the impact of the increasing costs of living for disabled residents, with:

- i) 53% of disabled people employed, compared to 82% of non-disabled people (disabled people being 3 times as likely to be economically inactive⁶).
- i) Life costs are £583 more on average a month if you're disabled and for almost a quarter (24%) of families with disabled children, extra costs amount to over £1,000 a month⁷.
- ii) After housing costs, the proportion of working age disabled people living in poverty is 27%. This is, however, higher than the proportion of working age non-disabled people at 19%⁸.

Regional and Hartlepool Levels of Disability

7.4 In setting the context for the investigation, the Committee was not surprised to find (as shown in Table 1) that the North East of England has the highest proportion of people reporting a disability in England (21.2%, 567,000), compared to the national rate of 17.7%⁹.

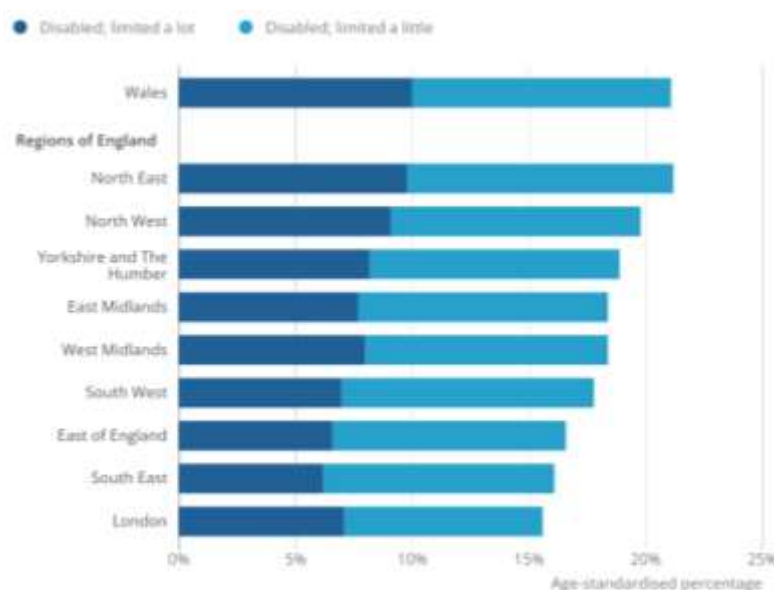


Table 1 - How disability (age-standardised) varies across local authorities in England and Wales, 2021

7.5 Breaking this down even further to focus specifically on the position in Hartlepool, Members discovered that:

- i) 21,150 people in Hartlepool have some form of disability (22.9% of the population compared to 17.7% in England)⁸;

⁶ Labour Market Survey

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08>) quoted by Scope at <https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/>

⁷ Scope "The Disability Price Tag" report (2019) <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag/>

⁸ Scope's analysis of the Government's "Households Below Average Income" report (2019-20)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2020>) quoted at

<https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/>

⁹ Census 2021

- ii) 11,645 females in Hartlepool have a disability (23.9% of the female population compared to 18.7% in England)⁸;
- iii) 9,490 males in Hartlepool have a disability (21.7% of the male population compared to 16.5% in England)¹⁰;
- iv) Rates of disability in Hartlepool are the highest in the Tees Valley (as shown in Table 2)⁹; and
- v) The percentage of homes in Hartlepool with 2 or more disabled residents is the highest in the Tees Valley, and is above the England and Wales figure (as shown in Table 4)⁹.
- vi) The prevalence of sever frailty in Hartlepool is higher than other Tees Valley authorities, were frailty is predominantly moderate (as shown in Table 3¹¹).

Area	Disabled under the Equality Act (%)
England	17.7%
Hartlepool	22.9
Middlesbrough	21.9
Redcar and Cleveland	21.4
Stockton-on-Tees	20.1
Darlington	19.4

Table 2 – Disability Rates across the Tees Valley (2021)⁹

Table 3 - How disability within households varied across local authorities in England and Wales, 2021⁹

Area	1 person disabled in household (%)	2 or more people disabled in household (%)
England and Wales	25.6	6.7
Hartlepool	30.9	8.7
Middlesbrough	29.4	7.8
Redcar and Cleveland	30.1	8.2
Stockton-on-Tees	27.4	7.7
Darlington	27.2	6.6

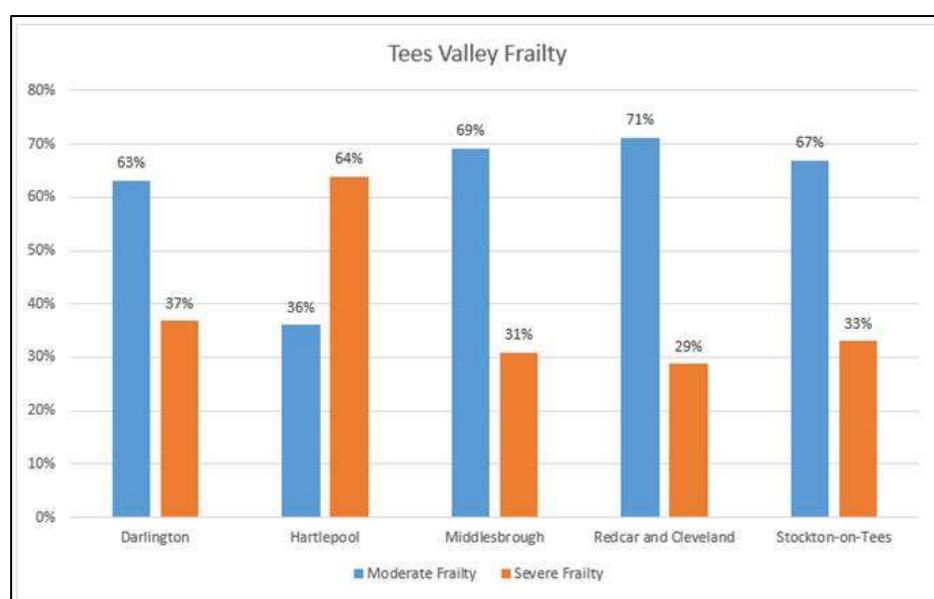


Table 4 – Frailty Levels¹⁰

¹⁰ Census 2021

¹¹ [\[MI\] GP Contract Services - England, 2021-22 - NHS Digital](#)

- 7.6 The Committee was concerned to find that across the Tees Valley, Hartlepool not only has the highest rate of disability, but also the highest percentage of households with two or more disabled residents and highest prevalence of severe frailty. The data provided reinforced to Members the importance of having in place truly accessible services.

8. PARTNER EVIDENCE

- 8.1 Evidence provided by the Community Led Inclusion Partnership (CLIP) brought to the attention of the Committee three models of disability (charity, medical and social) and provided a first-hand / lived experience perspective on each (detailed in Table 5).

Table 5 – Disability Models

Model	First-hand perspective
<i>The Charity Model</i>	Can depict disabled people as victims of circumstance, deserving of pity, unable to look after themselves or manage their own affairs and need charity in order to survive.
<i>The Medical Model</i>	Can assume that the first step solution is to find a cure or to use terminology to make disabled people more “normal”.
<i>The Social Model</i>	Depicts the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical or social barriers. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things.

- 8.2 Member were interested to find that the charity and medical models of disability tend to be used by non-disabled people to define / explain disability and that the charity model in particular was not supported by the disabled community due to the exceptionally negative perception it creates. Members noted these concerns and supported the view that going forward emphasis needed to be placed on the promotion of the social model of disability, changing attitudes towards disabled people, improving disability awareness and learning from feedback obtained from the disabled community. Particular emphasis to be placed on the importance of feedback from, and involvement with, the disabled community to improve:

- i) Access to social activities, employment, transport, education, parking, healthcare (Inc. GP appointments), independent living, local places, drop curbs and events (some of which was within the remit of the investigation);
- ii) Understanding of the disabled community, its needs and challenges;
- iii) Co-production of services development and delivery in Hartlepool; and
- iv) Workforce and Councillor Disability awareness.

9. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 9.1 The Committee undertook an extensive consultation and engagement exercise between the 9th May 2022 and the 23rd October 2022 to seek residents' opinions and lived experiences. The consultation was undertaken via a public survey, organisational / professional survey, quick poll, consultation workshops and mystery shopper exercise. Details of the consultation process are outlined over the page and an evaluation summary is provided in Section 11.

9.2 **Public Survey and Quick Poll** - An online public survey and quick poll was run on the public consultation project page via the Your Say consultation platform. The quick poll posing the question “On the whole, do you think the Council does enough to make its services accessible for people with disabilities and their carers?”

9.3 Extensive efforts were made to promote the consultation, and ensure that the survey itself was accessible to all. Details of how this was achieved are outlined in **Appendix 2**.

9.4 58 residents participated in the consultation, of which 14 participated in the quick poll and 49 in the survey¹² (5 completing both). Members were disappointed to find from the quick survey that 78% (11 people) had said they did not think the Council does enough to make its services accessible for people with disabilities and their carers. It was, however, clear that the number of responses had been very low and the statistical relevance of the data needed to be taken in to consideration.

9.5 Whilst bearing in mind the statistical relevance of the data provided, given the level of response, Members were pleased to find that the majority of respondents had a positive experience when accessing Council services (as shown in Chart 1).

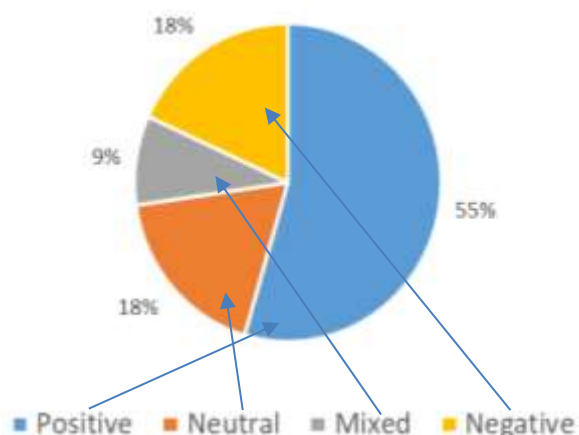


Chart 1 - How was your experience?

9.6 Members noted that compared to other projects, and in view of how heavily the consultation had been promoted, it had been expected that responses would have been higher. Overall, the majority of visits were from the project page and unusually, only a small number of visitors came via social media. In addition to this, the Committee noted that face to face engagement, including the Mystery Shopper, had proven to be an exceptionally beneficial addition to the wide mix of online and offline consultation measures implemented.

9.7 The Committee also noted with interest that:

- i) Of those who had asked for assistance, the majority (26%) had asked for help from their social worker or from staff in one of the community hubs (18%). It

¹² individuals may participate in more than one activity

was felt that this was very positive, as this is one of the primary purposes of the hubs.

- ii) Only 3% of respondents had asked for help with online services. This was surprising as many of the departmental survey responses highlighted that assistance was being used by the public. It is, however, unclear if the low level of those asking for assistance was due to the user friendly nature of online services, or whether they were just not being used.
- iii) 66% of respondents had requested assistance since 2018. Members found it encouraging that people felt increasingly able, and willing to ask for assistance. The most commonly selected factors that made for a positive experience were; accessing the service online, information being easy to find, understand and use, staff explained things in a way that could be understood. The Committee was pleased to find that throughout the consultation helpfulness of staff (especially reception staff) was voiced.
- iv) In terms of what could be done to build on positive experiences or improve further, the most common suggestions were:
 - The provision of staff training and awareness / empathy around disability and access needs;
 - Physical access to buildings (including ensuring that all Entry doors to the council buildings have automatic doors or a button visible to press to be able to open the door from a wheelchair);
 - Increased use of digital technology, which had been a recurring suggestion; and
 - Increasing capacity to reduce waiting times and making physical access improvements.
- v) Members were disappointed that a lack of staff knowledge about, or appreciation of, service users' needs had been a recurring theme in terms of negative experiences in accessing services. There was also concern that problems with online services (e.g. not being able to find information on the website), phones not being answered promptly and not being able to speak to the person they wanted to, were recurring issues. Members were, however, optimistic that many of these issues could be easily rectified.

9.8 The Committee considered the following potential options for improvement:-

- i) Increased promotion of Community Hubs as a place where people can find support to access other council services. It was highlighted that the Hubs are already set up to provide this service and Members were of the view that it would be beneficial to promote this service more to make other people aware that it is available.
- ii) Promote the assistance that is available for people who need help going online. As a service that many departments are already able to provide, Members were of the view that it could be beneficial to promote this service more, particularly to those who may find using online services particularly difficult. There was, however, a need to bear in mind that digital exclusion is an issue locally and some residents cannot easily access services online.

- iii) Look at what the uptake is for home visits for service users who cannot attend in person. Again this was something that many services were able to offer, although data from the survey suggested that uptake was low. It was unclear if this was because the services were able to help people in other ways or because people were not aware that it was an option. The Committee recognised that additional work to explore this was needed.
- iv) Improved staff training and awareness around disability, including access needs and lived experiences. Members were pleased to find that almost everyone had been quick to praise staff but supported the need for additional training and awareness raising.
- v) Linking postal letters to online accounts; the letter would appear in their online account (as well as being posted if this is a legal requirement) with the option to respond via the account. The Committee recognised that additional work to explore this was needed.
- vi) A “live chat” function via the website. It was suggested that this could be useful for all customers, but particularly for deaf people who use written English, as an instant means of communicating with customer services. The Committee recognised that additional work to explore this was needed.
- vii) Improve physical access to council buildings (Civic Centre and Bevan House in particular). The Committee recognised that additional work was needed to explore any potential outstanding access.
- viii) Improvements to the website and making information easier to find online. The Committee appreciated the issues raised in relation to accessibility of the website (including the absence of a document read function for people with disabilities). Members supported the need for a review of the Council website to ensure that all content meets web content accessibility guidelines going forward.

9.9 **Organisational / Professional Survey** - Organisations were asked to complete a survey based on their experience of assisting clients to use Council services or any anecdotal feedback they had received from their clients about their own experiences of accessing services. Despite being heavily promoted to a wide range of organisations only one response was received from Hartlepool Deaf Centre and details of the free text comments received are outlined in **Appendix 3**.

9.10 It came as no surprise to the Committee that many of the points raised mirrored those received via the public survey. These included:

- i) Good customer service and friendly, helpful and understanding staff.
- ii) Confusion on behalf of the Council. This could take the form of lost paper work, directing someone to the wrong room or failing to get back to people.
- iii) The need for the Council to be more creative in how it interacts with deaf people, for example advertising events as being deaf-friendly (and making them so). Also, reducing the reliance on interpreters by investigating other solutions.

- iv) There is a need to listen to people with disabilities and long term conditions and ensure that updating them on the outcome of consultation is undertaken as a matter of course. Concern had been expressed that none of the improvements identified by the Task and Finish Group established to improve accessibility for deaf people at the Community Hub have been implemented and no feedback provided.

9.11 **Consultation Workshops** - As a further mechanism to obtain public input a range of workshops were held with local community support organisations (CLIP, Hartlepool Deaf Centre, Hartlepool and Hartlepool Healthwatch) alongside an open session in the Central Hub / Library. BSL interpreters were provided for the workshops and a BSL signed video was embedded into the consultation project page and shared widely on social media to increase awareness amongst the Deaf community

9.12 Each workshop explored:-

- i) What the local authority does well?
- ii) What are the challenges in accessing council services
- iii) How good is the local authority at providing help?
- iv) How should the local authority approach identifying and understanding people's needs?

9.13 Members welcomed the breadth and balance of comments received and found the examples of lived experience gathered via the workshops particularly informative. Details of the evidence provided as a result of the workshops is summarised in **Appendix 4.**

9.14 **Mystery Shopper** - A mystery shopper exercise was carried out with volunteer shoppers recruited from some of the groups that took part in the earlier consultation sessions (Healthwatch and the deaf community (via the Deaf Centre)). The below scenarios were designed, and chosen by volunteers, for a range of frontline Council services and guidance provided on how to carry out the mystery shopper events and submit feedback.

- i) Apply for / renew a bus pass
- ii) Visit Hartlepool Art Gallery
- iii) Visit a leisure centre
- iv) Carry out a task on the HBC website x 2
- v) Reablement or occupational therapy
- vi) Visit a Community Hub or library
- vii) Make an enquiry at the Civic Centre reception

9.15 Members welcomed this alternative option for the gathering of evidence and suggested that it be used again where appropriate. The Committee did, however, exercise caution in relation to the results of the exercise, given the very small study and limited number of participants and services. The feedback was alongside the wider sources of evidence presented as part of the investigation. In doing so, Members learned that eight service areas had been tested by seven mystery shoppers, four of which had been "happy" or "very happy" with their visit, while 2 had been "unhappy". The results highlighted to the Committee issues in terms of:-

- i) Access to / availability of information in an accessible format - All felt information was very easy to find.
- ii) Staff interactions:
 - Arrival and first impressions were mixed with respondents' impressions either really positive or negative.
 - Staff were visible and approachability feedback was good with those who answered this question all complementary about front-of-house staff.
- iii) Getting around the site (a physical site and the HBC website):
 - Negative feedback included the lift being out of order for a long time in the Central Hub and different information appearing on the website each time the respondent looked.
 - The website, in particular, received negative feedback with respondents finding it was difficult to use with unclear navigation, missing and out of date information and expired links.
- iv) Facilities - Feedback on the facilities provided in venues (where tested) was generally positive. However, the toilet facilities in the Central Hub were described as "abysmal".
- v) Deaf access - Feedback tallied with deaf respondents comments during the wider consultation. Staff were unable to deal with their disability and the lack of easy and immediate access to a BSL interpretation service was a major stumbling block to Deaf residents being able to access services in the same way that a hearing person would be able to (even if disabled in other ways).

9.16 Summarising the results of the mystery shopper exercise, the Committee concluded that from a positive perspective, staff are consistently described as friendly and helpful and basic information about the services tested was "easy to find". From a negative perspective, the Deaf mystery shopper experienced additional difficulties in carrying out their scenarios to those shoppers with other types of disability. In addition to this, there had been a view that:

- The website is difficult to use and does not meet accessibility requirements.
- Poor outcomes (e.g. signposting and keeping people informed and updated).
- The ongoing effects of the Covid pandemic had led to reduced services.
- Multiple trips / appointments had to be made to find out simple pieces of information.

10. DEPARTMENTAL SURVEY

10.1 In addition to the consultation and engagement exercise referenced in Section 9, a piece of work was carried out to gain an understanding of accessibility across Council departments, with each department asked about:

- i) Their current access arrangements;
- ii) Who their customer base was; and
- iii) What barriers they had to making the service more accessible.

10.2 The Committee was pleased to find that a total of 47 responses had been received from across all departments, a list of which together with details of the survey results is outlined in **Appendix 5**. Based on the survey results, Members:-

- i) Welcomed confirmation that the majority of services remain face to face, by phone or email but acknowledged the role of on-line and hybrid working as part of the package of delivery mechanisms to meet the diverse needs of Hartlepool's population.
- ii) Noted that whilst some services actively ask people about additional needs when they make contact, others appear to take a more passive approach. The need for a more consistent approach was apparent to the Committee.
- iii) Had anticipated that the most common adjustment would be the provision of interpreters (13%), both British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and other languages. However, the range of other barriers were noted with interest:
 - Limitations of existing buildings
 - Reliance on other services / agencies (e.g. to provide front of house services or alternative meeting locations)
 - Technology (either due to expense of upgrading to keep pace with guidance or a lack of knowledge of how technology can be used to enhance access)
 - Lack of engagement with the disabled community
 - Lack of specialist support / advice and insufficient need identified to justify the change were also comparatively high.
- iv) Were of the view that a review of information / communication materials produced by the Council, and production of guidance to assist officers in the production of documents, to ensure consistency of production, would be beneficial.
- v) Noted with interest that the use of the staff intranet as one of the main points for access information and training. Further to discussion, it was felt that a review of accessibility information (e.g. what is available and in what form) would be beneficial to assist in enhancing staff and Councillor training and awareness. This being particularly useful for those staff whose roles do not involve regular contact with disabled people.
- vi) Had anticipated that finance and capacity would be identified as key barriers to making services more accessible. Subsequently, the survey results came as no surprise with 21% of responses identifying finance / budget, and 8% identifying lack of capacity, as barriers. In addition to this, an improved digital offer, more engagement with the disabled community, access to experts / specialist advice and a better understanding of issues were all identified as ways of making services more accessible.
- vii) Welcomed assurances that some services were thought to be fully accessible, however, it was suggested that more could perhaps be done across all departments to identify people with additional needs, share information and seek feedback from users to see if their experience of using the service matches up with the departmental view.
- viii) Explored the provision of adjustments and:
 - Expressed concern that a number of services do not have anything in place for service users that need adjustments to be made:

- Current arrangements are enough – 1%
- Not applicable – 1%
- Information says to ask if adjustments are required (i.e. only available on request) – 1%
- Nothing currently in place – 1%

Members appreciated that this could be due to an assumption that service are fully accessible so no further adjustment would be required, it could also be that service users with additional needs do not use the service because there are no adjustments available. With this in mind, Members reiterated the need for consistency of approach in assessing / asking about additional needs at the first point of contact.

- Found that most adjustments were made on an as-required basis and almost half of adjustments had been in place for a “long time / unknown”. Members were of the view that as most adjustments seem to be made on an ad-hoc basis, or have been in place for a very long time, a refresh of how and when adjustments are embedded may be timely.
- Learned that by far the most common ways of making service users aware of adjustments were:
 - Via information / communications – 22%
 - Via the Council website – 20%
 - Through initial contact with staff (i.e. people are told when they first speak to a member of staff) – 19%
 - Through general contact with staff (unspecified which stage of contact) – 19%

The Committee suggested that it might be useful to carry out a review of information / communications materials put out by the Council to see what proportion of materials include accessibility information and what form this takes.

- ix) Noted indications that the majority of staff know what adjustments, alternative arrangements or additional support can be put in place to support someone who needs it. Interestingly 6% of comments referenced finding information on the staff intranet, however, indications were that this is not always easy. The Committee was of the view that it might be beneficial to carry out a review of accessibility information on the staff intranet to ensure that the information provided is current and up to date and also that general information that would be useful to all staff is included and, most importantly, easy to find. This could include, for example, plain-English writing guides, web content guidelines, carrying out access audits, etc. This could be particularly useful for those staff whose roles do not involve regular contact with disabled people so the information is ready to hand when needed.

11. EVALUATION OF CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

- 11.1 With due regard to the issues raised via the consultation and engagement process, Table 6 (over the page) summarises the key findings presented and a number of potential actions identified by the Committee.

Table 6 – Evaluation of Consultation and Engagement Results

Key findings from the consultation	Potential Action
<p>1. People are not always aware that they can have help. Whether because they don't know that help is available or because they think they won't be eligible.</p> <p>A number of issues had been raised in relation to public and staff awareness of arrangements to facilitate the accessibility of services, including access to Council buildings for assistance dogs. Contact was made with Civic Centre, Hartlepool Central Library, Hartlepool Art Gallery, The Bis and The CIL and all services advised they would welcome those with assistance dogs.</p>	<p>Increased promotion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assistance schemes and the help available to access services – ensure that this promotion is targeted towards disabled service users i.e. in a form and location that is accessible to them. - Community hubs as a place where people can find support to access other council services. - The role of Community navigators - The various support available to help people with getting online e.g. at the Community Hubs and through community projects such as Hartlepower and Project 65. <p>Explore the uptake for home visits for service users who cannot attend in person with a view to identifying the need for increased promotion.</p> <p>Clearly display in buildings signs that shows help is available for people with disabilities / long term conditions.</p>
<p>2. Whether the level of service a disabled person receives is poor or excellent very much depends on who they get when they make contact.</p> <p>There seems to be a gap between focussed individual provisions (which is usually very good) and generic or universal services which are not so good. Also services which are used to dealing with disabled people regularly are better at it than those which only rarely have a disabled person make contact.</p>	<p>Improved staff training and awareness around disability, including access needs and lived experiences, including the development of a staff training and disability awareness package.</p> <p>Publicise a set of standards of service that disabled people can expect to receive and ensure that these standards are maintained.</p>
<p>3. Lessons learned from dealing with individual issues are not being embedded for lasting change. This means that issues recur for the same individual or for others.</p>	<p>Ensure lesson learning is shared through team meetings, board meetings and staff supervision sessions and that this is embedded into processes.</p>
<p>4. Consistency is a problem when a disabled person's enquiry or service request goes across teams or departments with people being told one thing by one team and something else by another.</p>	<p>Investigate how this can be mitigated.</p>

Disabled people find having to constantly repeat their stories to different staff members exhausting and demoralising, This is a barrier to some in making contact.	
5. The Council's website and Hartlepool Online are difficult to use for people with disabilities and do not meet WCAG requirements.	<p>Review the Council website and Hartlepool Online to ensure that they are compliant with WCAG guidance. In doing so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include consumer testing in the review of the web site and Hartlepool Online to check functionality. - Explore the potential of a "live chat" function via the website.
6. Going digital and moving services online can be beneficial for disabled people, however, digital inclusion / exclusion remains an issue.	Ensure that digital access is not the only means that people can find information or make contact with the Council.
<p>7. The Deaf Community have particular difficulties in contacting the council and accessing services due to a lack of BSL interpretation facilities in community buildings and an over-reliance on written English and telephone contact.</p> <p>Particular attention was drawn to the provision of assistance to those who cannot use telephones to make contact with the Council, or progress contact, via telephone. A text relay service and text messaging service had previously been available.</p>	<p>i) Investigate the feasibility of introducing video calling, to sit alongside traditional phone and email functions to allow a Deaf person to communicate with a BSL signer, and Relay UK.</p> <p>ii) The Text Relay Service has already been reintroduced, however, it could be better advertised.</p> <p>iii) Increase the number of BSL trained front line staff with the aim that there will always be at least one BSL trained staff member in each community building at any one time.</p>
8. Council efforts to make things easier for people with autism and dementia are laudable but people with other forms of disability feel forgotten, particularly the Deaf Community, parents of profoundly disabled children and those with Downs syndrome.	<p>Ensure that any disability awareness training includes a wide range of disabilities.</p> <p>Involve people with a wide range of disabilities, and groups such as CLIP, in conversations around improving access / services.</p>
9. Some disabled people feel that although they are regularly asked to give feedback or input into consultations around accessibility nothing every changes and their recommendations are not implemented	<p>Ensure that where consultation is carried out that the "feedback loop" is closed so that people's contributions are acknowledged and acted upon.</p> <p>Ensure that they are informed of the outcome of the consultation to tell them what has been changed and where change has not been possible why it was not possible.</p>

	Where changes requested are not possible ensure that the conversation is continued to try and find alternative outcomes rather than just making that the end of the discussion.
10. A lack of public toilets in Hartlepool is having an impact on disabled people's ability to get out and about and engage in their communities. Where toilets are available the accessible toilet is often locked	Look to try and increase the provision of public toilets, or at least make the existing ones more accessible.
11. Disabled parking is an issue, the location of parking meters in relation to the disabled bays and the size of the text on the sign boards	Investigate how this can be improved.
12. In conversations around disability and accessibility, children and young disabled people are being forgotten, particularly the 16-18 age group who are between school and adult social care support	Expand consultations and conversations to include children and young people to get their perspective.
13. There appears to be an issue with people not getting called back and enquiries / requests not being followed up. This is unlikely to be confined to disabled people but the impact on disabled people is much greater, particularly for those with problems with memory / understanding. Disabled people and carers reported not getting called back caused feelings of frustration and stress, and having to be the one to chase things up all the time was exhausting and "yet another thing to have to remember to do".	Ensure that staff training on disability and awareness includes the importance of calling people back and an understanding of why it is such an issue for disabled people and carers. Ensure this training is rolled out to all staff, not just front line staff.
14. Household waste recycling centre is less accessible than it used to be. Having to book an appointment in advance is difficult for those who can't plan ahead because of their health conditions or caring responsibilities. This is compounded for those who can't get online easily. No assistance on site anymore means people with reduced strength or limited mobility cannot get the items out of the car.	Review the need for pre-booked appointments at HWRC. If this is being retained as a cost cutting measure consider how the accessibility implications can be mitigated e.g. pre-booked for weekends and drop-in on weekdays or "just turn up" passes for disabled people.
15. Despite access aids at the civic centre (including BSL trained staff, step-free access, hearing loop, etc.)	Promote the range of services that can be accessed at other venues such as the Community Hubs where there is

many elderly / disabled people consider the civic to be inaccessible due to the lack of disabled parking at the building.	disabled parking so people can go elsewhere. Investigate how the disabled parking at the rear of the building can be better utilised (without having to walk all the way around the building)
16. Awareness of the role and range of services offered by the Community Hubs and Community Navigators is low.	Deliver a communications campaign to raise awareness. Make sure this is targeted to elderly / disabled people (i.e. in a suitable format and location).
17. The need to look more at planning and implementation to ensure accessibility is not treated as an after-thought or add-on. If services are easy to access for people with accessibility issues then it is easy to access for everyone.	Undertake an internal review of literature and processes within the Council to see if they meet requirements/legal guidance/council plans similar to the physical building audit but of our literature and website.

11.2 Whilst it was recognised that some adjustments could require more significant investment which would not be possible at this time, given the Council's current financial position, it was suggested that others may be possible quickly, easily and for very little cost. During the course of the consultation a number of potential "quick wins" were identified that could be implemented whilst more fundamental improvements are considered. Those were as follows:-

- i) Plan and implement an ongoing communications campaign, in an accessible format / location, to highlight all the various support schemes and reasonable adjustments that we already have in place and ensure this is repeated regularly. Services which offer adjustments for disabled people should ensure that this is included in all the information they put out. Ensure this is put out in a range of communications methods, not just on social media.
- ii) When time-critical videos are posted on social media and there is not time to set up closed captions first the video should include a text card to say that subtitles will be added as soon as possible – and ensure that this is followed up. This should be standard for all videos. For videos which are not time-critical subtitles should be added before they are uploaded.
- iii) Some people find the range of Council touch-points confusing and don't know where they need to be for particular services. Communicate that there are a number of "one-stop-shop" touch points such as civic centre reception and the Community Hubs where people can get everything done in one place, this will also make people who find accessing the civic difficult aware that they can get the same services elsewhere.
- iv) Promote the role of the Community Hubs and Community Navigators more to increase understanding of the services they offer.
- v) Ensure that community buildings and touch points have a range of posters and leaflets on display for a range of disability support groups and charities.
- vi) Introduce a facility for people coming in to reception to ask for a private room using the small rooms off the reception area if they wish to discuss something

confidential and make people aware that this is available (e.g. by putting signs on the glass partitions in a similar way to how pharmacies tell customers they can use a private consultation room).

- vii) Circulate some basic guidance to staff on font size and type, use of plain English and how to book an interpreter when one is required and put this information in an easy to find location on the intranet.

12. CONCLUSIONS

12.1 The Audit and Governance Committee concluded that:-

- 1) Hartlepool Borough Council has developed services and facilities aimed at supporting residents with disabilities and long term conditions and has invested in state-of-the-art facilities such as the Centre for Independent Living (CIL). There is, however, always more that can be done to ensure that the voices of residents are sought, heard and incorporated into future Council initiatives which may impact on the future physical, economic and social environment of the town.
- 2) Hartlepool staff are to be commended on their activities to support and signpost residents with disabilities and long term conditions. Experience being that where services are easy to access for those with disabilities or long term conditions, they are easier for all to access!
- 3) Accessibility is so much more than just physical access and must be given high priority in the development and provision of services. As such:
 - It is essential to have a clear understanding of Hartlepool's disabled community, its needs and challenges if the right services are to be provided in the right way. Only with this will the true level of need be identified to support the requirement for service change and adjustments.
 - Departments need to be supported within the available resources to make any necessary improvements and provided with specialist advice and support where required.
 - The needs of people with disabilities and long term conditions need to be represented in the development and delivery of services. A good example, as identified by the disabled community, is the involvement of CLIP in the development of the Highlight building. This being identified as good practice by the disabled community.
 - Where residents with a disability or long term condition are involved in consultation / engagement as part of the development of services, there is a need to ensure that they are updated on the outcome of consultations and decisions as a matter of course. This should be done at an early stage in the process with participants involved in ongoing conversations throughout the development, deliver and review of services. Not as a one off event.
 - Workforce development is essential in terms of training to increase disability awareness and an understanding of what reasonable adjustments can be made.

- 4) Hartlepool Borough Council should at every opportunity champion the provision of accessible services with its partners, local business' and other organisations across the town.
- 5) Emphasis needs to be placed on the promotion of the social model of disability, changing attitudes towards disabled people and improving disability awareness.
- 6) There needs to be a consistent approach to asking people about additional needs at the first point of contact. Services that are accessed regularly by disabled people and those with long term conditions should share best practice.
- 7) The completion of Impact Assessments to inform the decision making process is an essential part of the service development process. These assessments need to be undertaken as early as possible in the development of services and in order to simplify the process, it has been agreed that the Child and Family Poverty Impact Assessment and Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment will be amalgamated.
- 8) Many adjustments do not require significant investment in terms of time or resources. A great deal can be achieved by taking a flexible approach to service delivery and making small changes to the way in which things are done. This is where involving disabled people in conversations around service delivery could be particularly beneficial.
- 9) Subject to compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act, any proposals for the provision of additional activities, or service changes, must be considered alongside the financial challenges facing the local authority and be within available resources.
- 10) Making every contact count (MECC) needs to be a priority with improved communication between departments to remove the need for residents to repeat their issues.
- 11) Following calls for involvement in the investigation from groups and individuals across the town, the most significant level of input was received from Hartlepool's Deaf community. The investigation findings have subsequently been heavily influenced by their response and it is recognised that it may be beneficial to undertake further consultation as part of the process for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.
- 12) The mystery shopper process was a beneficial element of the consultation process undertaken as part of the investigation and should be used more frequently as a means of assessing lived experiences.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has taken evidence from a wide range of sources and its recommendations are as follows:-

- 1) Exploration of some adjustments would require more significant investment and be longer term actions. Other short / medium term actions would be to:-
 - i) Develop a communications campaign to:
 - Highlight the various support schemes and reasonable adjustments that are already have in place;
 - Promote 'One-Stop-Shop' touch points such as the Civic Centre reception and Community Hubs where people can get assistance with everything in one place. Making those who find accessing the Civic Centre aware that the same service can be accessed elsewhere; and
 - Promote the role of Community Hubs and Community Navigators to increase the understanding of the services they offer.
 - ii) Ensure that community buildings and touch points have posters and leaflets on display for a range of disability support groups and charities.
 - iii) Circulate basic guidance to staff on font size and type, use of plain English, how to book an interpreter when one is required and put this information in an easy to find location on the intranet.
 - iv) Create an "accessibility" tile on the intranet homepage so it is easy to find and collate a range of useful accessibility information for staff to be able to find quickly and easily when a disabled person makes contact.
- 2) Equality of access to services for all is a fundamental right and residents with disabilities and long term conditions should not be restricted in terms of the times they can access services or the levels of privacy they can expect. To this end:-
 - i) A Text Relay Service should be introduced;
 - ii) Given the financial restrictions faced by the local authority, the feasibility and benefits, of creation of a pod facility in the Civic Centre be explored to allow residents and officers to use online signing / translation services;
 - iii) The creation of a network of BSL trained staff, to act as first point of contact for volunteers, be explored;
 - iv) Existing TV screens in the Civic Centre reception be used to promote accessibility services and the assistance that is available; and
 - v) The Loop system currently used in council buildings be reviewed to ensure that it is still compatible with modern hearing aids.
- 3) Provide access to a video / telephone translation service (for BSL and other languages) in the Civic Centre, and a private room for the discussion of confidential issues. This facility to be promoted (e.g. via signs on glass partitions in a similar way to how pharmacies tell customers they can use a private consultation room).

- 4) A review of workforce training be undertaken to explore how disability awareness and an understanding of reasonable adjustments, could be increased, within available resources. As part of this:-
 - i) Accessibility and diversity awareness training to be rolled out as mandatory training for all HBC staff and offered as an option for Councillors as part of the induction process; and
 - ii) Options for training be explored including the use of online packages to allow ease of access and roll out across departments, without the need for an external trainer.
- 5) The newly established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Group to be used as a mechanism to share best practice, monitor performance and identify service improvements.
- 6) Improvements to the HBC website be explored to ensure that it is EDI compliant going forward, including but not be limited to:-
 - i) Read options for documents, to allow access by blind or visually impaired residents;
 - ii) Captions / signing on social media posts / videos; and
 - iii) When time-critical videos are posted on social media, and there is not time to set up closed captions, the video should include a text card to say that subtitles will be added. For videos which are not time-critical subtitles should be added before they are uploaded.
- 7) Council reports, documents and forms must be accessible (easy read / screen reader friendly) and going forward clear content guidance should to be provided, and its use promoted, including:-
 - i) Where appropriate, instructions for the inclusion of links to allow the use of screen readers; and
 - ii) Promotion of use of a document accessibility checker.
- 8) A consultation to be undertaken with partners on the potential benefits, and level of support for, the creation of a needs passport / card system that could be used to ensure that officers quickly recognise and respond to any additional support needs.
- 9) The process for creation of the Highlight on the Waterfront development is an example of good practice in terms of engagement / involvement with residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions. This good practice to be rolled out across the development of all services and strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from all those involved in the investigation.

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

Contact Officer:

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Legal Services
Hartlepool Borough Council
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Terms of Reference for the Investigation

- a) To gain an overarching understanding of national equality legislation, and in particular statutory duties as they relate to the activities of Hartlepool Borough Council.
- b) To gain an understanding of data in relation to the number of residents in Hartlepool with disabilities and long term conditions and consider existing evidence of the challenges they face in accessing services;
- c) From a Hartlepool Borough Council perspective:
 - i. Explore how the Council complies with its Equality Duty in ensuring accessibility to all areas of service provision (as detailed in the referral); and
 - ii. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's activities to ensure that people with disabilities and long term conditions have easy access to its services.
- d) To examine the barriers (physical, procedural and other) that may inhibit access to Hartlepool Borough Council services / activities, and day to day living, and ascertain their prevalence and impact (including the impact of Covid-19); and
- e) To identify if any changes / additions are needed to deliver tangible improvements to the accessibility of Hartlepool Borough Council Services.

How people were made aware of the consultation?

- The Your Say Our Future consultation platform, including in the monthly newsletters sent to all registered participants
- Extensive promotion on social media
- Posters and leaflets in all public Council buildings including the Community Hubs and libraries
- Posters and leaflets distributed to GP surgeries, health centres, pharmacies, etc.
- Written invitations to take part and request to share with contacts sent to:
 - Elected members
 - Residential homes, nursing care homes and other providers of adult and children's social care
 - Youth Council
 - Housing associations
 - Parish Councils
 - Alice House Hospice
 - Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Hartlepool Partnership
 - Healthwatch Hartlepool
 - Hartlepool and Stockton CCG and North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust
 - Various local community and disability support groups including Hartlepool Deaf Centre, Incontrol-able, Hartlepool Carers and the Hospital of God

How the consultation was made accessible to disabled people?

- The Your Say online platform is compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. It is compatible with screen readers and other assistive technology.
- The Committee commissioned two BSL signed videos to promote the consultation. These were shared extensively on social media, embedded onto the Your Say platform and shared by local deaf organisations with their members. BSL signers were also booked for all the workshop sessions.
- Easy-read and large print versions of the survey were available to download from the Your Say platform and also to pick up from Council buildings. Copies were given to disability groups to pass on to their members.

ORGANISATIONAL SURVEY FREE TEXT COMMENTS (DEAF CENTRE)

Please tell us about a positive experience of using a Council service.

iSPA contact centre staff are amazing, they are helpful and always willing to help get me to the right person or find a solution to a problem. One person in particular, shows real passion and commitment to the Deaf Community including studying BSL in her own time. She has a wealth of knowledge around Deaf equipment and resources and has fantastic Deaf awareness. Officers have a long track record of support to the Deaf Community but do not appear to have the resources to carry out some of the work they champion.

What do you think we could do to build on this positive experience or improve further?

Implement accessible contact methods to council services to support HDC to build confidence in people's own abilities to manage their own affairs. HDC can support this work by supporting clients to make contact, but without accessible contact methods HBC are removing people's independence, thus creating further barriers and the assumptions that the council do not care or do not know they have Deaf residents in the town. Promote council services by always ensuring subtitles are added to social media video content and any important announcements please consider BSL interpretation added to video content.

Please tell us about a negative experience of using a Council service.

I have a client at present who is unhappy with their social work support, they feel because they are Deaf the social worker is not in regular contact and does not update the client because of the communication barrier and needing to book interpreters. This client was very happy with the previous arrangements of having a Deaf council member to contact and receive support from. The client would like social care to be better deaf aware, receive Deaf Awareness training and social worker to learn BSL (Stockton, Middlesbrough and Darlington Council have social workers who can sign).

My own personal experience of offering to contact services on behalf of Deaf people is very counterproductive to the work we aim to achieve in empowering Deaf people. I get quick results because I am a hearing person with no disabilities or long-term health conditions, this again reinforces that we live in a town and have a wider society that practices audism openly despite legislation on local councils to provide accessible information, to be accessible themselves and to provide information that is accessible to the public (including those with protected characteristics).

What do you think we should have done differently or how do you think we could improve for the future?

My client asked me to feedback to the social worker and ask why my client waited so long for a follow up meeting. Eventually the social worker turned up at the client's door with an interpreter but without informing the client to expect her, the client sent her away because they were expecting a family visit. A subsequent visit was arranged and booked in with the client. My client remains unsatisfied, they feel the social worker does not understand them as a profoundly deaf person - it is important that Deaf people feel their support is from someone with good deaf awareness with an understanding of the clients background and culture. My client does not like to have an interpreter present for private discussions with their social worker but recognises this is required due to the communication barrier, however it makes them feel very

uncomfortable. Sometimes interpreters create barriers of their own, they are not the only solution to working well with Deaf people.

If there is anything that worries you or puts you off using Council services with or on behalf of your clients please tell us about it here.

Community Hub - York Road What puts me off the council... a continued lack of accessibility for Deaf people. Council events are never offered with BSL Interpreter, so the fantastic opportunities at the community hub are not open to Deaf people. Hard of hearing people say they would welcome it if the Hub to advertised they are deaf friendly - they want to see a big sign on the front door that shows the council understand the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people, and that events will be accessible, not just providing interpreters but arranged and adapted so that deaf and HoH people are fully included rather than left to fend for themselves, if they are brave enough to enter the doors

What worries me about council services... HDC carried out a Deaf Audit of the Community Hub in June 2021, delivered Deaf Awareness training to 15 library and outreach staff and have spent the charities self-funded hours to attend a 3 meeting Task and Finish group in Feb/March 2022 to be told there are no funds to implement any of the required improvements. Yesterday I attended a deaf person's support meeting lead by TEWV along with 2 social workers (one from Durham and one from Stockton), luckily I was early and could meet the client at reception because there was major confusion over the room booking and reason for the meeting, hub staff wanted to direct us to the medicine review queue. If the vulnerable deaf client had been exposed to this confusion it would have had a really negative impact on them, negative experiences get shared among the Deaf Community and is counter-productive to the work the council wants to achieve at the hub.

If you have any other comments or suggestions about making Council services accessible to people with long-term conditions and carers please write them in the box

The toilets in the community hub are not suitable for use, especially for people who are blind or have visual impairment. Accessible toilet is locked.

WORKSHOP FINDINGS

CONCERNS / CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING COUNCIL SERVICES	POSITIVE FEEDBACK / THINGS WE DO WELL
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Council website (difficult to use accessibility software) telephone systems and Hartlepool Online not easy to use. 2) Variations in the quality of service for people with disabilities and long term conditions. 3) Awareness of available help. 4) Awareness of the Community Navigators role is low. 5) Lack of clarity in terms of access for assistance dogs (other than guide dogs) in Council buildings. 6) Lack of access to computers. 7) The absence of remote video calling service. 8) Inaccurate Hartlepool Alerts (e.g. told have to pay for parking and ticket machines too far away from parking spaces – only to find that blue badge holders don't have to pay). 9) Civic Centre - Poor access to disabled parking and access to the lift to the reception. 10) The absence of a named contact that deaf people can contact to ask about deaf-related issues. 11) Making contact with the Council for those who are not able to use the telephone. 12) Difficulty getting help with confidential matters without divulging information to an unrelated third party to act as an interpreter (e.g. getting to speak to a social worker). 13) Making anonymous complaints about staff when a phone or computer cannot be used (ab example of this being a complaint about a carer requiring the form to be handed to the carer in question). 14) Charging Blue Badge holders for parking. 15) Access to BSL signers or interpreters (inc. Community Navigators) 16) Drop kerbs at Elizabeth Way Shops. 17) When involved in access audits and focus groups nothing seems to come from them. 18) Digital exclusion 19) Recreation and sport not always accessible (e.g. no disabled access to Rift House Rec. Sports and recreation grounds) 20) Dropped kerbs are often in the wrong position 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Improved physical access to Council buildings was good and improving (though still improvements to be made). 2) Staff helpful throughout various services and focused individual provision for people with disabilities and long term health conditions is good. 3) HBC house adaptations done to a very high standard, making a big difference to the quality of life. 4) Staff offering to help with form filling and signposting, particularly in the Civic Centre reception, Hubs and over the phone. 5) Hartlepool Now website (though seems to be better known by the public than by officers). 6) Partnerships with CLIP working well to improve accessibility at an early stage are (Highlight Leisure Centre, Tall Ships, Train Station and Summerhill improvements. 7) Assisted bin collection is a good scheme but not well publicised so people don't know they can have help. 8) "Borrow boxes" from the library have been well received. 9) Central and South Hubs do a good job – North Hub not so much but West View Resource Centre is very good 10) Communication and information in general is good. 11) Dealings with adult social care have been very positive. 12) The majority of Brierton Sports Centre staff are understanding, friendly and welcoming 13) Health trainers are accommodating to people with

<p>21) Maintenance of council buildings e.g. holes in access ramps, uneven surfaces, etc.</p> <p>22) Newer hearing aids are increasingly incompatible with the hearing induction loop system</p> <p>23) Having to specifically ask for support. It also depends on who you get when you make contact</p> <p>24) A lot of people with substance misuse problems have disabilities but services are not accessible to them because of their issues</p> <p>25) Mill House - Reduced water temperature and suitable changing tables.</p> <p>26) Lack of public toilets.</p> <p>27) No accessible play equipment in any of the play areas in Hartlepool.</p> <p>28) Need to improve the support through schools, particularly for mental health, bullying and the pressures of social media.</p> <p>29) People with BSL as their birth language can struggle to read letters sent by post</p> <p>30) Can't just turn up to do what they want.</p> <p>31) The glass screens - difficult to lip read or sign.</p> <p>32) Tend to think of disabled people as being older, younger disabled people are overlooked</p> <p>33) Lack of consistency between members of staff and services e.g. getting passed from pillar to post</p>	<p>disabilities and will adjust the programmes to suit people's abilities</p> <p>14) Disabled facilities at CIL are very good and having social workers based in there means people using the day services have easy access to them for support.</p> <p>15) Council is good at resolving issues for individuals</p> <p>16) Introduced of dementia-friendly sessions at Mill House</p>
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IMPROVEMENTS THAT COULD BE MADE

- 1) **An SMS notification service would be useful** for people who cannot use the phone or other technology
- 2) **Instant video remote interpreter service** so don't have to wait for an interpreter
- 3) **Need for the community to be involved in making services accessible**
- 4) **A lift to get from Victoria Road to the level of the reception area**
- 5) Better **system for anonymous feedback**
- 6) Use **Hartbeat more to publicise help arrangements** as it goes to every household (an **electronic version** be made available screen readers)
- 7) **Encourage private organisations** to be better at accessibility
- 8) Council is good at resolving issues for individuals but need to **embed learning to prevent issues recurring**
- 9) Need to consider the **"spontaneity" of services** (so disabled person can just turn up and do what they need to do)
- 10) **Public toilets**
- 11) **Focus on the person** and not what's "wrong" with them
- 12) Need **someone to oversee accessibility within the council**, leaving it to departments to self-police is not working
- 13) **Involving groups like CLIP in the development of services**
- 14) Should be asking:

- a. What do we know about our local populations and communities and their needs?
 - b. **What training do staff get** on accessibility as a matter of course?
 - c. How can we **improve access to governance and democracy** e.g. increase disabled members of committees.
- 15) **Workforce development** needs to have regard for all disabilities.
 - 16) **Support staff with disabilities** including through workforce development, recruitment and business development
 - 17) System for hidden disabilities like the **lanyards**.
 - 18) Dementia friendly services at Mill House badly attended – **need to develop these types of programmes in consultation with disabled people**
 - 19) **Listen to the deaf community** and implement recommendations
 - 20) **A private room for deaf people** where you can ask the receptionist for when you first arrive (when signing in the reception area anyone who knows sign language can see)
 - 21) More frontline **staff trained in BSL**.
 - 22) **Employ a deaf person to be a contact for other deaf people** (translation for people who speak BSL from birth)

EXAMPLES OF LIVED EXPERIENCE (Names have been changed to protect individual's privacy but these are based on conversations with real disabled people via the consultation)

Example 1 - My bin day. Dave, who is Deaf, wanted to check which day his bin was due to be emptied. He is unable to use the website to check this online. As he cannot use the telephone he says he only has two options to find this information out: either he needs to ask a friend or family member to find the information out for him (which makes him feel unempowered) or he has to take the bus into town to visit the Civic Centre reception and hope that there is a member of staff available who can use BSL who can tell him this information. Dave says it should not be so difficult to find out a simple piece of information that a hearing person could find out in 2 minutes. He would like the option to use an SMS service or a video call (to someone who can sign) to find the information he needs quickly.

Example 2 - Benefits check. Hazel is Deaf and uses BSL to communicate. She is also elderly and a wheelchair user. Hazel would like to find out if she is entitled to any additional benefits or support since her husband passed away. She says that from her previous dealings with the staff at the Civic Centre she expects that they will be helpful, however, she is unable to use the telephone to make an appointment for a home visit. It is difficult for Hazel to get to the Civic Centre as the accessible transport options in the town are limited. She does not know how she can contact the benefits team.

Example 3 - Crisis support information. Fred is Deaf and has a history of poor mental health. Recently Fred experienced a mental health crisis and received assistance from the Police. Afterwards, he was sent a letter by the Council with information about mental health support services and the Council's ISPA team. For all of the services listed in the letter there was only a telephone number to be able to contact them. As a Deaf person, Fred is not able to use the telephone and it made him feel even worse to be offered help that he could not access.

Example 4 - Phoning the Council. Frank has had a stroke which has left him with slurred speech and needs extra time to process the information he is given. Frank can use the telephone if he has to but he says he feels embarrassed to call the Council on the phone because he thinks that his speech impediment and cognitive difficulties mean that staff will think he is drunk or on drugs when he calls and dismiss him as a nuisance. For this reason Frank avoids using the telephone unless he absolutely needs to.

Example 5 - Social workers and carers. Annie is in her 80s. She is Deaf and uses BSL to communicate but she is able to read and write English. She also uses a wheelchair or walker when she goes out. Annie used to have a social worker who could sign but they recently left the authority and the social workers who have been covering do not sign so they need an interpreter to communicate. Annie says sometimes when the social workers and carers come to visit her they do not bring an interpreter with them so Annie does not feel confident that she has understood what they have told her; or that they are understanding and recording her needs correctly.

Annie is also worried that when they do remember to bring a BSL interpreter the interpreters then know her intimate personal business (such as financial information and care needs) as she thinks they discuss this with other Deaf people. She would prefer to have a social worker who can sign which would remove the need for an interpreter. Annie is also having problems with her care package and is worried about her benefits since her husband died. She feels overwhelmed trying to tackle these difficulties when responsibility is shared over so many services and none of them are Deaf-friendly.

SOURCES OF DEPARTMENTAL SURVEY RESPONSES

ACBS	C&JCS	Public Health	NRS	R&D
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage and open spaces • Museum / Art Gallery • Adult social care • Community hubs • Sports and leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Hub • Safeguarding, Assessment & Support and family time contact • Rossmere Children's Centre • Hindpool Children's Centre • 0-19 • Through Care Team • Fostering • Virtual school • HSSCP (Hartlepool & Stockton Safeguarding Children Panel) • SENDIASS • Housing • Childcare • Local welfare support • Resettlement • Educational psychology • SEND • School improvement • School place, planning and capital • Youth services • Youth justice service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health • Substance misuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultancy services • Policy support and facilities management • Passenger transport • Construction & highways • Planning and development • Environmental services • Environmental protection • Housing standards • Emergency planning • Commercial services • Car parking • Community safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal • Communications and marketing • Customer services • Debt recovery • Economic growth • Health, safety and risk • Corporate strategy and performance • Revenues & benefits • Revenues

DEPARTMENTAL ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**i) Where services are delivered:**

- The majority of services (26%) continue to be delivered face to face. Data indicating that the delivery of services by phone represents 22% of activity, compared to email (18%) or online contact via the portal or app which represented 18% and 15% respectively.
- 59% of services are universal / open to all with only 19% targeted.
- The top 4 locations in descending order are the Civic Centre, people's homes, other buildings and community venues.

ii) How are services provided:

- Hybrid delivery model (almost 50%), mostly a combination of office/home-based staff, although some front-facing services are a combination of face-to-face and online contact.
- 24% are providing more online services, 6% are totally on line.
- Located or delivered from buildings that are physically accessible (e.g. step-free access, hearing loop, etc. – 10%). Other responses which referenced physical access adjustments included:
 - Access to an induction loop – 5%
 - Accessible toilets at the service location – 3%
 - Disabled parking facilities at the service location – 1%
 - Lighting adjustments can be made at the service location – 1%
 - Accessible vehicles for service users – 1%

iii) **How is need identified:**

- Predominantly by speaking to other professionals (17%) rather than from asking the client. The second most common way is via an assessment or eligibility criteria.
- Some services actively ask people about additional needs when they make contact via conversations with service users / potential users (12%), forms that service users / potential users are asked to complete (12%) or carrying out access audits of the service (4%).
- Other services appear to take a more passive approach by waiting for service users / potential users to make the first move and tell about their needs.

iv) **How are adjustments to services made:**

- The most common adjustment is the provision of interpreters (13%), both British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and other languages. A further 5% reference the provision of BSL and 4% referenced unspecified “translation”.
- Other adjustments, not necessarily relating to physical access, include:
 - Home visits for service users – 9%
 - Reading or understanding information – 5%
 - Appointments in flexible locations – 4%
 - Technology to make the service more accessible – 3%
 - Help doing things online (2%) and filling out forms (2%)
- Information in alternative formats (unspecified – 4%), large print (8%) and easy-read (5%).

v) **Staff Training / Awareness of Adjustments** - 95% of responses indicate that all staff know what adjustments, alternative arrangements or additional support can be put in place. 6% of comments referenced finding information on the staff intranet.

vi) **What do you need to make your service more accessible** - Similarly to the previous questions, the most commonly referenced responses were finance / budget (20%) and more staff (13%). A further 17% of responses referenced improving the digital offer. More engagement with the disabled community – 7%

- Access to experts / specialist advice – 7%
- Better understanding of issues – 3%
- Finance / budget (20%), more staff (13%), improved digital offer (17%), more engagement with the disabled community (7%), access to experts / specialist advice (7%) and better understanding of issues (3%).

vii) **What are the key barriers to your service being accessible to all:**

- 11% stated that services are already fully accessible so no more needs to be done.
- Barriers identified included:
 - Finance / budget (21%), lack of capacity (8%).
 - Limitations of existing buildings (some are historic buildings which may have restrictions due to Listed Building status, others are just old and from a time when accessibility was not a consideration which makes retro-fitting access improvements difficult and expensive)
 - Reliance on other services / agencies (e.g. to provide front of house services or alternative meeting locations)
 - Technology (could be either due to the expense of upgrading technology to keep pace with guidance or a lack of knowledge of how technology can be used to enhance access)
 - Lack of engagement with the disabled community

COUNCIL

28 September 2023



Report of: Finance and Policy Committee

Subject: HIGHLIGHT LEISURE FACILITY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the referral from Finance and Policy Committee in relation to the proposed funding strategy for the proposed development of the Highlight leisure and wellbeing facility.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A Leisure Facilities Review and Options Appraisal was presented to Finance and Policy Committee in January 2020 which considered various options available to the Council in relation to its future leisure provision. One of the key recommendations was to invest in the replacement of Mill House Leisure Centre, which is no longer fit for purpose. The appraisal drew from the recommendations of the Indoor Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategy (IFPPS) 2019.
- 2.2 An indicative budget of £25.650m was developed and agreed. The total budget covered the main facility, infrastructure works and public realm. Following a competitive procurement process, Wates Construction, were identified as the preferred contractor to progress the development.
- 2.3 Based on the tender options (with an assumption of value engineering), the overall value of the project is £34.650m, thus leading to a potential budget shortfall of £9m.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 A report was considered by Finance and Policy Committee on 18th September 2023 and is attached at **Appendix 1**. At this meeting, Members agreed to progress with the Highlight scheme based on the following balanced funding strategy;

New external grant funding	£0.500m
Capital contingencies	£2.500m
Review of existing capital programme	£1.500m
Prudential borrowing	£4.500m

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that Full Council consider the following recommendations referred by Finance and Policy Committee as follows:

i) that Members support the revised funding strategy for the Highlight Leisure Facility as set out above and approve the changes to the capital programme and the additional borrowing.

5. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 To ensure that Hartlepool's proposed state of the art strategic leisure facility is delivered, and to enable work to start on site in Autumn 2023.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18 July 2019, Adoption Hartlepool Playing Pitch and Indoor Facility Strategy 2019 – 2024, Adults and Community Based Services Committee

30 January 2020, Leisure Facilities Review and Options Appraisal, Finance and Policy Committee

20 January 2022, Strategic Outcome Planning Model, Adults and Community Based Services

26 July 2022, Waterfront Regeneration Programme Business Case, Finance and Policy Committee

05 September 2023, Destination Management Plan, Economic and Regeneration Committee

18 September 2023, Highlight Leisure Facility, Finance and Policy Committee.

7. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date:
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date:
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date:

Capital budgets to be released to support Highlight budget pressure

(11) (b) (1) Appendix 1

Project Code	Scheme	£ ('000)	Comment
Major Regeneration Schemes			
7447	Headland Amphitheatre	171	Scheme complete and awaiting final account to be confirmed.
CIP	Mill House Demolition	500	Mill House Leisure Centre will be transferred to the HDC and as such any demolition costs will be met as part of any proposed site redevelopment.
-	CIP - Headland Sports Hall	200	Any essential works required to be funded from the Brierton Sports Complex scheme, as one leisure improvement scheme.
CIP	NIP Phase 2	500	Can be taken as a saving on public conveniences as alternative funding now secured to deliver improvements in tourism areas
Major Regeneration Schemes - Total		1,371	

Project Code	Scheme	£ ('000)	Comment
Adult and Community Based Services			
7234	Chronically Sick & Disabled Adaptations	144	Contribution no longer needed - Disabled Facilities Grant budget available for schemes
7212	Capital Grants to Residential/Nursing Care Homes	106	Balance available beyond current commitments
7218	Disabled Facility Grants	22	Non grant funded element available to release.
8108	Centre for Independent Living	96	Scheme complete. Some funding retained for sinking fund
7543	Waverley Terrace Allotments - Car Park	12	Scheme complete - balance available
7483	Grayfields - Reinstale 3G Pitch	8	Scheme complete - balance available
7483	Grayfields - Asset Transfer Contingency	100	Historic Funding - balance available
8103	Swimming Scheme	35	Historic Funding - No longer progressing
8408	Mill House Equipment	3	Scheme complete - balance available
8409	Sport & Youth Improvement Work (Carlton IT infrastructure)	12	Historic Funding - No longer progressing
8634	Brierton 3G Pitch (Football Foundation)	5	Historic Funding - No longer progressing
8689	Brierton - Sport England	1	Scheme complete - balance available
8896	Brierton - Tennis Courts	30	Historic Funding - No longer progressing
Adult and Community Based Services - Total		574	

Project Code	Scheme	£ ('000)	Comment
Children's and Joint Commissioning Services			
8906	Brierton Campus Windows	17	Scheme complete - balance remaining
8218	Youth Service Portable MUGA	5	Scheme complete - balance remaining
Children's and Joint Commissioning Services		22	

Project Code	Scheme	£ ('000)	Comment
Corporate			
7072	Seaton Library DDA toilet	37	Scheme not progressing as has been superceded by a wider scheme with grant funding secured.
7336	Borough Hall - Upgrade Fixtures and Fittings	8	Scheme complete - balance remaining
7539	Throston Youth Project - Resurface Car Park	63	Scheme not progressing - wider landlord improvements have been progressed.
7591	Mill House Capital	126	Scheme complete - balance remaining
7617	Borough Hall - Lighting and Wiring	38	Scheme not progressing - wider scheme in place
	Borough Hall - Major Refurb Works	45	Scheme not progressing - wider scheme in place
7623	IT Equipment	8	Scheme complete - balance remaining
Corporate Total		325	

Project Code	Scheme	£ ('000)	Comment
Resources and Development			
7260	City Challenge	9	Scheme complete - balance remaining
7623	Corporate IT Projects	12	Scheme complete - balance remaining
	Corporate Projects	109	Scheme complete - balance remaining
Resources and Development - Total		130	

Project Code	Scheme	£ ('000)	Comment
Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services			
HIFP	Additional Highways Schemes HIFP	332	The Highways Improvement Funding Programme was completed in 2020 and delivered all agreed schemes under budget focusing on carriageway resurfacing. Footpaths and verge schemes.
7347	NIP - CCTV in Parks	60	Scheme complete - balance available
8997	NIP - Unallocated	9	Scheme complete - balance available
Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services - Total		401	

OVERALL TOTAL TO BE RELEASED		2,823	
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FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

18 SEPTEMBER 2023



Subject: HIGHLIGHT LEISURE FACILITY

Report of: Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services and
Director of Finance, IT and Digital.

Decision Type: Key Decision Test I and II – General Exception Notice Applies

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- that is sustainable, clean, safe and green.
- that has an inclusive and growing economy.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report provides Members with an update on the proposed development of the Highlight leisure and wellbeing facility and seeks support for the proposed funding strategy.

3. BACKGROUND AND STRATEGIC CASE FOR INVESTMENT

- 3.1 A Leisure Facilities Review and Options Appraisal was presented to Finance and Policy Committee in January 2020 which considered various options available to the Council in relation to future leisure provision. One of the key recommendations was to invest in the replacement of Mill House Leisure Centre, which is no longer fit for purpose. The appraisal drew from the recommendations of the Indoor Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategy (IFPPS) 2019.

- 3.2 Options included the refurbishment of Mill House Leisure Centre alongside other new build opportunities in various locations in Hartlepool. The option to refurbish Mill House Leisure Centre scored lowest against the strategic criteria used to assess each option. There was significant risk to refurbishment including: limited opportunities to amend the existing footprint and configuration without considerable costs; partial or full closure of the facility during refurbishment having a significant impact on revenue and customer retention; limited value for money due to the structure remaining 50 years old; limited economic impact and appeal to visitors outside of Hartlepool; limited integration into a wider customer experience of leisure, culture, heritage and environment; limited access to investment as monies secured for strategic leisure development would not be secured against refurbishment due to the limited opportunity of impact and outcomes and limited ability to integrated more sustainable and efficient operations.
- 3.3 The decision to progress with this development was subsequently made by Finance and Policy Committee with a recommendation that the development of a new leisure centre (latterly named Highlight) be integrated as part of the wider Hartlepool waterfront development.
- 3.4 A robust and comprehensive strategic case for investment in Highlight has been developed over a number of years, dovetailing the findings of the IFPPS and findings / recommendations from the application of Sport England's Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM: 2021/22).

In headline terms, the strategic case for investment is based upon:

- an urgent need to address the aging and poor quality sport and leisure facility stock;
- reduced swimming pool capacity due to the closure of small, school pools;
- significant concern regarding the potential further loss of swimming pool capacity given the age and condition of Mill House Leisure Centre and High Tunstall School pools – the town's only public water spaces;
- the modelled and evidenced community and strategic need for aquatics, fitness provision (i.e. gym and fitness classes), play opportunities and family-focussed activity;
- a detailed understanding of the wider socio-economic challenges facing local communities (i.e. high levels of adult & childhood obesity, physical inactivity, cardio-vascular disease, mental ill-health, muscular-skeletal problems and social isolation) and the positive impact that an active lifestyle can have in addressing or mitigating all of these issues;
- evidenced policy, strategy and delivery support from all local, related public and voluntary sector partners (i.e. health, education, regeneration, housing, tourism) at community and regional strategy level, collectively advocating the value and beneficial impact that investment in sport and physical activity (and in Highlight) can have on the wellbeing of local people and in addressing wider social outcomes, including social cohesion, employment, mental well-being, inward investment and educational attainment

The strength and clarity of the case made for investment in Highlight and its potential to positively impact on local communities is reflected in the significant capital investment secured from both Tees Valley Combined Authority and Sport England.

4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

4.1 It was agreed that the following approval arrangements were adopted:

- *Stage 1* – Approval of indicative budget allocations for individual projects;
- *Stage 2* – Development of detailed schemes and business case to RIBA 3 (Spatial Coordination). This stage defines the detailed project specification to enable the Council to undertake the appropriate tendering/procurement exercise;
- *Stage 3* – Acceptance of tenders. If contract costs are within the budget limit approved at Stage 2 the project will be progressed to the delivery stage. However if contract costs exceed the indicative budget allocation, or external grant funding cannot be secured, an additional report will be submitted to Finance and Policy Committee to determine a strategy for managing this position; and
- *Stage 4* – Project delivery.

4.2 Subsequent work in relation to the above arrangements has taken place, with Stage 2 fully complete.

4.3 As per the requirements of Stage 1, an indicative budget was developed and approved. The total budget is split into three parts to represent the development of the leisure facility, infrastructure works and public realm.

Funding Stream	Value
Highlight Leisure Facility	
TVCA Capital Programme	£10.490m
TVCA IGF	£0.500m
Prudential Borrowing	£8.400m
External Grant	£2.000m
Infrastructure Works	
TVCA Capital Programme	£2.260m
Public Realm	
TVCA IGF	£2.000m
Total	£25.650m

5. PROPOSALS / OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 During the period January 2021 to July 2022, the project has progressed through a number of milestones with the project now fully developed to

Technical Design. This level of information is sufficient to obtain a fixed price tender for the delivery of the construction phase of the project.

- 5.2 Following Planning Permission for the development being granted in July 2022, the procurement exercise to identify a Main Contractor commenced. Unfortunately, due to a number of factors outside the Council's control, the procurement phase has taken longer than initially programmed and has also been amended to take into consideration the current conditions of the construction market which have evolved significantly post COVID-19.
- 5.3 The tender process robustly considered regional and national contractors in order to identify the most appropriate contractor to deliver this project. The early part of 2023 saw two large regional contractors with significant leisure centre experience go into liquidation which caused extensive uncertainty in the market, particularly in the North East. This led to an unavoidable delay while the project team considered alternative approaches to procuring a suitably experienced contractor.
- 5.4 Following a competitive procurement process, Wates Construction, a leader in the sport and leisure sector nationally, were identified as the preferred contractor to progress the development. Whilst Wates are a tier 1 national contractor they have engaged the local supply chain for delivery of this project. Wates were appointed under a Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA) whereby they become part of the project team to develop the final design, resulting in them being able to provide a fixed price tender for the delivery of the construction phase of the development. Wates Construction have extensive experience in leisure centre construction and were the principal contractor for the state-of-the-art facility that was purposely built for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.
- 5.5 The PCSA process was completed in July 2023 with Wates submitting a fixed price tender alongside a list of 'Value Engineering' options, a pre-construction programme and a construction programme. The tender submission had four potential prices depending on the amount of Value Engineering proposals accepted. Value Engineering is a process of refining the build process and specification to drive out value through design, as opposed to removing elements from the development. Wates have brought their extensive construction experience to the project through the PCSA, which has added further value.
- 5.6 The tender range is presented in table one below:

Tender Option	Total Cost
Low (all value engineering options accepted)	£29.930m
Medium (majority value engineering options accepted)	£30.000m
High (30% of value engineering options accepted)	£30.650m
Very High (No value engineering options accepted)	£30.940m

- 5.7 The tender submission in the instance that no value engineering is achieved is £30.940m, however the most likely figure is £30m as this provides value

engineering without being detrimental to the original specification. All costs are inclusive of the external areas to provide activity space, public realm, car parking facilities etc.

- 5.8 The pre-construction and construction phase programmes have been fully developed and it is anticipated that works on site can commence (subject to approval) in autumn 2023, with a programmed completion date of summer 2025.
- 5.9 Additional costs of £2.790m arise in addition to main construction costs:
- A budget of £0.600m is required for internal fixtures and fit out;
 - Off-site highway improvements, quay wall repairs, legal and planning fees to support the project total £0.580m;
 - Professional fees, which include design to date and project management to completion, total a further £1.610m.
- 5.10 It is recommended that the Council creates a contingency pot of £1.860m to cover any unexpected risks that arise as construction commences, which is standard practice for construction projects of this size.
- 5.11 Therefore the proposed facility, based on the medium case scenario being achieved through value engineering and including the offsite ancillary works are as follows:

Element	Value
Highlight Tender Sum (medium case)	£30.000m
Additional Project Costs	£2.790m
Risk/Contingency	£1.860m
Total	£34.650m

- 5.12 When taking into consideration the total anticipated costs, there is therefore a budget shortfall of £9m.
- 5.13 The facility mix and foot print of the new strategic leisure development has been developed with a robust evidence base working closely with Sport England and other national leisure and sport experts. The facility mix ensures achievement of the priority outcomes linked to participation, wider determinants of health (including working with the NHS Foundation Trust), attainment of young people swimming 25m as part of Ofsted requirements and ensuring an attractive offer for visitors amongst many other outcomes.
- 5.14 Rationalisation of the offer within the strategic leisure centre creates significant risk against the outcomes, business model and revenue projections compared to the one off capital investment it would save. Any changes to the proposed leisure facility at this stage would incur significant additional costs attached to design and other feasibility work as well as adding further delay and risk of continued inflation increasing the overall costs.
- 5.15 It should be noted that the original budget for the project was developed in 2019/20. Since that time, inflation, energy costs and other factor have had a

huge impact upon the whole of the UK, including the construction market. Following extensive research to understand the regional construction market, these costs do not appear to be abnormal with a number of other high profile projects being subject to similar pressures. Although the additional investment is significant, this development will have major long term benefits for Hartlepool, demonstrating the Council's commitment to regenerating the town, raising aspirations and supporting improved health outcomes for local people.

- 5.16 Delivering Highlight is fundamental to the wider Waterfront Regeneration Master Plan and delivery of the Council Plan ambitions for the town. A strategic leisure facility on the waterfront is the first step towards creating a destination attractive to residents, visitors and investors combining leisure, culture, heritage, business, retail, hospitality and environment.

6. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Having inadequate leisure provision in Hartlepool, especially as a coastal town, has significant population wide risk implications. This includes but is not limited to poor swimming attainment for children and young people, low rates of physical activity and increased risk of long terms health conditions.
- 6.2 Mill House Leisure Centre is no longer fit for purpose and requires significant investment to continue operating at the current standard. For the reasons outlined in 3.2 continued investment into the existing facility is seen as abortive and any early closure of part of the facility pending a new facility will have an impact on ongoing revenue budgets.
- 6.3 Not progressing with Highlight at this stage would risk loss of time and money already invested, potential loss of Sport England funding, impact on other grant conditions from TVCA and reputational damage based on the significant level of stakeholder and public support for the development of this facility.

7. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken by officers to develop a revised funding strategy to address the budget shortfall as set out below.

	Gap / Funding £000
Increased Grant Funding	
The project has been developed through close collaboration with Sport England and due to the strength of the project, further grant funding of £0.500m has been indicatively agreed in addition to the original allocation of £2.000m. Note that this funding is at risk until grant approvals are signed.	500

Use of Capital Contingencies	
Members will be aware from previous F&P reports that plans were in place to set aside a capital contingency for price risk on major capital schemes including Highlight. This was to be funded from temporary Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) savings and capital receipts. Whilst achievement of capital receipts has proven challenging in the current environment, the existing contingency, coupled with forecast MRP savings until the centre is operational, can be released to support Highlight.	2,500
In-depth review of Capital Programme	
<p>The finance team, in conjunction with Directors and service teams have undertaken a root and branch review of the existing capital programme and capital funding allocations to identify a number of schemes that are either complete, obsolete, stalled for a significant time period, part of a wider scheme or simply no longer deliverable.</p> <p>Appendix 1 details these schemes. The funding sources of these schemes are mixed, including earmarked capital reserves, external funding and prudential borrowing. Excluding borrowing, freed up capital resources, can be used to support the Highlight scheme.</p>	1,500
Prudential Borrowing	
<p>It is proposed to bridge the budget gap through prudential borrowing. Based on current interest rates, the annual cost of borrowing (both MRP and interest) would be circa £0.280m a year. Note the review of the capital programme outlined above releases historic borrowing approvals.</p> <p>The actual interest cost will depend on the prevailing rates when borrowing is entered into.</p> <p>Given the timeframe of the project, the flexibility the council has of when to borrow, but also recognising potential interest rate risk, it is proposed to factor in a potential pressure of £0.100m per year over the 3-year MTFS period.</p> <p>It should be noted that the Council has a prudent approach to borrowing, with comparatively low servicing costs compared to other Local Authorities.</p>	4,500

- 7.2 Whilst a balanced funding strategy is fully in place, the Council will continue to seek additional sources of external funding, as well as examine potential flexibilities within existing funding as the capital programme develops and is implemented. Should new opportunities arise, this will mitigate the impact on the Council funding position, and will be reported as part of quarterly budget reports.

- 7.3 Business planning for Highlight continues to progress with early projections identifying a projected subsidy comparable to that of Mill House Leisure Centre with significantly greater output in terms of outcomes, participation and customer experience. Further work will include review of operating models for leisure and culture to ensure best value and impact on the recommended operating model for Highlight. This work builds upon the detail already presented to Adult & Community Based Services Committee as part of the Strategic Outcome Planning Model (January 2022).

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>A procurement exercise was undertaken to select Wates Construction to provide further design input, buildability advice, technical advice and detailed costs information. This allows for their appointment through to construction and mitigates legal risks by using industry standard contracts to minimize legal costs and apportion risks in a fair and 'industry accepted' manner.</p> <p>Funding agreements and business cases have already been completed and signed with funders and investors. Any changes to the heads of terms and deliverables could create risk that will need to be managed in the context of existing agreements and contracts.</p>
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	<p>Physical activity, leisure and community engagement contribute to the health and wellbeing of the whole population, however the risks associated with physical inactivity, long term health conditions and lack of engagement in positive activities (including learning to swim) are typically higher amongst the most deprived communities.</p> <p>The development of a new strategic leisure facility will ensure improved engagement with communities and will have a positive impact on access to affordable leisure, play and activity provision. This supports the development of fundamental skills critical for the development of children and young people and preventing long terms risks to health and wellbeing.</p>
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	<p>Issues regarding equality and diversity have been considered throughout the development of the Highlight project, including engagement with the Community Led Inclusion Partnership (CLIP) regarding accessibility.</p>

	Linked to the funding contribution from Sport England there are some requirements to enhance accessibility of the facility in line with the Facility Planning Model.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The facility mix, configuration and operating model will require a review of staffing infrastructure to ensure Highlight is appropriately staffed in line with strategic objectives and ensuring safe operation.</p> <p>A staffing review will be conducted in advance of Highlight opening to ensure readiness of staff, a period of transition and ensure adequate training and development can be conducted. This work will be done with engagement from Human Resources and Trade Unions in line with corporate policy as required.</p>
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	The relocation from Mill House Leisure Centre to a new state of the art facility will reduce the existing maintenance burden on the Council. Mill House Leisure Centre is no longer fit for purpose and as such requires a disproportionate amount of maintenance spend to keep it operational.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	A Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM) has been used to inform the technical design. The aim of BREEAM is not only to identify a project's genuine sustainable credentials, but also to improve sustainability of a building throughout its whole life. BREEAM sets the standard for best practice in sustainable design and is internationally recognised as a measure used to describe a building's environmental performance. BREEAM assesses the performances of buildings over a wide range of environmental issues to produce a rating of either unclassified (<30% – non-compliant), pass (>30%), good (>45%), very good (>55%), excellent (>70%) or outstanding (>85%). The assessment undertaken on this project has identified that it should achieve a minimum rating of very good.
CONSULTATION	<p>Consultation and engagement has been ongoing involving customers, residents, stakeholders and investors. The development of the evidence base for a new strategic leisure centre started in 2017/18 when a review of Hartlepool's Playing Pitch and Indoor Facility Strategy (PPIFS) was started, and this concluded in 2019.</p> <p>Before this Hartlepool had been on a national strategic pipeline for leisure investment and development for a significant number of years due to the risk of decline of the existing leisure offer and projected trends in participation.</p>

	<p>Once the PPIFS was adopted further work to explore options and gain insight from the public and stakeholders was conducted as part of the option appraisal.</p> <p>Additional engagement work has been undertaken as part of the SOPM development, the design stages with architects GT3 and as part of ongoing service development during the evolution of Active Hartlepool.</p> <p>The public engagement through a broad range of methodologies has been positive especially combined with significant plans for regeneration of Hartlepool's waterfront and an opportunity to strategic align leisure, culture, heritage, environment and hospitality for the benefit of residents and visitors.</p>
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9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is recommended that Members support the revised funding strategy for the Highlight Leisure Facility as set out in the report and make a recommendation to Council to approve the changes to the capital programme and the additional borrowing.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 To ensure that Hartlepool's proposed state of the art strategic leisure facility is delivered, and to enable work to start on site in autumn 2023.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 18 July 2019, Adoption Hartlepool Playing Pitch and Indoor Facility Strategy 2019 – 2024, Adults and Community Based Services Committee

30 January 2020, Leisure Facilities Review and Options Appraisal, Finance and Policy Committee

20 January 2022, Strategic Outcome Planning Model, Adults and Community Based Services

26 July 2022, Waterfront Regeneration Programme Business Case, Finance and Policy Committee

05 September 2023, Destination Management Plan, Economic and Regeneration Committee

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 05 / 09 / 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 05 / 09 / 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 05 / 09 / 2023

COUNCIL
28 September 2023



Report of: Managing Director

Subject: BUSINESS REPORT

1. RESIGNATION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP

I have received notification of the resignation of Councillor Wallace from the Labour Group. Under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Authority is under a duty to review the allocation of seats to Political Groups as soon as practicable following a change to the membership of a political group. A review has, therefore, been undertaken. Full Council is asked to note that there are no changes in political proportionality as a result of the changes arising from Councillor Wallace's resignation.

The Labour Group have advised that Councillor Wallace will be replaced on Committees as follows:-

Audit and Governance Committee – Councillor Sharp

Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee – Councillor Creevy

Full Council is requested to note the outcome of the review of the allocation of seats to Political Groups and the replacement members on the Committees identified above.

2. FAIR TRADE PROPOSAL

We now have confirmation from the Fairtrade Foundation that they will extend our Fairtrade Town status to the end of the year. A number of meetings have been held and agreement has been reached that the Fairtrade steering group will become a subgroup of the Hartlepool Food Partnership*.

We will be looking to ensure we have representatives from schools, churches and business to reinvigorate Fairtrade across the borough. This would be undertaken by an announcement at the September meeting of the Food Partnership and placed in the associated newsletter. We will also advertise this through various networks and

through our social media outlets, plus other routes working with the VCS and Church contacts.

We are hopeful that a meeting of the Fairtrade steering group will meet in October. In the meantime we are looking at the renewed application form which will be submitted in December 2023.

The Hartlepool Food Partnership brings together representatives from the community, food businesses, the voluntary sector, educational institutions and the local authority – who care about the quality, affordability and sustainability of food in their town. By working in partnership with the wider community, a long-term plan is created to make available healthy, affordable and sustainable food.

3. TEES PORT WELFARE COMMITTEE

I have received a request on behalf of the Tees Port Welfare Committee (PWC) who have expressed an interest in having representation on the PWC from Hartlepool Council. Redcar and Cleveland Council have been members for several years and following a discussion over membership at a recent meeting, members felt there should be local government representation from all the port areas in the Tees region which includes Hartlepool. The Committee are hoping there might be a local councillor with an interest in seafarers' welfare, the maritime industry or charities that might find attendance at our meetings of benefit.

Port Welfare Committees are the key strategic partnership for the maritime community across the region and operate under the auspices of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) which is a national charity, (Registration Number: 453053) and company limited by guarantee (Number: 453053). Membership of the Port Welfare Committees include senior representatives from port authorities, ship owners, shipping agents, crewing agencies, seafarers' organisations (maritime trade unions), voluntary societies (maritime charities), maritime colleges, local government, including port health and police authorities, the Maritime & Coastguard Agency as well as the UK Border Agency. The Port Welfare Committees meet locally, usually three times a year. Whilst meetings are reasonably formal, great value is placed on the opportunity for partner agencies to network, share information and best practice. That said, the aim of the meetings is to ensure that serving seafarers, visiting seafarers and, where appropriate, retired seafarers, and their dependents, receive the highest quality and range of welfare services available, in their local area.

Full Council is requested to consider nomination of an elected member to the Committee and the addition of the Tees Port Welfare Committee to the schedule included in Part 7 of the Constitution.

4. SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Access to Information Procedure Rules included in the Council's Constitution, Full Council is informed that no special urgency decisions were taken in the period May 2023 – July 2023.

5. INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Three vacancies currently exist on the Independent Remuneration Panel and, following completion of the interview process, the appointment of all three of the candidates will be recommended to the Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 19 September.

The Audit and Governance Committee will be asked to consider each of the applicants, appoint any / all of those who it considers suitable and that their four year term of office commence on 19th September 2023.

Full Council will be updated on the recommendations of the Committee.

6. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Elected Members are reminded that there continues to be a vacancy on the Audit and Governance Committee, arising from the resignation of Councillor Smith.

A replacement member of the Conservative and Coalition Group is sought.

Public questions for Council

Meeting Date: 28 September 2023

1.	From: Mr G Lilley
	To: Chair Neighbourhood Services Committee, Councillor Little
	<p>Question</p> <p>Seaton Carew has become one of the most popular open water all year swimming venues in the north east. Recognised by HBC in their provision of a seasonal Lifeguard service</p> <p>Figures submitted to Northumbrian Water and HBC through Sewerage free Hartlepool and Seaton Carew Sea Swimmers (Brass Monkey's) show 5264 out of season (winter) Bathers in the 21-22 season and 4878 in the 22-23 season. During the summer season families and various groups including the Brass Monkey's swim every day, the area opposite the Norton Hotel being the most popular.</p> <p>Exiting the sea water it would be beneficial - not to say healthy - for all beach users, families, swimmers, and visitors to Hartlepool to have access to a rinse off facility. To wash salt water and sand off of bodies and swimming costumes.</p> <p>In the last twelve months we have contacted a number of local councillors who all positively support this request. Other local seaside resorts e.g. Whitby offer free cold water showers for beach users.</p> <p>Could Cllr Little request Officers to meet with us to progress this facility.</p>

Member questions for Council

Meeting: 28 September 2023

1.	From: Councillor Brash
	To: Councillor Young Chair of Finance and Policy Committee
	Question: Can the Chair of Finance & Policy Committee give Council a summary of the current financial position of the authority, what are the measures being proposed to combat the projected overspend, and what is his assessment of the potential threat of effective bankruptcy and/or the issuing of a 114 notice for the authority?
2.	From: Councillor Creevy
	To: Councillor Buchan Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee
	Question: Can the Chair of Adults and Community based services committee give an update on the "housing for families with a disabled family member" motion which was referred to Adults committee on 16 December 2021 which is nearly 2 years ago now.

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

24 MARCH 2023



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Ben Clayton, Angela Falconer, Leisa Smith

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Naweed Hussain, Tom Mawston

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Julie Craig, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Lynn Hall, Jean O'Donnell, Steve Matthews

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Teresa Higgins - Middlesbrough Council

Councillor Billy Ayre – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

114. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

It was noted no Declarations of Interests were submitted to the meeting.

115. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 10 February 2023 be confirmed.

116. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee on 24 February 2023 and Executive Committee on 3 March 2023 be confirmed.

117. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

- Gill Gittins – Pay Updates
- Home Office – Industrial Action Assurance

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

118. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

118.1 Service Plan 2023/24

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the Service Plan 2023/24 which contained the priorities for the forthcoming year and reflected the second year of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-26.

He reported that the annual strategic planning activities had been undertaken by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in January 2023. This included a review of the Community Risk Management, People and Resources plans to ensure they were still relevant and the actions were updated accordingly to support delivery into 2023/24, as summarised in the Service Plan 2023/24 at Appendix 1.

The CFO confirmed that the progress against the priorities will be reported to and monitored by ELT and the Authority's Executive Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Service Plan 2023/24 be noted.

118.2 Information Pack

- 118.2.1 National Joint Circulars
- 118.2.2 Employers' Circulars
- 118.2.3 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

119. REPORT OF THE CLERK

119.1 Calendar of Meetings 2023/24

Members considered the proposed schedule of Cleveland Fire Authority meetings for the municipal year of 2023/24. The Clerk confirmed that the dates were aligned to the Authority's business planning calendar and would be presented to the Annual Meeting of the Authority on 9 June 2023.

RESOLVED – That the Cleveland Fire Authority meeting schedule for 2023/24 be approved.

120. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

120.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24

The Treasurer reported that the Strategy had been scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee on 24 February 2023 and no issues had been raised. He outlined the report in detail, which included:

- Economic Background and Outlook for Interest Rates
- Interest Rate Forecasts up to March 2026
- Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24
- Borrowing Strategy 2022/23
- Investment Strategy 2023/24
- Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest Costs / Regulatory Information 2023/24
- Borrowing and Prudential Indicators

120.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 cont.

The Treasurer concluded that this Strategy sets out how the Authority will comply with the regulatory framework to ensure it achieves the lowest borrowing costs and security for any temporary cash investments made by the Authority. He added that within this framework and the more uncertain / volatile financial environment officers would continue to actively manage borrowing and investments to support the overall financial position of the Authority.

RESOLVED - That as recommended by the Audit & Governance Committee on 24 February 2023, the following recommendations be approved:

- (i) That the 2021/22 Treasury Management outturn detailed in Section 5 and Appendix A be noted.
- (ii) That the 2022/23 Treasury Management mid-year position detailed in section 6 be noted.
- (iii) That the prudential indicators outlined in Appendix B be approved.
- (iv) **Borrowing Strategy 2023/24**
That Members note that in the event of a change in economic circumstances that the Treasurer may take out additional borrowing in advance of need if this secures the lowest long term interest cost.
- (v) **Investment Strategy 2023/24**
That the Counterparty limits as set out in paragraph 9.8. be approved.
- (i) **Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement**
That Members approve the following MRP statement:
 - For capital expenditure incurred before 1st April, 2008 the Authority's MRP policy is to calculate MRP in accordance with former CLG Regulations. This is 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement except where the Authority makes Voluntary Revenue Payments which is in excess of the amount required by these regulations, based on asset life;
 - From 1st April, 2008 the Authority calculates MRP based on asset life for all assets or where prudential borrowing is financed by a specific annuity loan, MRP will be calculated according to the actual annuity loan repayments.
 - The Treasurer may determine to make Voluntary Revenue Provision payments to reduce the Authority's overall CFR if it is in the best financial interests of the Authority.

121. REPORT OF THE LEGAL ADVISER AND MONITORING OFFICER

121.1 Pay Policy Statement 2023/24

The Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer (LAMO) reported that in line with the provisions set out in the Localism Act 2011, the Authority had a statutory duty to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year relating to:

- the remuneration of its chief officers
- the remuneration of its lowest paid employees
- the relationship between:
 - the remuneration of its chief officers and
 - the remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers

121.1 Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 cont.

The LAMO outlined the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 at Appendix 1 and highlighted the remuneration of the lowest paid employees, which assumed the latest settlement offer of a 7% pay rise in 2022/23 and 5% for 2023/24. This was:

- Firefighter (Development) - £28,310
- Non-operational employees Grade B (Development) - £20,812 (£21,852 estimated 5% for 2023/24).

He reported that the Government's National Living Wage sets a minimum wage for all workers aged 25 years and over which equates to £18,325.50, which was lower than the Authority's lowest paid employees Grade B (Development) which is currently £20,812 (£21,852 estimated 5% for 2023/24).

The LAMO confirmed that the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24, which had been considered by the Executive Committee on 3 March 2023, was based on the current pay offer and would be updated as required should any further changes occur.

RESOLVED - That the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 be approved and published, as recommended by the Executive Committee on 3 March 2023.

122. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

122.1 Farewell to Members

The CFO noted that due to local elections taking place on 4 May 2023, this would be the final meeting for some Authority Members who were not standing for re-election. He extended sincere thanks to longtime Authority supporter Councillor Tom Mawston who had served a total of 18 years with the Authority since 1996. He also recognised the support of Councillor Teresa Higgins who had been on the Authority since 2015 and served as Chair of the Local Pension Board.

The CFO recognised the Vice-Chair Councillor Jean O'Donnell for her 21 years' consecutive service and the past 8 years as Vice Chair. He thanked Councillor O'Donnell for her guidance, wisdom and direction and for representing the Authority at national events. Councillor O'Donnell said she had enjoyed being part of the innovative journey of growth the Authority had been on and considered it to be a beacon of light among local government.

The CFO also recognised the Chair, Councillor Paul Kirton and thanked him for his 18 years' service. He praised the Chair for leading the Authority through some unprecedented times over the past four years and for his consistent support. Councillor Kirton thanked Members and Officers for their continued commitment and said he was proud to have had the opportunity to lead the Authority and be part of its outstanding achievements.

- 123. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION ORDER) 2006**
RESOLVED - “That Under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 3, 4 and 7 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to any individual; information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information and namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority; namely information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.”
- 124. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 10 February 2023 be confirmed.
- 125. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS**
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 3 March 2023 be confirmed.

The Treasurer left the meeting.

126. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE CLERK

126.1 Future Treasurers Role

Members considered the arrangements for the future provision of a Section 151 Officer to the Authority.

**COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR**

Cleveland Police and Crime Panel

A meeting of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel was held on Tuesday, 13 September 2022.

Present: Councillor Tony Riordan (Chair), Councillor Barrie Cooper (Vice-Chair), Councillor Graham Cutler, Councillor Chris Jones, Councillor Stefan Houghton, Councillor Tom Mawston, Mr Paul McGrath, Councillor Steven Nelson, Mr Luigi Salvati and Councillor Pauline Beall

Officers: Steve Newton, Alison Pearson, Rae Puggmurr (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council).

Also In attendance: Cllr Tony Grainge

Apologies: Councillor Shane Moore, Mayor Andy Preston, Councillor Amy Prince, Councillor Carrie Richardson and Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE

17 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

18 Minutes of the meetings held on the 5 July 2022 and attendance matrix

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2022 and the attendance matrix.

Regarding the attendance matrix, Councillor Chris Jones requested that his attendance record be amended to confirm that in addition to submitting his apologies for the last meeting, a substitute had attended in his place.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2022 be agreed as a correct record and the attendance matrix be amended to accurately reflect that a substitute had attended the meeting on Councillor Jones' behalf.

Arising from the minutes, the chair advised that he had progressed the request for stop and search data which had been raised as an action at the last meeting.

19 Off Road Motorcycle Problem / Public Safety

The Chair advised that, following the request of the Panel at its last meeting, an invitation had been extended to the Chief Constable to attend the meeting and provide and update to Members on actions being taken to address problems with off-road motorcycles and concerns regarding public safety.

The Chief Constable had declined the invitation stating that he did not wish for the boundaries of scrutiny and accountability to be stretched and would instead provide the Police and Crime Commissioner with a comprehensive report in advance of the meeting. In addition, he also extended an open invitation for any

Panel Members to visit the Force Control Room to gain a more detailed insight on the Force's position and how incidents were prioritised and responded to.

Members expressed disappointment at the situation and the inability to progress a discussion on this matter at the meeting with the relevant parties.

Due to the absence of the Police and Crime Commissioner it was proposed by Councillor Tom Mawston and seconded by Luigi Salvati that this item, along with items 5 to 10 as listed on the agenda, are deferred to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that this item, and items 5 to 10 as listed on the agenda, are deferred to the next meeting.

20 Annual Report of the Commissioner 2021/22

RESOLVED that, due to the absence of the Police and Crime Commissioner, this item be deferred to the next meeting.

21 Quarter 1 2022/23 Police and Crime Plan Performance Report

The Chair advised that he had met with the Commissioner's Office to discuss the presentation of simplified data, the inclusion of comparator data and information indicating the direction of performance. Panel Members also highlighted the need for information to be shared in a timely manner.

RESOLVED that, due to the absence of the Police and Crime Commissioner, this item be deferred to the next meeting.

22 Commissioner's Scrutiny Programme

RESOLVED that, due to the absence of the Police and Crime Commissioner, this item be deferred to the next meeting.

23 Decisions of the Commissioner

RESOLVED that, due to the absence of the Police and Crime Commissioner, this item be deferred to the next meeting.

24 Communication, Consultation and Engagement Update

RESOLVED that, due to the absence of the Police and Crime Commissioner, this item be deferred to the next meeting.

25 Members' Questions to the Commissioner

RESOLVED that, due to the absence of the Police and Crime Commissioner,

this item be deferred to the next meeting.

26 Public Questions

There were no questions from members of the public.

27 Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2021/22 (draft)

Members considered the draft content of the Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2021/22. No issues or queries were raised.

RESOLVED that the draft content of the Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2021/22 be agreed.

28 Forward Plan

Members considered the Forward Plan. The Chair advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner had requested the date of the next meeting to be rearranged if possible to enable him to attend a parliamentary debate.

RESOLVED that the forward plan be noted and the date of the next meeting be rearranged.

29 Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

30 Complaint Update

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer detailing five new complaint matters that had been received and providing an update on an existing complaint matter.

RESOLVED

With regard to the new matters:

Complaint 1 (2022 02)

RESOLVED

1. The Panel be confirmed as the relevant panel for the matter.
2. The matter be recorded and notified to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

3. The complaint be progressed as agreed by the Panel.

Complaint 2 (2022 03)

RESOLVED

1. The Panel be confirmed as the relevant panel for the matter.
2. The matter be recorded and notified to the Police and Crime Commissioner.
3. The complaint be progressed as agreed by the Panel.

Complaint 3 (2022 04)

RESOLVED

1. The Panel be confirmed as the relevant panel for the matter.
2. The matter be recorded and notified to the Police and Crime Commissioner.
3. The complaint be progressed as agreed by the Panel.

Complaint 4 (2022 05)

RESOLVED

1. The Panel be confirmed as the relevant panel for the matter.
2. The matter be recorded and notified to the Police and Crime Commissioner.
3. The complaint be progressed as agreed by the Panel.

Complaint 5 (2022 06)

RESOLVED

1. Further information be sought from the complainant to enable the Panel to determine whether the complaint meets the definition of a complaint for the purposes of the regulations

With regard to the update on an existing complaint (2022 01):

RESOLVED

1. The complaint be progressed as agreed by the Panel.

Cleveland Police and Crime Panel

A meeting of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel was held on Tuesday, 15 November 2022.

Present: Councillor Tony Riordan (Chair), Councillor Barrie Cooper (Vice-Chair), Councillor Graham Cutler, Councillor Chris Jones, Mr Paul McGrath, Councillor Tom Mawston, Councillor Steven Nelson, Mr Luigi Salvati and Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE

Officers: Steven Newton (Governance Director (Monitoring Officer)), Alison Pearson (Governance Manager) and Rae Puggmurr

Also In attendance: Lisa Oldroyd (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner), Steve Turner (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner), Rachelle Kipling (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner), Michael Porter (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) and Chief Constable Mark Webster (Cleveland Police)

Apologies: Councillor Stefan Houghton, Councillor Shane Moore, Mayor Andy Preston, Councillor Carrie Richardson and Councillor Carole Thompson

PCP 31/22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

PCP 32/22 **Minutes of the meetings held on the following dates and attendance matrix**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

PCP 33/22 **Exclusion of the Press and Public.**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

PCP 34/22 **The Strategic Direction of the Force**

Chief Constable Webster shared information with the Panel on work undertaken in recent months since his appointment to the Force. Following an assessment, he outlined key challenges and progress, along with proposed further improvements to be made to ensure an improved service to the public. The Chief Constable shared data with the panel on demand for services, including data on the number and types of daily 999 calls received, and incidents reported.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

The press and public were readmitted to the meeting.

**PCP
35/22**

Off Road Motorcycle problem / public safety

The Police and Crime Commissioner updated the Panel on his scrutiny of the force's response to the use of offroad motorcycles and quads. Although there were tactics in place to intercept where it would be safe and appropriate to do so, the likelihood of putting both riders and pedestrians at further risk of harm also needed to be considered.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stressed the importance of intelligence from the public around the location of off-road vehicles to enable them to be seized and destroyed and asked that Elected Members were proactive in sharing the request for information within their communities.

The Commissioner confirmed that there was an issue nationally, but that work was being undertaken to identify and replicate good practice from other force areas. He reiterated the importance of sharing information of any sightings, issues or concerns through the app or by contacting 101.

The Commissioner acknowledged the need improve feedback with the public to provide reassurance and build confidence that action was being taken as a result of the information they provided.

In relation to the practice of tactical contact, the Chief Constable gave an explanation of the risk assessment process undertaken before any decisions on action were made for each reported incident.

In response to comments about the use of the Force helicopter, the Commissioner confirmed that cost is not the primary deciding factor, but that each scenario is considered as to whether it is the appropriate use of resources.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**PCP
36/22**

Annual Report of the Commissioner 2021/22

The Commissioner introduced his report and expressed his pride at the work that had been undertaken and progress made during the year.

The Commissioner gave credit to his team and how positively they had responded to a different direction and focus. He also highlighted the work of the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) and suggested a representative from the unit be invited to a future meeting to share further detail on their work.

A panel member asked for further information regarding recruitment and whether there was a focus on recruiting permanent officers rather than special constables. The Commissioner confirmed that recruiting special constables was a challenge, but that those currently recruited brought a variety of skills and experience with them. There was a pledge to double the number of special

constables and work was ongoing to achieve this. The Commissioner clarified that special constables do not receive a reduction in their council tax.

A panel member sought assurance on the recruitment and vetting processes following recent national press coverage relating to people with criminal records gaining employment within the Police. The Commissioner confirmed that in terms of vetting new officers, the Force had stringent processes in place, and he was confident the process was as robust as it could be.

The Panel welcomed the Annual Report and commented that it was well presented and easy to read.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report be noted.

PCP 37/22 Quarter 1 2022/23 Police and Crime Plan Performance Report

RESOLVED that the item was discussed jointly with the Quarter 2 Police and Crime Plan Performance Report.

PCP 38/22 Quarter 2 2022/23 Police and Crime Plan Performance Report

The panel noted the performance information contained in the report and the Commissioner outlined the challenges and success and was confident that performance is going in the right direction.

It was noted that the national Police Crime Survey was due to be published. This would provide a benchmark against national and local performance.

A panel member felt that overwhelming public feedback appeared to be that there were issues within the control room in terms of contact and lengthy wait times. The Commissioner stated that that although frustrating, this was an area that was improving. It was also one of the reasons for developing the reporting app.

RESOLVED that the performance updates be noted and the results of the police survey be shared with the panel once published.

PCP 39/22 Commissioner's Scrutiny Programme

The panel noted the performance information contained in the report and the Commissioner outlined the challenges and success and was confident that performance is going in the right direction.

It was noted that the national Police Crime Survey was due to be published. This would provide a benchmark against national and local performance.

A panel member felt that overwhelming public feedback appeared to be that there were issues within the control room in terms of contact and lengthy wait times. The Commissioner stated that that although frustrating, this was an area that was improving. It was also one of the reasons for developing the reporting app.

RESOLVED that the performance updates be noted and the results of the police survey be shared with the panel once published.

**PCP
40/22**

Decisions of the Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner made all decisions unless specifically delegated within the Scheme of Consent/Delegation. All decisions demonstrated that they were soundly based on relevant information and that the decision-making process was open and transparent.

In addition, a forward plan was included and published on the OPCC's website which included items requiring a decision in the future. This was attached to the report.

Each decision made by the Commissioner was recorded on a decision record form with supporting background information appended. Once approved it was published on the OPCC's website.

Decisions relating to private/confidential matters would be recorded; although, it may be appropriate that full details were not published.

Decisions made since the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel were attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
41/22**

Quarter 1 Communication, Consultation and Engagement Update

RESOLVED that the item be discussed jointly with the Quarter 2 Communication, Consultation and Engagement Update.

**PCP
42/22**

Quarter 2 Communication, Consultation and Engagement Update

The Commissioner presented his report detailing the communication activity of the PCC's office between 31 May 2022 and September 2022.

The Commissioner advised that he welcomed the Panel's support in sharing positive activity of Cleveland Police as well as sharing information with the community on what services are available to them.

Members welcomed the information in the update reports and found the links within the report to be useful.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**PCP
43/22**

Members' Questions to the Commissioner

Question 1: The following question had been submitted from Councillor Tom Mawston for response by the Commissioner

"What progress is being made in the establishment of Neighbourhood Policing Teams as promised by the PCC?"

The Commissioner referred to the information that had been shared with the Panel in the earlier agenda item relating to the Strategic Direction of the Force. He advised that as part of the organisational changes, teams would move to four district command units, with four proactive teams with stronger geographic connections able to work more closely with others to provide the right care by the right professionals.

Question 2: The following question had been submitted from Paul McGrath for response by the Commissioner

“A recent article in the Times newspaper outlined the difficulty some commissioners are facing in respect of being present at feedback sessions to senior police officers following HMICFRS inspections. Apparently, it is at the discretion of a Chief Constable whether or not they are invited to attend. What is the situation at Cleveland, does the Commissioner attend feedback sessions?”

The Commissioner assured the Panel that there was a good relationship between him and the Chief Constable with strong communication. He confirmed that there was agreement that he would be involved in feedback sessions following HMICFRS inspections or other similar debriefs.

Question 3: The following question had been submitted from Councillor Norma Stephenson for response by the Commissioner

“The IOPC have concluded their investigation into allegations made against the previous Chief Constable of Cleveland, Mike Veale. In August 2021 you informed the public that the investigation was to be referred to an independent panel, chaired by an independent lawyer, to hold a misconduct hearing to consider the evidence, make appropriate findings and determine any outcome. 12 months on, the public are still waiting for the misconduct hearing to take place. When is it to take place?”

The Commissioner advised there was currently no date set. The matter was complex and was required to follow a specific process which he was unable to supersede.

Question 4: The following question had been submitted from Councillor Steve Nelson for response by the Commissioner

“Evidenced by the low public confidence in policing here in Cleveland, it has never been more important to ensure we are maximising public engagement and the sharing of good results. On the ground, Police Officers are producing fantastic results with limited resources daily. There does appear to be a lack of co-ordinated approach to the timely sharing of good news stories and results, which are vital to countering negative perceptions and the fear of crime. Can the PCC clarify who can and who cannot post social media updates at a neighbourhood level and who ultimately gets the say?”

The Commissioner confirmed that all officers were encouraged to post on social media. In terms of proactive communications, the Commissioner confirmed that over the last week 47 news stories and over 200 tweets had been shared.

It was acknowledged some officers were more comfortable with social media than others. Advice, support and training was available to officers and arrangements were in place for the communications team to post on officers' behalf should officers not feel confident in doing so themselves. There were also gatekeeping arrangements in place which should help build confidence in staff over time.

**PCP
44/22** **Public Questions**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**PCP
45/22** **Precept Task and Finish Group**

The Panel considered a report setting out the proposed process and timescales for considering the Police budget and precept and confirming the Task and Finish Panel membership.

RESOLVED that the panel noted and agreed the recommendations within the report

**PCP
46/22** **Forward Plan**

Members considered and agreed the content of the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the forward plan be noted.

**PCP
47/22** **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**PCP
48/22** **Complaint Update**

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer detailing a number of complaint matters.

Complaint 2021 11

RESOLVED that the comments of the Commissioner be noted and the matter closed.

Complaint 2022 06

RESOLVED that the complaint does not meet the definition of a complaint for the purposes of the regulations and the Monitoring Officer advise the complainant accordingly.

Complaint 2022 02

RESOLVED that any further action on this complaint be deferred pending notification by the parties that external proceedings had been completed and the Panel's previous decision not to refer the matter to the IOPC be confirmed.

Complaint 2022 03

RESOLVED That no further action be taken and that this matter be closed accordingly.

Complaint 2022 04

RESOLVED That no further action be taken and that this matter be closed accordingly.

Complaint 2022 05

RESOLVED that information from the Commissioner be provided to the Complainant and the matter be closed.

Complaint 2022 01

RESOLVED that the record in relation to the outcome of this complaint be published, on the basis that this was in the public interest given the nature of the matters raised therein.

Cleveland Police and Crime Panel

A meeting of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel was held on Tuesday, 7 February 2023.

Present: Councillor Tony Riordan (Chair), Councillor Barrie Cooper (Vice-Chair), Councillor Graham Cutler, Councillor Stefan Houghton, Mr Paul McGrath, Councillor Steven Nelson, Councillor Carrie Richardson, Mr Luigi Salvati, Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE and Councillor Carole Thompson

Officers: Steven Newton (Governance Director (Monitoring Officer)) and Alison Pearson (Governance Manager)

Also In attendance: Steve Turner (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner), Lisa Oldroyd (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner), Rachelle Kipling (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) and Michael Porter (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

Apologies: Councillor Chris Jones, Councillor Tom Mawston, Councillor Shane Moore and Mayor Andy Preston

PCP 49/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no interest declared.

PCP 50/22 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2022 and attendance matrix

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 be agreed as a correct record and the attendance matrix be noted.

PCP 51/22 Precept Proposals for 2023/24 - Report of the Commissioner

RESOLVED that this item be considered in conjunction with the next item on the agenda taking account of the views of the task and finish group established to review the proposals and make recommendations to the Panel.

PCP 52/22 Precept Proposals for 2023/24 - Report of the Task and Finish Group

A report from the Commissioner regarding the proposed precept for the financial year 2023/24 was considered by the Panel. The proposal was to set the Band D Police Element of the Council Tax within Cleveland for 2023/24 at £290.73, an increase of £15, or 5.44%, over the 2022/23 level.

The Commissioner indicated that he had considered the following in making his proposal for the 2022/23 precept:

- The views of the public of Cleveland
- The financial impact on the people of Cleveland and the current financial environment.

- The financial needs of the organisation as currently projected both for 2023/24 and in the future.
- The limits imposed by the Government on a precept increase before a referendum would be triggered in Cleveland.

The Commissioner had also discussed his proposals with the Chief Constable and engaged and consulted with the public on the options available to him.

The Panel noted that the Police Funding Settlement 2023/24 had been announced on 14 December 2022 in a written statement by the Crime and Policing Minister and that nationally, the overall funding for policing would rise by up to £287 million compared to the 2022/23 funding settlement, bringing the total up to £17.2 billion for the policing system.

The settlement also confirmed that PCCs would be empowered to raise additional funding through their Band D precept flexibility by up to £15 in 2023/24 without the need to call a local referendum, returning to £10 in subsequent years.

The Government stated that: "... they have provided significant investment into policing over the previous four years, and so now it is only right that we hold forces to account on delivery. We therefore expect policing to approach the 2023-24 financial year with a focus on this Government's key priorities:

- Ensuring overall police officer numbers are maintained at the agreed Police Uplift baseline plus force level allocations of the 20,000 additional officers.
- Deploying these additional officers to reduce crime and honour this Government's commitment to keep the public safe.
- Delivering improvements in productivity and driving forward efficiencies, maximising the value of the Government's investment."

The Panel had regard to the detailed information contained within the Commissioner's report in relation to the overall funding position, and specifically how this related to Cleveland. In determining the budget strategy and LTFFP for Cleveland in 2023/24, a number of future funding and planning assumptions had been made:

- Pay awards budgeted for a 4% increase in 2023/23 returning to 2% in subsequent years
- A precept increase of £15 (5.44%) in 2023/24, returning to £10 in subsequent years.
- Tax Base Growth of 1.39% in 2023/24, returning to 1.2% in subsequent years
- Government Grants increases of 1.7% in 2024/25, returning to 2% in subsequent years.
- Impact of Funding Formula review – Nil

The plan included a specific grant of £3,298,000 to maintain the Government targets for Police Officer increases. In Cleveland, this equated to at least 1443 officers by the end of March 2024. The Panel noted the Commissioner's plan to recruit 1500 officers and exceed this target.

As in previous years, the Panel questioned the fairness of the Government's funding formula which was based on population size rather than need and appeared to disadvantage areas of poverty. The figures quoted for the precept proposal were based on a Band D Council Tax property. The Commissioner commented that approximately 80% properties in Cleveland were in Band A-C therefore those households would pay a proportionately smaller amount of the precept. The Panel noted the Commissioner's commitment to fight for funding for the area and make representations for a fairer funding formula.

The Panel sought assurance on the level of reserves which reduced from £21m to £11m over the life of the plan. The Commissioner assured the Panel that total reserves would be maintained at a level that was appropriate to the size of the overall budget and that general reserves would be remain a minimum of £5m – 3.2% of the net budget requirement in 23/24.

With one of the measures to achieve a balanced position being to hold staff vacancies at around 11% of the workforce, the Panel asked whether there was a risk that front line officers would be used to fill back-office roles and were concerned this would reduce the intended impact of the officer uplift targets.

The Commissioner assured the Panel that an analysis of the vacant posts had been undertaken and the Chief Constable was reviewing structures. It was not felt that there was a risk in holding these vacancies and delivery of front-line services remained a priority.

In respect of the consultation exercises Members discussed the differences in responses based on whether the consultation had been on line or face to face. The variations were acknowledged but it was recognised that it was also important to provide a range of methods to enable people to engage with consultation.

The Panel gave consideration to the report that had been prepared by the Task and Finish Panel and thanked the Members for their time in looking at the budget strategy and precept proposals in greater depth. The Panel had recommended that the proposal to apply the maximum uplift of £15 to the Police Element of the Council Tax within Cleveland for 2023/24 should be endorsed.

RESOLVED that having considered all the information available to it and discussed the funding assumptions and associated issues in detail, the Panel endorse the Task and Finish Panel's recommendation and support the Commissioner's proposal to set the Band D Police Element of the Council Tax within Cleveland for 2023/24 at £290.73, an increase of £15, or 5.44%, over the 2022/23 level.

**PCP
53/22**

Communication, Consultation and Engagement Update

The Commissioner presented his report detailing the communication activity of the PCC's office between October and December 2022.

The Commissioner advised the importance of promoting positive work of the Office and requested the Panel's support in doing the same.

Data on the reach of social media channels showed that there had been a large increase, particularly on Facebook, by comparison to the same period the previous year, some of which was attributed to two paid advertising campaigns that had been running through the quarter.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**PCP
54/22**

Police and Crime Plan Performance and Delivery Update Report

The Commissioner provided a report setting out the updated position in relation to delivery of the Police and Crime Plan. The format of the report continued to be refined to include more comparison and trend data.

A member questioned the reason for the reduction in PCSO headcount. The Commissioner advised that the force was still committed to increasing the number of PCSO's and that recruitment was ongoing with lots of interest in the role. A number of PCSO's had stepped up into Officer roles and the timing of this, coupled with the ongoing recruitment work, was the reason behind the current reduction in headcount.

Data on complaints indicated that there had been an increase in complaints allegations with the biggest increase relating to the delivery of duties and services. The OPCC had responsibility for the logging and handling of all expressions of dissatisfaction received by Cleveland Police, and was currently the only force delivering this model. The Panel asked for a flavour of the complaint types for the next meeting.

A Panel member commented on the current complaint issues relating in particular to the culture of the Metropolitan Police and the vetting procedures and asked how the Commissioner assured himself about the position with Cleveland Police Force. The Commissioner advised that there had been significant challenge of the Force's recruitment and vetting procedures through his own scrutiny role and whilst it may not be possible to eliminate risk completely, he was assured that these were as rigorous as they could be.

The recent Crime Survey for England and Wales had been published in January 2023 which showed reduction in the number of people thinking the police are dealing with things that matter to local communities. The Commissioner advised that he would be analysing this information further in the coming weeks to understand the issues for Cleveland Police. Building public confidence in police remained a key priority for the Commissioner.

RESOLVED that the performance updates be noted and further information on the nature of complaints be shared with the Panel at their next meeting.

**PCP
55/22**

Commissioner's Scrutiny Programme

The Commissioner presented a report on his scrutiny programme and invited suggestions from Panel Members for potential future scrutiny topics.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
56/22** **Decisions of the Commissioner**

The Police and Crime Commissioner made all decisions unless specifically delegated within the Scheme of Consent/Delegation. All decisions demonstrated that they were soundly based on relevant information and that the decision-making process was open and transparent.

In addition, a forward plan was included and published on the OPCC's website which included items requiring a decision in the future. This was attached to the report.

Each decision made by the Commissioner was recorded on a decision record form with supporting background information appended. Once approved it was published on the OPCC's website.

Decisions relating to private/confidential matters would be recorded; although, it may be appropriate that full details were not published.

Decisions made since the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel were attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
57/22** **Members' Questions to the Commissioner**

Question1: The following question had been submitted from Luigi Slavati for response by the Commissioner.

'My question relates to the Port Clarence area, particularly the stretch of road (Haverton Hill and Port Clarence Roads) from the Incinerator to the Seal Sands turn off at the Calor Depot. I have noted that there is a weight limit for the bridge prior to the pub, and for Port Clarence itself. Over the past few months, I have noticed a rise in lorries constantly breaking the 7.5 tonne weight limit, ranging from 18-44 tonnes max gross weight, flouting the limit.

My concern is for residents and the school with the 20 mph surrounding it.

Does the Commissioner, when regularly scrutinising the Chief Constable, look at how effective he, and the Force are, in enforcing the Road Traffic Laws and Regulations.'

The Commissioner advised that this was an issue that hadn't been raised previously but he had some planned meetings with local road safety partnerships. Professional drivers could be personally responsible and could be at risk of losing their job for not complying with driving rules. Letters from MPs and/or Councillors to companies whose vehicles/drivers were not adhering to weight limits would be beneficial in adding pressure. There may also be a role for Local Authorities in reviewing signage.

Question 2: The following question had been submitted by Paul McGrath for response by the Commissioner

‘Cleveland police has an enviable record in respect of voluntary cadets. Recently the press has reported on a scheme developed by another North East force which involves the recruitment of students with special educational needs. Will Cleveland consider a similar scheme?’

The Commissioner advised that Cleveland Police had already worked hard to change arrangements in the way that cadets were managed and supported, and there were a number of students with special educational needs within the cadet corps. The Force remained focused on removing barriers and encouraging diversity.

**PCP
58/22 Public Questions**

There were no questions for members of the public.

**PCP
59/22 Forward Plan**

Members considered and agreed the content of the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the forward plan be noted.

**PCP
60/22 Exclusion of the Press and Public.**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**PCP
61/22 *Complaint Update**

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer detailing a number of complaint matters.

RESOLVED that complaint matters 1-13 be referred to the Chief Constable and complaint matter 14 be referred to the Police and Crime Commissioner as the Appropriate Authority.

Cleveland Police and Crime Panel

A meeting of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel was held on Tuesday, 11 July 2023.

Present: Councillor Tony Riordan (Chair), Councillor Chris Jones, Mr Paul McGrath, Councillor Jonny Neal, Mr Luigi Salvati, Councillor Stuart Smith, Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE, Councillor John Coulson, Councillor Pauline Beall, Councillor Jim Platt and Councillor Janet Thompson

Officers: Steven Newton (Governance Director (Monitoring Officer)) and Alison Pearson (Governance Manager)

Also In attendance: Lisa Oldroyd (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) and Steve Turner (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

Apologies: Councillor Carole Thompson, Councillor Mike Young and Mayor Chris Cooke

PCP 1/23 **Appointment of Chair for 2023/24**

It was moved by Councillor John Coulson and seconded by Luigi Salvati that Councillor Tony Riordan be appointed Chair of the Panel for the municipal year 2023/24.

A vote took place and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Tony Riordan be appointed Chair of the Panel for the municipal year 2023/24.

PCP 2/23 **Appointment of Vice Chair for 2023/24**

It was moved by Paul McGrath and seconded by Councillor Thompson that Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE be appointed Vice Chair of the Panel for the municipal year 2023/24.

A vote took place and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE be appointed Vice Chair of the Panel for the municipal year 2023/24.

PCP 3/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

PCP 4/23 **Minutes of the meetings held on 7 February 2023 and attendance matrix**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 and the attendance matrix for 2022/23.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 be agreed as a correct record and the attendance matrix be noted.

**PCP
5/23**

Quarter 4 - Delivery and Performance Report

The Commissioner presented his Police and Crime Plan Performance and Delivery Report which covered the period up to the end of Quarter 4 (March 2023). The Panel discussed the content of the report. Comments and questions raised included the following issues:

- A panel Member requested further demographic information in relation to stop and search data. It was advised that this was publicly available on the Cleveland Police website and a link would be provided.
- A panel Member asked if further information could be provided on the types of complaints, particularly those categorised as 'all other complaints'.
- A panel Member questioned how issues reported through the COPA App that related to local authority services rather than police issues were dealt with. The Panel were advised that the app directed users to relevant Council's websites to report such issues directly via the Council's own procedures. Data on the categories of reports to the relevant Councils could be provided.
- Some panel members expressed concerns about feedback from local neighbourhood policing teams when they had reported matters on behalf of residents. A question was also raised about whether third party reports were received by the force. The Commissioner confirmed that such reports were received.
- There was a wide variety of interventions to reduce violent crime and anti-social behaviour and funding was made available to local community and voluntary groups to further support this work.
- A Panel Member asked about how drones were used and the training required for drone pilots.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the information and the requested additional data be provided.

**PCP
6/23**

2022/23 Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report

The Panel considered the Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report 2022/23.

In introducing his report, the Commissioner recognised the huge effort of OPCC team to deliver against the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan and stated his pride that this report reflected a full year of delivery under his leadership.

He acknowledged that the report had taken a long time to produce and had not been available to Panel Members in the timeframes he would have wished for them to be able to review and digest the detail it contained. He outlined each of the sections of the report and offered to respond to any further questions from

Panel Member following the meeting.

The Commissioner emphasised the most notable achievements during the year including:

- Exceeding national targets having recruited 267 additional officers up to March 2023;
- The successful launch and implementation of the COPA app, Cleveland's first policing app;
- Securing funding for the continuation of CURV (Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence) with a particular focus on preventing vulnerable children from becoming involved in violent offences;
- Securing investment of more than £1.12m into services to combat violence against women and girls and support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- The noticeable improvement in the performance of Cleveland Police since the appointment of the new Chief Constable, acknowledged in the most recent report published by HMICFRA in March 2023;
- An increase in the use of technology to fight crime with drone deployments having risen by more than 40% and the number of drone pilots by 44%.

The report set out clearly the actions that had been taken to achieve each of the Commissioner's pledges and Panel Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss these with the Commissioner. Questions and Comments from Panel members included the following:

- Statistics showed there was a 24% reduction in Anti-social behaviour although it didn't necessarily feel that way. Off road bikes remained the biggest issue;
- Although there was some improvement with communication and feedback between police officers and local Councillors or members of the public reporting crimes, it was felt there was still more that could be done;
- Violent crime appeared to be increasing and becoming a significant problem in the Cleveland area. In part, this might be attributed an increase in reporting as some violent offences that might previously have gone unreported were now being reported, such as violence against young men;
- The growing use of the COPA app for reporting crime enabled incidents and evidence to be connected together increasing the chances of criminals being brought to justice;
- There was a view that nationally routes into policing could be improved to maintain/increase the number of police officers and ensure robust vetting procedures;
- The role of special constables was valuable and the Panel welcomed the fact that there was now a volunteer co-ordinator in post;
- It would be beneficial for Panel Members to promote the use of the COPA app within their own communities. Support was available via the Commissioner's office for any Panel Members that required assistance

with downloading and using the app.

The Panel felt that the report was clear and well presented.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report be noted.

**PCP
7/23**

Decisions of the Commissioner

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on decisions made by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Forward Plan.

The Police and Crime Commissioner made all decisions unless specifically delegated within the Scheme of Consent/Delegation. All decisions demonstrated that they were soundly based on relevant information and that the decision-making process was open and transparent.

In addition, a forward plan was included and published on the OPCC's website which included items requiring a decision in the future. This was attached to the report.

Each decision made by the Commissioner was recorded on a decision record form with supporting background information appended. Once approved it was published on the OPCC's website.

Decisions relating to private/confidential matters would be recorded; although, it may be appropriate that full details were not published.

Decisions made since the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel were attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
8/23**

Commissioner's Scrutiny Programme

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the Police and Crime Commissioner's scrutiny programme.

Holding the Chief Constable to account was the key duty of the Police & Crime Commissioner and must encompass all the functions of the Chief Constable and functions of those who were under the Chief Constable's direction and control.

The Commissioner had a range of scrutiny approaches in place to engage with the Chief Constable and hold Cleveland Police to account. These take place on a daily, weekly and monthly schedule and include a range of meetings, data and feedback from partners and the public.

Since the last Police and Crime Panel the Commissioner had held six formal scrutiny meetings which were held on 6 February, 20 March, 14 April, 16 May, 13 June and 11 July 2023 and focused on the Force Delivery Model, Vetting, PEEL Inspection, Neighbourhood Crime, Off Road Bikes and Public Confidence.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
9/23**

Members' Questions to the Commissioner

Question 1 – The following question had been submitted by Councillor John Coulson for response by the Commissioner:

‘How can the Panel, the Commissioner and the police restore public confidence in everyday policing, police response and response times?’

The Commissioner responded that restoring public confidence was a key priority and welcomed that the question noted there was a shared responsibility in achieving this. There was a strong focus on communication and engagement, particularly through social media, to highlight the positive work and achievements of the police.

Panel Members and their Councillor colleagues could use their reach within communities to champion the work of police and encourage a more positive narrative. There were some excellent examples of elected Members working with neighbourhood police officers.

Recent staff survey results showed that force leadership had improved and officers felt more valued.

There had been a number of recent press articles relating to officers being disciplined which created a negative view of the force, but also demonstrated that inappropriate conduct was being dealt with. The force had a stringent initial vetting process, but was also focusing on continuous vetting.

Question 2 – The following question had been submitted by Paul McGrath for response by the Commissioner:

‘The Home office has published a strategy with the aim of reducing fraud by 10%. Can the PCC outline how he will ensure that Cleveland Police will respond and meet this target?’

The Commissioner responded that cyber crime and fraud had seen a huge surge and was the single biggest crime type. Tackling the issue required a strong education and awareness programme to help people identify risks. Work was taking place with financial institutions and the North East Resilient Business Centre to increase awareness of fraud, identity theft and personal scams.

**PCP
10/23**

Community Engagement and Communications Update

The Commissioner presented his report detailing the communication activity of the PCC’s office between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

PCP 11/23 Panel Scrutiny Work Programme and Training Needs

The Panel considered their work programme for 2023/24 and training needs.

It was felt that the annual review of the local policing precept should continue to be undertaken by a Task and Finish Group in order to facilitate sufficient time and analysis of the financial arrangements of the PCC and commissioned services. The Task and Finish Group would make its recommendations to the Panel.

Membership of the Task and Finish Group should remain as one representative from each of the four Local Authorities and a Non-Political Independent Member and the following membership was proposed:

Hartlepool – to be advised
Middlesbrough – Councillor Jim Platt
Redcar and Cleveland – Councillor Jonny Neal
Stockton – Councillor John Coulson
Non-Political Independent Member – Luigi Salvati

With respect to training, the Panel were advised that an induction/training session was being arranged. Panel Members confirmed their preference for this to be virtual training.

In relation to other potential scrutiny topics the Panel may wish to consider, it was suggested that this be given further consideration following the training event.

RESOLVED that:

1. The proposed task and finish group membership be agreed and a nomination from Hartlepool Council be requested.
2. Arrangements for the training event be finalised and communicated to Panel Members.
3. Potential suggestions for scrutiny topics be revisited following training.

PCP 12/23 Public Questions

There were no questions from members of the public.

PCP 13/23 Forward Plan

Members were presented with the Forward Plan for the Panel 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan 2023/24, including dates of future meetings, be noted.

**PCP
14/23** **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**PCP
15/23** **Complaint Update**

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer detailing two complaint/referral matters that had been received.

RESOLVED

With regard to complaint reference 2023-01:

1. The Panel be confirmed as the relevant panel for the matter.
2. The complaint matter be recorded and notified to the Police and Crime Commissioner.
3. The complaint be the subject of informal resolution and both parties be invited to provide any comments or views on the potential resolution to the matter.

With regard to complaint reference 2023-02:

4. No further action be taken and the matter be closed.