

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

**8 DECEMBER 2023**

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Sue Little (In the Chair)

Councillors: Bob Buchan, Brian Cowie, Rob Darby, Helen Howson, and Carol Thompson.

Also Present: Councillor Moss Boddy as substitute for Councillor Karen Oliver in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.

Officers: Tony Hanson, Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services  
Kieran Bostock, Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services  
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services  
Steve Hilton, Communications and Marketing Team  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

### **20. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Karen Oliver.

### **21. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **22. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023**

Received.

### **23. Minutes of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee held on 26 September and 21 November 2023**

Received.

## 24. Public Question

A public question had been submitted by Claire Crichton for the public question section of full Council. The Managing Director, in accordance with the Constitution, had referred the question to the Neighbourhood Services Committee as the question related to a service within its remit.

The question stated: -

I have lived on the central estate for many years now and can see the area appears very run down and neglected. There is an ongoing issue with rodents inside and outside of properties which is creating a severe problem that is affecting the local community. Q1. What has the local authority been doing to address this problem and what is the plan of action moving forward from here? Q2. Will the local council be more direct with their own tenants, private landlords/private tenants etc when they are not taking adequate care of their properties?

In responding to the question, the Assistant Director, Regulatory Services stated –

Q1. We have reviewed our reporting system and this does not indicate a significant numbers of rodent infestations reported to us in this general area.

Our pest control officers take all reported cases seriously and conduct thorough reviews to determine the most appropriate course of action. However, treating open areas directly can pose risks to both wildlife and individuals passing by. For this reason we look to treat the properties that have reported rodent sightings in and around buildings and homes, additionally, the council targets root causes like accessible food sources or harbourage, often stemming from rubbish or fly tipping.

The pest control team, enforcement team and housing management team, work closely together, and always aim to tackle the wider issues contributing to the problem when cases are reported. We assess, plan, and implement solutions that target these underlying factors while ensuring the safety of the environment and the community.

Q2. The Council understand the crucial role that property maintenance plays in preventing and mitigating pest issues, disrepair and anti-social behaviour. The council actively engages with tenants, private landlords and owner occupiers to promote responsible property upkeep. Please be assured that the local authority is dedicated to addressing these challenges comprehensively and proactively taking enforcement action where appropriate. Input from the public is invaluable, and we would ask that any issues identified by residents are brought to the Council attention so that appropriate action can be taken.

If Ms Crichton has any specific concerns about buildings, streets, or the area in general, our Public Protection team are available to discuss and offer further information and advice.

A Member of the public questioned the charge for attending reports of rat infestations. The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services stated that there was a £40 charge to attend and assess which would be returned if a rat infestation was found.

### **Decision**

That the response be noted and shared with Ms Crichton.

## **25. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2026/27** *(Director of Finance, IT and Digital and Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on the MTFS and to enable the Committee to scrutinise / comment on the savings proposals referred from the Finance and Policy Committee.

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

The Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services gave an outline of the report submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee on 27 November 2023 and went on to outline each of the savings proposed for services within this Committee's remit, as detailed in Appendix C to the report. Details of any comments made by the Committee to be forwarded to the Finance and Policy Committee are included in the decision below. The Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services added that it was important for Members to note that officers were also reviewing operational decisions across their service areas in order to maximise income and efficiency while considering the merit of non-essential duties in order to ensure their budgets balance. This may result in further individual service reports being brought to Committee where approval was required, or in some cases these may be decision records or simply operational decisions that services could make in order to help to balance their particular budget.

The Committee made no specific comments in relation to the savings relating to Waste Services Restructure, Bus Shelter Advertising Contract and Fees and Charges Increase in line with September CPI. The Committee did, however, discuss in detail the proposed changes to CCTV monitoring which would result in a saving of £30,000. The view was

expressed by one Member that the lack of monitoring of the CCTV system between 9 am and 5 pm weekdays was too great a risk to the public and officers should look to other areas to find the saving. The inability to track criminals or criminal activity during the day was too high a cost and such criminals would soon become aware of the lack of monitoring and exploit this. No alternative to the saving proposal was put forward at the meeting.

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services reassured Members that cameras would not be turned off but moved to a 'resting' position giving the greatest coverage of their location. All cameras would continue to be recorded and these recordings kept for 28 days. The Police would be able to access recordings whenever necessary, as now. The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services expected that this would be predominantly when there was staff within the control room but there would always be other staff available that could provide recordings for the Police if matters were more urgent. It was also highlighted that staff recruitment to this area had been difficult with only one permanent HBC employee in post; the other posts being filled through agency staff.

Other Members sought confirmation from the Assistant Director, Regulatory Services as to the period for which recordings were kept and if this could be extended. The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services indicated that that detail could be included in the information provided to the Finance and Policy Committee.

### Decision

That as requested by Finance and Policy Committee the Committee considered the recommended 2023/24 savings proposed detailed in Annex A - Appendix C relating to the services within this Committees portfolio and Members made the following comments to be reported back to Finance and Policy Committee on 22 January 2024 in relation to each of the savings proposed.

Budget Reduction Heading	Budget Reduction 2024/25 £000	Adult and Community Based Services Committee comments
Waste Services Restructure	30	No specific comments were made.
CCTV	30	Some concern was expressed at the saving proposed and the impact on public safety as detailed above. No alternative saving was proposed.

Bus Shelter Advertising Contract	21	No specific comments were made.
Fees and Charges Increase in line with September CPI	250	No specific comments were made.

## **26. Civil Enforcement Update** (*Assistant Director, Regulatory Services*)

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

This report provided an update on the work and activity undertaken by Enforcement Officers within the Community Safety Team.

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

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services reported that Civil Enforcement Officers undertake a wide and varied range of duties including:

- Littering and littering from vehicles;
- Fly tipping and duty of care;
- Domestic and commercial waste offences;
- Graffiti;
- Dog fouling, dogs on a lead, means to pick up waste, dog exclusion areas, etc.;
- Fly posting;
- Abandoned, nuisance and untaxed vehicles;
- Illegally tethered horses;
- Traffic and parking contraventions of statutory legislation and local Traffic Regulation Orders;
- Car parking enforcement – failure to pay / permit controls / Blue Badge Enforcement of resident parking zones; and
- Illegal traveller encampments.

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services stated that the recruitment and retention of staff had been an issue over recent years particularly as the duties could be challenging. This was an issue regionally and not just in Hartlepool.

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services highlighted the work of the team around domestic waste enforcement (Section 46 notices) and the reduction in fly-tipping reports. The S46 Notice work showed that in the vast majority of cases, an informal warning from an enforcement officer usually worked and householders managed their waste bins correctly. The reduction in fly-tipping reports was due mainly to a change in the way the

statistics were being recorded and the numbers now reflected the incidents that an officer had responded to rather than just the number of incidents that were reported.

Concern was expressed by a Member at the potential misuse of public waste bins by commercial operators and issues in particular areas were highlighted. The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services stated that should a bin be reported as full on a regular basis, then there would be monitoring of the waste to establish if a commercial operator was misusing the bin. Officers could then speak to local commercial operators if this was the case.

The Committee discussed the issues around fly-tipping and the catching of criminal operators that fly-tipped on a regular basis. The Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services stated that the Council needed local residents to report such incidents and in particular the vehicles involved so that action could be taken. The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services indicated that remote cameras could be installed by the Council in areas of high incidents of fly-tipping to covertly record the vehicles and people that committed this crime. The Council's Fly-tipping Working Group had proven to be very effective in tackling fly-tipping issues but, as stated by the Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, intelligence from the public was key to addressing this problem.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

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

The Chair informed Members that the meeting scheduled to be held on 8 January 2024 was to be cancelled due to the Chair and Vice Chair's unavailability and the lack of business. The next meeting would therefore be held on Monday 5 February, 2024 at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 10.45 am.

**H MARTIN**

**DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

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