



Civic Centre
HARTLEPOOL

20 November, 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, 30 NOVEMBER 2023 at 7.00 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool to consider the subjects set out in the attached agenda.

Yours faithfully

D McGuckin
Managing Director

Enc

COUNCIL AGENDA



30 NOVEMBER 2023

at 7.00 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 28 September 2023 and the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 16 October 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;
- (9) To consider reports from the Council's Committees and to receive questions and answers on any of those reports;
 1. Periodic Review of the Council's Constitution – Report of Constitution Committee
 2. Nominations for Conferment of Civic Honours – Report of Civic Honours Committee **(Exempt item to be considered later in agenda)**

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;

1. Hartlepool's Armed Forces Covenant – Progress 2022/23 – Report of the Armed Forces Champion

(11) To consider reports from the Policy Committees:

(a) proposals in relation to the Council's approved budget and policy framework;

1. Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023/24 – Report of Children's Services Committee
2. Local Council Tax Support 2024/25 – Report of Finance and Policy Committee
3. Council Tax Premiums - Report of Finance and Policy Committee.

(b) proposals for departures from the approved budget and policy framework;

1. Development of Children's Home – Report of Finance and Policy Committee

(12) To consider motions in the order in which notice has been received;

1. "People Living in Hartlepool Illegally

We the below signed propose that this council:

1. Writes to the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and our Member of Parliament Jill Mortimer to supporting Jill Mortimer's position to remove people who are living in Hartlepool illegally - some who have been refused asylum up to three times.
2. Will never support the use of hotels to house people living in the town illegally.
3. Will seek information and send information from and to Border Force, the Home Office, and other public sector bodies such as Cleveland Police regarding people who are living in the town illegally."

Resolves to protect all those living here legally.

Signed: Councillors Young, Darby, Cassidy, Cowie, Moore.



2. **“Protection of Level 3 Vocational Qualifications**

We the below signed propose that this council:

1. Writes to Jill Mortimer MP and the new Secretary of State for Education The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP to support the concerns raised by Tees Valley Further Education Providers around the defunding of level 3 vocational education categories that will have a significant detrimental impact the ability for us to deliver our growth objectives in the next 10-20 yrs.
2. Protects level 3 vocational educational opportunities, as these will be limited leading to apprenticeships being ‘selectively’ removed and attainment at NEET levels will evaporate damaging our towns long-term aspirations for years to come at a time when we are trying our best to raise educational attainment in core subjects. We are concerned as the attainment of core subjects, as a direct result, will be an uphill struggle as we have always lagged the National achievement at Further and Higher Education levels locally.
3. Stop our young people from receiving ever more limited educational qualification choices that in their own right progress into decent well-paid career paths leading to the further sustaining of the towns future prosperity.

We the below signed support the motion to “put on hold the defunding arrangements” until such time as a new review and evaluation of the existing plans justifies statistically the merits of change.”

Signed: Councillors Lindridge, Young, Brown, Martin-Wells, Moore

3. **Credit their Service Motion**

The Royal British Legion’s “Credit their Service” campaign is demanding an end to the treatment of military compensation as income by welfare benefit means tests, which results in veterans and their families missing out on thousands of pounds a year.

Council fully endorses this campaign and this motion seeks to ensure that no member of the Armed Forces Community within Hartlepool should have their military compensation taken into account to access the same welfare support as their civilian counterparts.

Council, therefore, resolves to amend local policies to reflect this position and ensure that **all** payments made under military compensation schemes are disregarded as part of **all** locally administered means tested benefits.



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

- (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 on 9 June 2023.

EXEMPT ITEM

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

To consider reports from the Council's Committees and to receive questions and answers on any of those reports;

Nominations for Conferment of Civic Honours (Report of Civic Honours Committee)



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

28 September 2023

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm in the Civic Centre

The Ceremonial Mayor (Councillor Moore) presiding:

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	Morley	D Nicholson
V Nicholson	Oliver	Reeve
Sharp	Smith	Thompson
Young		

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Managing Director
Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources
James Magog, Director of Finance, IT and Digital
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services
Ian Gardiner, Head of Leisure, Recreation and Participation
Kieran Bostock, Assistant Director, Place Management
Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Connor Kerr, Steve Hilton, Ellen Fallow, Communications and Marketing Team
David Cosgrove, Jo Stubbs Democratic Services Team

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Ceremonial Mayor referred to the recent passing of former Councillor Edna Wright. Members stood in silence as a mark of respect.

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENT MEMBERS

Councillor Wallace.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None.

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

None.

40. MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

The Minutes of Proceedings of the Council held on the 13 July 2023, having been laid before the Council.

RESOLVED - That the minutes be confirmed.

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

With reference to minute no. 25.2 'Motions on Notice' a Member questioned if a response had been received from the Member of Parliament for Hartlepool. The Managing Director stated that one had not been received. Members expressed their concern at the lack of a response.

With reference to Minutes no. 32 'Hartlepool Mayoral Development Corporation (HDC)' a Member questioned if a meaningful response had been received from the Tees Valley Mayor and if any Council Members had attended meetings of TVCA. The Managing Director stated that no response had been received. The Mayor stated he had attended one meeting as a direct appointee, i.e. not appointed by this Council. The Leader also stated he attended one meeting of the Hartlepool Development Company Board as an Member appointed by the Board and not Council.

Concern was expressed at the attendance of Members at TVCA meetings against the wishes of the motion agreed at the last meeting.

42. BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE

None.

43. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

44. 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

The Monitoring Officer referred to the consideration of the report on proposed changes to the constitution considered by Council at the previous meeting (minute no. 27.1 refers). A number of the changes proposed by the Constitution Committee related to Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules and had, therefore, stood adjourned at the previous meeting in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 22.2.

Those amendments, as below, were now submitted for Council approval.

Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules - Questions from the Public – The Constitution 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 Constitution Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the time of meetings of Full Council be changed to 7.00 p.m.

The changes to the Council Procedure Rules were agreed, without dissent.

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

The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee reported that 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.

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 together with the action plan produced in response to each of the recommendations. The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee also commended the previous Chair of the Committee who had undertaken the investigation.

The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee in proposing the recommendations and action plan to Council noted that there would be resource implications in implementing some of the recommendations. It was suggested that grant funding be explored to support the implementation of any of the recommendations.

The recommendations set out in the report and the submitted action plan were approved without dissent.

45. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

None.

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

None.

47. 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

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

The report outlined a proposed funding strategy for the proposed development of the Highlight leisure and wellbeing facility. The Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee outlined the reasons behind the requirement for increased borrowing requirement and the continued support of the project by bodies such as Sport England who had increased their grant funding for the project.

Members supported the proposed increased borrowing but expressed great concern at the rising costs due to external economic impacts. There had also been concerns expressed by some sports clubs in the town that the new facility would not include a sports hall and that their views had not been heard. It was proposed by Councillor Brash that a full audit of all sports hall facilities in the town be undertaken and an open working group of officers, members and representatives of sports clubs in the town be established which is open to all to engage on the future of sporting facilities in the town and that this working group reports into the appropriate committee to inform the future decision making in this area. The motion was seconded by Councillor Creevy.

The Managing Director referred to the recommendations of the Indoor Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy (IFPPS) 2019 highlighted in the report, which were

being implemented by officers, and suggested it may be prudent to seek an update on the implementation of the strategy by way of a report to the appropriate policy committee before committing to the creation of a working group. The Managing Director's proposal was supported on the understanding that the report include this Council's wishes for all sports clubs in the town to be actively engaged in that debate and discussion.

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: -

1. That the recommendation of the Finance and Policy Committee support the revised funding strategy for the Highlight Leisure Facility and the changes to the capital programme and the additional borrowing, be approved.
2. That the Adult and Community Based Services Committee receive a report providing an update on the implementation of the Indoor Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy and that all sports clubs in the town be engaged in the discussion on the future provision of sporting facilities in the town.

48. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

None.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

49. RESIGNATION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP

The Managing Director reported receipt 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 had, therefore, been undertaken. Full Council was 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 had advised that Councillor Wallace will be replaced on Committees as follows:-

Audit and Governance Committee – Councillor Sharp.

Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee – Councillor Creevy.

RESOLVED – That the outcome of the review of the allocation of seats to Political Groups and the replacement members on the Committees identified above be noted.

50. FAIR TRADE PROPOSAL

It was reported that confirmation had been received 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. It was hoped that the Fairtrade Steering Group would meet in October. In the meantime, the renewed application form was being considered which would be submitted in December 2023.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

51. TEES PORT WELFARE COMMITTEE

The Managing Director reported receipt of 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.

Full Council was 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.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Dodds be appointed to the Committee

52. 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 had been taken in the period May 2023 – July 2023.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

53. INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Full Council was advised that three vacancies currently exist on the Independent Remuneration Panel. Following completion of an interview process, the Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 19 September, had recommended the appointment of all three of the candidates, Caroline McWilliams, Peter Greenwell and Gillian Smith, and that their four year term of office commence on 19 September 2023.

RESOLVED - That the decision of the Audit and Governance Committee be noted.

54. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Elected Members were reminded that there continued 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 was sought. Councillor Smith stated that she had not wished to be a Member of the Audit and Governance Committee and had not been informed of her appointment to it. Councillor Smith asked that her record of attendance be amended to remove the records of her non-attendance. The Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources indicated that such an amendment would not be permissible but a note could be recorded against Councillor Smith's name.

RESOLVED: -

1. That no appointment be made at this time to the Audit and Governance Committee.
2. That a note be recorded against Councillor Smith's attendances record for the Audit and Governance Committee stating that the Councillor had not sought appointment to the Committee.

55. PUBLIC QUESTION

One public question had been received from Mr Lilley, to Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee, as follows:-

"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

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.

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.

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.

Could Cllr Little request Officers to meet with us to progress this facility".

Councillor Little responded in the following terms.

“Thank you for the question and I can totally understand the reasoning for this request and the health benefits this leisure activity brings to those who swim in the sea.

I understand that there are financial and logistical challenges associated with installing showers or taps, which includes identifying a budget for the works, the necessary utility connections, along with the subsequent ongoing revenue costs associated with the cleaning, testing and maintenance.

I have been actively seeking funding opportunities for this proposal and I would ask that Members support me in asking Officers to carry out a piece of work to identify some locations and the funding, which officers have advised could be in the region of £15,000 to £20,000 plus on-going maintenance. The feasibility works alone will cost £1,500 to produce which can be undertaken now resulting in a further budget pressure on the trading accounts.

I am aware Officers are in discussions with Northumbrian Water regarding this proposal and once the feasibility study has concluded we will know the actual costs of installation and seek a contribution from Northumbrian Water to assist in the delivery. A further report will be presented to a future meeting of Finance and Policy Committee once the study is concluded.”

In a supplementary question, Mr Lilley asked what the anticipated timescale for the feasibility study was. Councillor Little stated that she had been informed that it would be around three months.

The Mayor asked Mr Lilley was satisfied his question had been answered, to which he indicated he was.

56. 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

Two questions had been received as follows:-

Question from Councillor Brash to Chair of Finance and Policy Committee

“Can the Chair of Finance and 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?”

The Chair of the Committee responded in the following terms.

“Thank you for the question. The Finance and Policy Committee received a report last week from the Director of Finance, IT and Digital setting out, in some detail, the financial position of the Council.

The in-year overspend is currently forecast to be just under £4.0m. However, the Director also stressed that as the budget had been set using reserves of £2.5m, the on-going sustainable budget gap was actually more in the region of £6.5m.

A significant reason for the overspend is within Children's Social Care – members will be aware of the pressures we, and the majority of councils are facing in this area. Given that one external placement for one child can cost in excess of £0.500m, the equivalent of 1% of Council Tax, I am sure members will appreciate the real challenges our officers are grappling with.

I would make the point that we are not alone. Not a day goes by when we don't read or hear about a council in serious financial difficulty. Whilst in recent years the government has significantly increased support to local government, more funding is needed and specifically a better and fairer deal for Hartlepool is a must. I know officers continue to make a robust case to government on the council's behalf.

Measures being implemented include;

- Action Plans being drawn up by Directors, and this will no doubt be linked into the MTFS position to support the longer term financial position;
- Monthly budget support or challenge clinics;
- Introduction of a budget management scheme and additional training for all budget managers;
- Council wide messaging to all staff to seek spend curtailment;
- Acceleration of 2024/25 savings proposals where possible and appropriate; and
- An in-depth review of council reserves.

An update will be provided to Finance and Policy Committee in November, along with an updated Medium Term Financial Plan report and savings proposals.

With regard to the threat of a Section 114 notice, there is no immediate threat, however, the Director was clear – if we do not take the necessary actions now, and I would add, take responsible decisions going forward, we will be facing a Section 114 notice within 2 to 3 years. As leader of the council I am committed to rising above politics and taking the responsible and right decisions to ensure whichever party is in charge in the future is best placed to continue to deliver the essential services the residents and businesses of this borough rely on. I hope the opposition is similarly committed.

Finally can I put on record, and I hope on behalf of all members, my thanks to the Managing Director, Directors and all the team for their continuing commitment to addressing the current budget difficulties, whilst also focusing on longer term service deliver, in what is an exceptionally challenging time for Local Government.”

Councillor Brash thanked the Leader for his response. Councillor Brash commented that he was disappointed that this meeting was not considering the in-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and setting officers the parameters in which they should bring proposals forward, as last year. A recent political leaflet for the Conservatives suggested that Council Tax was to be frozen in 2024/25; a decision not made by this Council or Finance and Policy Committee. Councillor Brash moved that a proposal from the Labour Group for a freeze on Council Tax be considered by the Finance and Policy Committee and referred back to full Council for approval with additional meetings being scheduled if necessary. The motion was seconded by Councillor Creevy.

Following closing comments by the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion:-

Those for:-

Councillors Allen, Boddy, Brash, Clayton, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Howson, Morley, Oliver, Sharp and Thompson.

Those against:-

Councillors Ashton, Brown, Buchan, Cassidy, Cowie, Cranney, Darby, Groves, Leedham, Lindridge, Little, Martin-Wells, Moore, D Nicholson, V Nicholson, Reeve, Smith, and Young

Those abstaining:-

None.

The vote was, therefore, lost.

Question from Councillor Creevy to Chair Adults and Community Based Services Committee

“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. “

The Chair of the Adults and Community Based Services Committee responded in the following terms.

“There is a strategic housing group in place involving a range of teams across the Council who lead on different aspects of housing. The group reviewed the

current situation in response to the Council motion and identified that there is a shortage of accessible housing however, due to issues with the Tees Valley Homefinder system, it was difficult to quantify.

Work that has been undertaken subsequently includes:

- Procurement of the new Homeseach system which has the facility to report on those on the waiting list and the reasons why, with reports now being developed.
- A data review has been undertaken to try and understand the whole picture and identify themes for the Council and partners to focus on.
- Information about local housing need has been shared with registered provider partners to promote the need for accessible properties.
- 79 new bungalows have been developed and a further 31 have been approved through planning.
- Disabled Facilities Grant funding has been used to adapt a further 327 properties in the borough to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

A half-day session is scheduled to take place on 3 October (1.00-4.00 pm at the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) to inform the development of a new Housing Strategy, which will include determining needs and identifying potential solutions. There will be updates provided to Members as this work progresses.”

Councillor Creevy thanked the Chair of Adults and Community Based Services Committee for his response but was concerned there had not been a report back to the Committee. Councillor Creevy also commented that while there were a number of bungalows recently built in the town, the majority were 2 bedroom homes when there was a need for family bungalows with 3 and 4 bedrooms.

The Managing Director stated that Members could attend the session on 3 October if they wished, and further advised a Members Seminar would also be held as part of the development of the Housing Strategy. A significant amount of work on the needs and demands in the town would be built into the strategy that would be in place for 3 to 5 years. A Member commented that the original question on this matter had been asked two years ago and no report back to Members had been made. This highlighted a serious issue on the reporting back of decisions of full Council and it was proposed that an action log of all actions taken on decisions made at Council be kept with regular monitoring and progress measured. It was proposed that such an action tracker be shared with Members. The Chair stated that a record of actions following Council would be shared with Members.

The Managing Director acknowledged Members comments in relation to the short notice of the event next week and indicated that there would be a Members’ Seminar on the development of the new Housing Strategy.

- 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 and the Police and Crime Panel

The minutes of the meetings held by the Cleveland Fire Authority 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 were noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.05 pm

CEREMONIAL MAYOR

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

16 October 2023

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm in the Civic Centre

The Ceremonial Mayor (Councillor Moore) presiding:

COUNCILLORS:

Boddy	Brash	Brown
Cassidy	Cowie	Cranney
Creevy	Darby	Dunbar
Feeney	Groves	Hall
Hargreaves	Harrison	Holbrook
Howson	Little	Martin-Wells
Morley	D Nicholson	V Nicholson
Oliver	Sharp	Smith
Thompson	Young	

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Managing Director
Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources
Amanda Whitaker, David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

Following the incident that had occurred over the weekend in the town, those present stood in silence as a mark of respect for the person who had tragically died.

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENT MEMBERS

Councillor Allen, Ashton, Buchan, Clayton, Dodds, Leedham and Lindridge.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None.

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

None.

60. REQUISITION CALLING EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

Full Council was advised that the meeting had been convened to consider the following:-

“We the undersigned request an extraordinary meeting of Full Council to discuss and/or pass motions regarding the misleading of both the public and elected members on the issue of Council Tax by the Council Leader and potentially other members of the Conservative Coalition.

This is a matter of utmost urgency in the context of the financing position of the authority, the preparation of the MTFS, which will happen ahead of the next council meeting, and public confidence in the council leadership.”

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

The Leader of the Labour Group explained the reasons for submission of the requisition for an Extraordinary meeting of Council.

A presentation was made by Councillor Brash. The presentation concluded that there was a case that the public, the council or both had been misled by the Leader of the Council and the Conservative Party in Hartlepool on the issue of Council Tax which would constitute a material breach of the code of conduct and the Nolan principles of conduct in public life.

It was considered that this issue must be fully investigated and those involved in this alleged dishonesty afforded the opportunity to defend their actions. It was highlighted that Officers had made clear they are continuing to prepare the MTFS on the basis of a 5% council tax rise, having not been directed to do otherwise, something Labour believes is wrong.

It was moved by Councillor Brash and seconded by Councillor Creevy:-

1. The matter of whether the leader of the Council and other Conservative members deliberately misled the public, elected member or both be referred to Audit and Governance to conduct a full investigation in conjunction with an independent person.
2. Cllr Tom Cassidy, as the publisher of the leaflet in question, be referred (along with any supporting evidence) to the electoral commission for investigation.
3. The matter of whether the Conservative Coalition backs Labour’s plan for a Council Tax freeze be referred to the Leader of the Council and an immediate answer demanded – yes or no.

A recorded vote was taken on the Motion:-

Those for:-

Councillors Boddy, Brash, Brown, Cassidy, Cowie, Cranney, Creevy, Darby, Dunbar, Feeney, Groves, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Howson, Little, Martin-Wells, Moore, Morley, D Nicholson, V Nicholson, Oliver, Sharp, Smith, Thompson, and Young.

Those against:-

None.

Those abstaining:-

None.

It was announced that the Motion had been carried, unanimously.

The meeting concluded at 7.15 p.m.

CEREMONIAL MAYOR



Report of: Constitution Committee

Subject: PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S
CONSTITUTION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Full Council to consider changes to the Constitution which have been recommended by the Committee.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's Constitution at Article 14 ("Review and Revision of the Constitution") requires that the Monitoring Officer "will monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that the aims and principles of the Constitution are given full effect."
- 2.2 The report addresses suggestions for review which have arisen since the meeting of the Committee on 26 June 2023.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The Constitution Committee, at its meeting on 13 November 2023, considered a report which proposed changes to the Constitution with regard to the following issues:-

Addition of Names on War Memorials

It was reported that the Constitution is currently silent on the delegation to approve a request for a name to be added to a War Memorial. The Committee was asked to consider the inclusion of this function under the delegation of the Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services.

It was recommended that the inclusion of this function, under the delegation of the Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services, be approved by Full Council.

Appointment of Ceremonial Mayor

The Director reported that currently, the Ceremonial Mayor is appointed following nominations from any Member at the Annual Meeting of Council. A request had been received for the appointment to be the 'longest serving elected member' (excluding any breaks in service).

It was proposed at the meeting that the following be included in the Constitution:-

“The Mayor is a Member of the Council and is elected by Councillors at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Each year the Councillor with the longest cumulative service on the Council will normally be nominated to serve as Deputy Mayor (unless that Councillor has previously served as Mayor).

When appointed by Council as Deputy Mayor, the Councillor concerned will usually be agreed as the person nominated to serve as Mayor for the following Municipal Year.

Where, in any year, more than one Councillor satisfies the criterion as the Councillor with the longest cumulative service on the Council, and no one agreed nominee has been chosen, nominations will be submitted and voted upon at the Annual Meeting of the Council for the position of Deputy Mayor for the forthcoming municipal year.

If in any year the Councillor with the longest cumulative service, or chosen nominee, decides not to agree to their name being put forward as nominee to the Annual Meeting of the Council, this will not preclude that Councillor from being re-considered for nomination in future years.”

Elected members debated issues arising from the proposal, with particular reference to the roles of Ceremonial Mayor and Chair of Council.

Following a vote:-

It was recommended that the proposal be approved by Full Council.

Appointment and Removal of Leader and Deputy Leader

It was reported that the Leader/Deputy Leader position is appointed at the Annual Meeting of Council following nominations from any Member. The appointment is made for the 'municipal year' with no current provision for their removal other than where they resign from the position of their own accord or where they have become 'disqualified' from being an elected member. A request had been received for Members to consider the inclusion of a provision to enable the Council to remove the Leader/Deputy Leader by resolution within the Municipal year.

Member's views were sought on the following proposed wording:

“Appointment and Removal of Leader and Deputy Leader

The Council shall at its Annual Meeting appoint a Leader and a Deputy Leader for a period of one year. If the Council fails to elect the Leader at the relevant Annual Meeting, the Leader is to be elected at a subsequent meeting.

The Leader, and/or the Deputy Leader may be removed from office by resolution of the Council.

Where there is a vacancy in the office of Leader, the Deputy Leader will assume the responsibilities of the Leader until a new Leader is appointed at an ordinary meeting of the Council. Where both the Leader and Deputy Leader cease to hold office at the same time, the Ceremonial Mayor shall call a meeting of the Full Council as soon as possible, to appoint a new Leader and Deputy Leader.”

It was recommended that the proposed wording be approved by Full Council.

Budget and Policy Framework Rules

The Committee was advised that the virement rules in regard capital set out at section 7 within the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules require Full Council approval over certain limits of any resources. This is considered restrictive within grant regimes where small schemes may require virement, including from unallocated contingency to maximise use of grant. It is also out of step with the Revenue virement approvals, whereby a higher virement is allowed, but with the safeguard built in that cross Directorate virements require Finance and Policy Committee approval. It was therefore proposed to amend the virement rules to make them consistent with the Revenue rules as follows:-

“Capital budget – The Managing Director and Directors may approve virement of capital budget up to £100,000 (cumulatively up to £200,000 over the financial year) per scheme and proposed virement of any resources in excess of that limit will require the approval of Full Council. Any virement that has an increased borrowing implication will require the approval of Full Council.

No virement of capital budget transfer between ‘Directorates’ is permitted without approval of the Finance and Policy Committee.”

It was recommended that the proposed amendment be approved by Full Council.

Proportionality

It was highlighted that currently where an Elected Member is part of a political group and resigns from a seat on a Committee, the group are unable to replace the Member until Full Council has approved the appointment.

Members were asked to consider the inclusion of a delegation for the allocation of seats in accordance with wishes of a political group as follows:-

“That any in-year informal, ad hoc vacancies on Committees, Partnerships or Boards normally appointed by Council be delegated to the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources in accordance with the agreed proportionality for the committee/body and Group wishes.”

It was recommended that the proposed delegation be approved by Full Council.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To consider the recommendations of the Committee 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.

COUNCIL
30th November 2023



Report of: Armed Forces Champion (Councillor Brian Cowie)

Subject: HARTLEPOOL'S ARMED FORCES COVENANT -
PROGRESS (2022/2023)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on progress in relation to the implementation of the Armed Forces Community Covenant during 2022/2023.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2012 Hartlepool Borough Council signed the North East Armed Forces Community Charter and established its own Armed Forces Community Covenant, to encourage support from the Armed Forces Community in our town.
- 2.2 A further review of the Armed Forces Community Covenant was undertaken in 2019 and was approved by Council on the 31st March 2019. The basis for the Covenant being that
- "Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved."
- 2.3 The Community Covenant requires that the Armed Forces Champion report annually to Full Council outlining progress in relation to the implementation of the Covenant. In 2022/23, the Council has maintained its commitment to the Covenant aims.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Over the last 11 years continued progress has been made in meeting the objectives and intentions of the Covenant and implementing the measures contained within it. This includes continued:-

- i) Prioritisation of armed forces personnel, their families and children, through the Council's allocations policies for Social Housing and in year school admissions;
- ii) Disregarding of War Pensions, and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments, from Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support calculations.
- iii) Representation on the Tees Valley Armed Forces Forum and Association of North East Councils Armed Forces Forum to ensure that the needs of our armed forces community are considered;
- iv) Support and participate in Armed Forces Events and Parades across the town and wider region, within the parameters of Covid restrictions, supported by our Culture and Information Team, Members Services Team, Public Relations Team and the Legal Service Team;
- v) Provision of Armed Forces Champion Surgeries on a monthly basis and a dedicated Armed Forces page on the Council's web site;
- vi) Promotion of:
 - Covenant signing (24 companies and bodies in Hartlepool)
 - Reserves Day; and
 - Military Discount Schemes / opportunities.
- vii) Support for the independently Chaired Hartlepool Armed Forces Liaison Group in its activities to bring together Armed Forces Associations from across Hartlepool to:
 - Share information / best practice; and
 - Assist in the implementation of the requirements of the Covenant and lead on (contribute to) the organisation of military / ceremonies in Hartlepool.
- viii) Representation on the Tees Valley Armed Forces Forum and Association of North East Councils Armed Forces Forum.
- ix) Provision via the Reserve Forces Policy of:
 - 10 days additional paid leave,
 - The ability to purchase additional leave and request additional unpaid leave; and
 - Information about pensions, pay, childcare and keep-in-touch days.
- x) The extension of the 'Get Hartlepool Active' card concession to Hartlepool residents (and their family living at the same address) who are currently serving in the regular armed forces, are ex-members of the armed forces with a discharge date within the last 5 years and those in the armed forces reservists. Further details of the scheme are

available via the below link. The aim of this is to provide improved the health and wellbeing opportunities for the Armed Forces community and Hartlepool Borough Council is the first Tees Valley Local Authority to offer these concessions.

https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20004/council_and_democracy/580/armed_forces_supamanda_port/10.

3.2 Over and above our ongoing activities, we have continued to move forward in our support of the armed forces community in Hartlepool. The work of our Armed Forces Champions (past and present) resulting in:

- i) Following receipt in 2019 of our Gold Award, from the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) we will be seeking revalidation in 2024 (as required every 5 years);
- ii) Appointment of a Veterans Champion to support the activities of the Armed Forces Champion;
- iii) Promotion through our Economic Regeneration and Tourism Forum to encourage businesses, suppliers, contractors and voluntary/community sector to engage with the Armed Forces Community. Resulting in:
 - Additional co-signatories to the Covenant from education, housing, voluntary/community sector and local/national businesses; and
 - Links between REED and local companies, increasing involved in the Armed Forces Business Forum.
- iv) Following the departure of the 883 Postal and Courier Reservist Squadron from the Easington Road Reservist Centre, we were delighted to welcome the below reservist units to Hartlepool:
 - 8th Battalion, the Rifles,
 - 71 Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers,
 - 150 Transport Regiment, Royal Logistics Corps.
- v) The direct provision of mental health support services such as the veterans weekly Mental Health Group and the council's Drug and Alcohol Support Team.
- vi) The refresh of E-Learning modules for Frontline Staff' as part of the corporate training package.
- vii) Introduction to, and promotion of the Veteran Friendly GP Accreditation Scheme with Hartlepool GP's, through the GP Federation, with 8 of Hartlepool's 15 GP's already part of the scheme;
- viii) The recent Tall Ships Event included an exceptionally successful military village.

- 3.3 A considerable amount of work has been done so far; however, I recognise that even more needs to be done.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Note the report and presentation.



Report of: Executive Director, Children and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

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.

2. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Budget and Policy Framework

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Council are being asked to adopt the draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023-2024 (**Appendix 1**)
- 3.2 The final Strategy will also be sent to the National Youth Justice Board.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Children's Service Committee approved the consultation process for the Youth Justice Strategic Plan on 12th September 2023 following which, the draft Youth Justice Plan has been presented to Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Audit and Governance Committee where it has been accepted and no additional comments or amendments have been suggested. Children's Service Committee will consider the final draft of the Youth Justice Strategy

on the 14th November 2023 for ratification and recommendation to Council for adoption. Any discussion points arising from that meeting will be updated verbally to Council.

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Should the plan not be adopted, the Council would not be compliant with the requirements necessary to receive the Youth Justice Board Grant funding for delivery of services to support young people in the youth justice system.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implication arising from this report. The Hartlepool Youth Offending Services is delivered through partnership funding and grants received from the Youth Justice Board as detailed within the Youth Justice Strategic Plan.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 a local authority must submit a youth justice plan annually to the Youth Justice Board setting out (a) how youth justice services are to be provided and funded in their area and (b) how the YOTs established by them are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate and what functions they are to carry out. The plan must be published in such manner and by such date as the Secretary of State may direct.

8. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific child and family poverty considerations arising from the report, the cohort of young people receiving support from the youth offending service are across a wide spectrum of socio- economic backgrounds, all children supported by the service receive an assessment of need which includes consideration of poverty issues and their impact.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific equality and diversity considerations arising from the report, all children receiving support from the youth offending team receive an assessment of need which includes consideration of equality and diversity issues and their impact.

10. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 There are no specific staff consideration arising from this report

11. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 There are no asset management considerations in this report.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 Council is requested to approve the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

13. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 The development of the Youth Justice plan for 2023-2024 will provide the Youth Justice Service with a clear steer to bring about further reductions in youth offending and contribute to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families alongside the broader community.
- 13.2 The local Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2023–2024 will establish responsibility across the Youth Justice Service and the Youth Justice Strategic Board for taking each improvement activity forward within agreed timescales.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
 - Children's Services Committee Report – 12 September 2023
 - Audit and Governance Report – 10 October 2023
 - Strategic Hartlepool Partnership Report – 2 October 2023

15. CONTACT OFFICER

- 15.1 Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children and Families, Hartlepool Borough Council, Level 4, Civic Centre, Hartlepool, TS24 8AY.
Tel 01429 523957.
E-mail jane.young@hartlepool.gov.uk

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 09/11/23
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 09/11/23
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 09/11/23



Hartlepool Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2023-24



Service	Hartlepool Youth Justice Service
Service Manager/ Lead	Roni Checksfield, Youth Justice Service Manager
Chair of YJS Board	Jo Heaney, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Delivery (Children, Young People and Maternity - Tees Valley) North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. (Chair Hartlepool YJS Management Board)

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Appendix 1 – Staffing Structure

Appendix 2 – Budget costs & contributions 2023/24

Foreword

Welcome to the 2023 - 2024 Hartlepool Youth Justice Strategic Plan. This plan sets out our ambitions and priorities for Hartlepool Youth Justice Service and the broader local Youth Justice Partnership for the next year.

The Safer Hartlepool Partnership, Community Safety Plan 2021-24 establishes a vision for the town:

“To make Hartlepool a safe, prosperous and enjoyable place to live, work and visit”

The Youth Justice Service and broader partnership has a key role in contributing to this vision, by continuing to deliver a high quality, effective and safe youth justice service that prevents crime and the fear of crime, whilst ensuring that children who do offend are identified, managed and supported appropriately, without delay.

In recent years Hartlepool has witnessed a significant reduction in youth crime. The local youth justice partnership has been particularly effective in reducing the numbers of children entering the youth justice system for the first time, but there still remains a need to drive down incidents of re-offending by children who have previously offended.

This will be achieved through a combination of robust interventions designed to manage and reduce risk of harm, support safety & wellbeing, restore interpersonal relationships, promote whole family engagement and achieve positive outcomes all wrapped around a “Child First” ethos. Encouragingly, Hartlepool Youth Justice Service alongside partners continues to maintain a strong health offer for all children and is constantly striving to build upon its restorative offer whilst ensuring that victims of youth crime also have a voice.

There has been a significant increase in work placed upon the Youth Justice Service both last year and in the current year. The introduction of the Turnaround programme nationally with its very tight lead in and planning times, the addition of the new KPIs, representation and input into the newly funded Cleveland Violence Reduction Unit (CURV) and more recently ongoing discussions with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) regarding the recently published Anti-Social Behaviour action plan and the pending YJS involvement within the “Immediate Justice” element.

Despite the increased workload, I am confident that Hartlepool Youth Justice Service and the broader Youth Justice Partnership will continue to help make Hartlepool a safe, prosperous and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

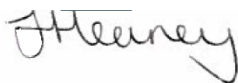
In 2023-24 we will strive to continuously improve by:

- Maintaining and building upon the current Health offer with trauma informed practice at its core.
- Continuing to work with partners to develop a clear and consistent approach to all forms of child exploitation.
- Building on the improving YJS offer of a ‘whole family approach’
- Ensuring the Service maintains a ‘child first’ ethos.
- Continuing to maintain a creative Early/Targeted Intervention, Prevention and Diversion offer.

None of the above will be possible without the continued support and close working relationships of our partners and Children's Social Care. In addition, these relationships allow us to mitigate the risks of reducing partnership budgets whilst maintaining the quality and effectiveness of the Service.

As always, the local authority and Strategic Management Board is extremely grateful for the skill and dedication shown by managers, staff, employees and volunteers of the YJS in continuing to support children who offend, or are at risk of becoming involved in offending.

On behalf of the Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board I am pleased to pledge my support to and endorse the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023-24



Jo Heaney, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Delivery (Children, Young People and Maternity - Tees Valley) North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.
(Chair Hartlepool YJS Management Board)

DRAFT

1. Introduction, vision, strategy & local context

Introduction

The National Youth Justice System primarily exists to ensure that children between the age of 10 and 17 (who are arrested and charged with a criminal offence) are dealt with differently to adult offenders, to reflect their particular welfare needs.

In summary, children who offend are:

- Dealt with by youth courts;
- Given different sentences in comparison to adults and
- When necessary, detained in special secure centres for children.

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority and statutory partners to secure and coordinate local youth justice services for children in our area who come into contact with the Youth Justice System as a result of their offending behaviour. This is achieved through the established Youth Justice Services.

The primary functions of Youth Justice Services are to prevent offending and re-offending by children, reduce the use of custody and ensure all of the above are delivered with a “Child First” ethos embedded across the service.

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service was established in April 2000 and is a Multi-Agency service made up of representatives from Children’s Services, Police, Probation, Public Health, Health, Education and Community Safety. Hartlepool Youth Justice Service seeks to ensure that:

- All children entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment to identify risk and protective factors associated with their offending behaviour in order to inform effective interventions.
- Courts and Referral Order panels are provided with high quality reports that enable them to make informed decisions.
- Orders of the Court are managed in such a way that they support the primary aim of the youth justice system, alongside managing risk of harm and ensuring there is due regard to the welfare of the child.
- Services provided to courts are of a high quality and ensure that magistrates and the judiciary have confidence in the supervision of children.
- Comprehensive bail and remand management services are in place locally for children remanded or committed to custody, or on bail while awaiting trial or sentence.
- The needs and risks of children sentenced to custodial sentences (including long-term custodial sentences) are assessed to ensure effective resettlement and management of risk.
- Those receiving youth justice services are treated fairly regardless of race, language, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor, and actions are put in place to address discrimination if identified

In addition to the above, the remit of the service has widened significantly in recent years due to both national and local developments relating to prevention, diversion and restorative justice and there is now a requirement to ensure that:

- Creative strategies and services are in place locally to prevent children from becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour;
- Out-of-court disposals deliver targeted and bespoke interventions for those at risk of entering the Youth Justice System
- Assistance is provided to the Police when determining whether Youth Cautions should be issued and
- Restorative approaches are used, where appropriate, with victims of crime and ensures that restorative justice is central to work undertaken with children who offend.
- The Turnaround Programme is implemented and meeting targets in line with Government criteria

The Hartlepool Youth Justice Plan for 2023-2024 sets out how youth justice services will be delivered, funded and governed in response to both local need, national policy changes and in line with the Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019, our most recent HMIP inspection findings, ongoing HMIP Thematic reports and the YJB Strategic Plan 2021-24. It also highlights how Hartlepool Youth Justice Service will work in partnership to prevent offending and re-offending by children and reduce the use of remands and custody ensuring we put the “Child First” throughout all processes.

Vision & Strategy

Hartlepool’s Children’s Strategic Partnership has set out its vision for children within the town as follows:

Vision:

Our ambition as a children’s partnership is to enable all children and families in Hartlepool to have opportunities to make the most of their life chances and be supported to be safe in their homes and communities.

Priorities:

- Children have opportunities to make the most of their life chances and are safe
- Improving family relationships, strengths, skills and ability to cope
- Reducing the impact of domestic violence, mental health, drugs and alcohol misuse on children and families
- Helping parents, carers and children to gain skills and get jobs

The Youth Justice Service, as part of the wider services for children, seeks to deliver on the vision and ambitions through a number of identified Youth Justice Service Strategic Priorities for 2023 - 2024.

In addition, these priorities align and overlap with the strategic priorities set by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership for 2021-24:

- Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour
- Reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse
- Reduce Domestic Violence

Youth Justice Service Strategic Objectives and Priorities – 2023-2024

We will use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver our services that enable us to work towards achieving the following objectives and priorities annually:

Re-offending - reduce further offending by children who have committed crime with a particular emphasis on continuing the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive, tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).

Early/Targeted Intervention, Prevention & Diversion – sustain the reduction of first time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that creative strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Remand, Custody & Constructive Resettlement – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the need for remands and custody. Ensure bespoke constructive resettlement packages are implemented at the earliest opportunity.

Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (Asset Plus) – ensure all children entering or at risk of entering the youth justice system benefit from a high quality structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management.

Restorative Justice – ensure all victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative justice approaches and restorative justice is incorporated in to the work undertaken with children who offend.

Effective Governance – ensure that the Youth Justice Strategic Management Board is a well constituted, committed and knowledgeable Board which scrutinises Youth Justice Service performance and drives continuous improvement.

Voice of the Children – ensure that all children are actively involved in developing their own plans and are encouraged and supported to inform current and future service delivery.

‘Child First’ – ensure that the Child First principles are regularly reviewed and embedded within the Youth Justice Service and that every child has the opportunity to live a safe and crime free life, and make a positive contribution to society.

Education, Training, Employment – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Schools, Virtual School and One Stop Shop to ensure all children open to the YJS are actively engaging in some form of suitable ETE, thus reducing NEET numbers, increasing attendance and improving outcomes.

Substance Misuse – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Horizons/START to improve and sustain the engagement of children open to the YJS within substance misuse services

Serious Violence & Exploitation – Working with and alongside all partners including the Police, MACE and Violence Reduction Unit to address and reduce serious violence and all forms of child exploitation

Over Represented Children - Identify and address any areas of over representation within the YJS cohort alongside the management board and partners.

Local Context

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) covers the local authority area of Hartlepool which is impacted upon by a range of social, economic and environmental factors. Using the 2019 average score of the Index of Multiple Deprivation Hartlepool is the 10th most deprived Local Authority in the country with high levels of unemployment, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and substance misuse.

All of these factors provide significant challenges to the children we work with impacting on their behaviours and influencing outcomes.

According to the mid 2021 population estimates – ONS, the population of Hartlepool was in the region of **92,571** with approx.**9359** being between the ages of 10-17.

The BAME population in Hartlepool continues to remain somewhat low in comparison to other areas locally, **3,270** or **3.5%** of Hartlepool Population (Non-White ethnic groups, Census 2021 – ONS)

10-17 BAME population – No published data.

Current number of Children in our Care (CIOC), all ages – **320** (Active as at 31 March 2023, Hartlepool Performance Team)

Current CIOC figures 10–17 – **203** (Active as at 04 05 2023, Hartlepool Performance Team)

****At the time of writing this Strategic Plan there are 4 children open to the YJS who are CIOC.**

Hartlepool is served by 5 Secondary Schools, 1 Pupil Referral Unit (Horizon School) and Catcote Academy which caters for secondary and post-16 students with special educational needs. There are 4 Sixth Form providers two of which are located within Secondary Schools.

Hartlepool YJS has had to evolve over the years in response to changing local circumstances and economic factors. The current service is a traditional YOS model with two small operational teams delivering case management across Out of Court Disposals and Post Court Orders/DTO. The operational teams are supported by a Leadership Team which carry out day to day operational oversight, performance management, service planning and policies & procedures. There is also support from a small business admin team as well as sessional staff and Panel Volunteers who provide a very valuable service.

The YJS is constantly striving to ensure that the service is able to meet the current and future demands of service users, based on a 'fit for purpose' structure which supports high quality service delivery. Central to this is the recognition that all staff will need to be well equipped to deal with a wide variety of service user needs, and keep abreast of emerging areas of practice not least trauma informed practice, the developing body of knowledge and evidence surrounding County Lines, Modern Day Slavery and Serious Youth Violence as well as findings from HMIP and other relevant inspection bodies.

As with the majority of YJSs the service is dealing with smaller caseloads, however these are much more complex individuals with multiple risks and vulnerabilities, the main cohort are predominantly young males aged between 14 and 17, many of whom reside within Hartlepool's most deprived neighbourhoods. Although not mutually exclusive, the common criminogenic and welfare issues prevalent amongst this cohort are identified as:

- higher than average mental health needs
- higher levels of drug and alcohol use than for the general population
- low educational attachment, attendance and attainment
- having family members or friends who offend

- higher than average levels of loss, bereavement, abuse and violence experienced within the family – historical trauma
- a history of family disruption
- chaotic and unstructured lifestyles
- Vulnerable to all elements of exploitation

Alongside this cohort of young males, there is another cohort of young females of similar age 14-17, whom although perhaps not as prolific in terms of reoffending, are of significant concern due to multiple complex issues which are more welfare-orientated. These include: Substance misuse, chaotic lifestyles, and sexual exploitation, missing from home and family breakdown.

Again, as with the male cohort, young females who are offending are noted to have a higher prevalence of poor emotional well-being.

As can be seen from the figures above Hartlepool does have a relatively low BAME percentage compared to locally and regionally, however the service does have the necessary training and skills to respond to work with children from a BAME or other diverse background. More notably the number of Children in our care (CIOC) does fluctuate within the YJS cohort, the data is regularly analysed and there is ongoing work with partners and carers in order to ensure appropriate actions are in place to support this vulnerable group of children. This is a strategic priority and actions and progress is reported to the Strategic Management Board.

Working in partnership is key to supporting a greater understanding of these underlying issues and addressing them in a holistic and co-ordinated way to provide “pathways out of offending”, reduce crime and break the cycle of offending behaviour across generations.

2. Child First

In line with the Youth Justice Boards Strategic Plan 2021-24 Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) is committed to:

- Prioritise the best interests of children and recognise their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
- Promote children’s individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
- Encourage children’s active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
- Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

We continue to ensure the “Child First” principles are embedded and maintained within all areas of service delivery in collaboration with other services and all partners.

In early 2022 Hartlepool YJS produced a “Child First” guidance for all staff to ensure this approach is embedded across all areas of service delivery from assessment, planning, intervention and at closure and exit.

This approach continues to be central to our operational delivery across the whole service and within staff supervisions, case audits and quality assessment of Asset Plus/plans.

In addition to providing guidance to staff the YJS manager and Chair of the management board designed and delivered bite size “Child First” and the “Voice of the Child” sessions for all board members, which will be reviewed and delivered on an ongoing basis.

** (The process below is taken from Hartlepool YJS Child First Guidance)

Assessment/Planning

- The assessment is needs led and not just offence focussed
- We utilise the assessment period to start relationship building and getting to know the child
- We find out what the child likes doing and what they are good at and promote these throughout their time with the service
- Whilst completing the SAQ within the assessment we utilise Why, Where, What, When, Who etc. to gather the Childs/Parents/Carers feelings and thoughts better
- The child’s plan is completed with them and parent/carer with their comments and signatures included
- We utilise Positive Activities within the plan and in collaboration with the child
- We ensure appropriate priority pathways are identified within the plan i.e. Health input and that they will run concurrent to other areas of the plan

Interventions

- We deliver as many sessions as possible away from the YJS Offices, utilising our offsite facilities more and other external locations as appropriate
- We ensure the Childs journey with the service is non-stigmatising
- We become the child’s advocate during their time with us and have regular communication with all other services involved i.e. Health, Education and Social Care etc. advocating on behalf of the child
- We use appropriate language at all times with the child and throughout their journey with the service
- Reparation isn’t used as a “tick box exercise” but is used correctly in a reparative way with the child understanding why they are required to complete it
- We complete a feedback form after each planned intervention ensuring we capture the child’s voice and their thoughts & feelings (feedback forms are shared with Management Team and presented at Management Boards)

Reviews/Closures

- We will ensure that as and when required Child/Parent/Carer are actively included in all reviews, ensuring we capture their voices and comments
- We ensure that a Case Summary and Survey Monkey are completed with the Child/Parent/Carer at the end of the child’s journey with the service (Case Summary are attached to Child View and the Survey Monkey shared with management team, analysed and findings subsequently presented at board meetings looking at potential service development)

Example - Hartlepool YJS acknowledged the need for a collective response to meeting the educational needs of all children open to the YJS.

As a response, we are now working with the towns 5 secondary schools via the Inclusion Partnership meeting. This partnership affords us the opportunity to work more closely with the Senior Leaders from schools and discuss issues their students face which may include unmet need i.e. undiagnosed Speech, Language and Communication Needs.

Working in partnership we aim to reduce the number of exclusions and improve the child’s attainment and attendance, which will support them into further education and lead positive, pro-social lifestyles, which are free of crime.

Schools also have the opportunity to attend training delivered by the YJS on restorative approaches to help mitigate any in-school behaviours.

3. Voice of the child

Hartlepool YJS work collaboratively with all Children/Parents/Carers to ensure their voice is heard, listened to and helps shape service delivery as required.

We will continuously review and enhance our delivery, so that the views of children are sufficiently captured, central to our work, and lead to change in the system to support children into positive outcomes and successful adulthood.

We strongly promote and encourage relationship building between staff and children from the outset of all involvement with the YJS.

Staff will start the process of capturing the child's voice during this period which also aids assessment. All SAQ and feedback sessions are completed face to face where possible and relevant and staff will encourage the child to expand on their responses. This process is also carried out with parents/carers.

We ensure that the child's voice is captured throughout the child's journey with the service:

- All SAQs
- Designing the child's plan
- After all completed interventions
- Asset Plus and all other reviews
- Closure Summaries
- Survey Monkey



Feedback is consolidated from the various sources and analysed via the monthly leadership meetings and quarterly service management boards. Any potential areas for concern or good practice are addressed appropriately.

The YJS will always advocate on behalf of the child at all meetings attended and where required their voice and that of parents/carers will be gathered in advance. There has been a marked increase and improvement in this process which has been very evident within education meetings. More in depth discussions are now taking place with education providers on a regular basis especially around exclusions/suspensions, reduced timetables and alternative provision.

Example – A child was encouraged and supported to attend and talk about their experiences of reparation at a recent YJS Management Board meeting. The child highlighted how he was given the opportunity to identify what he likes doing and how if possible the YJS could support with this. Subsequently he was able to help in a local foodbank, helping pack orders, stocktake etc. which gave him a real sense of achievement and pride. He has continued to support the foodbank in his own time.

This direct feedback to board members evoked considerable discussion and ensured we now, where feasibly possible, have those discussions with all children giving them the opportunity to identify what they would like to do and how it benefits the communities and others.

4. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Governance:

The Youth Justice Service is part of Hartlepool Borough Councils Children & Joint Commissioning Services Department which also includes Children's Social Care and Early Help services. The Management Board is chaired by Jo Heaney, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Delivery (Children, Young People and Maternity - Tees Valley) North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

The board is made up of representatives from Children's Social Care, Police, Probation, Public Health, Courts, Education, Youth Support Services, and Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Community Safety, VCS and an elected member.

Effective integrated strategic partnership working and clear oversight by the Management Board are critical to the success and effective delivery of youth justice services in Hartlepool. The board is directly responsible for:

- Determining how appropriate youth justice services are to be provided and funded;
- Overseeing the formulation each year of the youth justice plan;
- Agreeing measurable objectives linked to key performance indicators as part of the youth justice plan;
- Ensuring delivery of the statutory aim to prevent offending by children and children;
- Giving strategic direction to Youth Justice Service Manager and Youth Justice Service Team;
- Providing performance management of the prevention of youth crime and periodically report this to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership;
- Ensuring that Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019 and the Child First ethos are embedded across the whole service and audits are completed within required timescales;
- Promoting the key role played by the Youth Justice Service within local integrated offender management arrangements;
- Advocate on behalf of the YJS within their own service areas and beyond, specifically supporting the YJS to overcome barriers to effective Multi-Agency working;
- Oversight of all data submissions to the YJB ensuring timeliness, especially conditions set out in the YJB grant;
- Ensuring the recommendations outlined in YJB papers and HMIP inspection reports/thematic reviews are addressed and monitored at board meetings

The Management Board is clear about the priority areas for improvement, and monitors the delivery of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, performance and prevention/diversion work. It is well attended and receives comprehensive reports relating to performance, finance and specific areas of service delivery.

Members of the Board are knowledgeable, participate well in discussions and are members of other related boards, such as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Health and Wellbeing partnerships as well as the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, all which contribute to effective partnership working at a strategic level. Board meetings are well structured and members are held accountable.

During 2022/23 board members attended a YJS Board Induction and interactive bite size sessions on the recently published Management Board guidance and Child First/Voice of the Child. These sessions will be reviewed and updated for delivery again this year alongside any further updates.

Leadership/Structure

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service has a staff team of 22 people, which includes 3 seconded staff, and 4 sessional workers (**Staffing structure attached at Appendix 1**). The service also benefits from a team of 3 active volunteers who are Referral Order Panel members. All staff and volunteers are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks which are renewed every three years.

There are also 2 external staff commissioned into the service 1 x PT Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) (funded by the YJS) and 1 x PT Clinical Psychologist (funded by the ICB). Discussions and plans are underway to commission time from an Educational Psychologist (start date -Sept 23).

Via the recently implemented Violence Reduction Unit (CURV) 4 x Custody Navigators have been employed, they will be located in the central Custody Suite (Middlesbrough) and will engage all children entering the Custody Suite, with a view to support, guidance and directing them to further support and the relevant YJS (Due to go live in July 23).

At the time of writing this report all statutory partners have seconded staff within the YJS or have provided direct pathways i.e. Health, Education, Police and Social Care.

The YJS delivery model has been reconfigured and restructured during the last year to ensure the service remains sufficiently flexible to address future challenges. This will continue to be achieved through a generic case management and intervention delivery model, across pre and post court functions. This will ensure maximum resilience, capacity and flexibility to meet the needs of children and children and the service as a whole.

The current YJS structure aims to consolidate areas of strong performance and effective practice, whilst also providing a dynamic framework to respond to emerging priorities, recognised both by the Local Authority and key partners.

This model (alongside the YJS strategic plan) allows the organisation and the wider YJS partnership to action the priorities for service delivery and to achieve best outcomes for children and children across the range of statutory and preventative services.

The Assistant Director (AD), Children & Families is also the designated Head of Service for the Youth Justice Service with a service manager having responsibility and oversight for all elements of service delivery. The AD reports directly to the Director of Children's Services (DCS).

Partnership Arrangements

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service is a statutory partnership which includes, but also extends beyond, the direct delivery of youth justice services. In order to deliver youth justice outcomes it must be able to function effectively in both of the two key sectors within which it operates, namely:

- Criminal justice services.

- Services for children and their families.

The Youth Justice Service contributes both to improving community safety and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and in particular protecting them from significant harm.

Many of the children involved with the Youth Justice Service are amongst the most vulnerable children in the Borough and are at greatest risk of social exclusion. The Youth Justice Service's Multi-Agency approach ensures that it plays a significant role in meeting the safeguarding needs of these children. This is achieved through the effective assessment and management of safety & wellbeing and risk, through working in partnership with other services, for example, Children's Services, Health, Education, Secure Estate and Police to ensure children's wellbeing is promoted and they are protected from harm. Regular ongoing communication, meetings, joint training opportunities and speedy information/intelligence sharing ensure ongoing strong links and relationships.

All high-risk cases can be escalated to either one or both of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) or the Strategic Risk Management Group, the Youth Justice Service has representation on both groups which meet monthly.

Discussions around serious youth violence, criminal exploitation and county lines are conducted within these forums ensuring tight plans are implemented and strategic management oversight is afforded

The YJS has both operational and strategic representation on the following forums that all contribute to the support of children in the justice system.



5. Board development

As highlighted in Section 5 above Effective integrated strategic partnership working and clear oversight by the Management Board are critical to the success and effective delivery of youth justice services in Hartlepool.

In line with the guidance provided by the YJB in 2021 “Youth Justice Service governance and Leadership” the following training was undertaken with all board members. This training is being reviewed and will be delivered again in 2023/24.

	Board Development	Action Taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	Management Board TOR rewritten	The board TOR to be consulted with the board, agreed and re written	Management Board	Completed Sept 2021

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APPENDIX 1

2	Board induction for all members	Board induction to be undertaken with all board members, utilising the template shared by the AYM	YJS Manager/Board chair	Completed Sept 22
3	Update all board members on YJ service governance and leadership	Utilising the YJB - YJ service governance and leadership document, Sessions designed for all board members to attend and actively engage	YJS Manager/Board Chair	Completed over 4 sessions Apr – Oct 22
4	Child First/Voice of the Child	Sessions developed for all board members to attend and participate in Child First ethos/Voice of the child	YJS Manager/Board Chair	Completed over 4 sessions Apr – Oct 22
5	Key Performance Indicators	Power Point (YJB) presented to all board members updating on new KPIs	YJS Manager	Initial documentation and board discussion held. Power Point to be delivered July 23
6	Serious Youth Violence & Exploitation	Presentation & Discussion with Director of CURV	CURV Director	Initial Presentation and Discussion held in Feb 23 Management Board – Further presentations planned for Sept 23

Spotlight sessions have also been introduced into Management Board meetings and presented by YJS staff, this gives all partners and board members a better insight into daily delivery within the service. To date the following have been presented and discussed:

- Out of Court Disposals (OOCd)
- Reparation
- Restorative Justice
- YJS Health Offer
- Court & Post Court offer (to be presented at Sept 23 board)

There is a proposal for board members to also deliver spotlight sessions on their role/service and how they link, support and advocate on behalf of the YJS and its cohort of children.

Added to the above all statutory partners and board members are invited to attend all YJS internal training and are offered shadowing opportunities.

6. Progress on previous plan

Youth Justice Strategic Priorities 2022/23

Re-offending - reduce further offending by children who have committed crime with a particular emphasis continuing on the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive and tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).

Key Actions

- Undertake quality assessments of children at risk of re-offending, ensuring risks, desistance factors and needs are identified which inform effective intervention planning
- Continue to improve interventions delivered, through innovation and collaboration where appropriate
- Improve intelligence and timely information sharing relating to those children who are at risk of offending, to inform service-wide improvement activity or targeted work
- Continue to improve the 'Child First' approach and Health offer within the service and with partners
- Continue to undertake scoping activities in relation to retaining both the Speech & Language Therapist, Trauma Informed Care Pathway and Emotional Wellbeing pathways within the YJS beyond March 2023

Update

- All of the above actions have been achieved.
- Hartlepool YJS are now in a position to run a Reoffending report from Child View and are utilising the tracker available. The information being provided is more timely and allows us to update Leadership meetings and Management boards much quicker with data and analysis
- Senior representation at the regional Reoffending Group chaired by the OPCC
- Since the inception of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) there are now far greater sources of intelligence alongside the Police and partners which aids service wide improvements and targeted work.
- Reoffending figures do however continue to fluctuate and there has been some considerable increase in time between charge and outcome for those children open under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Concerns

- As indicated above the length of time children and courts are waiting for NRM outcomes, this has a considerable effect on the number of adjournments with minimal oversight of these children during this period – There are ongoing discussions with the SCA and within the local authority.

Early & Targeted Intervention/Diversion – Continue to prioritise a reduction in first time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that creative strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children and children from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Key Actions

- Maintain and enhance the YJS Early & Targeted Intervention programme "CHOICES" across Children's Services and the partnership
- Operate a targeted approach to supporting individuals and groups of children at risk of offending - based on intelligence and collaborative working with key partners (Police, ASB, Early Help, Voluntary Community Sector, Schools, etc.)
- Work with the Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) and partners to reduce and respond to Child exploitation

- Ongoing trend analysis of past and current FTE's to identify key themes and responses
- Ongoing briefings to key partners (such as Police and Social Care) to emphasise and promote the Prevention and Diversion agenda
- Continue to review and deliver our point of arrest diversion as a distinct and substantially different response to formal out of court disposals
- Continue to review the Diversion & Prevention strategy in place ensuring it includes how children are identified for diversion/prevention, how the services are delivered, by whom and how success is evaluated.

Update:

- All of the above actions were achieved
- Early & Targeted Intervention programme, CHOICES is continuing to receive referrals from within Children's Services.
- The service continues to work directly with children through our diversionary offer of Restorative Intervention and both Triage 1 and 2, all referrals are via the Police and Courts.
- The Turnaround programme is now up and running and adding a further offer alongside Preventions & Diversion
- Hartlepool YJS alongside South Tees YJS and Stockton YJS are in discussion with the OPCC re the "Immediate Justice" element of the very recently published Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan

Concerns

- There have been a significant amount of changes and increased workload placed on YJSs nationally with the introduction of Turnaround the added KPIs. These changes and developments will take time to establish and within day to day operational delivery.

Remand and Custody & Resettlement – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody and the YJS Resettlement Policy is reviewed and evaluated.

Key Actions

- Monitor and maintain the use of Compliance Panels to ensure continued effectiveness
- Ensure the Service provides intensive packages of supervision and support to high intensity orders and bail arrangements
- Ensure that the needs of children in custody and the factors relating to their offending behaviour are addressed in the secure estate to prevent further offending upon release
- Continue to review and evaluate the Resettlement Policy in place for children upon release from the secure estate (HMIP Youth Justice inspection framework, standard 4.1 Resettlement, May 2021)
- Regularly review capacity to deliver ISS, and resource appropriately, through a multi-agency approach

Update

- All of the above was achieved
- We continue to utilise and review our current Resettlement Policy
- We continue to be without a seconded Probation Officer since Nov 2021, discussions continue with the Probation Service.
- We have seen an increase in children remanded to local authority care in line with the Remand Framework and continue to work closely with the courts and partners to ensure all children receive the best support available
- Hartlepool YJS will be a part of the upcoming YRO (ISS) pilot commencing on the 3rd July 23.

Concerns

- There is a national shortage of suitable regulated local placements for children remanded to local authority accommodation.

Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (Asset Plus) – ensure all children and children entering or at risk of entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management.

Key Actions

- Continued Asset Plus refresher training, ensuring robust assessment of a child's needs
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure there is a co-ordinated assessment and plan relating to a child's risk and safety & wellbeing
- Implement an audit cycle/performance clinic to ensure assessment and plans are meeting the appropriate quality standards through robust and transparent quality assurance and feedback.
- Ensure that desistance factors are identified and analysed in all assessments of every child subject to YJS supervision through quality assurance and staff supervision.
- Attendance and contribution to YJB Regional Effective Practice groups and peer collaboration with Tees Valley and North East YJS colleagues
- Ongoing internal staff training and workshops to benchmark quality standards in the management of risk and safety & wellbeing
- Continue to work alongside the partnership to identify suitable interventions and pathways for children and children criminally exploited and potentially being drawn into County Lines activity
- Undertake 'Practice Week', this consists of a team of independent auditors to carry out case work audits, undertake practice observations and gain feedback from children and their families. The evaluation of practice week will inform the service development plan.

Updates

- All above achieved and continuing throughout 2023/24

Restorative Justice & Victims – ensure all victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative justice approaches and restorative justice is incorporated in to the work undertaken with children who offend.

Key Actions

- Ensure that victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative justice approaches leading to improved outcomes for victims
- Continue to use restorative practice across all aspects of the Youth Justice Service
- Regularly re-visit, review and develop practice and process around Referral Order panels to ensure increased involvement from victims, panel members, children and their families
- Continue to develop the in-house RJ 'offer' to consolidate and embed current and better integrated working practices – including the victim's evaluation

Updates

- RJ continues to be a priority area across all service delivery
- We are seeing an increase in Victim participation
- Victim evaluation & feedback is improving
- We continue to provide a suite of suitable reparation projects and will aim to source projects in line with the child's voice.

Effective Governance – ensure that the Youth Justice Strategic Management Board is a well constituted, committed and knowledgeable Board which scrutinises Youth Justice Service performance.

Key Actions

- The Youth Justice Management Board will provide oversight and scrutiny of the service action plan and performance
- Ensure Management Board members attend regular development and shadowing opportunities as provided by the YJS Manager.
- Continue to review the Terms of Reference for the YJS board to ensure it is fit for purpose and includes appropriate representation and contribution of all statutory partners.
- Attendance and representation at YJB Regional executive meetings with colleague YJS Managers from the North East – to share learning and Governance issues to improve wider regional service delivery

Update

- All of the above was achieved
- There is a continued programme in place for all board members
- Board members will be offered a number of bite size sessions to upskill and aid their knowledge of the service, service delivery and requirements etc.

Voice of the Children – ensure that all children are actively involved in developing their own plans having the opportunity to develop and inform current and future service delivery

Key Actions

- Ensure children's involvement in relation to their assessment and plans is clearly evidenced within the records.
- Children to be actively involved in developing their own plans and their comments are captured at implementation, review and closure of all plans
- The service will ensure children are provided with opportunities to influence and shape service delivery – through access to, and completion of, Survey Monkey feedback, session evaluations, closure summaries and SAQ
- YJS leadership team to hold regular evaluation/feedback meetings to ensure all comments are seen and actioned where required and findings shared at quarterly management board meetings

Update

- Considerable work has been undertaken across the service with all staff, the implementation of a Child First operational guidance includes how we capture the voice of the child and more importantly what we do with the findings. The Voice of the Child continues to be captured via SAQ, sessional feedback sheets, Survey Monkey and Closure Summaries, all findings are analysed at Leadership meetings and produced at board meetings for further scrutiny and action.

'Child First' – ensure that the Child First principles are regularly reviewed and embedded within the Youth Justice Service and that every child has the opportunity to live a safe and crime free life, and make a positive contribution to society.

Key Actions

- Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their needs, capacities, rights and potential.
- Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion.
- Ensure that all work carried out by the service is a meaningful collaboration with children and their parents/carers.
- The YJS will promote a childhood that is removed from the Justice System, using prevention, diversion and minimal intervention and that all work minimises stigma.

Update

- We continue to advocate strongly on the "Child First" ethos embedded with the YJS

- Guidance clearly highlights what is expected throughout Assessment, planning, interventions, reviews and closures for all children within the YJS.
- The above is monitored by way of children feedback and evaluation as well as via supervision, QA, case audits and direct 1:1 with the child.

Education, Training, Employment – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Schools, Virtual School, One Stop Shop etc. to ensure all Children open to the YJS are actively engaging in some form of suitable ETE, thus reducing NEET numbers and increasing attendance.

Key Actions

- Ensure Education is suitably represented on the Strategic Management Board
- Education reports are submitted by partners for each Strategic Management Board meeting and contain as a minimum, how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data should be analysed to identify any disproportionality and care status of the child. The number of children who have Education and Health Care plans (EHCP) who are open to the service should be provided.
- Encourage children's active engagement with their respective education provider
- Continue to build upon the monthly Education meetings with all education partners
- Continue working in collaboration regarding children with EHCP/SEN

Update

- Education reports are now presented at every quarterly management board meeting, data is provided on how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data is analysed to identify any disproportionality and care status of the child. The number of children who have Education and Health Care plans (EHCP) who are open to the service is also provided, analysed and discussed.
- Our education support is growing and our communication and challenge with education providers is vastly improving.

Serious Youth Violence & Exploitation – Working in collaboration with the MACE, Police and all other partners to ensure that all forms of serious youth violence and exploitation are identified and suitable plans implemented to reduce the risks.

Key Actions

- Continue to have representation at all MACE meetings
- Ensure any identification of potential exploitation via assessment and ongoing work is referred into the MACE straight away
- Alongside partners ensure NRM referrals are completed for all relevant children and followed up
- Build upon the risk management meetings (RMM) convened by the YJS ensuring all actions are completed, safety plans are in place and suitable contingency plans are identified
- Continue to ensure senior YJS representation at all relevant strategies/complex case discussions and mapping meetings
- Continue to have senior representation at all PREVENT meetings
- Continue to work alongside the OPCC/Police and all partners in implementing and sustaining the Violence Reduction Unit (funding recently received in Cleveland for implementation)

Update

- The YJS have senior representation at all MACE meetings
- All ongoing NRM and potential NRM are discussed and scrutinised at the MACE meetings

- The YJS attend monthly Police Tactical Control Group and Multi Agency Risk of Serious and Organised Crime meetings to discuss in depth Organised Crime Groups, Criminal Peer Groups and any children potentially linked to these
- Regular staff training is made available by the LA re exploitation, County Lines and all forms of Modern Day Slavery
- RUI continue to be analysed in monthly leadership meetings and scrutinised alongside serious youth violence offences with the Police and CPS, daily data spreadsheets are produced by the seconded Police Officer giving live updates on all cases.
- The 3 Cleveland YOTs have strategic representation across all tiers of the VRU (CURV)
- Via CURV and with management oversight by the Cleveland YJSs we have 4 x Custody Navigators in post due to go live in July 2023, this will ensure earlier engagement with all children entering the Custody Suite.

Substance Misuse – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Horizons/START to improve and sustain the engagement of children open to the YJS within substance misuse services.

Key Actions

- Ensure Substance Misuse providers are suitably represented on the Strategic Management Board
- Regular reports/updates submitted to the Strategic Management Board by Substance Misuse providers
- Ensure the continued working arrangements/pathways are embedded between the YJS and Substance Misuse partners
- All children and children identified as needing support are actively encouraged to engage with appropriate Substance Misuse services

Updates

- All of the above has been achieved
- Pathways into SM services are maintained with regular communication and their representation at board meetings
- All children entering the YJS are actively encouraged to engage with SM services as required

Over represented children – Identify and address any areas of over representation within the YJS cohort alongside the management board and partners

Key Actions

- Ensure a quarterly Needs Analysis of the YJS cohort continues to be presented at each Management Board for analysis of over representation and ongoing needs/gaps within service delivery
- Continue to scrutinise all HMIP Thematic report findings i.e. the over representation of BCIOCK and Mixed Heritage boys, Looked After Children etc and ensure discussions and any potential actions are agreed and implemented by the management board

Update

- Disproportionality is now an agenda item with the YJS managers report to quarterly management boards.
- A service needs analysis to be presented at each management board meeting highlighting over representation, discussion and actions are formulated and monitored.
- Regular ongoing discussions with all partners including Police and Social Care are undertaken to address and look at potential actions for any areas of over representation within the service.

7. Resources and Services

The Youth Justice Service budget is mainly resourced by a combination of Local Authority funding and Youth Justice Board grant.

****2023/24 budget costs and contributions are attached at Appendix 2**

As we write and produce this plan we are unfortunately still unaware of the amount of YJB grant we will be receiving for 2023-24, the figures indicated in Appendix 2 have been based on last year's YJB grant amount without the uplift.

The National Probation Service continue to provide funding (£5k) as well as their staffing contribution which is 0.5 FTE, this post is currently vacant and ongoing discussions are underway with the Probation Service to resolve this. The ICB contribution is a non-cash contribution via the commissioning of the Trauma Informed Care Pathway and the YJS Nurse Specialist is funded from Public Health.

Cleveland Police still provide a full time seconded Police Officer. Funding once again has been secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner towards the delivery of Triage, this is secured until 2025.

We use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver the below services to all children. In 2023/24 we aim to improve and maintain our performance across all areas of delivery ensuring a child first ethos is embedded throughout.

- Early/Targeted Intervention
- Prevention & Diversion
- O OCD
- All Post Court orders

8. Performance & National Key Performance Indicators

Existing key performance indicators

Binary reoffending rate

Work has now been completed by the Data team, YJS leadership team and Business support to set up the reoffending toolkit within our management information system Child View, this data is very useful and informative for management boards and any reports requested.

Unfortunately the Youth Data Summary from the MoJ/YJB isn't always timely with some significant waiting at times and discrepancies in the data. There have been discussions nationally with MoJ and YJB regarding this and plans are afoot to look at better and easier ways to capture this data.

We continue to establish and embed a collaborative Multi-Agency solution and response to reoffending. Strong communication across Children's Services and Cleveland Police ensures regular discussions/mapping meetings are being undertaken with clear accountable actions for

everyone. Alongside this the YJS puts a great deal of focus on their Multi-Agency risk management meetings for those small numbers of cases posing the highest risk of reoffending.

The YJS have representation on the Cleveland Reducing Reoffending Group which feeds into the Cleveland and Durham Local Criminal Justice Partnership. There is also representation on the Cleveland Prevention and Diversion, and Youth Offending sub-groups.

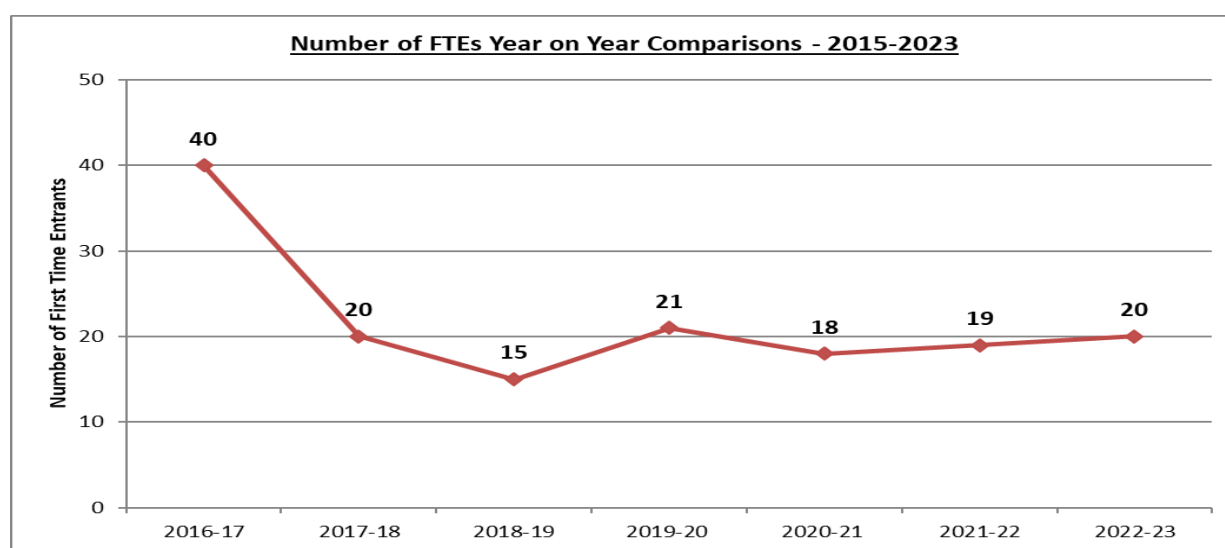
Latest data provided by YDS – Reoffending rates after 12 months, yearly cohorts

- Binary rate - Jul 20 - Jun 21 cohort (latest period) – **26.7%**
- Binary rate - Jul 19 - Jun 20 cohort – **47.8%**
- Percentage point change from selected baseline is **minus 21.16%**

This is lower than the regional and national percentages, however our reoffending binary rates do fluctuate. It is an area of priority for the YJS and partners to identify these YP earlier and offer suitable packages of support.

First time entrants

Hartlepool YJS continue to work hard in reducing and sustaining those reductions in FTE, the last 3 years have seen a levelling off of FTE and numbers have fluctuated minimally. Our recently implemented Early and Targeted Intervention programme – Choices, alongside Turnaround and our diversionary offer of Restorative Intervention (RI) and both Triage 1 & 2 ensure we have robust offers in place to intervene and divert children away from the criminal justice system. Furthermore we worked directly with 50 children last year across Triage (39), Triage 2 (3) and RI (8) who may have become FTE.



Use of custody

There have been 2 remands in 2022/23 and 2 custodial sentences, these are both increases on 2021/22. 1 child was initially remanded and then received a custodial sentence.

Hartlepool YJS have a clear process for alternatives to custody through the offer of ISS packages and utilisation of pre-breach compliance meetings for those at risk of custody via non-compliance. Hartlepool YJS alongside other North East colleagues will be participating in the YRO (ISS) Pilot due to commence on the 3 July 23

Year	Remands	Custody
2019-20	1	2
2020-21	0	2

2021-22	0	1
2022-23	2	2

Additional key performance indicators (from April 2023)

It is a now a requirement of the service to report on the following new key performance indicators from April 2023, with the first submission due August 2023.

There will be an increased workload placed upon business support, especially whilst carrying out quarterly data cleansing, although over time it is hoped the process becomes seamless and that everyone benefits from the data and information that can be gathered from these added KPIs. Currently we don't perceive any issues or risks other than the increased workload on business support staff.

- **Suitable accommodation** – The YJS have senior representation on the local authority housing and accommodation panel. Attendance at all relevant Social Care meetings and ongoing communication will ensure we are able to identify suitable/unsuitable accommodation and challenge/address where needed.
- **Education, training and employment** – There is senior representation from the Virtual School and Post 16 service at management boards and a consolidated report is produced quarterly. There are also monthly internal education meetings.
- **Special educational needs and disabilities/additional learning needs** – Via the Virtual School pathways have been implemented with the SEND team. Regular ongoing communication, attendance at meetings and suitable challenge should ensure we are able to monitor and record sufficiently.
- **Mental health care and emotional wellbeing** – The YJS have a very good health offer via the YJS nurse specialist, Speech and Language therapist and Clinical Psychologist for the Trauma Informed Care Pathway (TICP). All have access to their own service systems and information and speedier (at times) processes for further referrals
- **Substance misuse** – The HOS Substance Misuse attends the management boards and produces a quarterly report. There are pathways/referral routes in place to ensure a speedy process and regular information sharing.
- **Out-of-Court Disposals** – We have a considerable amount of data and information available on all children engaging with the service via an OOCd as well early/targeted intervention and Turnaround.
- **Links to wider services** – The YJS are in a position to clearly highlight and indicate the links to wider services and outward referrals made
- **Management board attendance** – This will be monitored on a quarterly basis and board members politely reminded of attendance on an ongoing basis.
- **Serious violence** – The YJS is well represented within the CURV and regular ongoing meetings are held to identify, discuss and analyse all elements of Serious Violence. The YJS manager was also part of the AYM consultation process with the Serious Violence Duty.
- **Victims** – A lot of work is carried out with victims of crime, the YJS RJ worker contacts all victims ascertains their willingness to engage and follows the process from there. All data is collected and stored securely on the MIS.

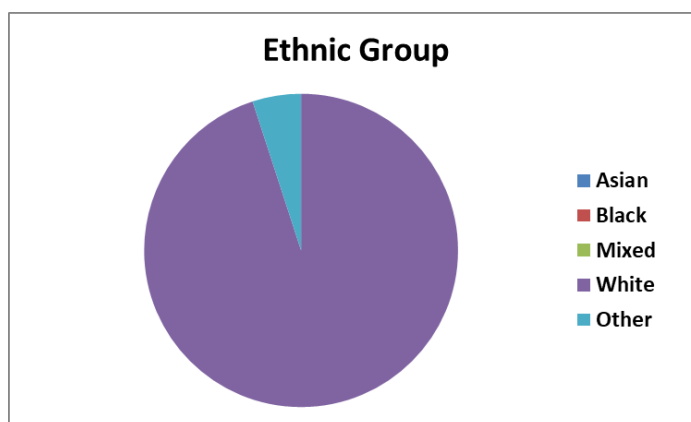
9. Local performance

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The service is dealing with smaller caseloads consisting of very complex individuals with multiple risks and vulnerabilities. Hartlepool YJS carry out a quarterly Needs Analysis of all children open to the service to ensure we thoroughly understand the collective needs of the children and ensure the service is able to respond to this. The Needs Analysis enables the service and partnership via Management Board meetings to have a good snap shot of the current cohort's complexities and potential gaps within delivery, services and areas of concern as well as any areas of over representation. Recent analysis reveals a cohort with many having very difficult home lives, they display much broader lifestyle choices i.e. substance misuse and the need to generate income to maintain this. This also reflects the national and regional picture in terms of caseload composition.

The information below was taken from the latest YJS Needs Analysis on the 04 05 23 and discussed at the management board on the 09 05 23.

The analysis was undertaken on 21 completed assessments.

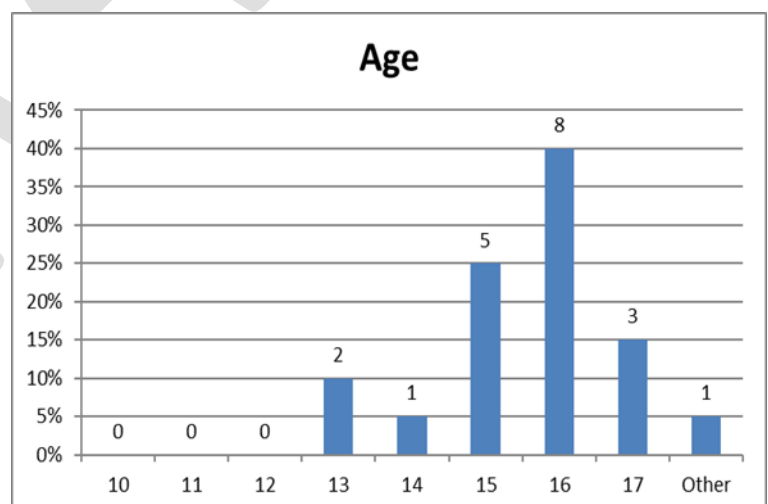


Of the 21 CYP 1 is a Traveller and the remainder White

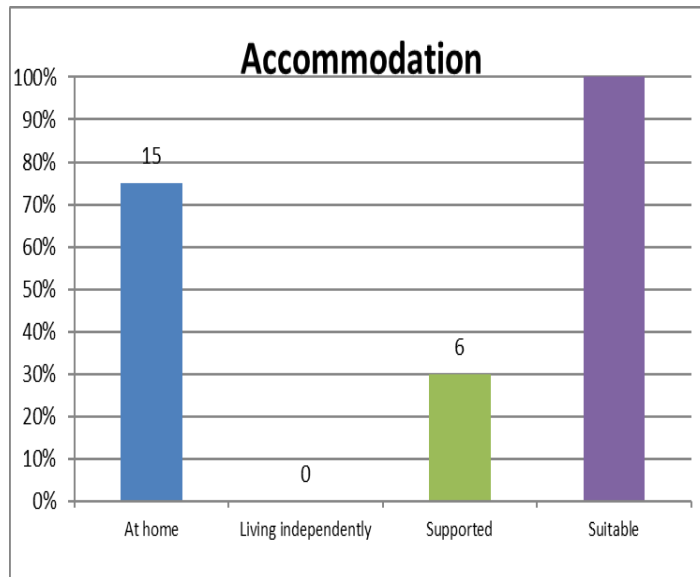
Ages are spread across the spectrum, however currently the youngest being 13.

15, 16 & 17 are generally our busiest age range

This cohort includes 2 females 15 & 17



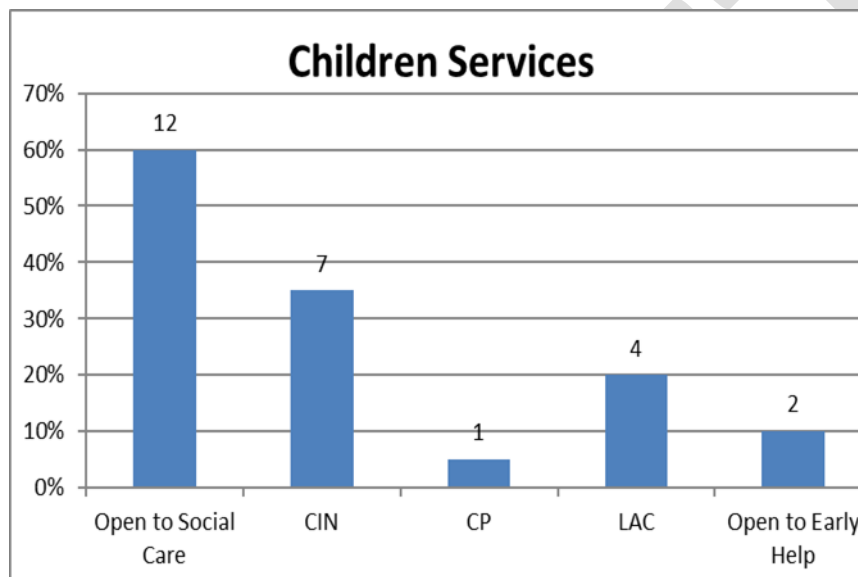
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17 CYP are classed as living at home, this is either with parents or an extended family member i.e. Auntie/Uncle, Grandparents etc.

6 x YP are classed as living in Supported accommodation, 2 of these are currently in HMYOI Wetherby, 2 are placed out of area and 2 placed in Hartlepool.

All accommodation is currently deemed suitable



Of the 21 YP 12 are currently open to Social Care – 7 are CiN, 1 CP and 4 are CIC

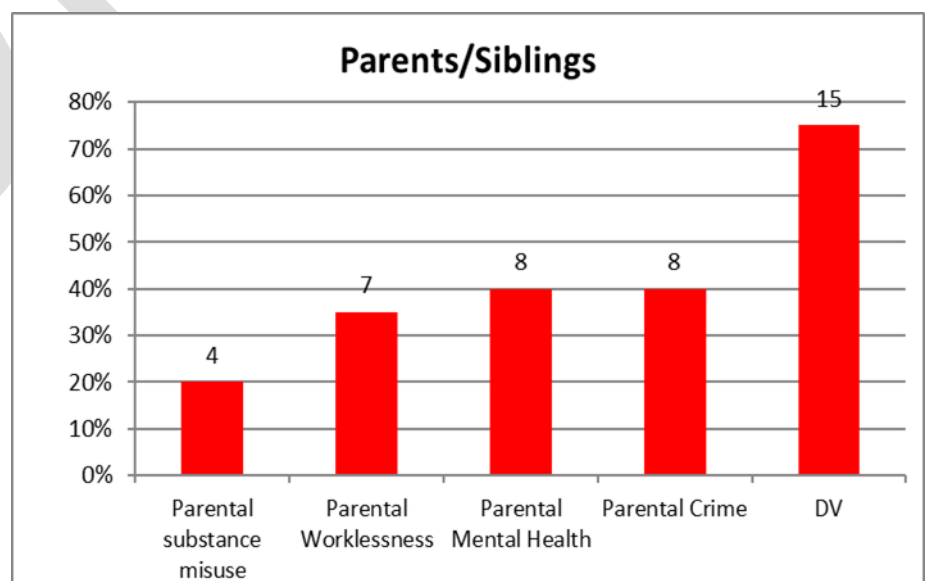
There are also 2 YP open to Early Help.

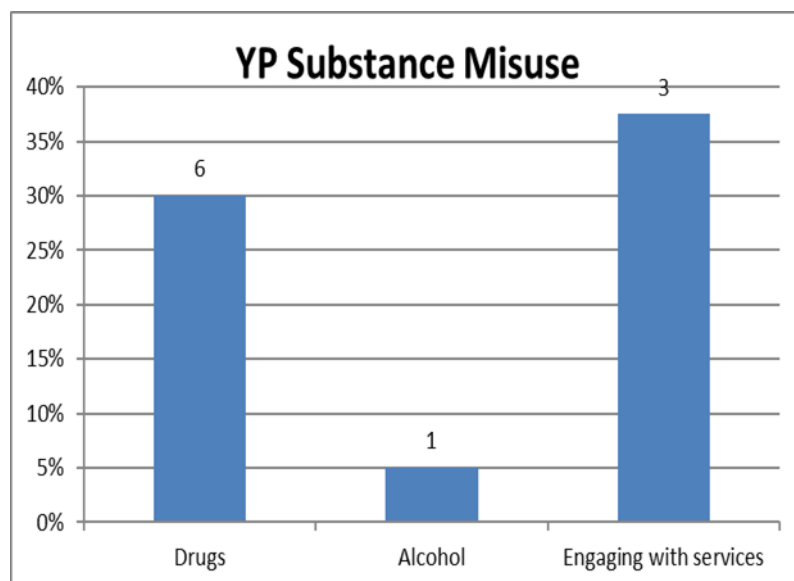
These figures equate to 15 of the 21 YP in this analysis.

Of the 4 parents identified as using substances 3 are engaging with services

Of the 8 identified as having MH issues 4 are engaging with services

DV – 15 CYP have witnessed DV





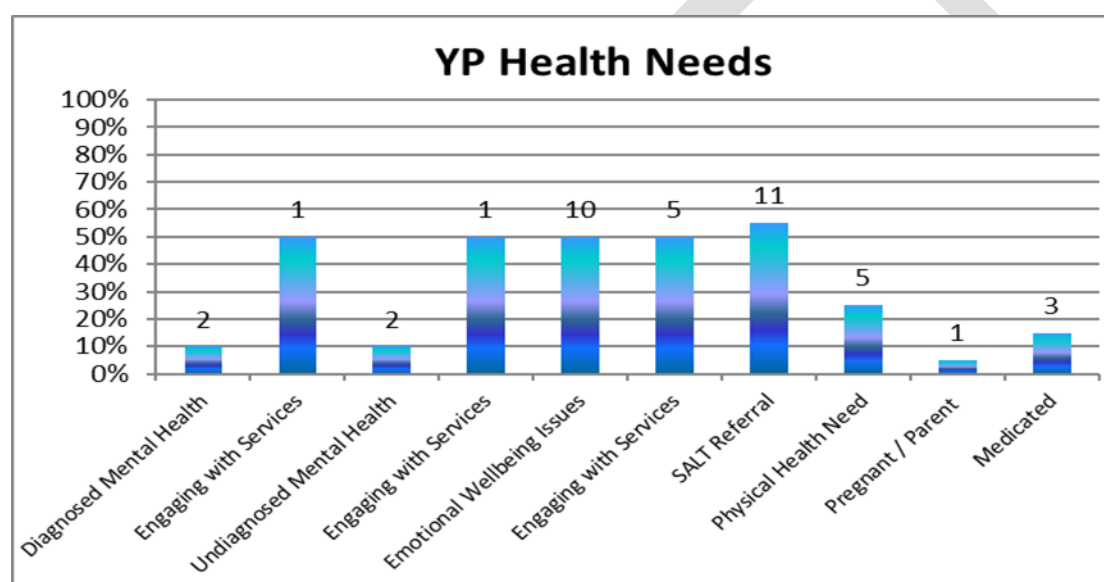
7 YP have been assessed as using substances/Alcohol

6 Drugs only

1 Alcohol only

4 referrals have been made by either the YJS or other services

3 is currently engaging or have engaged



2 CYP have a MH diagnosis, of those 1 is actively engaging with support

2 CYP have undiagnosed MH with 1 currently engaging in support

10 CYP have been identified as needing some form of emotional wellbeing support, of those 5 are engaging with services

11 CYP have been referred for a SLCN assessment and have or are engaging in the process

5 CYP have an identified/diagnosed physical health need

1 CYP is pregnant

3 CYP are medicated

****These graphs highlight a small snap shot of the Needs Analysis completed – May 2023**

****Education, attendance, SEND status i.e.EHCP and SEN need is captured in the Education report presented by the Virtual School Head teacher at all board meetings.**

10. Priorities

Children from groups which are over-represented

It is widely known that children from a range of backgrounds are over-represented in the youth justice system. Nationally it is known that Black and Mixed ethnicity boys are over-represented and a recent HMIP thematic report made a number of recommendations for local authorities, YJS partnerships and YJS managers in relation to these children.

However, it is not only Black and Mixed ethnicity children that are over-represented, and the YJS are aware and respond to any local concerns about all children from over-represented groups. This includes but is not limited to children known to social care services, children excluded from school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

There is no data to indicate that black and mixed ethnicity children are over-represented within Hartlepool YJS as well as Gypsy, Roma and traveller children. However the number of children within our care does fluctuate and at times there can be an over-representation as well as children excluded from school.

Disproportionality is covered within the YJS managers' report at the quarterly management board meetings. The following information was presented and discussed at the board meeting held in May 2023.

Children in our Care (CIOC)

- As at 02 05 23 there were **4** CYP who were CIOC open to the YJS, 2 on Statutory Referral Orders, 1 due to a remand episode with an ISS package and 1 for a Pre-Sentence Report (PSR)
- That equated to **11%** of the current YJS cohort
- Of the **4** CYP 2 were CIOC before becoming open to the service, **1** became a CIOC after entering the YJS and **1** became a CIOC due to their current remand episode, all are male.
- **3** of the CYP offences were committed out of placement, however **1** assaulted emergency workers at the point of arrest within their placement.
- We were also working with a further 3 CIOC on voluntary arrangements, 2 via the Choices programme and 1 via an AIM 3 assessment.
- As at the 02 05 23 in Hartlepool there were **203** CIOC 10-17 year old.
- **2%** of the overall 10-17 CIOC are currently open to the YJS on a statutory order/bail programme.

The YJS works very closely with Cleveland Police, CPS and the Courts to ensure protocol has been followed (10 point check) and there is clear transparent decision making. We also work alongside Social Care and the Through Care teams to ensure a good robust package of multi-agency support is afforded to each child. RJ training is also available and delivered to Care Home staff as required by the YJS RJ officer.

Prevention

Hartlepool YJSs recently implemented early and/or targeted prevention programme is known locally as "The Choices Programme"

Referrals are received from within Children's Services i.e. Social Care/Early Help for all children 10-17 displaying behaviours associated with offending, antisocial behaviour, or other vulnerabilities. All referrals are screened and discussed at management meetings

A worker is allocated from the Pre Court team who will undertake a further YJS screening tool, gain consent and implement an intervention plan alongside the child, parent/carer.

To date and in a short space of time we have engaged **18** children fully through a programme of interventions including positive activities, none of these children have had any further involvement with the YJS currently.

******This is a voluntary programme and children will and do decline to consent or disengage during interventions, we make every effort to keep all children engaged in the process which to date has proven effective.

Diversion

Hartlepool YJS as with the majority of YJSs has a strong diversionary offer to steer children out of the criminal justice system and avoid criminal records.

Our direct diversionary offer delivered directly by YJS staff consists of:

- Restorative Intervention (RI)
- Triage1 & 2
- (Turnaround)

Referrals are received via the Police (G26) and screened within our weekly OOC decision making panel, discussed in depth and decisions agreed as to the most suitable programme for the child. Mitigation, Gravity Scores and historical factors are taken into account prior to any decisions being made. Attendance at the panels will be a YJS manager, YJS Police Officer, RJ Officer, YJS nurse, SW/EHW (if open to other services) and education etc if required. At times referrals can also be sent from the court for consideration of an OOC and undergo the same process.

The child is allocated a worker who will gain consent and carry out a screening tool/assessment prior to jointly creating an intervention plan alongside the child, parent/carer. If the child fully engages with either RI, Triage or Triage 2 the initial offence is closed under Outcome 22. If however the child disengages or further offends it may be returned to the Police where a Youth Caution etc can be imposed.

The YJS has senior representation on the Durham/Cleveland OOC Scrutiny Panel where cases are looked at scrutinised/analysed i.e. was diversion the right offer, and all actions and future recommendations highlighted.

In 2022/23 Hartlepool YJS worked with **50** children via Triage **(39)**, Triage 2 **(3)** and RI **(8)**

******From April 2021 to March 2022 Hartlepool YJS worked with **34** children across the diversionary offer as at 31 03 23 **5** of those children had reoffended – this equates to a binary reoffending rate of **16%**, however more importantly **84%** hadn't reoffended.

Turnaround

School aged young people- School type

All YJSs nationally also have the Turnaround programme up and running. This programme has been very recently implemented and YJSs report directly to the MOJ with all returns, data and reports. This programme offers (voluntary) support via evidenced based interventions to all children who are currently Released Under Investigation (RUI), have been No Further Actioned (NFA) by the Police for an offence, at court may have received a Fine, been acquitted, had the case withdrawn or received a Conditional Discharge. Children having committed ASB and sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract can also receive the support.

Children become ineligible for the programme if they are open to Social Care as Child Protection or a child in our care or are open to Early Help services – however children open as Child in Need can participate. A child can only participate with the programme once and can't be open to the YJS on a statutory order.

It's far too early in the life of the programme to create any meaningful data or be able to prove effectiveness, however in time the data will be valuable. The programme is funded until March 31st 2025.

Education

All YJS staff have direct access to a named Education worker within the Virtual School and a named worker within the One Stop Shop for all Post 16 children. The YJS will be commissioning time from an Educational Psychologist from Sept 23 who will significantly add to our education support offer.

There are monthly education meetings held within the YJS with all partners in attendance where every child is discussed, actions raised and the education database updated. The YJS also have senior representation on the monthly Inclusion partnership meetings. The Virtual School Head Teacher and One Stop Shop manager attend and produce reports for all management board meetings

**The following data is taken from the Education report produced for the Management board meetings

No of moves	No of Young people
0	6
1	8
2	4
3	1
4	3
5	0
6	0
7	1

Attendance Band	No of Young People
-----------------	--------------------

Number of days suspension	
Child 1	5
Child 2	18
Child 3	5
Child 4	2
Child 5	20.5
Child 6	26
Child 7	10
Child 8	33.5
Child 9	16
Child 10	2
Child 11	1.5
Child 12	2.5
Child 13	15.5

%	
100-95	1
94-90	5
89-85	3
84-80	1
79-75	1
74-70	1
69-65	0
64-60	1
59-55	0
54-50	1
49-45	0
44-40	2
Under 40%	6

The data proved is invaluable and provides excellent discussion, challenges and clear actions moving forward.

Restorative approaches and victims

Whilst crime rates in Hartlepool have fallen, the likelihood of being a victim of crime still remains a reality, especially in our most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The YJS and broader Youth Justice Partnership are working hard to reduce the numbers of victims of crime, by incorporating the use of restorative justice practices. Restorative Justice (RJ) provides opportunities for those directly affected by an offence (victim, offender and members of the community) to communicate and ensure victims of youth crime have a voice.

In addition victims of youth crime are helped to access appropriate support pathways that enable them to move on from the impact of crime.

A personalised approach is taken to ensure that victims of crime in Hartlepool are placed at the centre. This includes ensuring that individual needs and wishes are fully taken into account. As a result we aim to visit all victims of crime so they are able to access pathways to support, including the option to participate in restorative justice. Across 2022/23 there were **52** contacts with direct victims of crime and where consented, a Victim Impact Statement carried out.

RJ is an important underlying principle of all disposals for children on YJS caseload, from Diversion to Detention & Training Orders.

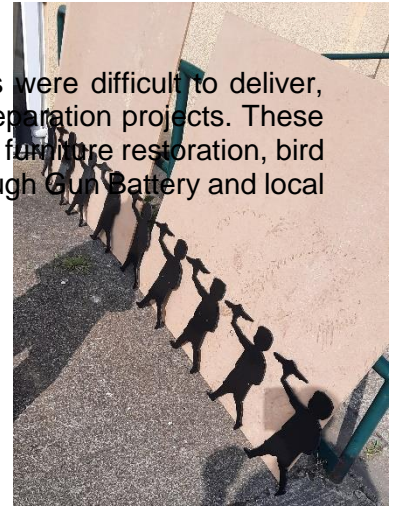
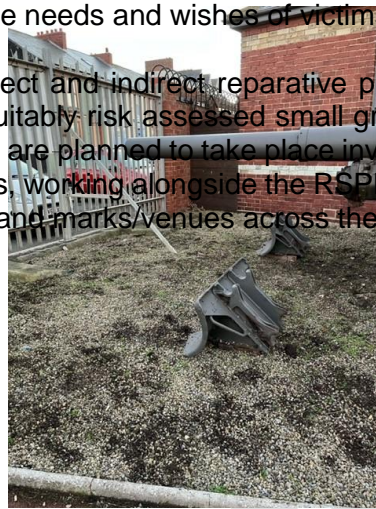
Whilst restorative processes technically result in practical reparation, for example participating in a task that benefits the community, the communication between victim and the child who has committed a crime, as part of this process, can also produce powerful emotional responses leading to mutual satisfaction and socially inclusive outcomes.

All YJS staff have undertaken service-wide RJ training, many to level 3 and the RJ/Victim lead to Level 4. The previous decision to bring RJ and victim work in house has enabled Hartlepool YJS to have direct control and influence in shaping the direction and quality of this work, including the establishment of updated working policies, practices and procedures. In turn, this has already begun to result in better outcomes for both victims and children and is much more responsive to local need.

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There is considerable evidence that RJ practice is much more integrated across all areas of the service. In particular, there is a closer link between those workers with additional RJ responsibility and case managers in relation to the needs and wishes of victims.

During the last couple of years direct and indirect reparative projects were difficult to deliver, however we are now introducing suitably risk assessed small group reparation projects. These are individual bespoke projects and are planned to take place involving furniture restoration, bird boxes for distribution to local groups, working alongside the RSPB, Heugh Gun Battery and local community projects at well known land marks/venues across the town.



Reparation completed at the Heugh Gun Battery



Community reparation completed in a community allotment

Serious violence and exploitation

All 3 Cleveland YJS` have strategic representation within the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). There are a number of meetings, boards and training events organised via CURV that the YJS attends. Improved data sharing and intelligence is evident and will continue to improve as the CURV takes shape and partner input begins to grow. There are also much clear links across the local authority and wider partners regarding Serious Violence. The YJS manager within his role as North East regional rep on the Association of YJS Managers (AYM) executive board led and produced the AYM national response for the consultation regarding the Serious Violence Duty.

The YJS Manager also has serious incidents within his report to the board and these are discussed and analysed for any lessons learned etc. During 2022/23 Hartlepool YJS reported **2** Serious Incidents to the YJB, all children involved were not known to the YJS previously.

There is ever improving partnership work across Hartlepool to address child criminal exploitation and interaction with the NRM. Hartlepool Multi Agency Child Exploitation team (MACE) lead on all matters regarding exploitation. There are regular case discussions and People/Areas of interest meetings which the YJS has senior representation at. The YJS has very good communication and information/intelligence sharing with the MACE team and co work many complex cases. A lot of work is ongoing with the SCA re NRM and regular liaison with the Police, CPS and Courts ensures everyone is as updated as can be. All YJS staff have attending various training events organised by the MACE re exploitation.

All YJS staff have carried out up to date Prevent training in line with local authority requirements.

The majority of children RUI who meet the criteria will be offered Turnaround, more up to date and current data will be made available as the programme progresses. As part of the YJS managers' report to management board meetings all RUI and bail figures are shared and discussed to measure the time from arrest to outcome. Suitable challenge is made where required.

Detention in police custody

A significant amount of work has been undertaken across Cleveland re children detained in Police custody. There is a monthly "Children in Custody" meeting where we discuss all children who have been held in custody 12 hours or more in the previous month. The meeting is attended by senior representation from the 3 Cleveland YJS`, Police Custody Management, EDT, Social Care, Custody health team and L&D. Every child is discussed to ascertain the reasons behind their length of stay in custody and suitable actions highlighted where required. The meeting is well attended and a lot of valuable information is shared.

This meeting has prompted further discussions and meetings such as, SCH Newton Aycliffe re the availability of PACE beds, discussions are underway.

The CURV has also recently funded 4 x Custody Navigators to engage, liaise and where needed support all children entering the custody suite. Management oversight is via South Tees YJS, however the Custody Navigators will engage all children and liaise directly with the home YJS, working across all 3 YJSs. This should hopefully speed up the process for children in the custody suite as the Navigators will also take on the role of Appropriate Adult as and when required.

Excitingly an area of the custody suite is being set aside for children only and a plan of works is in place to transform this into a Trauma informed space. There will be a separate entrance and exit, there will only be children allowed in this area and areas are being prepared with suitable reading materials, fidget objects, painted walls etc. We are very much looking forward to this being completed. The Custody Navigators are due to go live in early July.

The following data is correct as at June 23 regarding outstanding Police investigations/enquiries

- **39** Offences currently being investigated
- Of those **18** offences are currently Released Under Investigation (RUI)
- The remaining **21** are Conditional/Unconditional Bail
- **7** of the 39 are with CPS for charging decisions
- **16** are currently Out of Court disposals or awaiting referrals via the Police
- **14** ongoing investigations continue (most recent offences)
- **2** will be ready to charge within 6 weeks

The YJS monitors time from offence to outcome and updates all data via the quarterly YJS management board meetings and challenges the Police/CPS as required.

Remands

There has been an increase in remands to Youth Detention Accommodation (YDA) and a small increase in the use of Remands to Local Authority Accommodation (RLAA). There are ongoing strategic discussions looking at suitable alternatives and plans for future RLAA.

In 2022/23 we had 2 very short remands to YDA, however 2 lengthy RLAA.

As a service we are constantly offering creative alternatives to the use of remands and custody. The changes to ISS and the impending YRO (ISS) pilot with trail monitoring will enhance this offer and allow us the opportunity to offer a more creative and potentially robust alternative to custody with an improved process of oversight and management.

Use of custody

Nationally the use of custody has decreased significantly over the past ten years and this is rightly a success in the youth justice system. When children do go to custody it can have a damaging effect on their lives, disrupting education and straining family relationships. Children in custody are likely to be amongst the most complex and vulnerable children in society.

Hartlepool YJS generally has relatively low numbers of children with custodial sentences, and every effort is made by the service to offer creative alternatives to a custodial sentence.

The service has very good links to the local secure estate and ensures timely communication and planning is undertaken at all times.

All relevant services are involved from outset and the 7 point plan is instigated from the beginning of every custodial sentence and followed throughout their sentence ensuring **Constructive Resettlement**.

Hartlepool have implemented a Constructive Resettlement Guidance document which all staff follow to ensure every child is supported from sentence to resettlement.

There is regular management oversight of this via meetings, supervisions and QA. The guidance also highlights processes to be undertaken prior to sentence including Pre Sentence Reports (PSR) and the need for child/family involvement throughout. Actions to be undertaken at court after sentence and also in the first 10 days of sentence and then throughout their sentence planning for constructive resettlement.

7 Point Plan:

1. Case Management and Transition: Ensure that young people serving custodial sentences receive effective, end to end service provision based on a thorough assessment of need and risk, in order to reintegrate them into the community

2. Accommodation: To ensure that all young people leaving custody can access suitable accommodation and support where appropriate.

3. Education Training and Employment: Provide all young people with suitable and sustainable Education, Training and Employment through their sentence and beyond.

4. Health: Ensure that all young people in custody have access to suitable and sustainable general and specialist healthcare services, based on individual need, so that problems are assessed and treated at the earliest opportunity and in the most appropriate manner.

5. Substance Misuse: Ensure that all young people entering custody are screened for substance misuse, with recognition of previous interventions. Those with identified needs should receive specialist assessment access to appropriate interventions and treatment services, with their aftercare needs met on return to community.

6. Families: Ensure that families of young people in custody receive timely, high quality support and information, from the point of arrest and throughout the young person's sentence.

7. Finance, Benefits and Debt: Ensure young people leaving custody and their families are provided with information and advice so that they are able to access appropriate financial support.

A multi-agency approach is embedded to ensure each area of the above plan is monitored and every child receives the best and most timely support available from all services involved. The service has direct links to all partners in relation to accommodation, health, education, finance/budget, substance misuse and children's services such as Social Care and Early Help who are brought together at the point of sentence.

10. Standards for children in the justice system

Last Judgements completed in 2019/20 from both Strategic and operational Self-Assessments:

Standard	Strategic Self-assessed results	Operational self-assessed results
N1 O OCD	GOOD	OUTSTANDING
N2 At Court	GOOD	GOOD
N3 In the Community	GOOD	GOOD

N In Secure Settings	GOOD	GOOD
N5 On Transition	OUTSTANDING	GOOD

All areas identified for improvement have been included in the updated YJS improvement plans, Strategic Plans and wider YJS/Partner training. There will be a requirement to carry out another self-assessment of the National Standards again this year, however recent documentation has indicated that YJSs will be asked to concentrate on the “At Court” standard. YJSs will be updated by the YJB later in the year.

11. Workforce Development

An annual YJS training needs analysis is completed with the staff and forwarded to the local authority Workforce Development team. The YJS is constantly looking at creative and bespoke training for the staff and in line with identified needs of the children we work with.

Clinical supervision/emotional well-being is available via the Clinical Psychologist for all staff and reflective sessions are built into the YJS internal training programme.

Staff also attend all relevant local authority training as and when required.

	Workforce Development	Action Taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	AIM 3 - All case managing staff to have attended AIM 3 Assessor and Intervention training	1. All staff to be booked on and complete AIM 3 Assessment/Intervention training 2. Managers to have completed AIM 3 supervisor training	YJS Manager	1. 2 members of staff left to complete AIM 3 Intervention training – Will attend during 2023 2. Operational managers have completed supervisors training
2	YJS refresher trg - All staff to attend YJS internal training sessions identified in training programme. New KPIs included for May 23	1. Internal training programme updated and circulated to all staff 2. Attendance monitored to ensure all staff are captured within the training	YJS Manager/Health team/Business Support	1. Internal training programme ongoing 2. Programme reviewed 6 monthly
3	Child View Clinic - All staff to have access to a fortnightly Child View clinic to upskill, refresh and ask questions, sort issues	1. Fortnightly Child View Clinic implemented and available for all staff to attend.	Business Support Manager	1. Fortnightly Child View clinic implemented and ongoing

4	YJS training needs analysis completed	1. YJS training needs analysis completed and shared with Workforce Development Team	Leadership Team	1. YJS Training needs analysis has been completed for 22/23 and shared with WD
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Hartlepool YJS

Annual Internal Briefing/Training/Refresher Programme 2023/24

Month	Date	Briefing/Training	Delivery	Comments
Jun 23				
	15 June 1000-1130	Working with Anxiety	SC	
	29 June 1000 - 1200	SLCN refresher	K H	
July 23				
	06 July 1000-1130	Safety Planning	LH	
	13 July 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	
	27 July 1000-1130	Comic strip conversations	KH	
Aug 23				
	No training			
Sept 23				
	07 Sept 1000-1100	Reflective practice	SC	
	14 Sept 1000-1130	Time concepts	KH	
Oct 23				
	05 Oct 1000-1130	Child development	Health Team	
	19 Oct 1000-1130	ADHD	SC	
Nov 23				
	16 Nov 1000-1130	Communication/Trauma	SC, KH	
	30 Nov 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	
Dec 23				
	07 Dec 1000-1130	Teenagers & Hormones	YJS Nurse	
Jan 24				
	11 Jan 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	
Feb 24				
	15 Feb 1000-1100	Sexual Health Refresher	YJS Nurse	
Mar 24				
	21 March 1000-1100	Reflective Practice	SC	

12. Evidence-based practice and innovation

The purpose of evidence-based practice and innovation is to promote effective practices which achieve positive outcomes for children.

This includes systems, ways of working or specific interventions which are based on the best available research, are child focused and developmentally informed.

Alongside this the YJS are constantly looking at creative ways to improve delivery and evidence effectiveness, all commissioned services deliver evidence based practice i.e. SLCN, TICP.

The following 3 recent examples of emerging practice, innovation and evidence based practice below had a very positive impact on the children, Staff and board members.

Emerging Practice – In 2022/23 the YJS began to theme the Management Board meetings and introduce spotlight sessions into these. These are short presentations given by members of the staff team/children on areas of practice within the service. To date we have delivered 4 of these sessions, Diversion & OOC, Reparation, Restorative Justice & Victims and our service Health Offer.

Where feasible we are always looking at children to help deliver these sessions and give their experiences on areas of the service delivery being discussed. We were very fortunate to have a child agree to talk to the board about their experience of Reparation, with support from the case manager the session went extremely well and the child equipped themselves excellently in what many could potentially find very daunting. Everyone at the meeting agreed that the process worked extremely well, board members learnt a lot from the child and were able to understand the process better being able to ask questions directly and listen to a child actually undertaking Reparation.

Innovation - During some recent work with a victim a request was made by the victim, they wanted direct answers to some questions from the child but didn't want to see or meet them, the victim wasn't really keen on correspondence either.

The YJS Victim worker discussed this further with their line manager and a decision was made to potentially attempt to gather the child's answers/response via audio which could be played back to victim. Discussion and clarity was sought via legal and the LA Data Protection lead regarding this, the YJS under guidance created a new consent form and prepared the child for the session.

It was agreed that the process could go ahead and once the victim had heard the child's response the recorded audio would be secured in a safe and then at a given date destroyed. This is the first time as a service we have tried something along these lines, it worked extremely well for both the child and victim and it definitely won't be the last time we use it!

Evidence Based Practice/Intervention

Sports based provision – There is a growing body of evidence ([Homepage - StreetGames](#)) to suggest engaging children and young people in sport can deter from any further involvement in crime and offending.

Child A was referred to the YJS after committing an assault and a further offence of possession of a knife. The Child was recently diagnosed with epilepsy. Following the completion of the AssetPlus assessment it was identified that Child A was spending an increased amount of time in the community and was eager to please his peers, regardless of their behaviour and the associated consequences. Child A's Case Manager referred them to a Parkour programme being delivered by the Local Authority Sports and Recreation Department. Child A engaged and quickly began to develop their personal and social skills, realising that epilepsy would not hold them back. Due to the positive attitude and engagement during sessions, Child A was offered a Junior Volunteer role, which would see them supporting and encouraging younger children. Child A also now gets free access to sessions which removed any potential financial barriers. Child A completed their GCSE's and is considering their Post-16 options, which included sports and leisure.

13. Evaluation

All areas of intervention and delivery are evaluated on a regular basis, commissioned services submit quarterly reports which are internally evaluated within the local authority Commissioning team. Speech, Language & Communication Needs (SLCN), Trauma Informed Care Pathway (TICP) and recently acquired input from ABC Therapies all deliver evidenced based interventions which are both internally and externally evaluated.

14. Service development

This Improvement Plan is presented quarterly within Management Board reports produced by the YJS Manager and discussed/monitored to ensure that relevant senior strategic oversight is in place and direction of travel remains positive.

	Service Improvement	Action taken/Planned	Owner	Target Date/Completed
1	Ensure that the identified priorities for the service correspond to the needs of the children supervised by Hartlepool YJS to ensure these needs are met.	Strategic Priorities have been amended following the findings of recent HMIP thematic inspections and the YJB Strategic plan. These will continue to be amended and discussed at all future Management Board meetings to correspond with the needs of children supervised by the YJS and in line with the up to date Needs Analysis/Data presented at all board meetings. Individual meetings to continue with the Virtual School, OSS, MACE, CURV and Substance Misuse Services to strengthen this process – all are members of the YJS Management Board and will submit updates at board meetings.	YJS Management Team Management Board Chair/Members	Ongoing and monitored/reviewed at all Management Board meetings
2	Maintain the Child First ethos across the YJS and partners	1. Produce and implement a Child First operational guidance for all staff and board members 2. Carry out bite size sessions with all staff and board members on the guidance 3. Review and update the guidance at planned regular intervals	YJS Management team Management board members All staff	1. Operational guidance produced, implemented and shared 2. Bite size sessions have been carried out with board members and all staff 3. The guidance will be reviewed in Sept 23 4. Monitoring of the process is ongoing via QA,

11 (a)(1)
APPENDIX 1

		4. Audits, QA and Supervisions to monitor the progression of the Child First ethos identifying good practice and areas for improvement.		Supervision, case audits and feedback
3	Build upon and use the existing process to capture the voice of all children and their families to develop services.	1. SAQ are completed in depth for all children receiving an order 2. Intervention feedback forms are completed and handed to business support 3. Survey Monkey feedback is captured by children, parents/carers and victims of crime and shared with business support 4. Children, parents/carers are actively involved in planning and reviews, interventions and closures 5. All feedback is analysed at Leadership meetings and presented at board meetings for further discuss/service improvement.	YJS Management Team YJS Management Board Chair/Members	Process in place and all feedback and evaluation is presented at Management Board meetings for discussion
4	Maintain and where possible build upon the current service Health offer	1. Continue to establish funds annually to commission the SALT 2. Regular communication with the CCG to establish longevity and reassurance for the delivery of the TICP 3. Ensure the service retains a suitably qualified Nurse Specialist	YJS Management Board	Plans are in place via the YJS management board annually to review all commissioned services and secure future budgets as early as possible

15. Challenges, risks and issues

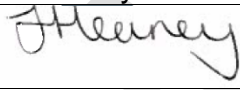
The key challenges, risks and issues that have the capacity to have an adverse impact on the Youth Justice Service in the coming twelve months and potentially beyond are detailed below:

Risks	Potential Impact	Control Measures
Secure Remand Costs and an increase in children remanded to Local Authority	The continued unpredictability associated with remand episodes and remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the YJS and broader Local Authority.	It remains essential that the service can demonstrate to the courts that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody.

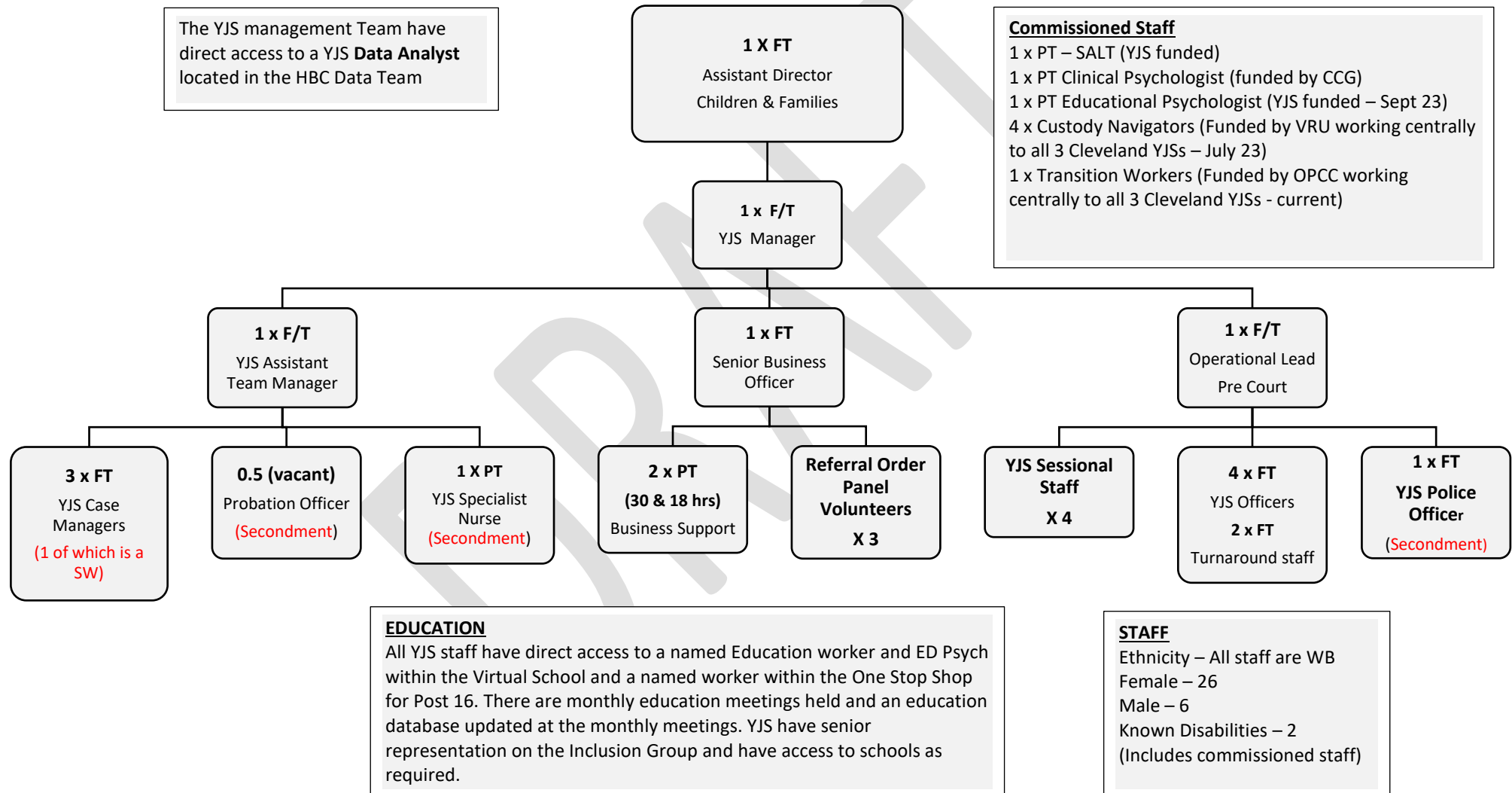
	The significant lack of suitable accommodation locally for RLAA leading to children being placed out of area with significant costs.	Coordinated Multi-Agency responses to children at risk of remand where safe and secure accommodation is the precipitating factor and is continuously monitored and further developed. Remand budget is incorporated within Wider Children's Services placement costs. North East YJSs piloting the new YRO (ISS) from 3 July 23.
Managing the potential for reduction in YJB grant and partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions pre and post 2023/24	Consequential negative impact on performance. Reduced capacity to meet strategic and operational obligations and statutory requirements. Reduced capacity to continue to focus on early intervention and identification	Targeted resources to address need. Continue to administer and embed the current structure and practice. Regional collaboration with neighbouring YJS' such as coverage of Teesside Youth Court. Robust financial management and oversight from strategic board.
Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines	The rise in FTE, reoffending rates, serious youth violence and exploitation of vulnerable children. Ultimately leading to criminalisation and wider service involvement having an adverse impact on Looked After Children (CIOC) figures	Continued regular communication, intelligence and information sharing via MACE/CURV and across all services. Ensuring a multi-agency approach is adopted with senior strategic oversight. Ongoing joint training and regular updates on the national and local picture enabling timely and relevant interventions. Ensure clear processes and pathways (known to all staff) are implemented to work with identified children. Continue working alongside the OPCC, Cleveland Police and partners to support the VRU (CURV).
Ongoing recruitment issues within the Probation Services having a direct impact on YJS Seconded PO	The lack of Probation expertise, advice and guidance within the YJS process, especially regarding transitions and those potentially high risk transitions not getting the support they require.	It's difficult to identify any direct proposals/actions which can mitigate this ongoing issue. Financial reimbursement isn't the immediate answer as there aren't any available agency/temp PO available for YJSs to potentially employ?
Challenges & Issues	Potential Impact	Proposed Controls/actions

The implementation of the new YJB KPI	Unable to provide relevant and up to date information required due to inability within the Management Information System and the potential of added workload on business support/data analyst.	We are not due the latest upgrade until 15 August 23, which leaves a very tight turn around for our first submission on the 31 August 23. We also won't be certain that the MIS (Child View) is able to provide the information required.
The continued delay in receipt of the YJB grant (as at 26 June 23 we are still unsure as to the actual amount)	Slows down the process of budget planning/commissioning for the forthcoming year, services not in a position to implement a robust budget but having to plan on the previous year's amount. Restricts service creativity.	Communication is received early from the YJB highlighting the delays and at times we are informed that there won't be a reduction. This process needs to be smoother and more streamlined to allow YJSs to plan more robustly.

16. Sign off, submission and approval

Chair of YJS Board	Jo Heaney
Signature	
Date	28/6/2023

Appendix 1 – YJS Service Structure



Appendix 2 – Budget costs & Contributions 2023/24

B5: YOT budget Costs and Contributions

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in kind	Other delegated funds	Total
Youth Justice Board	302,160		152,991	455,151
Local Authority	252,928	131,207	36,209	420,344
Police		50,000		50,000
Police and Crime Commissioner			32,000	32,000
Probation		29,609		29,609
Health		5,500		5,500
* Welsh Government				0
Other			4,000	4,000
Total	555,088	216,316	225,200	996,604

* Welsh YOTs only

Common youth justice terms

ACE	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
AIM 2 and 3	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
AssetPlus	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
CCE	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
Children	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
Child First	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
Child looked-after	Child Looked After, where a child is looked after by the local authority
CME	Child Missing Education
Constructive resettlement	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
Contextual safeguarding	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety

Community resolution	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
EHCP	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
ETE	Education, training or employment
EHE	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
EOTAS	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
FTE	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
HMIP	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
JAC	Junior Attendance Centre
MAPPA	Multi-agency public protection arrangements
MFH	Missing from Home
NRM	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
OOCD	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
Outcome 22/21	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
Over-represented children	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average

RHI	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
SLCN	Speech, Language and communication needs
STC	Secure training centre
SCH	Secure children's home
Young adult	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
YJS	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
YOI	Young offender institution



Report of: Finance and Policy Committee

Subject: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2024/25

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Members to consider the proposed 2023/24 Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme which will be recommended to the Finance and Policy Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In accordance with the Constitution, the Finance and Policy Committee is required to consider and recommend the LCTS scheme for the forthcoming financial year (2024/25) for consideration by Council.
- 3.2 Finance and Policy Committee received a report to its September meeting setting out proposals for a simplified LCTS scheme. The report set out the issues with the current scheme, namely;
- The need to assist low-income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax;
 - Council Tax Support and the roll out of Universal Credit; and
 - The need for a simplified approach to the Council Tax Support Scheme.

- 3.3 Finance and Policy Committee agreed to consult on the proposals for a new simplified scheme for 2024/25.
- 3.4 A report will be considered by Finance and Policy on 27th November 2023, detailing the outcome of the consultation and the proposed scheme. This report is attached at **Annex 1**.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 In view of the problems being experienced with the current scheme, it is proposed that an alternative “simplified” scheme be introduced from 2024/25. The approach has been to fundamentally re-design the scheme to address the issues of the current scheme and in particular:
- The level of support available to the poorest households;
 - The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and
 - The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;
- 4.2 Following design and modelling work, Finance and Policy Committee agreed to go out to consult on the new scheme.
- 4.3 The Council received 235 responses, although not all questions were answered by each respondent. The consultation and responses are detailed in **Appendix A to C of Annex 1**. Of those responding 62% were in favour of the income banded simplified scheme, 20% against and 18% uncertain. On specific questions, where there was a less than 60% favourable response the position was considered and two cost neutral amendments proposed:
- Raising the capital limit to £10,000 (consultation proposed £6,000)
 - Retaining a non-dependent deduction at £5 per week (consultation proposed removing this deduction)
- 4.4 The report recommended adopting these changes and progressing with a simplified income banded LCTS scheme for 2024/25.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Risk Implications	No relevant issues.
Financial Considerations	The financial implications are fully set out in Annex 1. The cost to the council based on the modelling undertaken will be £218,000 per year and this has been factored into the Collection Fund position.

Legal Considerations	<p>Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Finance Act 1992, states that before making a scheme, the authority must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult any major precepting authority which has the power to issue a precept to it; • publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit; and • consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme. <p>In addition to the statutory consultation, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is obliged to make resolution by 11th March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.</p>
Child and Family Poverty	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix D to Annex 1
Equality and Diversity Considerations	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix E to Annex 1
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.
Consultation	Following an 8 week period of public consultation closed on the 10 th of November in addition to consulting with the two major precepting authorities.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Finance and Policy Committee will be recommended to consider the following recommendations for referral to Council. Owing to the timing of meetings a verbal update on the proposals from Finance and Policy Committee (27 November 2023) will be provided to Council.

- i) Agree the LCTS scheme as set out in the Finance and Policy Report.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To amend the LCTS to a new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants from 1st April 2024 to reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit, to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income families and to improve the level of Council Tax collection.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Council Tax Support 2024/25 – Report to Finance and Policy Committee 27 November 2023.

Local Council Tax Support 2024/25 – Report to Finance and Policy Committee 18 September 2023.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

James Magog
Director of Finance, IT and Digital
Email: james.magog@hartlepool.gov.uk
Telephone: 01429 523093

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 16 November 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 16 November 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 17 November 2023

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

27TH NOVEMBER 2023



Subject: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2024/25

Report of: Director of Finance, IT and Digital

Decision Type: Budget and Policy Framework

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- i) Provide Members with the results of the consultation exercise undertaken following agreement at September 2023 Finance and Policy Committee to consult on a simplified Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme; and
- ii) Agree a revised LCTS scheme for 2024/25 to be referred to full Council for approval

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Finance and Policy Committee received a report to its September meeting setting out proposals for a simplified LCTS scheme. The report set out the issues with the current scheme, namely;

- The need to assist low-income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax;
- Council Tax Support and the roll out of Universal Credit; and
- The need for a simplified approach to the Council Tax Support Scheme.

3.2 Finance and Policy agreed to consult on the proposals for a new simplified scheme for 2024/25.

5. PROPOSAL FOR THE 2024/25 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

5.1 In view of the problems being experienced with the current scheme, it was (and is) proposed that an alternative approach be taken from 2024/25. The approach has been to fundamentally redesign the scheme to address all of the issues with the current scheme and in particular:

- The level of support available to the poorest households;
- The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and
- The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;

5.2 Design and modelling work has been ongoing since early this year on a new scheme. This work has considered schemes operated elsewhere in the region, and has been supported by external expertise. If agreed by members, consultation needs to be undertaken with the public and the major precepting authorities. If accepted by the Council later in the year, the new scheme will take effect from 1st April 2024.

5.3 The proposed new scheme ensures that more support will be given to those working age households on the lowest of incomes than in the current scheme, based on the following simple income grid. Note the income grid would be updated for inflation each year from April 2025;

	Passported	Single	Single with 1 child	Single with 2 or more children	Couples	Couple with 1 child	Couple with 2 or more children
Discount Level	Weekly Income Levels £						
Band 1 (90%)	Relevant Benefit	£0.00 to £110.10	£0.00 to £176.16	£0.00 to £242.22	£0.00 to £154.14	£0.00 to £225.71	£0.00 to £286.26
Band 2 (70%)	N/A	£110.11 to £198.18	£176.17 to £264.24	£242.23 to £324.80	£154.15 to £264.24	£225.72 to £309.38	£286.27 to £374.34
Band 3 (40%)	N/A	£198.19 to £236.72	£264.25 to £280.76	£324.81 to £385.35	£264.25 to £319.29	£309.39 to £352.32	£374.35 to £440.40
Band 4 (20%)	N/A	£236.73 to £280.76	£280.77 to £308.27	£385.36 to £495.44	£319.30 to £374.33	£352.33 to £407.36	£440.41 to £528.47

- It is proposed that the highest level of discount will be at a maximum level of liability (90%), Band 1. All current applicants that are in receipt of a 'passported benefit' such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) receive maximum discount;

- All other discount levels are based on the applicant's and partner's, (where they have one) net income;
- The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and / or dependants;

5.4 For all of the above options, the following key features will apply:

- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings. This will take the place of the current standard disregards and additional earnings disregards;
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance will continue to be disregarded;
- Where any applicant, their partner or any dependent child/children are disabled, a further disregard of £40 per week will be given, thereby maintaining the current level of support to those with disabilities;
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded;
- Child Benefit and Child Maintenance will be disregarded;
- The following elements of Universal Credit will also be disregarded:
 - An amount in respect of the Housing Element;
 - Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Activity Element;
 - Carer's Element; and
 - Disabled Child Element
- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions will continue (maintaining the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant);
- Extended payments will be removed;
- The capital limit will be reduced to £6,000 from £16,000 with no tariff (or assumed income) being applied; and
- With regard to non-dependents it was agreed that no non-dependent deduction is made.

5.5 In addition, and not explicitly set out in the September report, in order to align Council Tax Reduction with Universal Credit, the Council proposes to use a minimum level of income for those applicants who are self-employed. This would be in line with the National Living Wage for 35 hours worked per week. The income would not apply for a designated start-up period of one year from the start of the business and the Council would have the discretion to vary or waive the use of this facility in exceptional circumstances or where the Council considers that the applicant is unable to work that number of hours. Where the declared income is at or above the Minimum Income Floor, the declared income will be used in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction. This proposal was included in all of the costing assumptions of the model provided to September Finance and Policy and included as a specific question within the consultation.

How the proposed scheme would address the current problems

5.6 With the simplicity of the proposed new scheme and by taking a more 'Council Tax discount approach', it will address the problems associated with the increased administration caused by failings in the current scheme and Universal Credit as follows:

- **The scheme will require a simplified claiming process.** All applicants will see a significant reduction in the complexity of the claiming process and, where possible, Council Tax Support will be awarded automatically. For Universal Credit applicants *any* Universal Credit data received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be treated as a claim for Council Tax Support. Where information is received from DWP, the entitlement to Council Tax Support will be processed automatically without the need to request further information from the taxpayer. These changes will have the following distinct advantages namely:
 - **Speed of processing** – all claims will be able to be calculated promptly and largely automatically without the need to request further information which inevitably leads to delays (other than capital limits or if non-dependants reside at the property);
 - **Maximising entitlement to every applicant.** As there will no requirement for Universal Credit applicants to apply separately for Council Tax Support, and for all other applicants, the claiming process will be simplified significantly. Entitlement to Council Tax Support will be maximised with a reduced risk of loss of discount or the need for backdating. Note, it is proposed to increase backdating provision from 1 month to 1 year under the new scheme after the transition period;
 - **Maintenance of collection rates** – the new scheme will avoid constant changes in discount, the need for multiple changes in instalments and therefore assist in improving and increasing collection rates. The increased level of discount will also assist all those applicants on the lowest levels of income, again improving the overall collection rate;
- **The income bands are sufficiently wide to avoid constant changes in discount.** The current Council Tax Support scheme is very reactive and will alter even if the overall change to the person's liability is small. This is leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax demands. The effect of this is that Council Tax collection is reduced. The new scheme, with its simplified income banding approach will have the following advantages:
 - Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded;
 - Council Taxpayers who receive Council Tax Support will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments; and
 - The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach, where any discount changes it will be effective from the day of the change rather than the Monday of the following week.

The effect of the proposed scheme on individual households

- 5.7 The proposed changes will have a significant effect on households within the Council's area, especially those on the lowest of incomes. Current modelling allows us to project the likely outcomes for current households given their individual circumstances, as set out below. It should be noted that this is based on circumstances at the point in time the data extract was ran earlier in the summer. If recipients moved between income bands this could have either a further, and potentially significant favourable or detrimental impact. However, recipients will be better able to understand the impact of income fluctuations given a simpler scheme.

	Claimants
Increased Support	7,470 (87.5%)
Reduced Support	1,071 (12.5%)
	8,541

- 5.8 Inevitably, with any change in scheme, some households may lose out, although the proposed scheme has been designed to protect the most vulnerable and the vast majority of applicants. The numbers seeing a reduction in support based on circumstances at the time of data extract are shown below.

Reduced Support	Claimants
Less than £5 per week	281
£5.01 to £10 per week	556
£10.01 or more	234
	1,071

- 5.9 An examination of these cases show that the majority of these cases either will have capital in excess of the proposed new level, £6,000, or have large families where they will be affected by the limitation of dependants in the income-grid. It is therefore likely that the numbers receiving reduced support will reduce over time as capital levels fall. For information, the two dependant restriction is in line with other welfare benefits such as Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and Council Tax Support for Pension Age applicants.
- 5.10 In order to assist any household who may lose entitlement, the council will rely on its exceptional hardship scheme to protect individuals who experience exceptional hardship. Where any applicant is likely to experience exceptional hardship, they will be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment. The Council will consider all applications for exceptional hardship on an individual case-by-case basis, in line with the policy, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate further support will be given to the applicant.

- 5.11 This approach will enable individual applicants to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. The Exceptional Hardship Scheme will fall to be paid through the Collection Fund, so ensuring major preceptors fund their element of cost.

6. CONSULTATION OUTCOME

- 6.1 The Council opened its public consultation following Finance and Policy Committee in September with closure on 14 November 2023. As well as promoting through social media, efforts were also made to promote through local VCS partners, with hard copies of the questionnaire provided. Both the revenues and benefits team sought to promote during routine telephone contacts where applicable and the opportunity arose.

- 6.2 In total 235 responses were received, albeit not all questions were answered. Whilst this may appear low, the most recent local authority in the Tees Valley region to undertake such a consultation only received 45 completed questionnaires. The actual wording of the questionnaire can be found at Appendix A, with responses at Appendix B. Members of the public were invited to also provide additional open responses to each question and these ranged from feeling that the scheme / proposals were overly generous to a view that more support should be provided.

- 6.3 A summary of responses is provided below:

	Answered	Yes	No	Don't Know
Introducing an income-based banded discount scheme as described.	134	83 61.94%	27 20.15%	24 17.91%
Removal of Non-Dependent Deductions.	125	69 55.20%	32 25.60%	24 19.20%
Disregarding certain elements of Universal Credit.	120	84 70.00%	25 20.83%	11 9.17%
Replacing the current earnings disregards with a standard £25 per week disregard (irrespective of the number of hours worked).	118	80 67.80%	19 16.10%	19 16.10%
Continuing to protect families by disregarding Child Benefit and Child Maintenance	115	79 68.70%	24 20.87%	12 10.43%
Continuing to disregard disability benefits (Personal Independence Payments, Armed Forces Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance) and providing additional disregards of £40 where the applicant, partner or dependent is disabled.	115	94 81.74%	17 14.78%	4 3.48%
Introducing a new disregard for the support component of Employment and Support Allowance and Carer's Allowance.	111	77 69.37%	21 18.92%	13 11.71%
Protecting War Pensioners by continuing to disregard War Pensions or War Disablement Pensions in full.	110	96 87.27%	8 7.27%	6 5.45%
Introducing a minimum income level (Minimum Income Floor) for those applicants who are self-employed for at least one year.	109	65 59.63%	19 17.43%	25 22.94%

Reducing the capital limit to £6,000.	108	56 51.85%	35 32.41%	17 15.74%
Removing the Extended Payment Provision.	106	72 67.92%	15 14.15%	19 17.92%
Backdating any discount (up to a maximum of 12 months from the date of the claim) where circumstances show that the applicant would have been continuously eligible for the period in question had they applied at that time.	105	86 81.90%	11 10.78%	8 7.62%

6.4 There were 3 questions where the favourable response rate fell below 60%:

Reducing the capital limit to £6,000 (51.85%)

Accompanying responses to open questions suggested that a number of respondents thought this was too low and discouraged saving, albeit it appeared that some thought this applied to pensioners, which is not the case. Members will recognise that for those whose income sits above LCTS thresholds, they have no such protection regarding use of savings. However, it is recommended that members revise this threshold from £6,000 to £10,000.

Removal of Non-Dependents Income (55.20%)

Members may recall this was an option put forward at September Finance and Policy meeting. A number of responses considered that non-dependents should contribute to household expenses and as such their income be taken into account, which is currently the case, the minimum value being £4.60 per week. On the back of the consultation it is recommended that we retain a non-dependent deduction and set this at £5 per week.

Introducing a minimum income level (Minimum Income Floor) for those applicants who are self-employed for at least one year (59.63%)

Generally the open comments were more in favour of this approach or reducing the grace period. The negative responses reflected the seasonal nature of self-employment as well as erratic peaks and troughs. This is still considered by officers to be a fair and reasonable approach to allow a start-up period, whilst providing a floor to prevent under declaration of income.

6.5 In addition to the public consultation, major preceptors were contacted. As at the time of writing no formal response has been received, although the Cleveland Fire Authority is considering at a meeting that will be held before Finance and Policy Committee. It is not expected that any negative responses will be received, however, members will be updated at committee should that be the case.

6.6 A response has also been received from the Royal British Legion and this is attached at Appendix C. Members will note that at 4.4 the Royal British Legion have expressed concern that the survey only refers to one form of military compensation. For clarity, this was written in the consultation as a general point and not to cover all specific types of military compensation. The council will continue to disregard all forms of military compensation in the new scheme.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The current Council Tax Support scheme has a budgeted cost of £14.251m which is factored into the Base calculation each year. Costs are shared between the Council and the major precepting authorities in the following proportions for 2023/24:

- Hartlepool Borough Council (83.6%)
- Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland (12.6%)
- Cleveland Fire Brigade (3.8%)

7.2 Based on the proposals set out in Section 5 of the report, and using current caseload, the additional cost per option is as follows.

	Claimants
Increase in costs	£260,802
Council Share	£218,030

7.3 Should members choose to accept the above recommendations at 6.4, the cost to the council is neutral. The continuation of non-dependent deductions will reduce the level of increased support that a number of recipients will receive. However, the increase in savings limit will support a number of households and limit their potential reduction in support.

7.4 Whilst a new simplified scheme represents a cost to the council, the scheme will have financial benefits through;

- Sustaining current collection rates within the Collection fund;
- Avoidance of increased staffing and collection costs to manage the increasing complexity and volatility of the existing scheme given migration to Universal credit; and
- Printing and postage cost reduction that will be taking into account in the MTFS.

In addition, it is likely that costs of Council Tax Support overall will continue to reduce relative to budget as caseload, and specifically pensioner caseload, is on a general downward trend over a number of years.

7.5 The cost of the any revised scheme proposed has been factored into the Council Tax Base calculations.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	No relevant issues.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	The financial implications are fully set out in the main body of the report.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Finance Act 1992, states that before making a scheme, the authority must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult any major precepting authority which has the power to issue a precept to it; • publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit; and • consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme. <p>In addition to the statutory consultation, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is obliged to make resolution by 11th March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.</p>
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix D
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix E
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
CONSULTATION	Following an 8 week period of public consultation closed on the 10 th of November in addition to consulting with the two major precepting authorities.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Agree the post consultation changes proposed to the LCTS scheme set out at paragraph 6.4; and
- ii) Agree the 2024/25 LCTS scheme as set out to be referred to full Council for approval.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To amend the LCTS to a new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants from 1st April 2024 to reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit, to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income families and to improve the level of Council Tax collection;

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Local Council Tax Support 2024/25 – Report to Finance and Policy Committee 18 September 2023.

Local Council Tax Support 2023/24 – Report to Finance and Policy Committee 26 September 2022.

11. CONTACT OFFICERS

James Magog
 Director of Finance, IT and Digital
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 Telephone: 01429 523093

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 15 November 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 15 November 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15 November 2023



Hartlepool Borough Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 Consultation

1. A new Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Hartlepool Borough Council

Each year Hartlepool Borough Council must decide whether to change the Council Tax Reduction scheme for **working age** applicants in its area. There are no changes for Pension Age applicants as they are part of the national scheme. This year the Council is deciding whether to significantly change the working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

We are legally required to consult on any proposed changes to the scheme and we're asking you to take part in this consultation to find out what you think about our proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which would start from 1 April 2024. We want to:

make the scheme easier to understand and access;

provide up to 90% support for households on the lowest incomes;

make the scheme work better with the Universal Credit system;

support families and applicants who receive a disability benefit;

take away the need for constant changes in awards; and

make the scheme easier to manage.

Thank you for taking the time to share your views. It should take around 10 minutes to fill in this consultation.

2. Background to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme consultation

What is Council Tax Reduction?

Council Tax Reduction is a discount that helps people on low incomes pay their Council Tax bill. The level of discount is based on the income of the household.

Why are we making changes?

The current scheme has been in place since 2013 when Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes were first introduced. It is largely based on the previous Council Tax Benefit System that was delivered by the Government. There are a number of issues with the current scheme that need to be addressed to ensure it continues to provide effective support to low-income taxpayers and also to ensure that the Council is able to provide the service in an effective manner.

What scheme is the Council proposing?

We are proposing an income banded scheme that is easier to understand and is more supportive for the people most in need.

Who will this affect?

The changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will affect **working age households** in the Hartlepool Borough Council area who will get Council Tax Reduction from 1 April 2024. Pension age households will not see any change as the scheme to support this group is set out by Central Government.

The areas we are consulting on are:

Introducing an income banded scheme for all working age applicants. This will provide up to 90% support for low income families **(Part 1)**;

Removing Non-Dependant charges. Non-dependants are other people living in an applicants household but are not dependant on them. **(Part 2)**;

Disregarding a number of elements of Universal Credit **(Part 3)**;

Replacing the current earnings disregards with a standard £25 per week disregard for any amount of earnings; **(Part 4)**;

Supporting families by continuing to disregard all Child Benefit and Child Maintenance **(Part 5)**;

Continuing to disregard disability benefits (Personal Independence Payments, Armed Forces Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance) and providing an additional disregard of £40 per week where the applicant, partner or dependant is disabled **(Part 6)**;

Disregarding the support component of Employment and Support Allowance and Carer's Allowance **(Part 7)**;

Continuing to protect War Pensioners by disregarding War Pensions or War Disablement pensions in full **(Part 8)**;

Introducing a minimum income level (Minimum Income Floor) for those applicants who are self employed for at least one year **(Part 9)**;

Reducing the capital limit (maximum capital) to £6,000 **(Part 10)**; and

Removing the Extended Payment Provisions **(Part 11)**; and

To allow for the backdating of applications for a period of 12 months at the Council's discretion **(Part 12)**.

Across the Hartlepool Borough Council area, currently around 13,000 Council Tax payers receive Council Tax Reduction of which 8,500 are of working age. The gross cost of the scheme is spread across Hartlepool Borough Council (83.6%), the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland (12.6%), and the Cleveland Fire Brigade (3.8%) in accordance with the proportion of Council Tax which each organisation levies (which is shown in brackets).

Currently, the total cost of the scheme is around £14.25m. The proposed scheme costs are estimated at £14.51m.

Are there any alternatives to changing the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

We have thought about other options but we do not think these are right for the reasons given below.

Continuing with the current scheme

The current scheme requires Council Tax Reduction to be recalculated multiple times throughout the year with every change in an applicant's income, often with little or no change to the level of support. This results in increased processing costs. The multiple changes in Universal Credit inevitably lead to multiple changes in Council Tax Reduction which also impact collection of the charge and uncertainty for those whose support is being recalculated.

Support levels

The Council is proposing a maximum of 90% support which is an increase in the maximum for most applicants under the current scheme (88%).

In addition, the proposed scheme will:

Provide additional assistance to disabled household, by providing additional income disregards;

Remove Non-Dependant Deductions; and

Limit reduction to those applicants with capital of no more than £6,000.

This significant package of changes will, the Council believes, provide more support overall and focus the most support to the most vulnerable households.

Other income-banded scheme models

The Council is of the opinion that the proposed income-banded scheme provides an easy to understand and simple to administer scheme.

**1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme:
This question must be answered before you can continue. ***

☐ Yes

☐ No

Part 1 - Introducing an income banded scheme for all working age applicants which will provide up to 90% support.

We are proposing a new Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which will be introduced from 1 April 2024 for all working age applicants. This is an income banded scheme based on household income. The proposed scheme will:

provide up to 90% support for **all** working age applicants on the lowest incomes;

be easy to understand;

make claiming easy; and

be simple to manage.

The scheme will work with the roll out of Universal Credit and will provide stability to Council Tax payers by making sure that minor changes in income won't affect entitlement.

We are proposing a simplified, income banded scheme. Table 1 shows the level of discount that will be available.

Table 1

Discount	Weekly Net Income (after disregards)					
	Single	Single with 1 dependant	Single with 2 dependants or more	Couples	Couple with 1 dependant	Couple with 2 dependants or more
Band 1* 90%	£0 to £110.10	£0 to £176.16	£0 to £242.22	£0 to £154.14	£0 to £225.71	£0 to £286.26
Band 2 70%	£110.11 to £198.18	£176.17 to £264.24	£242.23 to £324.80	£154.15 to £264.24	£225.72 to £309.38	£286.27 to £374.34
Band 3 40%	£198.19 to £236.72	£264.25 to £280.76	£324.81 to £385.35	£264.25 to £319.29	£309.39 to £352.32	£374.35 to £440.40
Band 4 20%	£236.73 to £280.76	£280.77 to £308.27	£385.36 to £495.44	£319.30 to £374.33	£352.33 to £407.36	£440.41 to £528.47
Band 5 0%	£280.77+	£308.28+	£495.45+	£374.34+	£407.37+	£528.48+

Passported

Where any applicant, or their partner are in receipt of Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based) or Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related), discount will be awarded as shown in Band 1.

Change can be unsettling, but most applicants will get the same support or will be better off. Where an applicant experiences exceptional hardship, they may be eligible for extra support through the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme should they apply.

The positives are:

It provides up to 90% reduction to people on the lowest incomes;

It will protect the people who need support most;

It is simple and easy to understand;

It will save significant increases in administration costs due to the introduction of Universal Credit; and

It should provide greater stability to Council Tax Reduction recipients by reducing the number of Council Tax demands during the year, preventing multiple changes to monthly instalments.

The negatives are:

Some higher income households may receive less support, but they may be eligible for extra help through the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme should they apply.

2. Do you agree with introducing an income-based banded discount scheme as shown above?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

3. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 2 - Non Dependant Deductions will be removed

Under the current Council Tax Reduction scheme, an applicant's entitlement to Council Tax Reduction can be reduced where other adults (non-dependants) live in the premises (other than the applicant or partner). The charges vary from £4.60 to £14.15 per week depending on the circumstances of the non-dependant.

The new scheme proposes to remove these deductions.

The positives are:

It will help households who have other adults living in the same premises; and

It will make the scheme easy to manage.

The negatives are:

Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

4. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

5. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 3 - Disregarding certain elements of Universal Credit

By moving to an income-banded scheme, it's important that certain benefits are disregarded from the calculation of income. To protect applicants who need support most we propose that any amount decided as being awarded for the following elements of Universal Credit is not counted when assessing a person's income:

Housing Element;

Disabled Child Element;

Carer's Element;

Limited Capability for Work and Limited Capability for Work & Work Related Activity Elements.

The positives are:

It will help the people who need support most; and

The change is easy to put in place.

The negatives are:

Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for the vast majority of people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and are in receipt of Universal Credit.

6. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

7. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 4 - Replacing the current earnings disregards with a standard £25 per week disregard (irrespective of the number of hours worked)

Currently the scheme provides for a variety of disregards from earnings. These range from £5 per week for a single person to £25 per week for a lone parent). The disregards apply when the applicant or partner engages in work of at least 16 hours per week.

The new scheme will provide a single standard disregard of up to £25 per week to any earnings of the applicant (or partner if they have one). The new scheme will not apply any other disregards to earnings (either additional earnings disregards or child care disregards). For those applicants who have dependants, the income levels allowed for in the scheme are higher to allow for any child care costs.

The positives are:

It will encourage work at any level or number of hours; and

It will make the scheme simple and easy to manage.

The negatives are:

The change may affect a limited number of applicants who have high child care costs.

8. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

9. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 5 - Continuing to protect families by disregarding Child Benefit and Child Maintenance

By moving to an income banded scheme, it's important that certain benefits and incomes are disregarded from the calculation of income. In order to protect families, we propose that Child Benefit and Child Maintenance are not counted when assessing a person's income.

The positives are:

It will continue to help and support families.

The negatives are:

Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

10. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

11. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 6 - Continuing to disregard disability benefits (Personal Independence Payments, Armed Forces Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance) and providing additional disregards of £40 where the applicant, partner or dependant is disabled

In order to continue to protect the most vulnerable, the proposed Council Tax Reduction scheme will disregard the following disability benefits:

Personal Independence Payments;

Armed Forces Independence Payments; and

Disability Living Allowance.

In addition to disregarding disability benefits, the proposed scheme will provide a further £40 per week disregard where the applicant or partner is disabled. This disregard will also apply should any dependant be disabled.

The positives are:

It will help and support the disabled.

The negatives are:

Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

12. Do you agree with this proposal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

13. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 7 - Introducing a new disregard for the support component of Employment and Support Allowance and Carer's Allowance

In order to provide additional support for applicants (or their partner if they have one) who are unable to work and for those who provide care, the new scheme will fully disregard the following:

the support component of the Employment and Support Allowance; and

Carer's Allowance

This is an enhancement to the current scheme which treats both payments as income.

The positives are:

It supports those applicants who are most vulnerable or are helping the most vulnerable; and

The change is easy to put in place.

The negatives are:

Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

14. Do you agree with this proposal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

15. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 8 - Protecting War Pensioners by continuing to disregard War Pensions or War Disablement pensions in full

The proposed scheme protects certain war pensioners by continuing to disregard the war pension or war disablement pension in full. This is a continuation of the existing provisions.

The positives are:

It maintains the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant; and

The change is easy to put in place.

The negatives are:

Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

16. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

17. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 9 - Introducing a minimum income level (Minimum Income Floor) for those applicants who are self-employed for at least one year

In order to align Council Tax Reduction with Universal Credit, the Council proposes to use a minimum level of income for those applicants who are self-employed. This would be in line with the National Living Wage for 35 hours worked per week. The income would not apply for a designated start-up period of one year from the start of the business and the Council would have the discretion to vary or waive the use of this facility in exceptional circumstances or where the Council considers that the applicant is unable to work that number of hours. Where the declared income is at or above the Minimum Income Floor, the declared income will be used in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction.

The positives of doing this are:

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme; and

The treatment of income for self-employed claimants for Council Tax Reduction will be brought broadly into line with those applicants who are self-employed and who are in receipt of Universal Credit.

The negatives of doing this are:

Where a working age applicant is self-employed and continues to run a business where their income is below the national living wage level, the Council will assume they earn at least the minimum level (based on a 35-hour week, regardless of the hours they work).

18. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

19. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 10 - Reducing the capital limit to £6,000

Currently, the capital limit is £16,000. Any capital held which is less than £6,000 is ignored. Where capital is held over £6,000, the Council currently calculates an assumed tariff income of £1 per week for every £250 or part thereof held

The Council is proposing to reduce the capital limit at £6,000. Where an applicant has less than £6,000 in capital, any amount held will be ignored. Where an applicant has capital above that limit, they will not be entitled to a reduction.

The positives are:

The £6,000 limit still protects applicants with savings;

Any savings generated by this change will be used to protect those with the lowest resources.

The negatives are:

Where applicants have more than £6,000 in capital, for example savings, no reduction in Council Tax will be given.

20. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

21. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 11 - Removing the Extended Payment provision.

In certain cases, where applicants have been in receipt of prescribed benefits (such as Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance) and move into work which ends their entitlement, Council Tax Reduction can be paid for an additional 4 weeks after commencing work or increasing their hours. Similar provisions do not exist for Universal Credit claimants. As Universal Credit is to replace those existing (legacy) benefits, the Council feels that these provisions are no longer appropriate.

The positives of doing this are:

It will treat all applicants in receipt of DWP benefits equally; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

The negatives of doing this are:

Applicants who are still in receipt of legacy benefits and who move into work before being transferred to Universal Credit may lose any potential extended payment.

22. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

23. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 12 - Backdating any discount (up to a maximum of 12 months from the date of claim) where circumstances show that the applicant would have been continuously eligible for the period in question had they applied at that time

Some applicants do not make a claim for Council Tax Reduction at the appropriate time due to circumstances beyond their control. To protect those households, we propose that the scheme will allow for the backdating of support up to a maximum of 12 months from the date of claim.

The positives are:

It will protect low income households who can't make a claim for Council Tax Reduction at the appropriate time; and

It will make the scheme simple and easy to manage.

The negatives are:

There are no negatives to this option

24. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

25. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Your comments and suggestions on the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The proposed scheme supports working age households by allowing awards up to 90%, encourages work and protects the people who need support most. The scheme is easier for people to understand and less complicated to manage.

26. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme or any alternative suggestions you have.

About you

We collect this information to help us understand the communities that we serve so that services and policies can be delivered to meet the needs of everybody. Please feel free to leave questions that you do not wish to answer. All of the information gathered in this questionnaire is confidential and anonymous.

27. Are you completing this form on behalf of an organisation or group?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please tell us the name of the organisation/group and add any other comments you wish to make.

Questions for Individuals

Please answer the following questions.

28. Do you live in the Hartlepool Borough Council area?

☐ Yes

☐ No

29. Do you pay Council Tax in Hartlepool?

☐ Yes

☐ No

30. Are you currently receiving Council Tax Reduction in Hartlepool?

☐ Yes

☐ No

31. How would you describe your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ I describe myself in another way
- ☐ I prefer not to say

32. Which of the following age ranges do you fall into?

- ☐ 16-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-59
- ☐ 60-74
- ☐ 75 or over
- ☐ Prefer not to say

33. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Mixed / Multi ethnic groups
- ☐ Asian or Asian British
- ☐ Black African, Caribbean or Black British
- ☐ Other Ethnic group
- ☐ Prefer not to say

34. Do you have any physical or mental conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

35. Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

- ☐ Yes a little
- ☐ Yes a lot
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

36. What is your religion/belief?

- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Christian (includes Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian Denominations)
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Other
- ☐ No religion
- ☐ Prefer not to say

37. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Gay or lesbian
- ☐ Straight/Heterosexual
- ☐ I describe myself another way
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Next steps....

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

The consultation closes at midnight 14th November 2023.

We will listen carefully to what you tell us and take the responses into consideration when making a final decision on the 2024/25 scheme.



Following the decision, the full results from the consultation will be available on the Council's website.

Any new scheme will start on 1 April 2024. The Council will consider the impact of the scheme annually and consult again if it thinks further changes need to be made.




Consultation Responses

Appendix B




2. Background to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme consultation

1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme: This question must be answered before you can continue.				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		99.44%	176
2	No		0.56%	1
			answered	177
			skipped	58

3. Part 1 - Introducing an income banded scheme for all working age applicants which will provide up to 90% support




2. Do you agree with introducing an income-based banded discount scheme as shown above?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		61.94%	83
2	No		20.15%	27
3	Don't Know		17.91%	24
			answered	134
			skipped	101

4. Part 2 - Non Dependant Deductions will be removed

4. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		55.20%	69
2	No		25.60%	32
3	Don't Know		19.20%	24
			answered	125
			skipped	110




5. Part 3 - Disregarding certain elements of Universal Credit

6. Do you agree with this proposal?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		70.00%	84
2	No		20.83%	25
3	Don't Know		9.17%	11
			answered	120
			skipped	115




6. Part 4 - Replacing the current earnings disregards with a standard £25 per week disregard (irrespective of the number of hours worked)

8. Do you agree with this proposal?




Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		67.80%	80
2	No		16.10%	19
3	Don't Know		16.10%	19
			answered	118
			skipped	117

7. Part 5 - Continuing to protect families by disregarding Child Benefit and Child Maintenance




10. Do you agree with this proposal?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		68.70%	79
2	No		20.87%	24
3	Don't Know		10.43%	12
			answered	115
			skipped	120




8. Part 6 - Continuing to disregard disability benefits (Personal Independence Payments, Armed Forces Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance) and providing additional disregards of £40 where the applicant, partner or dependant is disabled

12. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		81.74%	94
2	No		14.78%	17
3	Don't know		3.48%	4
			answered	115
			skipped	120




9. Part 7 - Introducing a new disregard for the support component of Employment and Support Allowance and Carer's Allowance

14. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		69.37%	77
2	No		18.92%	21
3	Don't know		11.71%	13
			answered	111
			skipped	124




10. Part 8 - Protecting War Pensioners by continuing to disregard War Pensions or War Disablement pensions in full

16. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		87.27%	96
2	No		7.27%	8
3	Don't know		5.45%	6
			answered	110
			skipped	125




11. Part 9 - Introducing a minimum income level (Minimum Income Floor) for those applicants who are self employed for at least one year

18. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		59.63%	65
2	No		17.43%	19
3	Don't know		22.94%	25
			answered	109
			skipped	126




12. Part 10 - Reducing the capital limit to £6,000

20. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		51.85%	56
2	No		32.41%	35
3	Don't know		15.74%	17
			answered	108
			skipped	127

13. Part 11 - Removing the Extended Payment provision.

22. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		67.92%	72
2	No		14.15%	15
3	Don't know		17.92%	19
			answered	106
			skipped	129

14. Part 12 - Backdating any discount (up to a maximum of 12 months from the date of claim) where circumstances show that the applicant would have been continuously eligible for the period in question had they applied at that time

24. Do you agree with this proposal?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		81.90%	86
2	No		10.48%	11
3	Don't know		7.62%	8
			answered	105
			skipped	130



15. Your comments and suggestions on the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme

26. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme or any alternative suggestions you have.				
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	36	
		answered	36	
		skipped	199	

16. About you

27. Are you completing this form on behalf of an organisation or group?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		2.91%	3
2	No		97.09%	100
			answered	103
			skipped	132



17. Questions for Individuals

28. Do you live in the Hartlepool Borough Council area?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		94.00%	94
2	No		6.00%	6



28. Do you live in the Hartlepool Borough Council area?

	answered	100
	skipped	135




29. Do you pay Council Tax in Hartlepool?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		92.93%	92
2	No		7.07%	7
			answered	99
			skipped	136







30. Are you currently receiving Council Tax Reduction in Hartlepool?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		30.30%	30
2	No		69.70%	69
			answered	99
			skipped	136




31. How would you describe your gender?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Female		55.00%	55
2	Male		37.00%	37
3	I describe myself in another way		0.00%	0
4	I prefer not to say		8.00%	8
			answered	100
			skipped	135




32. Which of the following age ranges do you fall into?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	16-24		0.00%	0
2	25-34		12.00%	12
3	35-44		20.00%	20
4	45-59		33.00%	33
5	60-74		25.00%	25
6	75 or over		4.00%	4
7	Prefer not to say		6.00%	6
			answered	100
			skipped	135





33. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	White		94.00%	94
2	Mixed / Multi ethnic groups		2.00%	2
3	Asian or Asian British		0.00%	0
4	Black African, Caribbean or Black British		0.00%	0
5	Other Ethnic group		0.00%	0
6	Prefer not to say		4.00%	4
			answered	100
			skipped	135





34. Do you have any physical or mental conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?



Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		34.00%	34
2	No		59.00%	59
3	Prefer not to say		7.00%	7
			answered	100
			skipped	135




18. Disability

35. Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes a little		41.18%	14
2	Yes a lot		47.06%	16
3	No		8.82%	3
4	Prefer not to say		2.94%	1
			answered	34
			skipped	201

19. Questions for individuals

36. What is your religion/belief?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Buddhist		0.00%	0
2	Christian (includes Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian Denominations)		53.54%	53
3	Sikh		0.00%	0
4	Jewish		0.00%	0
5	Muslim		0.00%	0
6	Hindu		0.00%	0
7	Other		2.02%	2
8	No religion		31.31%	31
9	Prefer not to say		13.13%	13
			answered	99
			skipped	136

37. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Bisexual		2.02%	2
2	Gay or lesbian		4.04%	4

37. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?				
3	Straight/Heterosexual		79.80%	79
4	I describe myself another way		2.02%	2
5	Prefer not to say		12.12%	12
			answered	99
			skipped	136



Hartlepool Council Tax Reduction Scheme consultation

The Royal British Legion response, November 2023

1. About Us

- 1.1. The Royal British Legion (RBL) is at the heart of a national network that supports our Armed Forces community through thick and thin – ensuring that their unique contribution is never forgotten. We were created as a unifying force for the military charity sector at the end of the First World War, and remain one of the UK's largest membership organisations. The RBL is the largest welfare provider in the Armed Forces charity sector, helping veterans young and old transition into civilian life. We help with employment, financial issues, respite, and recovery, through to lifelong care and independent living. For further information, please visit www.britishlegion.org.uk
- 1.2. The RBL Benefits Debt and Money Advice (BDMA) Service provides free debt and money advice including advice on bankruptcy and debt relief, benefit checks and income maximisation, as well as benefit claims and challenging decisions up to and including the upper tribunal. The service works through England, Wales and Northern Ireland and has 33 advisers across the UK, 13 of which are based in our Contact Centre in Wales.

2. General Comments

- 2.1. The RBL is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Hartlepool Borough Council's call for comments and feedback on its new Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25.
- 2.2. We note the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, to which Hartlepool Council is a signatory¹ that:

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.²

¹ Hartlepool Borough Council, [Armed Forces Support](#)

² Ministry of Defence, [Armed Forces Covenant](#), (2011)

2.3. As a charity providing welfare and support to the Armed Forces community in the UK, we have restricted our answers to the questions and themes where we can provide expertise and insight.

2.4. Hartlepool is home to 681 recipients of Armed Forces pensions or compensation.³

2.5. Serving Armed Forces personnel, ex-serving personnel and their families are also resident in Hartlepool. The 2021 census records 3844 individuals residing in Hartlepool as having previously served in any UK Armed Forces. This is made up of 3031 individuals who have previously served in the UK regular Armed Forces, 654 who previously served in the reserve Armed Forces, and 159 who previously served in both the regular and reserve Armed Forces.⁴

3. Identifying the Armed Forces community

3.1. The effective provision of appropriate, specialised advice and support to members of the Armed Forces community is reliant on early identification of ex-Service personnel and their families.

3.2. The RBL has long called on all public bodies to ‘ask the question’ at the first point of contact with members of the public. ‘Asking the question’ allows identified veterans and family members to be pointed to specialised routes of support and ensures they are given the most appropriate help in a timely manner. **Hartlepool Council should ensure that all residents approaching the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and other benefit services are asked a question that will identify:**

- **Former members of HM Armed Forces, Regular and Reserve**
- **Spouse or Partner of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces**
- **Widow(er)s of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces**
- **Dependent children of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces**
- **Recently divorced or separated spouses or partners of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces**

3.3. In 2017, research highlighted that more needs to be done to upskill frontline welfare staff in local authorities with regards to the Armed Forces Covenant. Over a third of all councils in England, Wales and Scotland have no mechanism in place for briefing staff on the Armed Forces Covenant (39%). Within the Armed Forces community only 4.5% felt that all councils had a good understanding of their needs.⁵ **We recommend that Hartlepool Council assesses all intended staff training processes to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the policies specific to the Armed Forces community and the Council’s commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.**

³ Ministry of Defence (2023), *Supplementary tables: location of armed forces pension and compensation recipients as at 31 March 2023*, Table 3, available at [Location of armed forces pension and compensation recipients: 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-of-armed-forces-pension-and-compensation-recipients-2023)

⁴ Office for National Statistics, [UK armed forces veteran data, England and Wales: Census 2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforces/veterans/data/census)

⁵ Shared Intelligence et al, [Our Community - Our Covenant 2nd Edition](https://www.ourcommunity-ourcovenant.org.uk/) (2017)

4. Credit their Service Campaign

- 4.1. In July 2023, RBL launched a new campaign called [Credit their Service](#)⁶, which calls on the Government to end the unfair treatment of military compensation as income in means tests for welfare benefit, which results in veterans and their families missing out on thousands of pounds each year.
- 4.2. In the summer of 2022, RBL undertook an extensive Freedom of Information (Fol) request exercise of all local authorities in Great Britain to understand how each local authority treated military compensation in their means tested benefits, including Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Disabled Facilities Grants. Hartlepool responded to RBL's Fol request with the following information:

**Answers provided are displayed within the square brackets, i.e., []*

1. Does the Local Authority disregard all payments made under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (2005) as income, when assessing eligibility for:

- a. Housing Benefit [Yes]*
- b. Council Tax Support/ Council Tax Reduction [Yes]*
- c. Discretionary Housing Payments [No]*
- d. Disabled Facilities Grants (England and Wales only) [Yes]*

(Please answer YES/NO)

2. Does the Local Authority disregard all payments made under the War Pension scheme, as income, when assessing eligibility for:

- a. Housing Benefit [Yes]*
- b. Council Tax Support/ Council Tax Reduction [Yes]*
- c. Discretionary Housing Payments [No]*
- d. Disabled Facilities Grants (England and Wales only) [Yes]*

(Please answer YES/NO)

3. Does the Local Authority disregard a Service Invaliding Pension or Service Attributable Pension, paid under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, as income, when assessing eligibility for:

- a. Housing Benefit [Yes]*
- b. Council Tax Support/ Council Tax Reduction [Yes]*
- c. Discretionary Housing Payments [No]*
- d. Disabled Facilities Grants (England and Wales only) [No]*

(Please answer YES/NO)

- 4.3. We welcome that Hartlepool Council is already disregarding as income all payments made under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (2005), the War Pension Scheme, and

⁶ Royal British Legion, [Credit their Service Campaign](#)

Service Invaliding (SIP) and Service Attributable Pensions when assessing eligibility for Council Tax Reduction.

4.4. However, we note with concern that Part 8 of the consultation survey only refers to one form of military compensation, War Pensions. It is essential that all forms of military compensation, including War Pensions, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, SIPs and SAPs are disregarded in full, and this is highlighted in relevant policy.

4.5. **RBL recommends that Hartlepool Council continues to fully disregard all forms of military compensation as income in assessments for Council Tax Reduction, and ensure that this is reflected within policy. RBL also recommends that the Council seeks to introduce these same disregards in relation to all other locally administered benefits.**

5. Survey Questions

5.1. RBL has no comment to make, either in support or objection, to other proposed aspects of the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme. We do not consider it will impact our beneficiary group in the Armed Forces community disproportionately to the general population.

6. Summary of Recommendations

6.1. Hartlepool Council should ensure that all residents approaching the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and other benefit services are asked a question that will identify:

- Former members of HM Armed Forces, Regular and Reserve
- Spouse or Partner of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
- Widow(er)s of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
- Dependent children of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
- Recently divorced or separated spouses or partners of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces

6.2. We recommend that Hartlepool Council assesses all intended staff training processes to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the policies specific to the Armed Forces community and the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

6.3. RBL recommends that Hartlepool Council continues to fully disregard all forms of military compensation as income in assessments for Council Tax Reduction, and ensure that this is reflected within policy. RBL also recommends that the Council seeks to introduce these same disregards in relation to all other locally administered benefits.

For further information or to discuss, please contact Luke Lancaster, Public Affairs and Campaigns Officer (North) - llancaster@britishlegion.org.uk

November 2023

Poverty Impact Assessment Form

Appendix D

1. Is this decision a Budget & Policy Framework or Key Decision? Yes

If YES please answer question 2 below

2. Will there be an impact of the decision requested in respect of Child and Family Poverty? YES

If YES please complete the matrix below

GROUP	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
Young working people aged 18 - 21	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.
Those who are disabled or suffer from illness / mental illness	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.
Those with low educational attainment	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.

Those who are unemployed	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.
Those who are underemployed	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.
Children born into families in poverty	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.
Those who find difficulty in managing their finances	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.

Lone parents	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.
Those from minority ethnic backgrounds	✓	✓	✓	The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.

Poverty is measured in different ways. Will the policy / decision have an impact on child and family poverty and in what way?				
Poverty Measure (examples of poverty measures appended overleaf)	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NO IMPACT	REASON & EVIDENCE
Low Income Individuals, Families and Households	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable. The proposed changes will impact dependent on individual circumstances. The scheme may result in some significant changes for those at the margin of support bands if their income increases, however, it will be more transparent and understandable, and the Council has a hardship scheme in operation should individuals qualify for support.</p> <p>Under the proposed changes, couples and lone parents with 2 or more children are combined into the same income level. This means that the income band is the same regardless of whether a claimant has 2 children or more. This will negatively impact on some claims, depending on their circumstances. However, this aligns the approach to other means tested Government benefits.</p> <p>This impact is a result of having a simplified scheme and the need to ensure costs are kept affordable.</p> <p>The Council has an exceptional hardship fund (Section 13a payments) for any claimant who experiences exceptional hardship and claims will be considered accordingly.</p>
Overall impact of Policy / Decision				
POSITIVE IMPACT	Yes	ADJUST / CHANGE POLICY / SERVICE		N/A

NO IMPACT / NO CHANGE	N/A	STOP / REMOVE POLICY / SERVICE	N/A
ADVERSE IMPACT BUT CONTINUE	N/A		
Examples of Indicators that impact of Child and Family Poverty.			
Economic			
Children in Low Income Families (%)			
Children in Working Households (%)			
Overall employment rate (%)			
Proportion of young people who are NEET			
Adults with Learning difficulties in employment			
Education			
Free School meals attainment gap (key stage 2 and key stage 4)			
Gap in progression to higher education FSM / Non FSM			
Achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils (key stage 2 and key stage 4)			
Housing			
Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council tax benefit claims			
Number of affordable homes built			
Health			
Prevalence of underweight children in reception year			
Prevalence of obese children in reception year			
Prevalence of underweight children in year 6			
Prevalence of obese children in reception year 6			
Life expectancy			

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Appendix E

Department	Division	Section	Owner/Officer
Finance, IT and Digital	Customer Services and IT	Benefits	James Magog
Service, policy, practice being reviewed/changed or planned	Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25		
Why are you making the change?	Subject to consultation: to reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit, to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income families and to improve the level of Council Tax collection		
How might this impact (positively/negatively) on people who share protected characteristics?			
		<i>Please tick</i>	POSITIVELY NEGATIVELY
Age			
The Government considered the position of low income pensioners associated with the abolition of Council Tax Benefit and the introduction of LCTS. The Government determined that unlike most other groups, pensioners cannot reasonably be expected to seek paid employment to increase their income. Therefore the Government determined that as a specific vulnerable group, low income pensioners should be protected from any reduction in support as a result of this reform. The Government has not changed its position on this core principle for 2024/25. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Disability			
The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Gender Re-assignment			
The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Race			
The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Religion			
The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Gender			
The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Sexual Orientation			

The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Marriage & Civil Partnership			
The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Pregnancy & Maternity			
The proposed scheme continues with the core principle that every working age household should pay something towards Council Tax. The scheme does not provide protection of detriment to any specific working age group. A neutral relative impact is therefore envisaged.			
Has there been consultation /is consultation planned with people who will be affected by this policy? How has this affected your decision making?		The proposed scheme will be consulted upon prior to any implementation.	
As a result of your decision how can you mitigate negative/maximise positive outcomes and foster good relationships?		By applying the scheme fairly and consistently across all households within Hartlepool.	
Describe how you will address and monitor the impact		1. No Impact - No Major Change	
		No new specific impact expected.	
		2. Adjust/Change Policy	
		N/A	
		3. Adverse Impact but Continue as is	
		N/A	
		4. Stop/Remove Policy/Proposal	
		N/A	
Initial Assessment	04/09/23	Reviewed	
Completed	14/11/23	Published	

COUNCIL

30 November 2023



Report of: Finance and Policy Committee

Subject: COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS

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 is sustainable, clean, safe and green
- 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 The purpose of this report is to enable Members to consider the proposal to implement additional premiums allowable under relevant legislation as recommended by Finance and Policy Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Finance and Policy Committee received a report to its November meeting setting out the calculation of the Council Tax Base, approval of which is delegated to Finance and Policy Committee. The report is attached as **Annex 1**. However, as part of that report, proposals were included to implement additional premiums for long term empty and furnished homes. As per the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the decision to impose or vary a long term empty premium must be made by Council.

- 3.2 The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (empty Dwellings) Act 2018 received Royal assent in November 2018. This allowed Councils to increase the Council Tax long term empty and unfurnished home premium to 100% (previously 50%) from 1 April 2019 for properties that have been empty more than 2 years. The Council adopted this approach from 1 April 2020.
- 3.3 The Act also provided that from April 2020 the premium could be increased to 200% for any properties empty between 5 and 10 years and from April 2021 a 300% premium can be charged on any properties empty for more than 10 years. The Council has not implemented this additional power.
- 3.4 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act received Royal Assent on the 26 October 2023. This Act allows that from 1 April 2024, the empty home premium to be introduced after 1 year instead of 2 years as is currently the case. It also requires the council to consider exemptions from the premium for the following;
- Genuine attempts to sell or rent;
 - Continuing renovation to bring the property back into a fit state for occupation; and
 - Legal or technical issues preventing sale or letting (e.g. the property left in a will)
- 3.5 In addition to changes to empty properties, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act also allows a second home premium of 100% after 1 year to be charged on homes that are unoccupied but furnished from 1 April 2025. These “dwellings occupied periodically” are often classed in the media as holiday homes and are a particular concern for areas of the country with a high visitor footfall e.g. Cornwall, where the local population are often priced out of the market

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 It is proposed to implement the following additional premiums:

Long-Term Empty (Unfurnished) Dwellings Premiums

From 1 April 2024

- Apply the 100% Premium after 1 year
- Apply the 200% Premium after 5 years

From 1 April 2025

- Apply the 300% Premium after 10 years

Second (Furnished) Dwellings Premium

From 1 April 2025

- Apply the 100% Premium after 1 year

- 4.2 Making these changes will have a positive impact on the Councils budgetary position, protect households who are making a genuine effort to renovate, rent or sell, whilst also encouraging action on those making no attempts to bring properties into use to do so.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Risk Implications	No relevant issues.
Financial Considerations	The proposals enable an additional 88 Band D equivalent homes to be added to the Council Tax Base, resulting in an additional £0.170m of income for the council.
Legal Considerations	Variations to Council Tax premiums is a matter reserved for full council as stipulated in the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
Child and Family Poverty	No relevant issues
Equality and Diversity Considerations	No relevant issues
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.
Consultation	No relevant issues

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that Council consider the recommendation of Finance and Policy Committee in relation to the implementation of additional premiums.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To enable the Council to discharge its statutory responsibilities.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Tax Base 2024/25 – Report to Finance and Policy Committee 27 November 2023.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

James Magog
Director of Finance, IT and Digital
Email: james.magog@hartlepool.gov.uk
Telephone: 01429 523093

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 16 November 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 16 November 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 17 November 2023

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

27 NOVEMBER 2023



Report of: Director of Finance, IT and Digital

Subject: COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25

Decision Type: Budget and Policy Framework

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 is sustainable, clean, safe and green
- 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 The report seeks member approval, as required by statutory regulations, of a calculated Council Tax Base for 2024/25 which will be used for Council Tax billing purposes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is required by law to calculate its Council Tax Base for the forthcoming year, and inform the major precepting authorities, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland and Cleveland Fire Authority, and local precepting authorities (Parish Councils), before 31 January 2023. The Council Tax Base is expressed as the number of Band D equivalent properties.

- 3.2 The amount of Council Tax levied on each Band D property located in the Borough of Hartlepool is calculated by dividing the total amount of the precepts determined by this Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland and Cleveland Fire Authority on the Collection Fund in 2024/25, by the Council Tax Base. The amount of Council Tax payable for other bands is determined by applying a fixed proportion of the Band D amount. A separate report on the statutory calculation of the amount of Council Tax payable for each band for 2024/25 will be submitted to Council as part of the budget process.

4. LEGISLATIVE IMPACT AND DEVELOPMENTS

Local Council Tax Support

- 4.1 Councils are required to determine and operate their own local schemes for providing support with Council Tax. Under these arrangements, there is a requirement to adjust the Council Tax Base to reflect the impact of the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. Finance and Policy Committee on 18 September 2023 agreed to consult on a proposed simplified scheme, the outcome of this consultation being reported elsewhere on today's agenda for approval. The calculated Council Tax Base reflects the proposed simplified scheme.

Long-Term Empty (Unfurnished) Dwellings Premiums

- 4.2 The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (empty Dwellings) Act 2018 received Royal assent in November 2018. This allowed Councils to increase the Council Tax long term empty and unfurnished home premium to 100% (previously 50%) from 1 April 2019 for properties that have been empty more than 2 years. The Council adopted this approach from 1 April 2020.
- 4.3 The Act also provided that from April 2020 the premium could be increased to 200% for any properties empty between 5 and 10 years and from April 2021 a 300% premium can be charged on any properties empty for more than 10 years. The Council has not implemented this additional power.
- 4.4 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act received Royal Assent on the 26 October 2023. This Act allows that from 1 April 2024, the empty home premium to be introduced after 1 year instead of 2 years as is currently the case. It also requires the council to consider exemptions from the premium for the following;
- Genuine attempts to sell or rent;
 - Continuing renovation to bring the property back into a fit state for occupation; and
 - Legal or technical issues preventing sale or letting (e.g. the property left in a will)

- 4.5 The Council already grants temporary exemption for properties left in a will. However, the introduction of the additional exemptions will require additional resources to inspect properties and confirm exemptions i.e. what is a genuine attempt at renovation, rent or sale. Note, this additional resource will likely be required regardless of whether the changes to premiums are adopted by the Council.
- 4.6 Taking both of these measures, the number of additional premiums charges that could arise are as follows:
- Applying the 100% empty premium after 1 year – 106
 - Applying the 200% empty premium after 5 years - 129
- 4.7 Applying the differing banding mix of the current empty properties and reflecting a prudent 50% reduction in the numbers due to either exemptions or bringing the properties back into use quicker, the financial impact on the Council of making these changes is as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
Premiums	161	30	19	12	7	3	3	0	235
Band D equivalent	107	23	17	12	9	4	5	0	177
Exemption Impact (50%)	54	11	9	6	5	2	2	0	89
Band D Impact	53	12	8	6	4	2	3	0	88
Current Band D									£1,927
Additional Income									£169,576
Less Additional Resource									(£39,174)
Impact on Council Budget									£130,402

- 4.8 Making these changes will therefore have a positive impact on the Council's budgetary position, protect households who are making a genuine effort to renovate, rent or sell, whilst also encouraging action on those making no attempts to bring properties into use to do so. If the council agreed to amend these premiums, we would seek to advertise as such through social media and also via advert in a local newspaper.
- 4.9 It is further recommended to introduce the 300% premium from 1 April 2025, providing a one year grace period before this higher charge is applied. Based on current caseload, 39 properties would be subject to this increased charge.

Second (Furnished) Dwellings Premium

- 4.10 In addition to changes to empty properties, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act also allows a second home premium of 100% after 1 year to be charged on homes that are unoccupied but furnished from 1 April 2025. These "dwellings occupied periodically" are often classed in the media as holiday homes and are a particular concern for areas of

the country with a high visitor footfall e.g. Cornwall, where the local population are often priced out of the market. The council area currently has 132 empty but furnished properties, 96 of which would currently be eligible for the premium.

- 4.11 It is recommended that the Council introduce this second home premium with effect from 1 April 2025, which is the earliest date allowable under the regulations. This premium will be built into base calculations as required for the 2025/26 financial year.

5. CALCULATION OF TAX BASE

- 5.1 The calculation of the Council Tax Base is a complex calculation and includes converting the number of properties in the eight Council Tax Bands into a Band D equivalent. To complete the Tax Base it is necessary to:

- (a) Calculate Item A - "the relevant amount" for the year for each valuation band in the valuation list. For each band this represents the estimated full year equivalent of each chargeable dwelling in that band, taking into account entitlement to, exemptions, disability reductions, discounts, premiums and the forecast Local Council Tax Support.

The relevant amount for each band are expressed in terms of Band D equivalents and are set out at Appendix 1.

- (b) Calculate the collection rate for the Council (Item B).
- (c) The relevant amounts for each band (Item A) are then multiplied by the collection rate (Item B) to calculate the Tax Base.

- 5.2. The calculation for the Parish Councils follows the same calculation as that of the billing authority except that for item A, the calculation only relates to the area covered by that Parish.

6. PROPOSED TAX BASE

- 6.1 The proposed Tax Base for the Council area for 2024/25 is **25,780**. This is an increase of 438 (1.7 %) from the current base. The forecasts includes a best estimate of the anticipated number of households eligible for LCTS.
- 6.2 The Band D make-up of the base position is summarised in the table below, together with a comparison against previous year.

2023/24		2024/25
34,983	Chargeable Dwellings (after disregards / disability adjust)	35,455
-3,290	Less Discounts and Premiums	-3,289

-6,185	Less Local Council Tax Support Estimate	-6,261
220	Add forecast growth of chargeable dwellings	268
25,728	Item A	26,173
98.5%	Item B - Collectability (%)	98.5%
25,342	Council Tax Base	25,780

- 6.3 The proposed Council Tax Base has been reflected within the MTFS reported elsewhere on today's agenda.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Tax Base for 2024/25 and in the subsequent years is subject to the following main risks, all of which have been potentially increased given the prevailing economic conditions;
- The proposed council tax base includes a best estimate of average LCTS claimants. There is a potential risk that claimants may increase due to the economic uncertainty. This is mitigated by consideration of economic forecasts for future years and allowance of a small headroom in the calculation;
 - Less growth in housebuilding. This is mitigated by understanding both developments in progress and planned developments in order to factor in the latest position in timing and value of house builds planned. Progress is monitored closely in year and over the Medium Term Financial Strategy period; and
 - Reduced collection rate. The pandemic saw a significant dip in the in- year collection rate. On-going recovery and strong collection of arrears mitigates the risk that the collection rate should be reduced to lower than 98.5%. Regular management reporting is in place to ensure that collection rate is maintained.

8. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The Council must budget to avoid a deficit on its statutory Collection Fund. In determining the 2024/25 Council Tax Base a number of underlying assumptions have been made. As part of the Council's Financial Governance Framework, throughout 2024/25 programmed monitoring reviews of Collection Fund Council Tax performance will be undertaken and reported to Finance and Policy Committee.
- 8.2 Growth in the 2024/25 tax base had already been anticipated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The actual tax base to be set is 238 higher than forecast and this will provide increased Council Tax income of £0.459m, which will help reduce the 2024/25 budget deficit. This additional recurring income is reflected in the updated MTFS report on the agenda.

9. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1. To comply with statutory responsibilities as set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 the Council must determine the Council Tax Base for the forthcoming financial year by 31st January. This report ensures this responsibility is discharged.
- 9.2. Variations to Council Tax premiums is a matter reserved for full council as stipulated in the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Child / Poverty considerations	No relevant issues
Equality and Diversity considerations	No relevant issues
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues
Asset Management considerations	No relevant issues
Environment, sustainability and climate change considerations	No relevant issues
Consultation	No relevant issues

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 It is recommended that Members:

- a) Approve a Hartlepool BC Council Tax Base for 2024/25 of 25,780 as detailed in Appendix 1.
- b) Approve a Council Tax Base for 2024/25 for Parishes who may levy a precept upon the Council's Collection Fund as follows:

Brierton	14.7
Claxton	14.5
Dalton Piercy	134.8
Elwick	239.6
Greatham	283.6
Hart	404.9
Headland	800.5
Newton Bewley	34.2
Wynyard	977.2

- 11.2 Recommend the implementation of the additional premiums allowable under relevant legislation as set out in Section 4 of the report be referred to Full Council for approval.

12. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 To enable the Council to discharge its statutory responsibilities.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 There are no background papers.

14. CONTACT OFFICER

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 7 November 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 7 November 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 7 November 2023

Council Tax Base - Hartlepool Borough Council

Appendix 1

	Band (A)	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total	Band D Equivalents
Chargeable Dwellings	130.00	23,261.00	7,508.00	6,465.00	3,451.00	1,889.00	862.00	660.00	92.00	44,318.00	35,455
Total Discount	(16.25)	(2,979.75)	(804.25)	(508.25)	(206.50)	(92.00)	(36.00)	(25.25)	(4.00)	(4,672.25)	(3,494)
Premium Factor	0.00	253.00	17.00	7.00	3.00	4.00	0.00	3.00	2.00	289.00	205
Council Tax Support Estimate	(40.84)	(7,272.43)	(1,128.56)	(384.33)	(103.70)	(36.48)	(10.53)	(3.57)	(0.70)	(8,981.14)	(6,261)
Net Forecast Chargeable Dwellings	72.91	13,261.82	5,592.19	5,579.42	3,143.80	1,764.52	815.47	634.18	89.30	30,953.61	25,905
Prescribed Proportions for each band	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9		9/9
Band D Equivalent Properties	40.51	8,841.21	4,349.48	4,959.48	3,143.80	2,156.64	1,177.90	1,056.97	178.60	25,904.59	25,905
Band D Forecast Growth (Housing)										180.00	180
Band D Forecast Growth (Premiums)										88.00	88
Total Forecast Band D Equivalents - Item A										26,172.59	26,173
Estimated Collection Rate - Item B										98.5%	98.5%
Tax Base 2024/25										25,780.00	25,780

COUNCIL

30 NOVEMBER 2023



Subject: DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S HOME
Report of: Finance and Policy Committee

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To enable Members to consider a proposal to increase the Council's children's home capacity. The report attached at **Appendix 1** was presented to a meeting of Finance and Policy Committee on 27 November 2023 for approval and referral to Council for the use of prudential borrowing to fund the redevelopment of the Star Centre to increase the Council's children's home capacity. A verbal update on the outcome of the discussion at Finance and Policy Committee will be provided at Full Council to inform decision making on this matter. **Additional information is set out in CONFIDENTIAL Appendix A This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (para 1, 2 and 3). Information relating to any individual/likely to reveal the identity of an individual/Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Council consider the recommendation of the Finance and Policy Committee.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To enable the Star Centre to be developed as a Children's Home which will provide a reduced cost for care compared to external provision.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 5.1 Finance and Policy Report Medium Term Financial Strategy 03 July 2023.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 14/11/2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 14/11/2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 14/11/2023

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

27 NOVEMBER 2023



Subject: DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S HOME

Report of: Executive Director of Children and Joint Commissioning Services, Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services and Director of Finance, IT and Digital

Decision Type: Key Decision, Test (i) General Exception applies

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- Where those who are vulnerable will be safe and protected from harm.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To enable Members to consider a proposal to increase the Council's children's home capacity.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As outlined in successive reports to Finance and Policy Committee, councils have seen a sustained increases in the numbers of vulnerable children requiring care and support. Currently there are 340 children and young people in the care of Hartlepool Borough Council and this represents a rate of 169 per 10,000 children.
- 3.2 The MTFS report presented to Finance and Policy Committee on 03 July 2023 detailed the challenges in placement sufficiency for children in care and in particular the high costs of placements for those with the greatest need. The number of children in our care within external residential placements has only increased by two children in the past two years; as at 30 September 2023 there were 37 compared with 35 in July 2021. However, the increasing complexity of children's needs and finite capacity in the residential market is

leading to ever increasing prices being charged for residential care. The average weekly cost of a placement has increased by over 45% over the last three years as outlined in the MTFS report. Currently, the highest external placement cost is in excess of £11,000 per week.

- 3.3 In response to the challenges posed by the external residential sector market, HBC opened a new children's home and this has prevented the need for higher cost placements for these young people in the independent sector. Two children from external residential placements have moved into this home.
- 3.4 In the context of the current level of demand and new and emerging demand in particular the transfer of young people under the National Transfer Scheme further placement capacity is needed to meet existing and forecast demand and ensure the Council has sufficient supply of placements within residential care. Currently the Council operates five children's homes which provides a permanent home for 14 children and short break care for children with additional needs. These homes are fully occupied and the children who live there receive high quality care and support. Children's homes are regulated by Ofsted and all are judged to be good with one home judged as outstanding.
- 3.5 Due to all the Council's homes being fully occupied, where a child in our care requires a placement in residential care it is necessary to seek a placement in the independent sector. It is widely recognised that the cost of these placements is increasing at a rate significantly above inflation and providers are profiteering from vulnerable children. Too many local authorities are experiencing high levels of demand for young people with complex care needs and there is a shortage of providers that can care for these young people. This further drives placement costs.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The proposal is to bring a former children's home in the Council's ownership back into use to provide care for three children and split the building into two homes offering a specialist one bed home and two bed home. The one bed home will be available from May 2024 following completion of the work and registration with OFSTED with works to the two bed home following on from this.
- 4.2 The 'Star Centre' has been office accommodation for the past 20 years. The building requires significant internal building work to meet current building standards and Ofsted regulations for children's homes. Planning permission was granted by Planning Committee on 16 August 2023. The Managing Director, under urgency powers (delegation MD8 in the Constitution refers), agreed that the costs of the urgent works, estimated to be in the region of £45,000, would be funded from a STAR Centre unscheduled maintenance budget. Subject to the decision of Full Council on 30th November, then this funding will be replaced if the prudential borrowing decision is approved.

- 4.3 Consideration has been given to purchasing two properties and refurbishing these to children's homes standards, however, this has been discounted for the following reasons:
- The cost of purchasing and refurbishing two properties are likely to be higher than those estimated to develop the Star Centre;
 - Finding properties that are suitable and appropriately located for development as a children's home will be challenging;
 - Timescales for completion will be significantly longer due to the need to locate and purchase accommodation, apply for planning/certificate of lawfulness and then undertake any required refurbishment works to meet children's home and building regulation standards;
 - The STAR Centre benefits from creating two properties next to each other and this will yield operational savings in terms of one unit manager over both homes.
- 4.4 Additional information is set out in **CONFIDENTIAL Appendix A This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (para 1, 2 and 3). Information relating to any individual/likely to reveal the identity of an individual/Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The costs of the renovation are estimated to be £700,000. Works are required to bring the property up to current Building Regulation standards with significant works required to upgrade the mechanical and electrical parts of the building as well as installing fire doors to the property. A summary breakdown of the costs are as follows:

Cost breakdown	Cost (£)
Preliminaries	£ 30,000.00
Construction	£ 326,532.00
Mechanical	£ 96,155.00
Electrical	£ 78,015.00
Asbestos Removal	£ 24,675.00
Alarm System	£ 23,375.00
Inflation	£ 33,225.00
Sub-total	£ 611,977.00
Contingency	£ 30,598.85
Construction total	£ 642,575.85
Fees	£ 57,423.45
Total Budget Estimate	£ 699,999.30

- 5.2 It is proposed to use prudential borrowing to fund this scheme. Based on current interest rates the annual cost of borrowing is forecast to be £44,000 per annum. Note the actual costs incurred will be dependent on the prevailing interest rate at the time the council takes out the borrowing.
- 5.3 Given the current differential between external placement costs and residential care provided by HBC, this will reduce the overall cost the council incurs for a child in residential care. As such it is financially advantageous for the Council to progress the scheme. Analysis of placement cost shows that residential care provided by HBC is approximately 30% less than the lowest priced placements in the independent sector.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	<p>There are key two risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost and availability of building materials may affect both the completion date and forecast costs of the project • If the project does not go ahead, the Council will continue to be reliant on the volatile external care market and rising costs.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no legal considerations arising from this report
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	There are no specific child and family poverty considerations arising from this report, the Council has a statutory duty to provide children in our care with accommodation, care and support.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	There are no specific equality and diversity considerations arising from this report. The Star Centre building works will meet compliance standards for the Disability Discrimination Act and be responsive to the individual needs of the children who will reside there.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	There are no staffing considerations arising from this report.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	A Council asset will be developed into a children's home.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	The property will be upgraded to meet the latest Building Regulation standards which will include energy efficiency measures. In addition this will bring a vacant building back into use preventing it from becoming derelict.

CONSULTATION	Formal consultation as required for Planning Committee has been completed and responses reported to that Committee. Planning was granted by Planning Committee on August 8 th 2023.
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6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that Members agree to the proposal to increase the council's children's home capacity by redeveloping the Star Centre and refer the use of Prudential Borrowing of up to £700,000 to Full Council for approval.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To enable the Star Centre to be developed as a Children's Home which will provide a reduced cost for care compared to external provision.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Finance and Policy Report Medium Term Financial Strategy 03 July 2023.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 02/11/23
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 02/11/23
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 07/11/23



Report of: Managing Director

Subject: BUSINESS REPORT

1. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

I have been informed that Councillor V Nicholson will replace Councillor Smith on the Audit and Governance Committee.

I have also been advised that Councillor Darby will replace Councillor V Nicholson on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2. 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 August 2023 – October 2023.

COUNCIL
30 November 2023



Report of: Managing Director

Subject: BUSINESS REPORT 2

3. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE 6 MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW VISIT UPDATE

I attach a copy of the 6 month progress review report following the check-up visit which took place 30th August 2023. This was considered and noted at Finance and Policy Committee 27th November 2023. The Peer review team recognised that significant activity had taken place across the breadth of Council operations and commended the Council on its many successes. Members are asked to note the report.

4. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP CHANGE

I have been advised that Councillor Buchan will replace Councillor Moore on the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

Councillor Moore was Vice Chair of the Committee and a replacement member to act as Vice Chair of the Committee is sought.

5. SUSPENSION OF BLUE BADGE CAR PARKING CHARGING MOTION

Members will recall receiving a motion 13th July 2023 to *suspend the blue badge car parking charges 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.*

I can advise officers held a meeting with representatives of Hartlepool's Community Led Inclusion Partnership (CLIP) on 7th September to establish their concerns regarding access to parking meters for blue badge holders. Following this meeting CLIP arranged a Blue Badge Community feedback session on 14th September. They consulted with their community and carried out a survey. We received a feedback report 6th October, which went beyond the initial concerns re access to pay

& display parking meters for Blue Badge holders and covered enforcement and other issues. The concerns raised in relation to access to pay & display meters and improved signage are ones mirrored those already identified. Arrangements were put in place for remedial works to commence at a number of locations.

In cases where we only manage the car park for a third part (e.g. one life centre) we have had to work with the owner to agree an alternative location for meters, check legal agreements and establish location of services on the land before work can be carried out.

The works we carry out will be in line with the Department of Transport Inclusive Mobility Best Practice. This is our priority list for work that has been agreed to date.

1. East Side bollard and chain removals.
2. Millhouse short stay – Move machine and tariff to an accessible location closer to the disabled bays.
3. Rocket House and Coronation Drive – Move machines to accessible locations.
4. Interchange – lower kerbs at the two locations to make both machines accessible.

The additional requests in their report included

- Bringing the Blue Badge bays back into use near shop mobility. Following checks regarding legal agreements this work has now been approved, and is due to commence shortly.
- Provision of electric charging points for blue badge holders. Officers have raised this with those leading on this work and we are able to confirm that plans are in place to provide two specific electric charging points in blue badge bays and a further two points with increased bay width, which will accommodate blue badge holders.

There are issues with access to parking meters in the basement car park at MGSC work is ongoing to determine the best solution as there are difficulties associated in moving the meters in this car park.

We would therefore recommend that Council agree to lift the suspension on parking charges for Blue Badge Holders in Council Car Parks.

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

27TH NOVEMBER 2023



Subject: CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE – 6 MONTH
PROGRESS REVIEW VISIT UPDATE

Report of: Managing Director

Decision Type: For information

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:

- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To update members on the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 6 month progress review visit which took place on 30th August 2023.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The LGA corporate peer challenge (CPC) approach involves a team of experienced officers and members spending time with another council as 'peers' to provide challenge and share learning. Participating councils receive a comprehensive report and recommendations from the peer team and then identify their own action plan to respond. Peer challenges are an established tool that supports councils to drive improvements and efficiency.
- 3.2 The CPC is available to all councils and there is no charge to participate. The LGA expects that all councils will complete a CPC at least every five years. The last CPC took place in Hartlepool in December 2022 and the feedback report was shared with Finance and Policy Committee and Full Council at their meetings in January 2023. The Council's action plan was subsequently developed and agreed by Finance and Policy Committee and Full Council in March 2023.

- 3.3 Six months after a CPC, the LGA organises a progress review. This is a facilitated session which creates space for the council's senior leadership to explore progress and challenges with the peers, and discuss their next steps.

4. PROGRESS REVIEW FEEDBACK

- 4.1 The CPC progress review took place on 30th August 2023 and the feedback report is attached as Appendix 1. In summary, the Peer Review Team:

- recognised that significant activity has taken place across the breadth of the Council's operations, including taking forward all the recommendations from the peer review;
- commended the Council on its many successes, from securing the highest judgement in its Ofsted SEND inspection of Local Area Partnership, through to day-to-day delivery during points of acute capacity pressures;
- were encouraged by the direction of travel set through the Council's action plan, however they also reflected on the significant degree of activity planned for Autumn 2023 and challenges that this could cause in terms of delivery.

- 4.2 To assist the Council in driving delivery of its aspirations, the Peer Team suggested that we consider:

Approach to place narrative, communications and communities

- Ensuring the place vision for Hartlepool takes a long-term view (beyond 10 years), and is developed in 'true' partnership with partners and services.
- Accelerating plans for a single corporate approach to HBC's communications function to maximise use of resources, align messaging and enable the Council to speak with a stronger collective voice.

Internal Foundations for delivery

- Regularly reflect on when delivery at pace is a necessity, and when a more pragmatic approach is needed to reflect capacity to deliver.
- Continuing efforts to foster a culture where collective corporate ownership is widely understood beyond service and directorate responsibilities, and with greater distributed leadership across the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).
- Bringing forward the intelligence hub to drive organisational performance, transformation, and identification of opportunities.

Empowered political leadership

- Ensuring there is strong cross-party engagement in the development of Hartlepool's strategic vision and refreshed Corporate Plan so that clear political direction drives collective ownership, prioritisation, and demand management.

Financial sustainability and resource alignment and prioritisation

- Develop a greater focus on delivering savings plan with three-year timeframe to support the medium-term financial position of the authority.

5. ACTION PLAN UPDATE

- 5.1 Since the progress review visit the CPC action plan agreed by Council in March 2023 has been reviewed and an update is provided in appendix 2. Reflecting the feedback from the progress review ELT have considered the timescales originally agreed and have proposed new timeframes for some elements of the action plan and have included some additional actions related to the development of the intelligence hub.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	The Council's approach to risk was considered as part of the Corporate Peer Challenge. The action plan includes actions related to the Council's risk management framework and also the organisation's appetite for risk.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	The Council's approach to finance was considered as part of the Corporate Peer Challenge. The action plan includes actions related to the Council's medium term financial strategy, capital strategy and programme and the management of budgets across the organisation.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	No relevant issues.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	The Council's approach to equality and diversity has been considered as part of the Corporate Peer Challenge. The action plan includes an action in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
CONSULTATION	The Corporate Peer Challenge process included consultation with relevant individuals and groups as part of the review. The specifics of which have been included and considered within the feedback report. In addition the action plan includes actions relating to consultation and engagement.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Finance and Policy Committee are requested to:
- note the feedback from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 6 month progress review and refer this on to full Council for information;
 - note the progress against the CPC action plan as set out in appendix 2 and agree the new timeframes proposed.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The LGA expects Councils to respond to the recommendations of their Corporate Peer Challenges and Finance and Policy Committee are the responsible committee for overseeing Council performance and improvement.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Finance and Policy Committee 20th June 2022 - Corporate Peer Challenge

Finance and Policy Committee 23rd January 2023 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report

Council 26th January 2023 - LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report

Finance and Policy Committee 13th March 2023 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Proposed Action Plan

Council 23rd March – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Proposed Action Plan

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 7 th November 2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 7 th November 2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 7 th November 2023

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Hartlepool Borough Council

30 August 2023

Feedback





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1. Introduction

Hartlepool Borough Council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during December 2022 and promptly published the full report with an action plan. The Progress Review is an integral part of the CPC process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Update Peers on the early progress made and to receive feedback on this including how the action plan aligns to the CPC's recommendations.
- Consider Peer's reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs.
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.

The LGA would like to thank Hartlepool Borough Council for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) took place on 30 August 2023. The Progress Review was structured into two parts:

- Firstly, a series of fieldwork conversations with key individuals responsible for progressing elements of HBC's CPC recommendations, as well as several Peers holding telephone or video calls with their key counterparts at HBC.
- Subsequently, a Reflections Roundtable took place between the Peer Team and HBC's Leader, Leader of the Opposition and Executive Leadership Team. The facilitated conversation used HBC's CPC Action Plan to explore, reflect, and test progress to date in taking forward the CPC recommendations, challenges to implementation, and notable practice in doing so.

The Progress Review focused on each of the recommendations from the CPC, under the following theme headings:

Theme 1: Approach to place narrative, communications and communities

- Develop a clear vision and narrative for the whole Borough of Hartlepool which all councillors, staff and partners can get behind, ensuring there is a clear link to strategies, plans and understanding of local community needs.
- Develop a centrally-led Communications, Engagement and Marketing Strategy, with a higher profile and an internal and external focus.

Theme 2: Internal Foundations for delivery

- Refresh the organisational plan for HBC - setting out the next stage of the journey for the Council, linked to a clear approach to transformation and values.
- Review existing operational arrangements (e.g. structure and operating model).
- Revisit the Workforce Strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Theme 3: Empowered political leadership

- Invest further in Member development to support councillors in their Council and community leadership roles and to ensure the governance system functions efficiently and effectively. Consider the introduction of a ward budget for Councillors. Role model positive behaviours.
- Reconvene Group Leaders meetings to improve relationships and communications between political groups on strategic issues for the benefit of the Borough.

Theme 4: Financial sustainability, resource alignment and prioritisation

- Strengthen longer-term financial sustainability by developing:
 - A longer-term Medium Term Financial Plan, including scenario analysis, to inform the development of a Financial Strategy
 - A Corporate Capital Strategy and Corporate Asset Management Plan
 - Review the approach to budget development to ensure greater ownership
 - A better understanding of HBC's appetite for risk across all its activities

- An organisational approach to service transformation, procurement and municipal enterprise supported by requisite skills and capacity to support delivery
- Develop an explicit level of prioritisation for the Capital Programme and selective approach to future funding bids based on how these link to the vision.

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Tracey Lee, Chief Executive, Plymouth City Council
- Cllr Craig Browne, Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council
- Evonne Williams, former Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Derby City Council
- Chris Ashman, Director of Regeneration, Isle of Wight Council
- Dean Langton, Director of Finance, Blackburn with Darwen Council
- Sally Rowe, Executive Director Children's and Customer, Walsall Council
- Nathan Brewster, LGA Shadow Peer
- Frances Marshall, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

The Peer Team met in a hybrid format with HBC colleagues over the course of 30 August 2023 with approximately 34 representatives from the council.

This report provides a high-level summary of the Roundtable discussion and Peer Team's reflections based on the pre-engagement, fieldwork meetings, Reflections Roundtable and HBC provided pre-reading. The following summary is not intended as an exhaustive record of activity undertaken by HBC in response to the CPC.

3. Progress Review - Feedback

Overview: Since the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in December 2022, significant activity has taken place across the breadth of Hartlepool Borough Council's (HBC) operations, including taking forward all the recommendations from its CPC. This has been against a backdrop of significant changes to HBC's operating environment. Notable developments include: a new Leader and refreshed political administration taking up office following the local elections, which resulted in a hung council; successfully hosting the international Tall Ships Race; the establishment of new Mayoral Development Corporation for Hartlepool; and securing £18.5m Levelling Up funding, to highlight a few but by no means exhaustive list.

The Peer Team commended HBC on its many successes, from securing the highest judgment in its Ofsted SEND inspection of Local Area Partnership, through to day-to-day delivery during points of acute capacity pressures. Peers were encouraged by the direction of travel set through HBC's CPC action plan, however also reflected on the significant degree of activity planned for Autumn 2023 and challenges this could cause in terms of delivery. To assist HBC in driving delivery of its aspirations, the Peer Team suggested HBC consider:

Approach to place narrative, communications and communities

- Ensuring the place vision for Hartlepool takes a long-term view (beyond 10 years), and is developed in 'true' partnership with partners and services.
- Accelerating plans for a single corporate approach to HBC's communications function to maximise use of resources, align messaging and enable the Council to speak with a stronger collective voice.

Internal Foundations for delivery

- Regularly reflect on when delivery at pace is a necessity, and when a more pragmatic approach is needed to reflect capacity to deliver.
- Continuing efforts to foster a culture where collective corporate ownership is widely understood beyond service and directorate responsibilities, and with greater distributed leadership across the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).
- Bringing forward the intelligence hub to drive organisational performance,

transformation, and identification of opportunities.

Empowered political leadership

- Ensuring there is strong cross-party engagement in the development of Hartlepool's strategic vision and refreshed Corporate Plan so that clear political direction drives collective ownership, prioritisation, and demand management.

Financial sustainability and resource alignment and prioritisation


- Develop a greater focus on delivering savings plan with three-year timeframe to support the medium-term financial position of the authority.

Theme 1: Approach to place narrative, communications and communities

Vision and narrative for the whole Borough: The Peer Team heard how HBC had defined a clear route-map for developing a 10-year vision and narrative for the Borough. This approach would be grounded in partnership working and informed by rich data and insight. To date, a programme timeline had been established, stakeholder mapping undertaken, and a delivery partner secured. Autumn 2023 would see this work move into delivery phase.

The Peer Team endorsed HBC's approach of taking the time to get the foundations in place. Moving forwards, they encouraged the council to fully harness partner engagement and accelerate its plans to enrich data insight through an Intelligence Hub. This would help drive organisational performance, transformation, and identification of opportunities. Establishing a cross-partner working group could also help foster shared ownership of priorities across the whole borough and leverage place-based resources to collectively deliver them. The Peer Team suggested HBC develop a longer-term vision – covering a timespan of up to 20 or 30 years – and be clear what the vision would be used for. This clarity and longer timeframe would engender a more ambitious transformative vision for place. It would also enable alignment with other strategies, plans and funding to optimise resources across all partners.

Communications: The Peer Team heard that developing a Communications, Engagement and Marketing Strategy was work in progress and had not advanced as significantly as desired. Activity undertaken included Senior Management Team-wide




conversations about developing a centrally-led team, and the development of a Destination Marketing Plan. The Peer Team encouraged HBC to accelerate bringing about a single corporate approach to its communications function. By developing a single communications strategy, brand and joined-up approach this would support HBC to maximise use of resources, align messaging and speak with a stronger collective voice.

Theme 2: Internal Foundations for delivery

Organisational Plan: The Peer Team heard that a range of activity to strengthen HBC's internal operations had been completed. This included: delegation of powers from Council to Policy committees, removal of Part 3: Delegation Scheme, conducted annual light-touch review of the Constitution, and introduction of a Workforce Strategy, and new Chief Officer structure. Autumn 2023 would see further activity with the launch of refreshed organisational values, review of performance and risk management frameworks, development of internal operating manual for the council, and launch of "Big Conversation" consultation to inform new Council Plan and strategies. The Peer Team endorsed a 5-year Council Plan timeframe and emphasised how it - and HBC's new values – presented a great opportunity to drive culture change and engender collective ownership. Whilst at an early stage, the Peer Team heard from staff that work to develop new organisational values had been well received.

Delivery: The Peer Team reflected on the array of successful delivery HBC should be proud of and celebrate. This included high profile activity such as delivery of the Tall Ships Race, Ofsted SEND judgement and national recognition for its Community Hubs. Equally important was the everyday service delivery at the same time as flexing to support priorities that require an organisational-wide effort. Peers encouraged HBC to consider what more could be done to ensure all staffs' efforts were recognised and celebrated, as staff did not always feel this was the case.

Workforce: With the new Chief Officer structure and Workforce Strategy in place, the Peer Team encouraged HBC to consider its next steps around organisational culture and capacity. The Peer Team heard there was further work to do to foster collective corporate ownership. Sharing responsibility for delivering corporate agendas across



the Executive Leadership Team would help foster this whole-council approach. As would getting all services to consider how they can help each other's services to reduce overall demand and funding pressures.

Capacity: There was a sense from everyone the Peer Team spoke with that prioritisation and stretched capacity remains challenging. This was reported to be increasingly impacting on staff, with the risk that the goodwill of the workforce is reaching its limits. HBC could benefit from reflecting on when delivering at pace is a necessity, and when a more pragmatic approach is required to reflect available capacity.

Theme 3: Empowered political leadership

Decision making and member development: Measures have been taken to invest in elected Member development and strengthen timely decision making. This has included: reviewing committee delegations, consulting elected members on their learning aspirations, and refreshing the Member induction programme. Strengthening decision making nevertheless remains a work in progress. The Peer Team heard frustration - from elected members and officers - around low attendance at elected member development sessions, the quality of training, lack of clarity on mandatory training, and speed of implementing decisions. The Peer Team encouraged HBC to consider how to further address these issues, as uptake of councillor development, political buy-in, strategic direction will be key to HBC's success. HBC could benefit from a more extensive review of its constitution – and training on it - to identify further opportunities to strengthen decision making and enhance elected Members' understanding of it.

Strategic leadership: The Peer Team heard that the re-introduction of Political Group Leader meetings had been positively received. There was however more mixed feedback on the effectiveness of joint member – officer working. HBC may wish to consider investing in the development of its collective political and officer team to help strengthen relationships. This would also help ensure clear political direction drives the development of Hartlepool's strategic vision, refreshed Council Plan and associated prioritisation and demand management decisions that flow from this.

Theme 4: Financial sustainability and resource alignment and prioritisation

Longer-term financial sustainability: The Peer Team heard that significant strides had been made in implementing a longer-term approach to financial planning. A revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been agreed based around key themes, including commercialism, and with scenario planning illustrations. Other notable developments included: agreement of a Corporate Capital Strategy and Investment Programme, 'root & branch' review of Capital Programme conducted, Strategic Asset Management Plan prepared, and smooth operational transition with a new Director of Finance, IT and Digital in post and new Assistant Director recruited. Peers heard this suite of measures were having a positive impact but with further work is required to fully embed collective ownership and delivery across the organisation.

Whilst recognising HBC's success in setting a balanced budget within challenging financial circumstances, the Peer Team encouraged HBC to have a stronger focus on its medium-term financial outlook. Moving to a three year savings plan, and encouraging strong political engagement in HBC's medium term financial position (beyond just council tax setting) would be conducive to shaping the council's longer-term financial health.

Resource alignment and prioritisation: The Peer Team heard that several streams of activity were in train to increase capacity and align resources and prioritisation. This included: identification of £1m reserves for transformation, implementation of the Chief Officer structure, and plans to refresh the council's approach to procurement. The Peer Team commended HBC's open approach to learning from other authorities on transformation and associated governance. To fully realise the opportunity benefits from transformation, Peers encouraged HBC to carve out 'time to save time,' so that strategic transformation is prioritised as part of the day job. They also encouraged HBC to take a more detailed approach to strategic risk management to understanding those areas where HBC are willing to take risks, and those where not. This would drive informed prioritisation, use of existing capacity, and identification of single points of failure and success.



4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank HBC for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward. Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Mark Edgell (Principal Adviser) is the main point of contact between the authority and the Local Government Association (LGA) and their e-mail address is mark.edgell@local.gov.uk.

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Action Plan – Latest Position November 2023

Key:

C	Action Completed
G	Action On Track
A	Action Delayed
R	Intervention Required

Recommendation	Current position	Action(s) to be explored	Lead Officer	Timeframe	RAG	Latest Position
1. Develop a clear vision and narrative for the whole Borough of Hartlepool which all councillors, staff and partners can get behind, ensuring there is a clear link to strategies, plans and understanding of local community needs.	The Council has agreed with partners a number of shared strategies and plans for Hartlepool including the Town Centre Masterplan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Community Safety Plan. However, there is no single, clear vision and narrative for the whole Borough of Hartlepool which is owned by all stakeholders.	i) Develop a 10 year vision and narrative for the whole of Hartlepool which is informed by robust data and intelligence and engagement with various stakeholders.	Managing Director	January 2024 New date proposed - May 2024	G	Meetings with organisations who are able to support the development of the narrative took place in late August/early September. There is a need to ensure that this work is closely aligned to the work on the new Council Plan and therefore the timescale has slipped to ensure that the vision and narrative can be informed by the 'Big Conversation' exercise.
		ii) Review current partnership arrangements to enable broader stakeholder engagement and ownership of Hartlepool priorities.	Managing Director	September / October 2023	C	A stakeholder mapping exercise including partnership arrangements was completed in September 2023. This refreshed the previous list with the current arrangements and from this the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will identify if there are any gaps that need to be addressed.
		iii) Identify a stakeholder and networks map for the Borough and where relationships are managed across the Council.	Managing Director	September / October 2023 New date proposed - December 2023	G	Information from the mapping exercise and preparations for the Big Conversation will be used to identify a stakeholder and networks map for the Borough.

Recommendation	Current position	Action(s) to be explored	Lead Officer	Timeframe	RAG	Latest Position
2. Refresh the organisational plan for HBC - setting out the next stage of the journey for the Council, linked to a clear approach to transformation and values.	<p>The Council Plan 2021/22-2023/24 sets out our vision for Hartlepool. It is an ambitious document which reflects the priorities that were identified through extensive consultation with residents, elected members, workforce and our public, voluntary, community and private sector partners whilst also recognising the emerging and continually evolving challenges the Council faces from the covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Activity to deliver the Council Plan is captured in a range of delivery plans and regular progress updates are considered by the Corporate Management Team and Finance and Policy Committee. Annual reports are also produced.</p> <p>The Senior Management Team have been working collectively to identify a clear set of values for the Council. These are ready to be articulated to the workforce.</p>	i) Undertake a comprehensive consultation and engagement programme with stakeholders (staff, elected members, VCS, business, public sector and local residents) focusing on the priorities for the 10 year narrative, the new Council Plan, the Council's budget and other Council strategies such as the Health and Wellbeing and Poverty.	Managing Director	October / November 2023 New date proposed - November 2023 – January 2024	G	Following agreement to the proposal for the delivery of a "Big Conversation – Your Say, Our Future" exercise by Finance and Policy Committee in September work on the detailed plan has been progressed and agreed by ELT. The comprehensive consultation and engagement exercise will inform the development of a new, 5 year Council Plan, the 10 year place vision and narrative and the preparation of other key strategies and plans for the Borough including the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Community Safety Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy. The aim is to launch the 'Big Conversation' in mid-November and it will run until the end of January 2024.
		ii) Review and update the Council's Performance and Risk Management Frameworks to ensure that they are fit for purpose, better able to demonstrate the progress being made and clearly identify and articulate the consideration of risk throughout the organisation.	Managing Director	December 2023 New date proposed - April 2024	G	Work to review the Council's performance and risk management frameworks will be completed in time to inform the development of the new Council Plan.
		iii) Undertake an exercise with all staff to promote and strengthen the Council's culture and values.	Managing Director	May 2023 New date proposed - November 2023	G	The Council's values have been developed in consultation across the Council and with elected Members. Work has been undertaken with staff to articulate these for the behavioural framework. The values will be formally launched in November 2023.
		iv) Ensure that the Council's culture and values are embedded within the Council Plan.	Managing Director	March 2024 New date proposed - September	G	Finance and Policy Committee agreed at their meeting on 18 th September 2023 that the new Council Plan will cover a 5 year period. The timetable agreed for the development of the new Council Plan, including the 'Big conversation' exercise, means that the Plan will not be agreed before September 2024. The Council's culture and values will be embedded within the new Plan.
		v) Agree a new 5 3 year Council Plan.	Managing Director	March 2024 New date proposed - September 2024	G	
3. Review the existing operational arrangements (e.g. structure and operating model).	Report taken to Finance and Policy Committee in January 2023 with recommendations on the Chief Officer structure of the	i) Deliver the Chief Officer restructure as agreed by Finance and Policy Committee.	Managing Director	June 2023	C	Completed – The new Chief Officer structure was in place from 1 st June 2023 with two new Assistant Directors starting in post in August 2023.

Recommendation	Current position	Action(s) to be explored	Lead Officer	Timeframe	RAG	Latest Position
	Resources and Development Department.	ii) Review existing governance arrangements including Committee delegations and frequency.	Director of Legal, Governance & HR Services	May - September 2023	C	Completed - Review undertaken by Constitution Committee and proposals agreed by Council on 23 rd March and 13 th July 2023 respectively.
		iii) Review the Council's strategies, plans and priorities and how they 'knit together' corporately. This will also consider how capacity, skills and resources are aligned to key organisational goals and risks.	Managing Director	September - October 2023 New date proposed - December 2023	G	Work is also underway to develop an operating manual for the Council which will bring together key policies and procedures into one place that is accessible to all staff and elected members.
4. Revisit the Workforce Strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose.	Work on a new Workforce Strategy is currently underway.	i) Review the draft Workforce Strategy to ensure that it is embed and collectively owned and links to our activities on equality, diversity and inclusion.	Director of Legal, Governance & HR Services	September 2023	C	The new Workforce Strategy was agreed by Finance and Policy Committee on 3 rd July 2023.
5. Develop a centrally led Communications, Engagement and Marketing Strategy, with a higher profile and an internal and external focus.	There is no single Communications, Engagement and Marketing Strategy in place for the Council. However, activity is delivered across various parts of the Council supported by a core corporate team.	i) Utilise LGA support to develop a new Communications, Engagement and Marketing Strategy for the Council.	Assistant Director – Development and Growth	October 2023 New date proposed - November 2023	G	LGA support was utilised to facilitate two workshop sessions in May 2023. One session brought together Communications, Marketing and Engagement Officers from across the Council and the other was with the Senior Management Team (consisting Directors and Assistant Directors). A proposal will be going to ELT with recommendations in November 2023.
6. Invest further in Member development to support councillors in their Council and community leadership roles and to ensure the governance system functions efficiently and effectively. Consider the introduction of a ward budget for Councillors. Role model positive behaviours.	Induction and annual member development programmes are in place for elected members and new opportunities are shared as they become available throughout the year. The Council previously had individual budgets for ward members but these were taken out of the budget as a previous years saving.	i) Utilise support from the LGA to review the existing Member Development Programme and work with elected members to understand what they want and need from the Member Development Programme so that it can be tailored to fit.	Director of Legal, Governance & HR Services	May 2023	C	Completed - A consultation exercise was undertaken with all elected members invited to share their view on the Member Development Programme. Unfortunately, only three elected members responded. Their feedback has been considered and some changes to the induction programme for new members was made in time for the recent elections. Attendance by elected members at training and development sessions remains a difficulty. The programme will be under constant review and we will look at introducing on-line training where possible to improve attendance.
		ii) Consider the proposal of reintroducing ward budgets for Councillors including how these could be financed within the Council's existing budget constraints.	Director of Finance, IT & Digital Services	December 2023	G	The Managing Director is due to discuss this with Group Leaders at one of their sessions in the autumn as part of wider discussions on the Council's budget. Early indications are that this is not supported

Recommendation	Current position	Action(s) to be explored	Lead Officer	Timeframe	RAG	Latest Position
7. Reconvene Group Leaders meetings to improve relationships and communications between political groups on strategic issues for the benefit of the Borough.	Although there have been Group Leader briefings in the past there are currently no active arrangements to bring them together on a regular basis.	i) Reintroduce bi-monthly briefings with Group Leaders supported by the Managing Director.	Managing Director	June 2023	C	Completed - Group Leader sessions are now in place and happening on a monthly basis. There are also formal weekly meetings between the Managing Director and Leader of the Council and individual group meetings are held as required / necessary / requested.
		iii) Through Group Leaders sessions provide support to Group Leaders so that they are sighted on opportunities and challenges in relation to Council priorities and role model positive behaviours supporting our culture and values.	Managing Director	June 2023 and ongoing	C	
8. Strengthen longer-term financial sustainability by developing: a) a longer-term Medium Term Financial Plan, including scenario analysis, to inform the development of a Financial Strategy b) a Corporate Capital Strategy and Corporate Asset Management Plan c) review the approach to budget development to ensure greater ownership d) a better understanding of HBC's appetite for risk across all its activities e) an organisational approach to service transformation, procurement and municipal enterprise supported by requisite		a) i) Develop a 3 year Medium Term Financial Strategy with detailed one year plans.	Director of Finance, IT & Digital Services	December 2023	C	Completed – New 3 year Medium Term Financial Strategy reported to Finance and Policy Committee in July 2023. Detailed annual reports are presented to Finance and Policy Committee.
		b) i) Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2026/27 considered and approved by Finance and Policy Committee and Council in February.	Assistant Director (Finance)	February 2023	C	Completed – Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2023/24 - 2026/27 agreed by Finance and Policy Committee and Council in February 2023. This will be an iterative process each year and will be brought back annually for approval.
		b) ii) Develop Corporate Asset Management Plan for approval by Finance and Policy Committee.	Assistant Director (Development and Growth)	June / July 2023	A	A Corporate Asset Management Plan is scheduled to be taken to Finance and Policy Committee in November for approval.
		c) i) Introduce an internal budget development training programme for all officers involved in managing budgets.	Director of Finance, IT & Digital Services	July 2023 New date proposed - December 2023	G	A budget Management guide has been produced and will be rolled out, with training, across the organisation during November and December 2023.
		c) ii) Introduce a financial training programme for all members, as part of their inductions and as part of sitting on policy committees.	Director of Finance, IT & Digital Services	September 2023	C	Completed – This was delivered as part of the Member Development Programme in July 2023 however only 6 elected members were in attendance. The relevant session will be promoted as mandatory for Member Development in 2024 with additional sessions offered to encourage attendance.

Recommendation	Current position	Action(s) to be explored	Lead Officer	Timeframe	RAG	Latest Position
skills and capacity to support delivery		d) i) Undertake an exercise to establish HBC appetite for risk regarding current and future opportunities, based on our Council Plan priorities.	Director of Finance, IT & Digital Services	June – September 2023 New date proposed – May 2024	G	The new 3 year MTFS identifies ‘Commercial’ as one of the themes in the Council’s approach to transformation. This workstream will work towards ensuring a consistent, corporate approach across the Council to maximise income opportunities and push forward greater commercialism where there is a clear rationale and business case to do so (pre-reading document ref. 8). The Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 confirmed amendments made to counterparty lists in order to provide more flexibility and a more appropriate risk appetite. Revised approach to cash flow and cash holdings have been made internally to increase TM returns. Further work will be developed in line with the renewal of the Council Plan in early 2024 taking the Government risk appetite guidance note 2021 into account.
		e) i) As part of d) i) above, review the level of capacity and skills already within the Council to determine whether there is a need to rebuild corporate capacity or provide training opportunities for staff in order to deliver on our priorities for service transformation, procurement and municipal enterprise.	Managing Director	June – September 2023 New date proposed - March 2024	G	The need to increase capacity and skills at a senior level was a key driver in the Chief Officer restructure which has seen the introduction of 2 new Assistant Director roles within the new Finance, IT and Digital Department. In addition £1m of reserves have been set aside in the MTFS to provide capacity to deliver the Council’s transformation approach. The use of this funding will require a clear rationale connected to transformation or a sound business case for any invest to save spend. The need to refresh the Council’s approach to procurement has been identified. Support from procurement specialist colleagues from the LGA and Durham County Council will be utilised to work with SMT to formulate an improvement plan for procurement across the Council.
9. Develop an explicit level of prioritisation for the Capital Programme and selective approach to future funding bids based on how these link to the vision.	Preparation of a Capital Strategy and Capital Programme covering 2023/24 – 2026/27 underway.	i) Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2026/27 considered and approved by Finance and Policy Committee and Council in February.	Director of Finance, IT & Digital Services	February 2023	C	Completed – Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2023/24 - 2026/27 agreed by Finance and Policy Committee and Council in February 2023. This will be an iterative process each year and will be brought back annually for approval.
		ii) Include a section in all committee reports linking recommendations to the 6 Council Plan priorities.	Director of Legal, Governance & HR Services	June 2023	C	Completed – A new report template has been prepared and was in use for the start of the new municipal year.

Additional action proposed following progress review:

Progress Review Feedback	Current position	Action(s) to be explored	Lead Officer	Timeframe	RAG	Latest Position
10. Consider bringing forward the intelligence hub to drive organisational performance, transformation, and identification of opportunities.	The development of a Corporate Data and Intelligence Hub is in progress. A workshop with data and intelligence officers from across the Council was held to inform the direction of the Hub.	i) Develop the Data and Intelligence Hub as a network of officers who are able to support the better use of data and intelligence across the Council.	Director of Public Health, Assistant Director – Development and Growth and Assistant Director – Joint Commissioning	January 2024	G	A dedicated resource has been identified to take this action forward as a priority. Those officers who should be involved in the Data and Intelligence Hub network have been identified and a MS Teams dedicated channel has been established for the sharing of information and experience.
		ii) Develop a Data Strategy which will set out how the Council will ensure that data and intelligence is utilised across the Council to drive organisational performance, transformation and identification of opportunities.		March 2024	G	

COUNCIL

30 November 2023



Report of: Managing Director

Subject: BUSINESS REPORT 3

6. HARTLEPOOL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION UPDATE

Independent Review

On 7 June, it was announced that Angie Ridgwell, Chief Executive of Lancashire County Council had been appointed to lead a review into Teesworks following allegations about the organisation being made by the press and in the Commons. It is understood the independent review panel's report has now been postponed until mid-December 2023.

Investment Zone

Tees Valley Combined Authority has been identified as one of eight areas (in England) to work with government to co-develop proposals for a Tees Valley Investment Zone (TVIZ). IZ's are aimed at catalysing a small number of high potential clusters in areas in need of levelling up to boost productivity and growth. The total funding available to each IZ is £80m over 5 years (commencing April 2024), with an expectation of 60% match coming from private sector, third sector and local government. The TVIZ is focused on digital and technology as the priority sector, with identified high growth clusters in Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Teesside International Airport.

GOVERNANCE AND APPOINTMENTS – AUDIT SUMMARY

Proposals were considered and agreed in relation to the Development Corporation's Audit & Governance Committee, including approval of and recommendation to TVCA Cabinet of the proposed appointments of up to 5 independent Members to the Development Corporation's Audit & Governance Committee and also an update to the Board in respect of the Development Corporation's appointment of Auditors was provided.

PLANNING UPDATE

Responsibility for the determination of planning applications within the Hartlepool Mayoral Development Corporation boundary lies with the Hartlepool Mayoral

Development Corporation. Delegated authority has been used by the Head of Planning to determine five approvals, one refusal and three discharge of conditions. The Head of Planning had received two issues relating to planning enforcement and the matters are currently being investigated.

Full details will be provided to the Hartlepool Mayoral Development Corporation Planning Board when it next meets.

DRAFT DESIGN CODE SUMMARY

Feedback was provided to the Board following the recent public consultation on the draft Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC) Design Code. Officers had made a number of amendments to the draft HDC Design Code to take into account the comments received during the consultation process. Details of which are available on the TVCA Website as part of the HDC public papers.

BRIEFING ON THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLETON GRANGE SHOPPING CENTRE SUMMARY

Hartlepool's Middleton Grange Shopping Centre is located at the heart of the Hartlepool Development Corporation zone and forms one of the major assets within the HDC. HDC is in negotiations to buy the long lease for the asset. As part of the previously announced Master Plan, this is with a view to improving the retail landscape of the town centre, redeveloping the site with regenerated public spaces and a new frontage to open it up with a wider range of uses beyond retail.

This acquisition would help deliver the overall vision for Hartlepool - focused on accelerating the borough by maximising the potential of its maritime past, manufacturing present and creative future. This includes attracting 2,000 new, good-quality jobs; building up to 1,300 new homes; restoring, reinvigorating and reshaping a sustainable and vibrant town centre; and to renew the waterfront to create a thriving maritime economy around its historic Marina.

The plan would see Hartlepool Borough Council retain the freehold of the site, with the HDC Board appointing asset and property managers to oversee Middleton Grange on its behalf.

Board approval was provided at its meeting on Tuesday, 28 November. Acknowledging that there are some matters yet to be finally agreed between HDC and the Vendor, delegation was provided to the TVCA Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Resources and Monitoring Officer authority to complete all legal documentation in order to facilitate the purchase.

*HDC reports are available on the TVCA website providing further details regarding the above topics.

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING

9 JUNE 2023



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Tom Cassidy, Ben Clayton

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs John Kabuye, Dennis McCabe, Julie Thompson

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Steve Kay, Mary Ovens, David Taylor

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Jim Beall, John Gardner, Stefan Houghton, Sufi Mubeen, Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Deputy Treasurer,

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Henry Ashton – Hartlepool Borough Council

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

The Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer (LAMO) opened the meeting and sought nominations for the position of Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2023/24.

Councillors David Coupe and Ben Clayton were subsequently proposed and seconded. A vote was taken and Councillor Coupe received eight votes to Councillor Clayton's seven.

RESOLVED – that Councillor David Coupe be appointed Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2023/24.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

3. APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

The Chair sought nominations for the position of Vice Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2023/24. Councillors Sufi Mubeen and Mick Stoker were proposed and seconded with Councillor Mubeen receiving eight votes to Councillor Stoker's seven.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Sufi Mubeen be appointed as Vice Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2023/24.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary meeting of 24 March 2023 be confirmed.

5. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive (Appeals) Committee meeting on 24 April 2023 and the Executive Committee on 19 May 2023 be confirmed.

6. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

7. REPORT OF THE LEGAL ADVISER AND MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 Business Report 2023

The Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer (LAMO) referred Members to The Constitution at Appendix A which included:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFA Membership 2023/24 • Calendar of Meetings 2023/24 • Terms of Reference • Scheme of Delegation • Financial Procedure Rules • Code of Corporate Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical Governance Framework • Standing Orders of the Authority Regulation of Proceedings & Business • Contract Procedure Rules • Members Allowance Scheme |
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Voting took place on the nominations received for Committees and outside bodies. With the consensus of the Members present, it was agreed that the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair for the Audit & Governance Committee would take place at this Annual meeting and not at the initial committee meeting on 30 June 2023.

Appointment of Audit & Governance Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Nominations took place for the position of Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee. Councillors John Kabuye and Steve Kay were subsequently proposed and seconded with Councillor Kaye receiving nine votes to Councillor Kabuye's six.

Nominations took place for the position of Vice Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee. Councillors Janet Thompson and David Taylor were subsequently proposed and seconded with Councillor Thompson receiving seven votes to Councillor Taylor's seven.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Constitution as outlined at paragraph 3 and Appendix A be approved.**
- (ii) That Member appointments to committees and outside bodies (as nominated and outlined in the table below) be approved.**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CON	COUPE (CHAIR)	MIDDLESBROUGH
CON	MUBEEN (VICE CHAIR)	STOCKTON ON TEES
CON	CASSIDY	HARTLEPOOL
LAB	CLAYTON	HARTLEPOOL
LAB	CHANEY	REDCAR & CLEVELAND
LAB	STOKER	STOCKTON ON TEES
LIB DEM	OVENS	REDCAR & CLEVELAND

7.1 Business Report 2023 cont.

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

IND GRP	KAY (CHAIR)	REDCAR & CLEVELAND
CON	TAYLOR (VICE CHAIR)	REDCAR & CLEVELAND
CON	ASHTON	HARTLEPOOL
CON	HOUGHTON	STOCKTON ON TEES
CON	GARDNER	STOCKTON ON TEES
LAB	THOMPSON	MIDDLESBROUGH
LAB	BEALL	STOCKTON ON TEES
LAB	KABUYE	MIDDLESBROUGH
MICA	MCCABE	MIDDLESBROUGH

FPS LOCAL PENSION BOARD 2023/24

LAB	CLAYTON	HARTLEPOOL
CON	GARDNER	STOCKTON ON TEES
MICA	MCCABE	MIDDLESBROUGH
CON	ASHTON (SUB)	HARTLEPOOL

REPRESENTATIVES FOR OUTSIDE BODIES 2023/24

LGA FIRE COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE	COUPE
Substitute:	MCCABE
REDCAR & CLEVELAND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP	TAYLOR
STOCKTON SAFER PARTNERSHIP REPN	HOUGHTON

7.2 Member Development Plan

The LAMO presented the Member Development Plan 2023/24, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report, and informed Members that a Corporate Manslaughter development seminar had been arranged for 28 July 2023. All development needs should be directed to Bev Parker, Democratic and Administration Manager.

RESOLVED – that the Member Development Plan 2023/24, at Appendix 1, be approved.

7.3 Appointment of Independent Persons

The LAMO informed Members that the term of office for the current Independent Persons was due to end on 30 June 2023. He reported that following a recruitment campaign, expressions of interest were only received from the current Independent Persons. Therefore, at its meeting on 3 March 2023, the Executive Committee agreed to recommend the re-appointment the Independent Persons for a four-year term of office (Min. No. 109 refers).

RESOLVED – That as recommended by the Executive Committee on 3 March 2023, Mr Paul McGrath and Mr Steve Harwood be re-appointed as the Independent Persons to Cleveland Fire Authority from 1 July 2023 for a four-year term of office.

8. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

8.1 Corporate Plan 2022-26: Progress on 2022/23 Priorities and Priorities for 2023/24

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) introduced himself to the Authority and invited the Assistant Chief Fire Officers (ACFOs) to outline the remit of their own directorates.

He referred Members to the Corporate Plan 2022-26 (Appendix 1) which provided an outline of the progress of 2022/23 priorities set against the corporate goals and objectives captured in the following four-year plans:

- Community Risk Management Plan
- People Plan
- Resource Plan

The CFO also referred Members to the Service Plan 2023/24 (Appendix 2) which sets out the Authority's priorities and improvement actions for the coming year which are regularly monitored by the Executive Committee.

Councillor Kabuye asked what recent Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activities had been undertaken by the Brigade. The CFO confirmed that there had been positive action to encourage under-represented groups during the recent firefighter recruitment campaign which unfortunately had not been as successful as hoped with both female and black and ethnic groups underrepresented. Work is ongoing across the Brigade to address this gap.

Councillor Chaney referred to the delays with the Authority's 2021/22 Audit Certificate due to delays receiving Pension Fund Auditor assurances and asked whether there was a financial penalty to the Authority. The CFO confirmed that there was no financial penalty from the Home Office.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) **That Members noted the position regarding the implementation of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2022-26; and the priorities set out in the underpinning Community Risk Management, People and Resources Plans 2022-26.**
- (ii) **That the priorities for the current year, as detailed in the Service Plan 2022/23 at Appendix 1, be noted.**

8.2 Values & Culture in Fire & Rescue Services

The CFO presented the HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Values and Culture in the FRS and the assessment of the Brigade's current arrangements in relation to the 35 recommendations set out in the Report.

He referred Members to the Report at Appendix 1 which had been published on 30 March 2023 and focused on the following nine themes: raising concerns; background checks; misconduct handling; leadership; management and leadership training and development; diversity data; improving diversity; core code of ethics; and The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

The CFO reaffirmed the Authority's strategic direction in relation to its people as set out in the People Plan and captured in the corporate goals and objectives and reported that a comprehensive review and gap analysis had been undertaken against the 35 recommendations.

8.2 Values & Culture in Fire & Rescue Services cont.

Progress on the implementation of the Brigade's actions will be captured in the Brigade's improvement planning framework and monitored by the Executive Committee.

Councillor Chaney asked whether the trade unions and firefighters supported the Brigade's efforts to improve values and culture in the workplace. The CFO confirmed that the trade unions were fully supportive and had a long history of pushing the EDI agenda.

Members recognised that the 36 recommendations contained within the Spotlight report was onerous on the Brigade's resources. The CFO reported that the ACFO-SPR had undertaken a gap analysis against these recommendations and some were already being undertaken as part of the Authority's 2023/24 priorities. He acknowledged the value in striving to become a more inclusive, diverse workforce which reflects the communities of Cleveland.

RESOLVED – That Members noted:-

- (i) the publication of the HMICFRS's Spotlight Report on Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service (Appendix 1).**
- (ii) Cleveland Fire Brigade's assessment of its current arrangements in relation to culture against the recommendations set out in the HMICFRS Spotlight Report (Appendix 2).**
- (iii) the overview of the short, medium, and long-term recommendations for Government (Appendix 3).**
- (iv) the overview of the short, medium, and long-term actions for the National Fire Chiefs' Council (Appendix 4).**
- (v) the overview of the short, medium, and long-term actions for the Chief Fire Officer (Appendix 5).**
- (vi) that further reports will be brought to future Executive Committee meetings on progress of the implementation of Cleveland Fire Brigade's actions.**

8.3 Information Pack

8.3.1 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

9. 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 and 4 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."

10. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary meeting of 24 March 2023 be confirmed.

11. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive (Appeals) Committee on 24 April 2023 and the Executive Committee on 19 May 2023 be confirmed.

COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR