

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

5 September 2024

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

Present:

Councillor: Gary Allen (In the Chair)

Councillors: Moss Boddy, Bob Buchan, Fiona Cook, Ged Hall, Sue Little, and Aaron Roy

Also present:

Councillors Brenda Harrison, Leader of Council and Tom Feeney, Deputy Leader of Council

Officers: Jill Harrison, Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services
Sarah Scarr, Head of Service - Heritage and Open Spaces
Andrea Horsley, Project Officer (Allotments)
Julian Heward, Communications
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

8. Apologies for Absence

None.

9. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Aaron Roy declared a personal interest in minute 11.

10. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2024

Received.

11. Allotment Review (*Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

It was agreed at Council on 13 July 2023 that the proposed increase in allotment fees for 2024 would be cancelled and a wholesale review of the allotment service was commissioned. The report outlined the outcome of that review.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services gave a detailed and comprehensive presentation on the wholesale review undertaken on the allotment service. It was highlighted that the scope of the review was broad but examined basic benchmarking on the operation of allotment services; operation and delivery models through comparisons and case studies; explored administrative process and software support; along with examples of best practice. In addition to the above, key issues covered in the review included community participation, security of sites, environmental impacts of sites and exploring improved methods of communication. The review concluded that the current allotment offer provides value for money and suggested a number of recommendations and opportunities that could be taken forward and these were detailed in the report.

It was highlighted that there had been good progress over the last year through changing working practices, small investments for long term changes and capital funding investment for security, access improvements and plot clearance. The Assistant Director noted that in the next year, the priorities for the Allotment Service would be utilising capital funding where possible to invest in sites, work with partners to use all resources to improve sites and continue to listen to tenants and Associations regarding their aspirations for their sites.

The Chair was pleased that a number of allotment holders were in attendance at the meeting and he encouraged everyone to engage positively in the process throughout the review adding that Members were aware of how important allotments were to the people of the town. The meeting was opened to questions from the Committee.

In response to a number of questions from Members, the Assistant Director confirmed that the review was prompted by a motion from Council was estimated to cost £9k and had been undertaken independently. It was noted that the Allotment Service was currently operating with a deficit of approximately £80k and this had been highlighted as a corporate budget pressure. It was highlighted that fly-tipping was a significant issue on allotments and work was ongoing with allotment holders and associations

on ways to try and prevent this. A Member sought clarification on previous lottery funding that had been secured for the allotment service provision. The Director of Adult and Community Based Services confirmed that Big Lottery Funding had been secured for Waverley Allotments previously.

The Leader of the Council commented that Members were fully supportive of the provision of allotments and emphasised the need to work together based on the factual information available. It was reiterated that one of the key aspects was effective communication involving representatives from all allotment associations.

In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director confirmed that work was ongoing in relation to the issue of fly-tipping on allotments and the probation service were supporting the Council with this but any issues with rubbish removal on specific allotments would be looked at on a case by case basis.

The Assistant Director was thanked for the presentation and it was noted that there was a lot of work to be undertaken and a crucial element for the success of this was clear, honest, factual and straight forward communications between all parties.

Decision

1. It was noted that a wholesale review had been independently conducted to inform future allotment service developments.
2. That ongoing and future communication be conducted with allotment tenants and associations to continue to engage them positively in the future development of allotments.
3. That Officers carry out further work to review the recommendations, consider the implications and opportunities that these will have on the service, should they be implemented and work with stakeholders.
4. That fees and charges be reviewed and a proposal to increase fees and charges be made as part of the medium term financial strategy.
5. Recommendations will be considered however there will be no introduction of concessionary charges at this time due to the financial position and the need to achieve a better budget position for the allotment service.
6. Recommendations taken forward be embedded as part of the ongoing review and development of the current Allotment Strategy to minimise duplication and ensure coordination of all work to support the success of the allotment service.

12. Historic Places Panel Report *(Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide information on a visit to Hartlepool by the advisory group, the Historic Places Panel and proposed future actions subsequent to the publication of their report.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation on the visit that was convened by Historic England which covered a broad range of topics and places. A number of national organisations and local stakeholders also contributed to the visit through a balance of formal presentations, informal walks and talks around areas and discussions over dinner.

The final report was published on Historic England's website and was attached at Appendix 1. A further follow up visit was made with a small number of panel members and Historic England staff to discuss the outcome of the report and reflect on the recommendations. The recommendations provided a useful steer of good practice and there was ongoing support from Historic England to support their delivery. The Assistant Director noted that this was a long term piece of cross-cutting work for the Council with some elements depending on the input of other organisations and the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC) being proactively supporting the process.

A discussion ensued on the offer that was available within the Art Gallery in Church Square and the history of the building itself and the staff were congratulated on their knowledge and for making it such an accessible place for everyone. The work being undertaken within the Art Gallery to support the local community was outstanding, in particular an exhibition, which opened today, to display the art and creativity undertaken by individuals who were going through recovery from living with substance misuse.

The Leader of the Council commended the work undertaken within the Art Gallery and commented that it was a significant boost to the local area to have the opportunity to work alongside Historic England and the King's Foundation. In addition to this, it was noted that the improvements being undertaken at the Maritime Experience and Hartlepool Museum were really exciting and will benefit the people of Hartlepool.

Decision

1. The content of the report was noted and the development of an action plan in partnership with key stakeholders and 'Boards' to ensure opportunities were maximised based on the expert advice that had been received was supported.

2. Officers to continue to work with Historic England and other key experts who were part of the panel to explore progression of wider opportunities to benefit Hartlepool's heritage.

13. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

Minute 14 – Update on Telecare Provision

14. Update on Telecare Provision

In response to a request from the Chair for an update, the Director of Adult and Community Based Services confirmed significant engagement had been undertaken. There were no changes to be implemented for anyone who received telecare as part of a wider package of care, only people who accessed Telecare as stand-alone support were affected. As part of the wider engagement, it had been flagged up that a lot of people were not maximising their benefit entitlement. Additional training had been undertaken with staff in relation to checking what benefits people were entitled to and West View Advice and Resource Centre had been providing support with this issue also.

A Member highlighted that not everyone had family members and it might be worth ensuring people were aware they could nominate close friends and neighbours to be their contact should the need arise. The Director of Adult and Community Based Services indicated that it will be reiterated during the ongoing engagement that it did not have to be a family member who was their Telecare contact. In response to a question from a Member, the Director confirmed that a discount had been introduced for households where more than one person received the service, with the second person receiving a 50% discount in cost. There were around 20 households who had opted to receive the service with this discount. The charges incurred covered the need for equipment and sensors along with individual reviews undertaken to tailor the support needed. A further update can be provided to Committee at a later date.

Decision

1. The update was noted.
2. That further information would be provided at a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 7 November at 5.00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 11.15am

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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