

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

17 JUNE 2024

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor: Karen Oliver (In the Chair)

Councillors: Ben Clayton, Fiona Cook, Sue Little, Corinne Male, Christopher Wallace and Mike Young.

Also Present: Councillors Tom Feeney, Brenda Harrison, Michael Jorgeson and Carole Thompson.

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

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2024

Received.

4. Minutes of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee held on 12 March 2024

Received.

5. The Role and Remit of the Neighbourhood Services Committee *(Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide background information for Committee Members on the work of the Authority managed through the Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee received a comprehensive presentation by the Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services outlining the role and remit of the Committee and the service areas of the Authority that fell under its management. The presentation also included challenges and priorities the Council and the service was currently managing. It was agreed that the presentation be shared with all Councillors.

The Chair commented that she had requested some additional training for elected Members on the Council Portal and the Contact Centre.

Decision

That the presentation be noted.

6. Footpath Licensing Policy *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision (Forward Plan Reference No. DNRS 05/24).

Purpose of report

To seek approval for a Footpath Licensing Policy as required by the government's new Permanent Pavement Licensing Regime, in order to provide a streamlined process for businesses and ensure the safety of pedestrians and other highway users.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services reported that the Government introduced the Permanent Pavement Licensing Regime under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This replaced the temporary

regulations introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily to support businesses in the hospitality sector as they reopened while still under partial lockdown restrictions. The new legislation provides clear guidance to businesses wishing to place seating, or other items associated with outdoor hospitality, signage, or other goods on the public highway/footway.

The process enabled Local Authorities to regulate highway installations, and ensure that they don't negatively impact other highway users, particularly mobility and visually impaired people. The policy, submitted as an appendix to the report, also gave clear guidance on the process for enforcement and removal of unauthorised items on the highway, where a licence had not been applied for and no application was forthcoming. The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services also reported that the fees proposed had been benchmarked across the Tees Valley local authorities and Hartlepool's proposed charges were slightly lower.

Members questioned how premises would be transitioned to the new licences and what sort of notice and /or publicity would be involved. The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services stated that as licences issued under the temporary regulations expired, they would automatically transition to the new regime. There would be publicity for new policy and the intention is to go 'live' as soon as possible once the document had been finalised which could be within a month.

Decision

That the Footway Licensing Policy, as submitted, be approved.

7. Household Waste Recycling Centre *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to outline the options for the appointment system currently in place at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) on Burn Road in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services reported that the introduction of a free permit scheme for Hartlepool residents to use the HWRC at Burn Road was included as part of the budget savings proposals considered for introduction in April 2020. The appointment system had been brought in as a way for the Council to restrict waste from commercial operators and residents from outside the Borough being disposed of at the site.

The appointment system had been in place since spring 2020 however there remained a perception that the operation did not meet the demand for the Borough and the system is obstructive. This view was supported by the recent Big Conversation with some residents commenting that they had difficulties in accessing the recycling centre.

In line with Defra's 2023 consultation, appointment systems are not intended to be obstructive, so a number of options were presented for Members to consider:

1. Appointment system remains in place;
2. Hybrid system making 1 day a week appointment free; or
3. Removal of appointment system.

The saving accepted in December 2019 would potentially need to be reversed and should the tonnage of waste return to the levels pre 2020 this pressure could be in the region of £75,000.

If either a hybrid or full removal option was considered to be the most suitable by Members, then it was recommended that further controls, including proof of residency, etc., be put in place to minimise non-resident visitors and mitigate any financial impact.

Should the current operating model be changed the budgetary position would need to be closely monitored during the year and action considered within the service budget and wider portfolio to mitigate any detrimental financial position.

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services also highlighted that consideration would need to be given as to how the Council would be able to safely operate the site to ensure that no health and safety risks were created as a result of any changes. Consideration of the vehicle traffic in the vicinity of the HWRC will also need to be managed safely in the absence of an appointment system.

The Chair acknowledged the concerns raised in the report but considered that the public feedback was not positive in relation to the appointment system and it had been a Labour Party pledge to remove it and, therefore, the Chair proposed that it be removed. The proposal was seconded.

In debate, there were other Members who believed that the appointment system did work well and had addressed health and safety issues on the operations within the HWRC site. There had also been traffic concerns raised by the Police in the past relating to traffic queues on Burn Road of cars waiting to enter the site. A Member stated that businesses in the area were also concerned at the potential return of traffic queues on Burn Road. Other Members did not, however, foresee such issues and believed the queues, should they arise, could be easily controlled through traffic management controls.

Members also referred to the levels of recycling cross the Borough and did feel that anything that could be introduced to improve the recycling rates had to be explored. Much of the use of the site would be during the weekends and evening when most of the business around the site would be closed and any additional traffic would not cause them any concern.

A Member proposed an amendment to the Chair's proposal for Option 3 stating that as officers had clearly stated that a review of the operation of the site was required before the appointment system could be removed, would it not be more appropriate to undertake the review first and report back to Committee before a final decision was made. The amendment proposed that a review of the operation of the HWRC be initiated to include a review of the appointments process, operations within the site and the health and safety of staff and users, and any potential impact on the traffic on Burn Road, be undertaken and reported back to this Committee in September prior to a final decision being made. The amendment was seconded.

The meeting moved to consider the amendment and substantive motion put before Members.

In terms of the amendment, the vote was lost with 2 votes for and five against.

The substantive motion to remove the appointments system, Option 3, was put and carried with 5 votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention.

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services highlighted that in light of the work that would need to be undertaken in advance of the removal of the appointments system, it was likely the change would not take place until September.

Decision

1. That in relation to the day-to-day operation of the Household Waste Recycling Centre, the appointments system be removed.
2. That any additional control measures required for the safe and efficient use of the site be delegated to the Executive Director for Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services in consultation with the Chair of Neighbourhood Services.
3. That the operation of the site remain under review over the next 12 months and a further report be presented to Members for consideration should operational or financial issues arise.

8. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 5.50 pm.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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