



Civic Centre
HARTLEPOOL

2 DECEMBER 2024

Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Buchan, Clayton, Cook, Cranney, Creevy, Darby, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Leedham, Lindridge, Little, Male, Martin-Wells, Moore, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Reeve, Riddle, Roy, Scarborough, Sharp, Smith, Thompson, C Wallace, S Wallace and Young.

Madam or Sir,

You are hereby summoned to attend the COUNCIL meeting to be held on THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2024 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

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COUNCIL AGENDA



12 December 2024

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 meetings of the Council held on 3 October 2024. 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;
- (10) To consider any other business specified in the summons to the meeting, and to receive questions and answers on any of those items;

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.

- (11) To consider reports from the Policy Committees:
 - (a) proposals in relation to the Council's approved budget and policy framework; and
 - (1) Local Council Tax Support 2025/26 - Report of Finance and Policy Committee
 - (2) Council Tax Base 2025/26 - Report of Finance and Policy Committee
 - (b) proposals for departures from the approved budget and policy framework;
- (12) To consider motions in the order in which notice has been received;
- (13) To receive the Managing Director's report and to pass such resolutions thereon as may be deemed necessary;
- (14) To receive questions from and provide answers to the public in relation to matters of which notice has been given under Rule 9;
- (15) To answer questions of Members of the Council under Rule 10;
 - a) Questions to the Chairs about recent decisions of Council Committees and Forums without notice under Council Procedure Rule 10.1
 - b) Questions on notice to the Chair of any Committee or Forum under Council Procedure Rule 10.2
 - c) Questions on notice to the Council representatives on the Police and Crime Panel and Cleveland Fire Authority
 - d) Minutes of the meetings held by the Cleveland Fire Authority held on 7 June 2024 and the Police and Crime Panel on 9 July 2024 and 17 September 2024.



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

3 October 2024

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm in the Civic Centre

The Ceremonial Mayor (Councillor Thompson) presiding:

COUNCILLORS:

Allen	Bailey-Fleet	Boddy
Buchan	Cook	Cranney
Creevy	Dodds	Dunbar
Feeney	Hall	Hargreaves
Harrison	Holbrook	Jorgeson
Leedham	Lindridge	Little
Male	Martin-Wells	Nelson
Reeve	Riddle	Scarborough
Sharp	Smith	C Wallace
Young		

Officers: Denise McGuckin, Managing Director
Hayley Martin, Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources
Angela Armstrong and Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officers

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENT MEMBERS

Councillors Clayton, Darby, Moore, Morley, Oliver, Roy, S Wallace

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None.

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

None.

38. MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

The minutes of the last meetings of the Annual Council meeting held on 21 May 2024 and reconvened on 28 August 2024 and Council meeting held on

10 July 2024 having been laid before Council.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be confirmed.

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

None.

40. BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE

None.

41. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

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

None.

43. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

1. Periodic Review of the Council's Constitution – Report of the Constitution Committee

Council was presented with the report considered by the Constitution Committee on 17 September 2024 which proposed changes to the Constitution with regard to Local Joint Consultative Committee, Personnel Sub-Committee, Reinstatement of Public Questions at Council and Duty to Consult – Street Tree Felling. Members were referred to the minutes of the Constitution Committee which were attached at Appendix B and an updated version of the terms of reference of the Local Joint Consultative Committee as agreed at Constitution Committee. The appointments referred to in the report would be considered alongside the appointments included on the Managing Director's report.

RESOLVED – That the following recommendations of the Constitution Committee were agreed by a show of hands:

(i) Local Joint Consultative Committee:-

- (a) The revised terms of reference as outlined in the report were agreed and the quorum of the Committee includes one representative from each side.

(b) Meetings will be held quarterly with the option to schedule additional meetings as required.

(ii) Personnel Sub-Committee:-

- (a) The Personnel Sub-Committee be renamed 'Appeals Committee' and membership of the meeting be increased to 6 (5 Elected Members plus a non-statutory co-opted independent member).
- (b) The specification in relation to the appointment of a non-statutory co-opted independent member was agreed to include utilising the voluntary and community sector to advertise the position.
- (c) The Monitoring Officer to explore the eligibility criteria in relation to the requirements around undertaking criminal records checks for the appointment to the position of non-statutory co-opted independent members.

(iii) Re-instatement of Public Questions:-

That no changes be made to the current public question arrangements at Council meetings.

(iv) Felling of Trees:-

That the delegation scheme be updated to include the following:-

Executive Director of Development, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods:

In consultation with the Chair of Neighbourhood Services, the power to make decisions on the felling of street trees following the duty to consult under the provisions of section 96A of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended by 115 of the Environment Act 2021).

In cases where the removal of a street tree is outside the scope of the duty to consult or is subject to an exemption within the legislation or guidance, the decision on whether to fell a street tree will be made by the Council's arboriculturalist.

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

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

None.

45. REPORT FROM THE POLICY COMMITTEES

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

(i) Youth Justice Strategic Plan – Report of Children's Services Committee

Full Council was advised that Children's Service Committee had approved the consultation process for the Youth Justice Strategic Plan on 9 July 2024 following which, the draft Youth Justice Plan had been presented to Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Audit and Governance Committee where it had been accepted and no additional comments or amendments had been suggested. Children's Service Committee considered the final draft of the Youth Justice Strategy on the 10 September 2024 and had recommended the Plan to Council for adoption.

An elected Member referred to the issue of young people leaving custody who did not always qualify for temporary accommodation adding that the Government and Hartlepool's Member of Parliament should explore the need for changes in the legislation governing this.

RESOLVED – The Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 was approved.

(ii) Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 30 June 2024 – Report of Finance and Policy Committee

The report included a proposal in relation to capital expenditure that required Full Council approval given it was in excess of virement limits within the Constitution. Following the temporary closure of the Town Hall Theatre and part closure of the Borough Hall in March, the required assessments and remedial works were nearing completion. The current plan was to reopen the venues in September and October respectively. In addition, it had been identified that further maintenance and improvement works at the Town Hall Theatre were needed over the next 12 months. The estimated cost of these works is £0.700m. It was proposed that this was funded by a £0.700m transfer from the Borough Hall £3.000m scheme within the approved capital programme.

Councillor Little declared a personal interest at this point in the meeting.

A recorded vote was taken on the following recommendation of the Finance and Policy Committee:-

Approve the reallocation of £0.700m from the Borough Hall approved capital scheme to support capital maintenance and improvement works at the Town Hall Theatre as detailed in the report.

Those for:-

Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Buchan, Cook, Cranney, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Leedham, Lindridge, Male, Martin-Wells, Nelson, Reeve, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp, Smith, Thompson, C Wallace and Young.

Those against:-

None.

Those abstaining:-

Councillor Little

The vote was carried.

(iii) Gambling Policy – Licensing Committee

Licensing authorities were required to publish a Statement of Gambling Principles every three years and Hartlepool must publish a new policy no later than January 2025. As with previous policies, the draft Statement contains a 'no casino' resolution and Council was required to consider whether such a resolution should remain. Whilst such a resolution was permitted by the Gambling Act it does not, in reality, carry any weight as casinos can only be developed in areas that had a pre-approved by the Gambling Commission and Hartlepool was not one of those areas. Council approval was sought to formally adopt the Statement of Gambling Principles.

RESOLVED –

1. That the recommendations of the Licensing Committee for the adoption of the draft Statement of Gambling Principles as detailed in Appendix 1 with effect from 3 January 2005 were approved.
2. The recommendations of the Licensing Committee for the adoption of a 'No Casino' resolution for the reasons detailed in the report were approved.

46. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Two motions had been received as follows:-

1. REQUEST FOR BLANKET REINSTATEMENT OF WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS FOR ALL PENSIONERS

“Background and Rationale:

Winter Fuel Payments are a vital resource for all pensioners, particularly during the colder months when heating costs rise. Many pensioners rely on these payments to maintain a safe and warm living environment. These individuals have spent their working lives contributing to society and paying taxes, and it is only fair that they receive support without additional barriers or qualifications.

The introduction of means testing for Winter Fuel Payments has caused unnecessary hardship and anxiety among pensioners. This process excludes many who are in need and unfairly penalises those who have contributed to the public purse for decades. Moreover, it is deeply concerning that while pensioners are subject to means testing to receive basic support, Members of Parliament, such as Hartlepool MP Jonathan Brash, receive a salary of £91,346 plus expenses, including all office costs and wider accommodation. This disparity highlights a significant injustice in how resources are allocated and who is prioritised for financial support.

This motion calls for the complete reinstatement of Winter Fuel Payments for all pensioners, without any form of means testing. Pensioners deserve to live with dignity and should not have to worry about their ability to afford heating during the winter months, especially when public funds are more freely allocated to others in different positions.

Motion:

This Council requests the following actions be taken immediately:

1. Blanket Reinstatement of Winter Fuel Payments:

- Hartlepool Borough Council urges the relevant government departments and agencies to reinstate Winter Fuel Payments for all pensioners, without any means testing. All pensioners, regardless of income or other financial factors, should receive this payment automatically in recognition of their lifelong contributions to society through taxes.

2. Fair Treatment of Pensioners:

- We call upon the government to recognise that pensioners, having paid their taxes and contributed to society over many decades, deserve unconditional support. It is unjust that pensioners are subjected to means testing while MPs, such as Hartlepool's Jonathan Brash, receive substantial salaries and expenses. The government must prioritise the basic needs of all citizens, particularly the elderly.

3. Support for Universal Benefits for Pensioners:

- Hartlepool Borough Council advocates for a return to universal benefits for pensioners, ensuring that all receive the necessary support to cover essential living costs such as heating. This measure will prevent any pensioner from being left out or struggling to meet basic needs during the winter months.

4. Challenge to Policy Penalising Vulnerable Populations:

- This Council challenges the policy decision to introduce means testing for Winter Fuel Payments, which disproportionately affects vulnerable pensioners. We demand that the government explain why pensioners, among the most vulnerable in our society, are targeted first for cuts to essential benefits, while public funds are allocated for substantial salaries and expenses of MPs and their teams.

5. Advocacy and Continued Support:

- The Council commits to continued advocacy on behalf of our pensioners and to providing support for those in need. We stand with our elderly residents in demanding fair treatment and the immediate reinstatement of universal Winter Fuel Payments.

Conclusion:

Hartlepool Borough Council believes it is unjust for pensioners to face financial hardship or complex bureaucratic processes to receive the support they deserve, especially when others receive substantial financial support without similar scrutiny. The removal of means testing and the reinstatement of Winter Fuel Payments for all pensioners is a matter of fairness and respect for those who have contributed to our community and country throughout their lives. We urge immediate action to address this issue and ensure all pensioners receive the support they need and deserve.”

We request the Council to approve this motion and take the necessary steps to advocate for the blanket reinstatement of Winter Fuel Payments for all pensioners, ensuring no one is left behind.

Signed: Councillors Young, Martin-Wells, Cranney, Buchan, Darby, Smith and Little

Councillor Young moved the motion and addressed the Council in support of the motion.

Seconded by Councillor Buchan.

The background and rationale for submission of the Motion was detailed by the mover of the Motion.

Councillor Harrison moved the following amendment to the motion and requested that Jonathan Brash, MP for Hartlepool be given the opportunity to address Council in support of his position as he was referenced within the original motion.

“The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments (WFP) has caused widespread concern amongst Hartlepool residents.

Council understands the dire financial circumstances that the new government have inherited, however, the current approach does not take adequate account of the administrative barriers and stigma that may prevent our town’s pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, a benefit which only 6 in 10 eligible pensioners claim.

Council welcomes the efforts made by Jonathan Brash MP to lobby Government and the Treasury to review the threshold for WFP.

Council further welcomes our MP’s work with Council officers to write to pensioners who may be eligible to pension credit offering them drop-in sessions at which they can be supported to apply for it.

Council also welcomes that:

- The triple lock is guaranteed and will see pensions increase by £900 this year, £470 next year and £1,700 over the parliament.
- The Household Support Fund has been extended by £500million.
- Pension Credit uptake is up 150%.

Council therefore resolves to:

- a) Request that all group leaders within Hartlepool Borough Council sign a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for a review and raising of the threshold for WFP
- b) Request that all group leaders within Hartlepool Borough Council sign a joint letter to Jonathan Brash MP, supporting his position that the WFP threshold must be raised.
- c) That Council commits to continued advocacy on behalf of our pensioners and to providing support for those in need. We stand with our elderly residents in demanding fair treatment and a review of the WFP threshold.”

Signed by: Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Clayton, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Male, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Roy, Scarborough, Sharp, Thompson, C Wallace.

Seconded by Councillor Dodds.

The background and rationale for submission of the amendment was detailed by the mover and seconder of the Motion.

A recorded vote was taken on the amendment to the motion.

Those for:-

Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Male, Nelson, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp, Thompson and C Wallace.

Those against:-

Councillors Buchan, Cranney, Leedham, Lindridge, Little, Martin-Wells, Reeve, Smith and Young.

Those abstaining:-

None.

The vote on the amendment was carried.

Members confirmed that there would be no change in their votes for the substantive motion.

The vote on the substantive motion was therefore carried.

Jonathan Brash MP addressed Council.

2. MOTION TO HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND TREASURY RESPONSIBILITIES

“Background and Introduction

The new Labour administration locally and nationally had access to the financial records of the Conservative government and Conservative Coalition led Hartlepool Borough Council for at least 12 months prior to them winning the 2024 local and general elections. During that period, neither the Labour Party nor the Treasury raised any concerns regarding the significant financial challenges on the horizon, most notably a looming £22 billion national deficit. The absence of any warning or action from these parties raises serious questions about the level of financial oversight being exercised by national authorities during a critical period for public finances.

In contrast, this local administration was transparent with the now Labour leadership throughout 2023, sharing the council’s financial forecasts and making clear the significant pressures the council was facing. We highlighted that rising costs related to children in care were driving the council’s finances towards a crisis point. Despite inheriting a £12 million

deficit in 2019, we contended with multiple external pressures, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis, high inflation, substantial energy costs, and the financial burden associated with the rising number of children in care.

In the face of these challenges, we successfully managed to deliver a restrained rise in Council Tax, with a 0.99% increase in the Core Council Tax rate and a 2% Social Care Precept increase, both well below the maximum allowable rates. The final overrun for the council 2023/24, even after over £2m savings shows a significant deficit and our view is that the renewed strategy we started, of building our own children's homes to care for those who need to be taken into care is key as well as finding as many foster care families as possible to support those with less complex needs. The current high costs that we are seeing across the country by private providers in the children in care sector is causing these significant overspends.

We ask Council to consider:

The failure of the Treasury and Labour to address or highlight the impending national financial shortfall, while in possession of critical financial data, should be of serious concern. It suggests a broader issue within the Treasury with regard to financial transparency and oversight, and we believe this warrants an urgent investigation.

We also believe that there are potential links between the £22 billion shortfall and other significant financial pressures, such as the £9.4 billion required to meet public sector union pay demands, the £11.6 billion committed to international climate change initiatives, and an additional £1 billion that must be being allocated for other government spending - maybe buying new outfits for the PM, the cabinet and their partners?!. These links must be fully explored to ensure that public finances are being managed responsibly.

Hartlepool Borough Council SLT, by contrast, have demonstrated diligence and competence in maintaining clear and accurate financial forecasts, and their commitment to transparency stands as a model that should be followed and I imagine largely is, across the UK. The Treasury have almost made their negligence a marketing tool, which we feel needs to be fully tested.

We determine that Council should resolve to:

1. Write to the relevant government departments, including HM Treasury and the Department for Housing and Communities, to express our concern over the lack of transparency and communication regarding the national financial deficit and to request an explanation as to why these issues were not raised by Treasury officials during the relevant period.
2. Request a formal investigation into the causes of the £22 billion national shortfall, including whether it is directly linked to public sector pay

increases, international climate change funding, or other significant national expenditures. This investigation should also assess whether adequate internal controls and oversight mechanisms were in place to manage these financial commitments.

3. Urge the government to hold accountable those responsible for any mismanagement or lack of transparency, regardless of their roles, and to consider appropriate reprimands for any failures in financial oversight.

4. Support measures that ensure that all levels of government are fully equipped to maintain transparency and accountability in fiscal forecasting and that the interests of local authorities, such as Hartlepool Borough Council, are better considered in national financial planning.”

Signed by: Councillors M Young, G Cranney, B Buchan, L Smith, S Little, A Martin-Wells

The motion was moved by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Buchan.

The background and rationale for submission of the Motion was detailed by the mover of the Motion.

Councillor Hargreaves moved the following amendment to the motion.

“Given the turmoil created and the devastation inflicted upon the country over the last 14 years, particularly in poorer areas like ours, and the recent uncovering of the £22billion black hole in the national budget by HM Government, Hartlepool Borough Council calls for the following urgent actions:

1. That this Council writes to the Government to demand an inquiry into how former Conservative Ministers were permitted to make unfunded spending promises, contributing to the £22 billion shortfall and leaving their successors with a fiscal mess to sort out.
2. That this Council asserts its support for Accountability Measures and welcomes the Labour Government's Budget Responsibility Act (as voted for by our MP) as a step towards greater fiscal accountability and urges robust enforcement of the Act's provisions to prevent such a disaster ever occurring again.
3. That this Council advocates for the Government to introduce further reforms that enhance financial transparency and ensures local authorities are adequately considered in national budgeting processes.
4. That this Council welcomes the Labour Government's indications around moving to longer-term funding settlements for local authorities which will offer longer-term spending plans and greater security for overstretched local authority officers.
5. That this Council agrees to act in a way that upholds the Nolan principles of public life, specifically; integrity, honesty and leadership and refrains from dabbling in petty politics that spread untruths and lead to inflaming public distrust of politicians at all levels.

This Council stands firm in its commitment to responsible financial management and urges the Government to rectify these oversights for the benefit of our community and beyond.”

Signed: Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Clayton, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Male, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Roy, Scarborough, Sharp, Thompson and C Wallace.

Seconded by Councillor Boddy.

The background and rationale for submission of the amendment was detailed by the mover and seconder of the Motion.

Councillor Young addressed Council and commented on the amendment.

A recorded vote was taken on the amendment to the motion.

Those for:-

Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Dunbar, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Holbrook, Jorgeson, Male, Nelson, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp, Smith, Thompson and C Wallace.

Those against:-

Councillors Buchan, Cranney, Leedham, Lindridge, Little, Martin-Wells, Reeve, and Young.

Those abstaining:-

None.

The vote on the amendment and substantive motion was carried.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

47. MEMBERSHIP VACANCIES

A number of vacancies on Council Committees were reported to Council and the following nominations were received:

Licensing Committee – Councillor Dodds
Constitution Committee – Councillor Nelson
Appointments Panel – Councillor Boddy
Civic Honours Committee – Councillor Hargreaves
Children's Services Committee – Councillor Jorgeson
Planning Committee – Councillor Darby (resignation rescinded)

Appeals Committee – Councillors Buchan, Cook, Riddle Scarborough and Smith

Local Joint Consultative Committee – Councillors Boddy, Dunbar, Holbrook and Reeve

RESOLVED – The nominations received were approved.

48. RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR

Council were informed of the resignation of Councillor Brash. As a result of the subsequent by-election held on 19 September 2024, Councillor Owen Riddle was elected. The following outside bodies to which Councillor Brash had been appointed were therefore vacant and the following nominations were received.

Hartlepool Power Station Community Liaison Committee – Councillor Hargreaves

Safer Hartlepool Partnership – Councillor Brenda Harrison

Victoria and Jubilee Homes (Term of office 2022-2026) – Councillor Riddle

RESOLVED – That Councillor Brash's resignation and subsequent election of Councillor Riddle was noted and the nominations received for the resulting vacancies were approved.

49. SAFER HARTLEPOOL PARTNERSHIP (SHP)

Council were informed that a request had been received from Jonathan Brash, MP for Hartlepool to continue his participation within the membership of the Partnership.

RESOLVED – That the request was noted.

50. PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON POLICY COMMITTEES

The Leader of the Council and Managing Director wrote to the Parish Clerks of all Hartlepool Parish Councils seeking nominations for a representative from each Parish Council to be co-opted onto each of the Council's Policy Committees. The following nominations had been received for consideration by Council.

Finance and Policy Committee – Parish Councillor M Ireland, Dalton Piercy Parish Council

Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee – Parish Councillor S Smith, Greatham Parish Council

Neighbourhood Services Committee – Parish Councillor L Noble, Dalton Piercy Parish Council and Parish Councillor S Smith, Greatham Parish Council

RESOLVED – The nominations received were approved.

51. WHITBY STREET SUBSTANCE MISUSE TREATMENT CENTRE – FUNDING

Council were provided with an update on the Substance Misuse Treatment Centre currently based in Whitby Street. A proposed build at Roker Street received objections and did not proceed. Following the consideration of various options, it was proposed to place a new, larger Portakabin modular building, offering improved modern accommodation for staff and service users on the existing Whitby Street site. Details on the associated costings were included in the report and approval was sought for a scheme variation given the costings were in excess of £200,000 whilst noting that no additional borrowing approval was required.

RESOLVED – That the scheme variation be approved.

52. HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL/HARTLEPOOL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION PLANNING APPLICATION

Council was informed that there had been an administrative error resulting in a small overlap between the jurisdiction of the Hartlepool Development Corporation and Hartlepool Borough Council as the planning authority. A planning application had been received for site 7, Maritime Avenue that was predominantly within the HDC area which was shown on Appendix 2 and as it would be better for this to be determined by one planning authority, it was proposed to delegate HBC planning function to the HDC to allow them to determine this application in full. Consultation with HBC will be undertaken through existing neighbouring authority arrangements.

RESOLVED – The delegation of Hartlepool Borough Council's planning function to the Hartlepool Development Corporation in relation to site 7 – Maritime Avenue be approved.

53. PUBLIC QUESTION

None.

54. 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 10.1

None.

- b) Questions on notice to the Chair of any Committee or Forum under Council Procedure Rule 10.2

None.

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

None.

- d) The minutes of the meeting held by the Cleveland Fire Authority on 22 March 2024 and Police and Crime Panel on 6 February 2024 were noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.05pm

CEREMONIAL MAYOR

COUNCIL

12 December 2024



Report of: Finance and Policy Committee

Subject: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2025/26

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 2025/26 Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme recommended by Finance and Policy Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In accordance with the Constitution, the Finance and Policy Committee is required to consider and recommend to Full Council the LCTS scheme for the forthcoming financial year (2025/26).
- 3.2 A report was considered by Finance and Policy on 25 November 2024 and is attached at **Annex 1**.
- 3.3 The current simplified scheme was introduced in April 2024 and therefore has only been in operation for a number of months. It appears to be bedding in well and has resulted in a reduced administrative burden on the Council as well as greater clarity for council tax payers.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 In view of the new scheme having no significant issues and the need to establish the change in order to provide stability for our working age claimants, it is

proposed that no change is made to the scheme for 2026/26, save for an inflationary uplift.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Risk Implications	No relevant issues.
Financial Considerations	The financial implications are fully set out in Annex 1.
Legal Considerations	Councils are required to determine their LCTS scheme for each financial year before 11 March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.
Child and Family Poverty	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix A to Annex 1
Equality and Diversity Considerations	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix B to Annex 1
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues.
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues.
Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations	No relevant issues.
Consultation	Not applicable given no changes are proposed.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Finance and Policy Committee recommend that Full Council:

- i) Agree the 2025/26 LCTS scheme as presented to and agreed by the Finance and Policy Committee on the 25 November 2024.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To comply with legislation and ensure stability and a chance for the recently revised scheme to become established following the change to a simplified LCTS scheme.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Council Tax Support 2025/26 – Report to Finance and Policy Committee 25 November 2024.

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: 26 November 2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 26 November 2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 26 November 2024

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

25 NOVEMBER 2024



Subject: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2025/26

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) Agree the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme for 2025/26 to be referred to full Council for approval

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:

- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for Working Age applicants with billing authorities;
- Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
- Prescribed that persons of Pension age would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.

3.2 Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Support scheme has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities

and also within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding actually provided from Central Government sources, but that this has been significantly reduced.

- 3.3 The current Council Tax Support scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.
- 3.4 Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100 per cent support towards their council tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of LCTS can only be made to the working age scheme.
- 3.5 When Council Tax Support was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support. Due to the reduction in finance, the Council reduced the maximum level of support available to working age applicants in 2014/15 to 88%.

Simplified Scheme

- 3.6 Following public consultation, council agreed a revised scheme for operation in 2024/25. This “simplified” scheme introduced a number of income bands to determine support. It also increased the level of maximum support from 88% to 90% to provide additional support to those in most need. The current income bands and support for 2024/25 are set out below:

	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

- 3.7 Key features of the scheme include:

- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard is provided against all earnings;

- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance are disregarded;
- A further disregard of up to £40 a week from your income if an individual, their partner or a dependent child living with them receives one of the above benefits, thereby maintaining the current level of support to those with disabilities;
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance is disregarded;
- Child Benefit and Child Maintenance is disregarded;
- The following elements of Universal Credit are also 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 continue (maintaining the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant);
- The capital limit is set at £10,000 with no tariff (or assumed income) being applied; and
- With regard to non-dependents a £5 per week deduction is applied.

3.8 In addition, in order to align Council Tax Reduction with Universal Credit, a minimum level of income for those applicants who are self-employed was introduced. This is in line with the National Living Wage for 35 hours worked per week. The income does 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.

Simplified Scheme - Introduction

- 3.9 The new scheme was introduced on the 1 April 2024. Preceding this, significant training was undertaken within the Benefits team, but also within Revenues, Customer Services and Local Welfare Support. Information was provided to advice agencies within the borough to provide support for their customers. System upgrades were also carried out.
- 3.10 The roll out was successful. Whilst there was an initial increase in queries when bills went out, to date we have only received one formal complaint despite the significant scale of the change. The new system is considered to now be bedded in and where operational or system issues have arisen, the team have identified work around solutions.
- 3.11 In terms of administration impact, the scheme has successfully reduced the level of re-billing during the year with circa 2,000 less bills being issued by the end of August compared to the previous year. This will aid recovery of Council Tax, but also ensure residents on LCTS have a clearer understanding of their Council Tax position.

Claimant Numbers

- 3.12 Over the years there has been a steady decrease in the number of LCTS claimants. Despite this, Hartlepool remains (as at Q1 2024/25) the highest claimant count per adult population in the country and is currently the 15th highest for pensioners. Given relative deprivation this is not unexpected, but it also demonstrates our success in supporting take up of benefits where eligible.
- 3.13 During the current year, the number of claimants has increased slightly. As at September 2024 there were 13,015 LCTS claimants, of which 8,611 were working age and 4,404 pension age.
- 3.14 Forecasting future claimant numbers is difficult. It is likely that the government and council's drive to increase pension credit take up will manifest itself in higher pensioner claimants of LCTS. However, increased fraud prevention work, will likely counter any significant increase. The Council Tax Base report, elsewhere on today's agenda will include the best available estimate.

Collection Performance

- 3.15 Collecting Council Tax from LCTS households is more resource intensive than non LCTS households. These households are less likely to pay by Direct Debit, instead choosing to make payment in different ways e.g. cash. In addition there is a greater likelihood that payment is ultimately obtained through Attachment of Benefit. All recovery action is managed sensitively, whilst seeking to maximise income collection.
- 3.16 Attachment of Benefits (AOB) can only be requested to the DWP following the Council securing a liability order via the Magistrates Court. Currently the highest attachment allowable is £30.88 per month for a couple who are both over 25. If single and under 25, the deduction is £15.58. Only one AOB deduction can be active at any one time. In the best case scenario, such an attachment could only be secured 3 months into the financial year, thus allowing 9 months of collection. The maximum collectable in this scenario is therefore £277.92 in total for the first year for the couple or £140.22 for a single individual under 25. The least amount payable for a Band A property is £158.51, therefore in many circumstances, unless individual's circumstances change, debt continues to accrue year on year. Note, proposed changes in the Autumn Budget may reduce the amount able to be collected and therefore increase the level of debt accruing from year to year.
- 3.17 Currently 6,831 Council Tax accounts have an Attachment of Benefits, though these will not all be current LCTS accounts. In addition, there are 6,474 Liability Orders at pending stage. As at the end of August 2024 £4.984m of debt is outstanding to those with Attachment of Benefits. Collection levels remain high for this debt, albeit payment is not all received in the year the liability first became due.

- 3.18 Continued effort will be made to engage with and increase the collection rate for those in receipt of LCTS.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Given the introduction of the revised scheme on 1 April 2024, the fact that no significant issues have arisen and the need to establish the change to provide stability for our working age claimants, it is proposed that no change is made to the scheme for 2025/26, save for an inflationary uplift.
- 4.2 The September Consumer Price Index (CPI) figure is used by the national government to calculate uplift in benefits from the 1 April in the following year. The CPI rate at September 2024 was 1.7%. It is proposed to mirror this increase with our LCTS scheme, resulting in the following bands for 2025/26:

	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 £111.97	£0.00 to £179.15	£0.00 to £246.34	£0.00 to £156.76	£0.00 to £229.55	£0.00 to £291.13
Band 2 (70%)	N/A	£111.98 to £201.55	£179.16 to £268.73	£246.35 to £330.32	£156.77 to £268.73	£229.56 to £314.64	£291.14 to £380.70
Band 3 (40%)	N/A	£201.56 to £240.74	£268.74 to £285.53	£330.33 to £391.90	£268.74 to £324.72	£314.65 to £358.31	£380.71 to £447.89
Band 4 (20%)	N/A	£240.75 to £285.53	£285.54 to £313.51	£391.91 to £503.86	£324.73 to £380.69	£358.32 to £414.29	£447.90 to £537.45

- 4.3 Alternative options could be considered for the LCTS, including changing the bands or key features. To do so would require consultation. Given the scheme is in its infancy, is running smoothly, and the time and cost constraints of running a consultation this is not recommended. Similarly a different CPI rate could be applied to the uplifts or no inflation rate applied at all. This was not considered appropriate given using September CPI aligns with national benefit uplifts as well as generally being aligned to government grant uplifts in the past.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The estimated cost for 2025/26 is £15.904m and included within the Base calculation elsewhere on today's agenda. Costs are shared between the Council and the major precepting authorities based on the precept levied on the collection fund. For 2024/25 the proportions are as follows:

- Hartlepool Borough Council (83.4%)
- Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland (12.8%)
- Cleveland Fire Brigade (3.8%)

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	No relevant issues.
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	Councils are required to determine their LCTS scheme for each financial year before 11 March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.
SUBSIDY CONTROL	No relevant issues
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix A
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	An impact assessment is attached at Appendix B
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	No relevant issues.
CONSULTATION	Not applicable given no changes are proposed.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Agree the 2025/26 LCTS scheme as set out to be referred to full Council for approval.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 To comply with legislation and ensure stability and a chance for the recent scheme changes to become established follow the recent change to a simplified LCTS scheme.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Telephone: 01429 523093

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 05/11/24
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 05/11/24
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 05/11/24

Poverty Impact Assessment Form

Appendix A

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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

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			The operation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme means that those meeting the eligibility criteria will receive a reduction to Council Tax payable.
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 B

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 2025/26		
Why are you making the change?	No change is proposed save for inflationary uplifts		
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 2025/26. 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?		<p>The existing scheme has been consulted upon previously. Consultation would be undertaken should an amendment be proposed.</p> <p>It is not envisaged that any scheme change will impact the Equality Impact Assessment, the same relative impact is anticipated.</p>	
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	05/11/24	Reviewed	05/11/24
Completed	05/11/24	Published	25/11/24



Report of: Finance and Policy Committee

Subject: COUNCIL TAX BASE 2025/26

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 seek member approval, as required by statutory regulations, of a calculated Council Tax Base for 2025/26 which will be used for Council Tax billing purposes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Hartlepool Borough Council (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 2025. The Council Tax Base is expressed as the number of Band D equivalent properties.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposed Tax Base for the Council area for 2025/26 is 26,455. This is an increase of 675 (2.62%) from the current base. The calculation and relevant commentary is included in the attached report to Finance and Policy Committee at **Annex 1**.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Risk Implications	As set out in the attached report at Annex 1 .
Financial Considerations	As set out in the attached report at Annex 1 .
Legal Considerations	To comply with statutory responsibilities as set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
Subsidy Control	No relevant Issues
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 Finance and Policy Committee recommend that Full Council:

- a) Approve a Council Tax Base for Hartlepool for 2025/26 of 26,455 as detailed in Annex 1 of Appendix 1.
- b) Approve a Council Tax Base for 2025/26 for Parishes who may levy a precept upon the Council's Collection Fund as follows:

Brierton	15.9
Claxton	13.7
Dalton Piercy	134.1

Elwick	237.6
Greatham	274.1
Hart	489.2
Headland	810.7
Newton Bewley	33.9
Wynyard	1,129.0

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Tax Base 2025/26 – Report to Finance and Policy Committee 25 November 2024.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 26 November 2024
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 26 November 2024
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 26 November 2024

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

25 NOVEMBER 2024



Subject: COUNCIL TAX BASE 2025/26

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
- 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 2025/26 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 2025. 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 2025/26, 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 2025/26 will be submitted to Council as part of the budget process.

4. CALCULATION OF TAX BASE

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2. 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.

5. PROPOSED TAX BASE

- 5.1 The proposed Tax Base for the Council area for 2025/26 is **26,455**. This is an increase of 675 (**2.62%**) from the current base. The forecasts includes a best estimate of the anticipated number of households eligible for LCTS.
- 5.2 The Band D make-up of the base position is summarised in the table below, together with a comparison against previous year.

2024/25		2025/26
35,455	Chargeable Dwellings (after disregards / disability adjust)	35,997
-3,289	Less Discounts and Premiums	-3,119
-6,261	Less Local Council Tax Support Estimate	-6,370

268	Add forecast Base growth	350
26,173	Item A	26,858
98.5%	Item B – Collectability (%)	98.5%
25,780	Council Tax Base	26,455

- 5.3 The increase in chargeable dwellings represents a positive rate of housing growth within Hartlepool during the past year.
- 5.4 The reduction in discounts and premiums reflects both the anti-fraud work, specifically targeting Single Person Discount error and fraud, but also the introduction of additional premiums from April 2024 for Long-Term Empty (unfurnished) dwellings.
- 5.5 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. Elsewhere on this agenda the LCTS scheme for 2025/26 is submitted for approval prior to referral to full council. The calculated Council Tax Base assumes that this scheme is approved and that there is no additional uptake in those eligible for LCTS.
- 5.6 The growth assumption for 2025/26 takes into account three elements:
- Housing growth. An increase of 250 is assumed. This is positive, but slower growth than the current year due to the mix and maturity of key housing developments;
 - Additional Premiums. 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. Council previously approved the introduction of these premiums from 1 April 2025; and
 - Fraud Prevention. Following the success in reducing Single Person Discount fraud it is anticipated that momentum can be maintained and that action to address potential LCTS fraud and error will commence during the year.
- 5.7 The proposed Council Tax Base has been reflected within the MTFS reported elsewhere on today’s agenda.

6. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Tax Base for 2025/26 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 or government policy, for example promotion of pension credit. 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%, though this is kept under close review. Regular management reporting is in place to ensure that collection rate is maintained.
- Reduced Collection Rate – Attachment of Benefits. The Autumn Budget proposed reducing the amount of debt that can be recovered via Universal Credit from 25% to 15%. This could impact on the level of collection via attachment of benefits. This will be kept under review for 2025/26 and may impact future years collection rates should it have a material impact.

7. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. The Council must budget to avoid a deficit on its statutory Collection Fund. In determining the 2025/26 Council Tax Base a number of underlying assumptions have been made. As part of the Council's Financial Governance Framework, throughout 2025/26 programmed monitoring reviews of Collection Fund Council Tax performance will be undertaken and reported to Finance and Policy Committee.
- 7.2 Growth in the 2025/26 tax base had already been anticipated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The actual tax base to be set is 237 higher than forecast and this will provide increased Council Tax income of £0.470m, which will help reduce the 2025/26 budget deficit. This additional recurring income is reflected in the updated MTFS report on the agenda.

8. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. 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. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Subsidy Control	No relevant issues
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

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that Members refer for approval for full Council, that:

- a) Approve a Hartlepool BC Council Tax Base for 2025/26 of 26,455 as detailed in Appendix 1.
- b) Approve a Council Tax Base for 2025/26 for Parishes who may levy a precept upon the Council's Collection Fund as follows:

Brierton	15.9
Claxton	13.7
Dalton Piercy	134.1
Elwick	237.6
Greatham	274.1
Hart	489.2
Headland	810.7
Newton Bewley	33.9
Wynyard	1,129.0

11. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 To enable the Council to discharge its statutory responsibilities.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

13. CONTACT OFFICER

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 5/11/24
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 5/11/24
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 5/11/24

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	133.00	23,303.00	7,606.00	6,637.00	3,518.00	1,981.00	909.00	683.00	91.00	44,861.00	35,997
Total Discount	(15.25)	(2,872.25)	(809.75)	(508.00)	(212.00)	(95.00)	(38.50)	(25.50)	(3.50)	(4,579.75)	(3,438)
Premium Factor	1.00	372.00	32.00	12.00	13.00	7.00	1.00	5.00	2.00	445.00	319
Council Tax Support Estimate	(39.22)	(7,346.00)	(1,166.99)	(406.83)	(108.05)	(40.42)	(13.13)	(3.58)	0.00	(9,124.22)	(6,370)
Net Forecast Chargeable Dwellings	79.53	13,456.75	5,661.26	5,734.17	3,210.95	1,852.58	858.37	658.92	89.50	31,602.03	26,508
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	44.18	8,971.17	4,403.20	5,097.04	3,210.95	2,264.26	1,239.87	1,098.20	179.00	26,507.87	26,508
Band D Forecast Growth (Housing)										250.00	250
Band D Forecast Growth (Premiums)										50.00	50
Band D Forecast Growth (Fraud Prevention)										50.00	50
Total Forecast Band D Equivalents - Item A										26,857.87	26,858
Estimated Collection Rate - Item B										98.5%	98.5%
Tax Base 2025/26										26,455.00	26,455



Report of: Managing Director

Subject: BUSINESS REPORT

1. OUTSIDE BODY VACANCIES

Council are informed that vacancies remain on the following outside bodies:-

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education – 1 vacancy
Age UK Teesside – 1 vacancy
Teesside Airport Consultative Committee – 1 vacancy
Henry Smith Education Charity – 1 vacancy
Furness Seaman's Pension Fund – 2 vacancies

Nominations are sought.

2. CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – RESIGNATION OF VICE-CHAIR

I have received notification that Councillor Sharp has resigned as Vice-Chair of Children's Services Committee and that Councillor Dunbar be appointed as his replacement for the remainder of the municipal year.

Members are asked to note this appointment.

3. RESIGNATION FROM COUNCILLOR BUCHAN – AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

I have received notification that Councillor Buchan has resigned as a Member and Vice-Chair from the Audit and Governance Committee. Nominations are therefore sought to replace Councillor Buchan (non-majority Group appointment) and to also appoint a Vice-Chair for the remainder of the municipal year.

Nominations are sought.

4. PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON POLICY COMMITTEES

On 22 May 2024, the Leader of the Council and Managing Director wrote to the Parish Clerks of all Hartlepool Parish Councils seeking nominations for a

representative from each Parish Council to be co-opted onto each of the Council's Policy Committees as non-voting members. Following appointments made at the last meeting of Full Council to Economic Growth (1 appointment) and Neighbourhood Services (2 appointments), Council are informed that further nominations have been received:-

Parish Councillor Elizabeth Hurst (Wynyard Parish Council) to serve as a co-opted member on Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee

Parish Councillor Sam Lee (Headland Parish Council) to serve as a co-opted member on Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee

Parish Councillor Scott Gaiety (Headland Parish Council) to serve as a co-opted member on the Adult and Community Based Services Committee

As appointment of co-opted members is within the remit of full Council, Members' approval is sought.

5. **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE – RESIGNATION OF VICE CHAIR**

I have received notification that Councillor Clayton has resigned as Vice-Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee and that Councillor Cook be appointed as his replacement for the remainder of the municipal year.

Members are asked to note this appointment.

Public questions for Council

Meeting Date: 12 December 2024

1.	From: Veronica Jane Rowsell
	To: Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee and Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee
	<p>Question:</p> <p>My question is, what procedure do you have to combat the issues raised below?</p> <p>I wish for this question and letter to be read out at a full council meeting.</p> <p>1) I pity the people growing old in Hartlepool today There's not much in the way of helping hands You've taken away the mobility scooter shop Which gave the elderly and infirmed a bit of a chance Dropped kerbs are a big issue for me 'Cause as far as I see only half the job has been done There's still an inch or so lip on most of them And trying to mount the pavement isn't fun</p> <p>2) Some of the pavements and walkways are buckled For example along the bottom of Catcote Road I think I'm on a bouncy castle As I shake from my head to my toes The pavements are all cracked, uneven and in a poor state And the kerbs are not easy to see Where there is no grass verge there should be a white line painted For those with poor sight like me</p> <p>3) Pressing the button to work the traffic lights Can be quite a danger zone For the control panel is on the edge of the pavement And I have to stop well back from the road This means that I have a job to reach the control pad Because I'm scared to get close to the edge It feels safer to wait for a passer-by To work the control panel instead</p>

4)
Shopping whether in a wheelchair or not,
is a battle older people have to put up with
Even the supermarkets put what you want on the topshelf
And the fear of dropping something puts you right off.
The clothes shops are geared to squash in as many rails as they can
And it's like walking around in a narrow maze
Primark is the place that springs to mind
And I leave buying nothing and my mind's in a daze

5)
Tesco Express shop on the Fens is another nightmare
As they seem to be filling the shelves all day long.
They have tall wide trollies which take up the aisle space
And I think that it's all wrong
They should make sure their shelves are all stocked up from the start
And refill at the end of the day
As it makes life hard for wheelchair users to cope
There has to be a better way.

6)
I feel it is wrong to park a car half on the pavement and half on the road
As driving a wheelchair through a narrow gap can be a problem
So you either have to go and ask politely if it can be moved
Or risk life and limb by going around it
(I must admit that families pushing prams, pushchairs etc must be
experiencing similar problems)
It's not much fun when your legs don't work.
And you have to rely on others for aid
So let's have something done about the things mentioned above
And make life a little less of a problem

7)
Growing old is a sad fact of life
And sometimes it brings you sorrow
So let's do something for the elderly today
Because it may be your turn tomorrow.

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING

7 JUNE 2024



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Gary Allen, Bob Buchan, Ben Clayton

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs John Kabuye, Naweed Hussain, Dennis McCabe

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Barry Hunt, Mary Ovens, David Taylor

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Jim Beall, Stefan Houghton, Sufi Mubeen, Andrew Sherris, Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Chief Fire Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

The Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer (LAMO) opened the meeting and informed Members that nominations had been received for two political groups with 7 Members for Labour and 6 for Conservative. He sought nominations for the position of Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2024/25.

Councillors David Coupe and Ben Clayton were subsequently proposed and seconded. A vote was taken and both nominees received eight votes. The LAMO suggested a recess to speak to both nominees. Members agreed and on their return the LAMO announced that Councillor Coupe to be appointed Chair for the ensuing year. Councillor Coupe thanked Members for their support.

RESOLVED – that Councillor David Coupe be appointed Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2024/25.

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 2024/25. Councillor Ben Clayton was proposed and seconded. The Chair welcomed Councillor Clayton to his new role and said he looked forward to working together over the coming year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Ben Clayton be appointed as Vice Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority for 2024/25.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary meeting of 22 March 2024 be confirmed.

5. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive (Appointment) Committees on 15/16 April and 20/21 May 2024, Extraordinary Audit & Governance Committee on 19 April 2024 and the Executive Committee on 17 May 2024 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 2024

The Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer (LAMO) referred Members to The Constitution at Appendix A which included:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • CFA Membership 2024/25 | • Ethical Governance Framework |
| • Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 | • Standing Orders of the Authority |
| • Terms of Reference | Regulation of Proceedings & |
| • Scheme of Delegation | Business |
| • Financial Procedure Rules | • Contract Procedure Rules |
| • Code of Corporate Governance | • Members Allowance Scheme |

Voting took place on the nominations received for Committees and outside bodies. With the consensus of the Members present, it was unanimously 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 28 June 2024.

Appointment of Audit & Governance Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Nominations took place for the position of Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee. Councillor Mary Ovens was subsequently proposed and seconded.

Nominations took place for the position of Vice Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee. Councillor Stephan Houghton was subsequently proposed and seconded.

7.1 Business Report 2024 cont.

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
LAB	CLAYTON (VICE CHAIR)	HARTLEPOOL
CON	BUCHAN	HARTLEPOOL
LAB	CHANEY	REDCAR & CLEVELAND
MICA	MCCABE	MIDDLESBROUGH
CON	MUBEEN	STOCKTON ON TEES
LAB	STOKER	STOCKTON ON TEES

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

LIB DEM	OVENS (CHAIR)	REDCAR & CLEVELAND
CON	HOUGHTON (VICE CHAIR)	STOCKTON ON TEES
LAB	ALLEN	HARTLEPOOL
LAB	BEALL	STOCKTON ON TEES
IND	HUNT	REDCAR & CLEVELAND
LAB	HUSSAIN	MIDDLESBROUGH
LAB	KABUYE	MIDDLESBROUGH
CON	SHERRIS	STOCKTON ON TEES
CON	TAYLOR	REDCAR & CLEVELAND

FPS LOCAL PENSION BOARD 2024/25

LAB	CLAYTON	HARTLEPOOL
CON	COUPE	MIDDLESBROUGH
LAB	STOKER	STOCKTON ON TEES
LAB	ALLEN (SUB)	HARTLEPOOL

REPRESENTATIVES FOR OUTSIDE BODIES 2024/25

LGA FIRE COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE	COUPE
Substitute:	MUBEEN
REDCAR & CLEVELAND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP	TAYLOR
STOCKTON SAFER PARTNERSHIP REPN	HOUGHTON

7.2 Member Development Plan

The LAMO presented the Member Development Plan 2024/25, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report, and informed Members that a Corporate Manslaughter development seminar had been arranged for 26 July 2024.

RESOLVED – that the Member Development Plan 2024/25, at Appendix 1, be approved.

8. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

8.1 Information Pack

- 8.1.1 National Joint Circulars
- 8.1.2 Employers Circulars
- 8.1.3 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

9. REPORT OF THE CLERK

9.1 Appointment of Chief Fire Officer

Members received details in connection with the appointment of the new Chief Fire Officer for Cleveland Fire Authority by the Executive (Appointments) Committee on 15/16 May 2024.

The ACFO-SPR outlined the robust three-stage appointment process and proposed conditions of service detailed at Appendix 1.

The LAMO recorded a vote, and Members unanimously approved the appointment of Mr Peter Rickard as the Chief Fire Officer of Cleveland Fire Authority.

RESOLVED – That the appointment of Peter Rickard to the post of Chief Fire Officer, subject to the confirmation of the necessary medical, reference checks and Enhanced DBS and Security Clearance, be approved.

10. JOINT REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FORVIS MAZARS

10.1 The Financial Report 2022/23 and Audit Completion Report

The Treasurer presented Members with the 2022/23 Financial Report which had been published on the website on 16 June 2023 and scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee on 25 August 2023. He reported that owing to a backlog of local government audit work the external audit had not commenced until January 2024.

Mazars had presented a report to the Executive Committee on 17 May 2024 to advise Members that the External Auditors had substantially completed the audit review which enabled the 2023/24 Financial Report to be finalised. The Treasurer confirmed that this put the Authority in a good position and audit work was now up to date.

The Audit Engagement Lead (AEL) presented the Audit Completion Report and informed Members that an unqualified audit opinion had been issued, without modification, on the 2022/23 financial statements and if approved could be signed off and published on the Brigade website on 10 June 2024.

He reported that the Auditors Annual Report would go to the Audit & Governance Committee on 28 June 2024 for detailed consideration and would include value for money commentary to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and financial sustainability.

He also noted that the Whole of Government accounts reporting would be submitted the following week and once clearance was received, expected around the end of November 2024, the Audit Certificate could be issued.

10.1 The Financial Report 2022/23 and Audit Completion Report cont.

The AEL informed Members that this was his final year working with the Authority as he was to be replaced by Mr James Collins. He passed on sincere thanks to Members and Officers and wished them well for the challenging future the Authority faced.

The Chair recorded thanks to the AEL for the many years hard work he had dedicated to the Authority.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the 2022/23 Financial Report (including the statement of accounts) attached at Appendix A be approved.**
- (ii) That the Audit Completion Report (ACR) at Appendix B and ACR follow up letter at Appendix C be noted.**
- (ii) That Members noted that the Management Representation Letter will be issued once the audit has concluded.**
- (iv) That the Auditors' draft Annual Report attached at Appendix D be noted.**

11. 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."

12. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

That the Confidential Minutes of the Executive (Appointment) Committees on 15/16 April and 20/21 May 2024 and Executive Committee on 17 May 2024 be confirmed.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**

Cleveland Police and Crime Panel

A meeting of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel was held on Tuesday, 9 July 2024.

Present: Councillor Tony Riordan (Chair), Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE (Deputy Chair), Mayor Chris Cooke, Councillor John Coulson, Councillor Graham Cutler, Councillor Chris Jones, Mr Paul McGrath, Councillor Ian Morrish, Councillor Karen Oliver, Councillor Paul Rowling, Mr Luigi Salvati and Councillor Janet Thompson

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

Also In attendance: Matt Storey (Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Oldroyd(Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

Apologies: Councillor Peter Chaney

PCP 1/24 Appointment of Chair for 2024/25

It was moved by Councillor John Coulson and seconded by Paul McGrath that Councillor Tony Riordan be appointed Chair of the Panel for the municipal year 2024-25.

A vote took place and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Tony Riordan be appointed Chair of the Panel for the municipal year 2024-25.

PCP 2/24 Appointment of Vice Chair for 2024/25

It was moved by Councillor Janet Thompson and seconded by Councillor Paul Rowling that Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE be appointed Vice Chair of the panel for the municipal year 2024-25.

A vote took place and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE be appointed Vice Chair of the panel for the municipal year 2024-25.

PCP 3/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

PCP 4/24 Minutes of the meetings held on the following dates and attendance matrix

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 and the attendance matrix for 2023-24.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 be agreed as a correct record and the attendance matrix be noted.

**PCP
5/24**

Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report

The Panel considered the Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report 2023/24.

Following the recent election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner, the report was introduced by the Chief Executive. In introducing the report, the Chief Executive highlighted a number of achievements across the year, most notably, the removal of Cleveland Police from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services 'engage' process (otherwise known as 'special measures') in September 2023 for the first time in four years. This had been achieved through the culmination of hard work and determination by officers, staff and volunteers within Cleveland Police, supported by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Other significant achievements included:

- An overall reduction in crime by 8% in the last 12 months, representing 7500 fewer crimes than previously.
- The successful introduction of custody navigators and hospital navigators to support people involved in violence.
- An investment of £1.4m in anti-violence projects and interventions.
- A significant reduction in re-offending rates in those participants who successfully completed the Divert programme.
- The continued success of project ADDER in reducing harm caused by drugs and addiction and the introduction of the UK's first drug driving educational scheme.
- An investment in targeted youth outreach services to divert young people away from anti-social behaviour and crime and encourage them into more positive interests and activities.
- The continued investment in measures to tackle violence against women and girls with 1198 victims reporting improved ability to cope after accessing support.

The report set out clearly the actions that had been taken to achieve each of the objectives that had been set in the Police and Crime Plan and Panel Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss various aspects, including the following points:

- The plan contained Cleveland wide statistics. Where possible, it would be useful to see these broken down to borough level to support the work of local community safety partnerships.
- The continuation of support for Victim Care and Advice Services (VCAS) was important, particularly in relation to violence against women and girls and it was hoped that the new Commissioner would include this in his Police and Crime Plan.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report be welcomed and noted.

**PCP
6/24**

Commissioner's Scrutiny Programme

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the Police and

Crime Commissioner's scrutiny programme.

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

The Commissioner had a range of scrutiny approaches in place to engage with the Chief Constable and hold Cleveland Police to account. This was delivered through the PCC's Standards, Scrutiny and Accountability (SSA) Programme.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
7/24**

Decisions of the Commissioner

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

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

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

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

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

Questions and comments from Panel members included the following:

- With reference to drug related crimes, a combination of enforcement action and treatment was necessary.
- Dealing with knife crime remained a priority. An education programme for young people was important, however, there were many other means of engaging with young people other than in schools and would be explored.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
8/24**

Communication, Consultation and Engagement Update

The Commissioner presented his report detailing the communication activity of the PCC's office since the last meeting.

In response to a request from a panel member, the Commissioner stated he would look to provide information on which events he had attended personally,

and which had been attended by Office staff.

The value of social media as a communication tool was discussed recognising there were various different platforms available, each generally attracting a different type of audience.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
9/24 Police and Crime Plan Development - Consultation and Engagement
Proposal**

Panel Members considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner setting out a proposed approach to consultation and engagement on the development of his Police and Crime Plan 2024-28.

He shared a document outlining his vision of 'working together to build safe, strong and confident communities which was supported by six proposed priorities:

- Deliver more visible and effective policing
- Reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and harm
- Improve safety for women and girls
- Build trust and confidence in policing and the justice system
- Ensure the right support for victims and vulnerable people
- Prevent offending and re-offending

A suite of performance metrics would be agreed to support and monitor delivery against the plan.

Panel Members asked that careful consideration be given to how consultation events were advertised and the types of questions included in any surveys or questionnaires. It was important to get a wide variety of views that were representative of the population in the Force area.

Other comments included:

- The need to address the disconnect between crime and the perception of crime.
- The importance of people to reporting crime and any information related to crimes to build effective intelligence.
- The possibility of extending the powers given to PCSO's.
- The benefits of co-located services.
- The inadequacies of the current funding model and the specific challenges that posed for Cleveland police.
- The relationship with the wider justice system and criminal courts.
- Concerns about the early release of prisoners and the impact on communities.

RESOLVED that the Panel's comments be noted.

**PCP
10/24**

Panel Arrangements and Training Needs 2024/25

The Panel considered their work programme for 2024/25 and training needs.

With reference to the statutory role of reviewing the local policing precept, the Panel felt this should continue to be undertaken by a Task and Finish Group in order to facilitate sufficient time and analysis of the financial arrangements of the PCC and commissioned services. The Task and Finish Group would make its recommendations to the Panel.

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

Hartlepool – Councillor Karen Oliver
Middlesbrough – Councillor Ian Morrish
Redcar and Cleveland – Councillor Graham Cutler
Stockton – Councillor John Coulson
Non-Political Independent Member – Paul McGrath

With reference to the Panel's role in handling complaints, the following membership of the Complaints Sub-Committee was proposed:

Hartlepool – Councillor Rob Darby
Middlesbrough – Councillor Janet Thompson
Redcar and Cleveland – Councillor Chris Jones
Stockton – Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE
Non-Political Independent Member – Luigi Salvati

With respect to training, the Panel were advised that a training event had taken place in December 2023 but arrangements would be made to repeat this following changes in panel membership.

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

RESOLVED that:

1. The proposed precept task and finish group membership be agreed.
2. The proposed membership of the Complaint Sub-Committee be agreed.
3. Arrangements be made for a further training event for the Panel.
4. Potential suggestions for scrutiny topics be revisited following training.

**PCP
11/24**

Members' Questions to the Commissioner

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

“Would you, as Commissioner, agree with me that it is not appropriate to use the resources of the elected local policing body improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) and, with that in mind, reflect on your post promoting a political candidate on your Facebook page for the election on 4th July?”

The Commissioner responded that the post in question was on a Labour campaign page and not an OPCC page and was, therefore, appropriate.

Question 2 – The following question had been submitted from Councillor John Coulson for response by the Commissioner

“As you develop your Police and Crime Plan, how do you intend to deal with the problem of shoplifting and associated issues?”

The Commissioner responded that retail crime was an important area and was particularly traumatic for retail staff who, by nature of their roles, were required to go back to the scene of the crime on a daily basis. This type of crime also had a significant impact on economic growth. He noted that government had dedicated more resource to this area and targeted action in some areas such as ‘days of action’ had proved effective. He intended to work with businesses in developing the approach to this work which would include exploring the use of digital technology such as retrospective facial recognition.

Question 3 – The following question had been submitted from Luigi Salvati for response by the Commissioner

“Recently, a number of stories appeared in the media regarding support by Cleveland Police being withdrawn from, or the format needing to be changed for, the annual charity Santa Motorcycle Ride. Although the deployment of police resources is the decision of the Chief Constable, is there anything you can do to further support the Chief Constable in ensuring this fantastic community engagement event carries on?”

The Commissioner responded that some operational details had needed to be clarified with the organisers of the event. This had now been done and the event would go ahead.

Question 4 – The following question had been submitted from Luigi Salvati for response by the Commissioner

“Concerning the recent incident on Roseberry Topping, and recalling a previous similar incident around 18 months ago which resulted in a conviction, how has the PCC assured himself that there is a consistent and proportionate operational response to such issues?”

The Commissioner responded that the matter was an operational policing matter. He had been briefed by the Chief Constable and was assured that the matter had been dealt with appropriately.

**PCP
12/24** **Public Questions**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**PCP
13/24** **Forward Plan**

Members were presented with the Forward Plan for the Panel 2024-25. It was requested that the date of the meeting in November be changed from 19 November 2024 to 12 November 2024.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan 2024-25 be agreed, including the requested change of date in November.

**PCP
14/24** **Exclusion of the Press and Public.**

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

**PCP
15/24** ***Complaints**

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer detailing a complaint matter (ref 2024-02) that had been received.

RESOLVED

1. The Panel be confirmed as the relevant panel for the matter.
2. The matter be referred to the IOPC in line with regulations.
3. The complaint matter be recorded and notified to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Cleveland Police and Crime Panel

A meeting of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel was held on Tuesday, 17 September 2024.

Present: Councillor Tony Riordan (Chair), Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE (Deputy Chair), Councillor Peter Chaney, Mayor Chris Cooke, Councillor John Coulson, Councillor Graham Cutler, Mr Paul McGrath, Councillor Ian Morrish, Councillor Karen Oliver, Councillor Paul Rowling, Mr Luigi Salvati, Councillor Janet Thompson, Councillor Karen King and Councillor Mike Young

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

Also In attendance: Matthew Storey (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) and Lisa Oldroyd (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

Apologies: Councillor Rob Darby and Councillor Chris Jones

PCP 16/24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

PCP 17/24 **Minutes of the meetings held on the following dates and attendance matrix**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 and the attendance matrix for 2024-25.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 be agreed as a correct record and the attendance matrix be noted.

PCP 18/24 **Recent Disorder Events - Chief Constable to attend**

The Chief Constable attended the meeting to brief the Panel on the Police's response to the disorder events that had occurred in Hartlepool on 31 July 2024 and Middlesbrough on 4 August 2024.

He stated that a full Public Order Public Safety Command had been stood up lasting over three weeks to support local, regional and national requirements.

As a result of the disorder there had been:

- Over 250 crimes recorded
- 117 Suspects arrested
- 88 Suspects charged
- 32 Suspects currently remanded in Custody
- 23 Suspects jailed with sentences totalling 43 years and 6 months
- 44 Suspects identified yet to be arrested
- 143 Suspects yet to be identified

- Total costs of the Policing Operation had been in excess of £660,000

He also noted, however, that the response to the events had also had a positive impact on public confidence in the police.

As part of the Panel's ensuing discussion, the following comments and issues were noted:

- It was expected that the financial cost of the operation would be covered by national Government with little, or very limited impact at a local level. It was expected this would also include funding for the compensation scheme.
- Deprivation appeared to be a factor contributing to the disorder events.
- The Commissioner had continued to reinforce the concerns about the funding formula at a national level and shared a copy of a letter he had sent to the Home Secretary in that regard.
- There had been support for all Officers involved in the operation with the force welfare team contacting each officer individually.
- The leadership and communication by District Commanders at a local level had been excellent.
- The communications from the Commissioner and his Office had also been excellent and well received.
- The Commissioner had spent time with various groups and individuals who had been affected by the disorder. As a result of this, there seemed to be a stronger shared desire to look for opportunities for positive change and to support community cohesion and a Hate Crime Strategic group was being formed.

RESOLVED that the Panel's thanks to the Commissioner, the Chief Constable and the Force for their response to the recent disorder events be placed on record and the Chair write to the Chief Constable, on behalf of the Panel, to that effect.

PCP 19/24 **Quarterly Performance Update**

The Commissioner presented his Police and Crime Plan Performance Summary report which covered the Quarter 1 period of 2024/25. In presenting his report he highlighted the positive work that had taken place as part of the Safer Streets 5 Programme, the virtual reality work with Teesside University as part of the work to tackle violence against women and girls and the launch of the youth focused custody suite in Middlesbrough police station.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following questions and comments from Panel were raised:

- There appeared to be a less visible presence of PCSO's. The Commissioner stated that this was an area he was focusing on. There were staff abstractions at times to support response policing, but there was a PCSO recruitment drive planned for January 2025.
- A member questioned whether the reduction in non-999 calls correlated

with a reduction in reports of crimes? The Commissioner advised that the reduction in non-999 calls reflected a national trend. He was confident that residents knew how to report non-emergency issues, including through an increased use of digital reporting through other means such as the COPA app. He emphasised the importance of non-emergency reporting in building up intelligence to be able to tackle issues more effectively.

- Whilst the figures during the reporting period showed a reduction in total domestic related recorded crime, there was still lots to do. Violence against women and girls and neighbourhood policing were priority areas for the Home Office and education work was an important element of the strategies to address these issues.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
20/24** **Communication, Consultation and Engagement Update**

The Commissioner presented his report detailing the communication activity of the PCC's office since the last meeting.

A Panel Member asked if it was possible to make the connection between the communications activity and the strategic objectives, once the Police and Crime Plan was agreed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
21/24** **Commissioner's Scrutiny Programme**

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

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
22/24** **Decisions of the Commissioner**

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

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

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

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

Decisions made since the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel were

attached to the report.

In relation to the 'Rewire' programme (helping people with criminal records into employment), a member asked whether the Force employed people with criminal records. The Panel was advised that the Force did employ such people, but subject to vetting and risk assessments.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**PCP
23/24**

Members' Questions to the Commissioner

Question 1 – the following question had been submitted by Luigi Salvati for response by the Commissioner

'Accepting that both Cleveland Police and the relevant Local Authorities in the Force area have responsibilities to ensure parking regulations are adhered to, how does the commissioner assure himself that the Force is appropriately discharging them'.

The Commissioner responded that in the main, local authorities are responsible for parking issues. The police are able to issue fines in some circumstances where there is an obstruction and will undertake targeted operations from time to time taking account of resources and priorities.

The Chair asked the information on the Force's website could be reviewed to give clearer guidance dealing with an obstruction.

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

'Cybercrime is rapidly growing and has become incredibly lucrative for criminals. Could the commissioner outline the Cleveland police strategy to tackle this and whether high level IT skills are embedded in recruitment strategies or whether specialist training is offered to new recruits?'

The Commissioner responded that there was a dedicated cyber crime unit and all officers were regularly briefed and given ongoing training with emerging methods for tackling the rapidly changing nature of cyber crime. There had previously been a fraud financial advocate in place which had been very successful in helping victims get reimbursement. A similar post was now being funded through a partnership arrangement between the Police, local authorities and trading standards.

Question 3– the following question had been submitted by Councillor Graham Cutler for response by the Commissioner

'After campaigning hard, Loftus police station was re-opened 6 years ago and staffed with a part time team that many East Cleveland residents and businesses rely on. Positive relationships have been built between the community and the team which has given residents and businesses a great sense of security and confidence to report crime. I understand the force is undergoing a restructure in its staffing which includes the East Cleveland area.

How can the Commissioner make sure the benefits of the improved relationships and confidence in East Cleveland aren't lost in any change?'

The Commissioner responded that he had reviewed this position through his own scrutiny arrangements. He advised that shift patterns had changed, but he had been assured by the Redcar Neighbourhood policing team that this would have no impact. The location of the station would remain unchanged and the base would remain in Loftus. He committed to keep the situation under review though his own scrutiny arrangements.

**PCP
24/24** **Police and Crime Panel's Annual Report**

Members considered the draft content of the Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2023-24. No issues or queries were raised.

RESOLVED that the draft content of the Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2023-24 be agreed.

**PCP
25/24** **Appointment Process for Non-Political Independent Members**

The Panel considered a report setting out a proposed process and draft documentation for the appointment of two non-political independent members in light of the impending expiry of the terms of office of the existing non-political independent members on 1 February 2025.

RESOLVED

1. The arrangements for the appointment of non-political independent members as detailed in paragraphs 4-6 of the report be agreed.
2. A selection sub-committee be established to appoint and conduct shortlisting and interviews to determine the most suitable candidates prior to formal appointment by the full Panel.
3. The sub-committee comprise the following panel members:

Councillor Karen Oliver (Hartlepool)
Councillor Janet Thompson (Middlesbrough)
Councillor Chris Jones (Redcar and Cleveland)
Councillors Tony Riordan and Norma Stephenson OBE (Stockton)
4. Authority be delegated to the Governance Director and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Panel Chair and Vice Chair, to amend and finalise the arrangements and associated documents, should it be necessary to do so.

**PCP
26/24** **Public Questions**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**PCP
27/24** **Forward Plan**

Members reviewed the Forward Plan for the Panel 2024-25.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan 2024-25 be noted.

**PCP
28/24** **Exclusion of the Press and Public.**

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

**PCP
29/24** ***Complaint Update**

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer detailing a new complaint matter that had been received.

RESOLVED

1. The Panel be confirmed as the relevant Panel for the complaint matter.
2. The complaint be recorded as a complaint and notified to the Commissioner.
3. No further action be taken in respect of the complaint matter.