



Civic Centre
HARTLEPOOL

25 April 2025

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, Smith, Thompson, C Wallace, S Wallace, Young and Vacancy.

Madam or Sir,

You are hereby summoned to attend the COUNCIL meeting to be held on THURSDAY 8 MAY 2025 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



Thursday 8 May 2025

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 meeting held on 20 February 2025 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;
 - (a) Further Periodic Review of the Constitution – *Report of Constitution Committee*
- (10) To consider any other business specified in the summons to the meeting, and to receive questions and answers on any of those items;
- (11) To consider reports from the Policy Committees:

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.

- (a) proposals in relation to the Council's approved budget and policy framework
 - (b) proposals for departures from the approved budget and policy framework;
- (12) To consider motions in the order in which notice has been received;

(a) Protection of Residential Amenity From Inappropriately Sited Onshore Wind Turbines

Council notes with concern that the current Hartlepool Local Plan does not offer adequate protection to residents from the impacts of large-scale onshore wind turbines. While this Council fully supports the shift toward renewable energy, it must not come at the cost of public wellbeing, visual landscape, or residential amenity.

At present, there is no fixed minimum separation distance between onshore wind turbines and residential properties in Hartlepool's planning framework. This creates uncertainty for residents and developers alike, and leaves communities vulnerable to inappropriate developments that may lead to:

- Noise disruption, including low-frequency hum and aerodynamic blade noise
- Shadow flicker, affecting indoor living spaces
- Visual intrusion, with turbines towering over homes and dominating the skyline

Other authorities across the UK have taken action to address these issues:

- Milton Keynes Council sought a minimum setback of 600 to 800 metres
- Wales recommends 500 metres as a standard separation
- Northern Ireland uses a 10-times rotor diameter rule, with a minimum of 500 metres
- Scotland recommends a 2000m buffer from settlements for major wind developments

These precedents show that clearer, stronger planning rules are not only reasonable, but essential.

Council therefore resolves to:



1. Establish a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Working Group within 8 weeks to draft a Wind Turbine SPD that introduces:

For all new onshore wind turbines if the height of the wind turbine generator is-

- (a) greater than 25m, but does not exceed 50m, the minimum distance requirement is 1000m;
- (b) greater than 50m, but does not exceed 100m, the minimum distance requirement is 1500m;
- (c) greater than 100m, but does not exceed 150m, the minimum distance requirement is 2000m;

This is in relation to existing residential properties and schools

- A borough-wide maximum turbine tip height of 99 metres in or near urban and semi-rural areas.
2. Commence a formal review of Policy CC4 of the Hartlepool Local Plan via Neighbourhood Services Committee, with the aim of incorporating these safeguards into statutory planning policy, subject to consultation and examination. This should include a review of amenity for local residents in line with

Hartlepool's Local Plan (Policy CC4):

- Requires that turbines do not have a significant impact on the *“amenity of local communities or residents including visual intrusion, noise and traffic”*.

"The plan's footnote defines an appropriate topple distance as at least the turbine's tip height plus 10%... This safety setback applies generally to all structures (including dwellings), ensuring a basic separation between turbines and nearby properties."

3. Ensure that until such a Local Plan amendment is adopted, the SPD and this Motion form a material consideration in the assessment of all wind turbine-related planning applications at Neighbourhood Services Committee.
4. Affirm Hartlepool Borough Council's continued support for renewable energy, while committing to ensuring it is delivered safely, sensibly, and with full regard for the wellbeing of Hartlepool's residents and the character of its communities.
5. Assure that no relevant authority may grant planning permission for the construction of a wind turbine generator unless it meets the minimum distance requirement



Signed by: Councillors Buchan, Cranney, Little, Moore, Smith and Young

- (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 6 December 2024 and 14 February 2025

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – to be confirmed.



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

20 February 2025

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm in the Civic Centre

The Deputy Ceremonial Mayor (Councillor Morley) presiding:

COUNCILLORS:

| | | |
|----------|--------------|------------|
| Allen | Bailey-Fleet | Boddy |
| Buchan | Cook | Cranney |
| Creevy | Darby | Dodds |
| Feeney | Hall | Hargreaves |
| Harrison | Jorgeson | Lindridge |
| Little | Male | Moore |
| Nelson | Oliver | Reeve |
| Riddle | Scarborough | Sharp |
| Smith | C Wallace | |

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

28. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

In view of Councillor Young's recent ill-health, the Chair asked that a card and some flowers be sent to him with the best wishes of Council.

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENT MEMBERS

Councillors Clayton, Dunbar, Holbrook, Leedham, Martin-Wells, Roy, Thompson and Young.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest made at this point of the meeting, see minute 40.

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

None.

32. MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

The minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 28 November 2024 having been laid before Council were amended as follows:

Jonathan Brash MP was included on the Councillors list as present in error, he was not in attendance at the meeting and should be removed from the list as present. Councillor Jorgeson was not in attendance and should be removed from the list as present. Councillor Riddle was in attendance and should be added to the list as present.

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 December 2024 having been laid before the Council.

Councillor Little sought a progress update on the road safety discussions on Elizabeth Way. Councillor Oliver, Chair of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that campaign work on safer roads was currently being explored.

Councillor Moore referred to an incorrect statement he had made at the Extraordinary meeting of Council held on 28 November 2024 in relation to discussions with the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources. Councillor Moore apologised unreservedly to the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources for this incorrect statement.

RESOLVED:- That the minutes be confirmed.

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

Councillor Moore sought clarification on the timescale for the consideration of amendments to the Conservation Area Appraisal document and Planning Delegations in relation to windows and doors. The Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee, Councillor Allen confirmed that this issue would be considered at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 23 March 2025.

34. BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE

None.

35. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

36. 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.

37. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

1. STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND – CONSULTATION – REPORT OF AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Council was informed that in response to concerns that the current standards regime was in certain key aspects, ineffectual, inconsistently applied and lacking adequate powers to sanction, the Government had launched a consultation on wide-ranging reforms to the local government standards system. A response to this consultation was sought from Members. Council was presented with a report from the Audit and Governance which had considered the consultation and noted that the key areas of the reforms was a mandatory code of conduct which would ensure all local authorities operated under the same ethical guidelines. In addition to this, a mandatory baseline would be introduced to ensure fairness and consistency across all local authorities. The Committee had formulated a response to this consultation and it was included within the report.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Audit and Governance Committee for the proposed response to the consultation adding the reforms would provide a more robust way of looking at the standards to be upheld as Elected Members. In view of recent circumstances, Council was asked to consider seeking the resignation of Councillor Stephen Wallace as an Elected Member. This request was seconded by Councillor Little.

RESOLVED -

- (i) That the proposed response from the Audit and Governance Committee to the consultation on Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England be forwarded to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- (ii) That in view of recent circumstances, Councillor Stephen Wallace be requested to consider resigning from his position as an Elected Member.

2. PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION – REQUESTS AND REQUISITIONS FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL – REPORT OF CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

Council was presented with the report considered by the Constitution Committee on 27 January 2025 which proposed amendments to the process for requests or requisitions for an Extraordinary meeting of Council. Members were referred to the report and subsequent minutes of that meeting that were attached at Appendix 1.

RESOLVED – That the following recommendations of the Constitution Committee were agreed by a show of hands and would stand adjourned until the next ordinary meeting of Council in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 22.2:

That the wording set out below be included within the Council Procedure Rules at Part 4 of the Constitution in relation to requests/requisitions for Extraordinary Council meetings:

Any request or requisition for an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council shall specify the reason for the calling of the meeting and give notice of a motion/motions to be debated (unless the purpose is to receive reports or adoption of recommendations of Committees or Officers or any resolutions following from them).

The purpose of an Extraordinary Meeting is to enable business to be transacted, or a matter to be debated, that is urgent and cannot wait until the next ordinary Full Council meeting.

3. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26 – REPORT OF AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee reported that the Local Government Act 2003 required Full Council to determine a Treasury Management Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy which sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. The recommended strategy had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 28 January 2025; a copy of the report submitted to the Committee was appended to the report.

The following was agreed by a show of hands.

RESOLVED – That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 be approved, including:

- (i) The borrowing strategy for 2025/26;
- (ii) The investment strategy for 2025/26;
- (iii) The prudential indicators; and

- (iv) The minimum revenue provision statement.

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

None.

39. REPORT FROM THE POLICY COMMITTEES

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

(i) CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 TO 2028/29 – REPORT OF FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee presented the Capital Strategy for 2025/26 to 2027/28 and Capital Programme new starts 2025/26 to 2027/28. The report considered by Finance and Policy on 10 February 2025 drew together the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, aligning them with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Treasury Management Strategy as an integral part of the Council's Strategic and Financial Planning Framework.

In response to a question from Councillor Moore, the Chair of Finance and Policy Committee confirmed that discussions in relation to the options to replace the Civic Centre were ongoing and would be publicised when the plans were firmed up. In addition, Councillor Moore sought clarification on the progress of the work being undertaken at the Borough Hall on the Headland. The Chair of Finance and Policy Committee indicated that the work on the Borough Hall was progressing and that a lot of the work being undertaken was restorative work to ensure the building remained fit for purpose.

The Chair of Economic and Regeneration Committee highlighted the amount of amazing capital development and investment in the town that was ongoing, including the transformation of the Waterfront, Wesley Chapel, Museum of Hartlepool, the tower at the Art Gallery and the production village in Church Street. This capital investment shows how Hartlepool was punching above its weight in developing the town and inspiring future generations and everyone should be very proud. Councillor Little added that the recent capital investment at Seaton Library had extended its life for another 10 years. All the Council Officers who were involved with developing bids for grants and external investment for the town should be thanked for extending the life of these facilities for the future generations. The Chair requested that the gratitude of Council be placed on record to all Officers involved in developing bids for grants and external funding for the future development of the town.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.6 a recorded vote was taken.

Those in favour: Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Buchan, Cook, Cranney, Creevy, Darby, Dodds, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Jorgeson, Lindridge, Little, Male, Moore, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Reeve, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp, Smith and C Wallace.

Those against: None.

Those abstaining: None.

The vote was carried.

RESOLVED: - that the report from the Finance and Policy Committee be noted and that:

1. The Capital Strategy for 2025/26 to 2027/28, at Appendix 1 to the report be approved. The strategy was a requirement of the Prudential Capital Code;
 2. The Capital Programme new starts 2025/26 to 2027/28, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report be approved;
 3. The delegation to relevant policy committees to approve detailed schemes arising from confirmed specific grant allocations as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved;
 4. That any capital receipts generated will be considered for funding the existing capital programme or financial flexibility arrangements be used to fund revenue costs associated with service transformation as set out in paragraph 6.4 of the report;
 5. The updated capital programme (including new starts) set out at Appendices 3-9 of the report was noted; and
 6. That the gratitude of Council be forwarded to all Officers involved in securing funding through bids for grants and external funding for the development of the town.
- (ii) MTFS 2025/26 – STATUTORY BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX DETERMINATION – REPORT OF FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee presented the detailed final 2025/26 Local Government Finance settlement; which enabled Elected Members to consider the budget proposals referred by Finance and Policy Committee including the level of Council Tax and Adult Social Care (ASC) precept for 2025/26 and finalise the 2025/26 technical Council Tax calculations, which incorporated Council Tax levels independently set by precepting bodies.

The Finance and Policy Committee had recommended that Elected Members note that the detailed 2025/26 statutory council tax calculations

incorporating the council tax levels set by individual precepting authorities, ie the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cleveland Fire Authority and individual parish councils, that were referred to Council for approval.

Councillor Lindridge moved that given the level of deprivation in the town, the adult precept should remain at 2% but proposed a freeze on council tax to give residents a helping hand. Councillor Buchan seconded the motion. In response to a question, Councillor Lindridge indicated that he did not have a list of services that would need to be cut to enable the freeze on council tax.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.6 a recorded vote on the proposed amendment was taken.

Those in favour: Councillors Buchan, Cranney, Darby, Lindridge, Little, Reeve and Smith.

Those against: Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Jorgeson, Male, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp and C Wallace.

Those abstaining: Councillor Moore.

The vote was lost.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.6 a recorded vote on the substantive motion at paragraph 14.1 was taken.

Those in favour: Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Jorgeson, Male, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp and C Wallace.

Those against: Councillors Buchan, Cranney, Darby, Lindridge, Little, Moore, Reeve and Smith.

Those abstaining: None.

The vote was carried.

RESOLVED:-

- i) The contents of the report, including that the Core Spending Power increase was based on Government's assumption that Councils will increase Council Tax to the maximum allowable was noted;
- ii) An increase to core Council Tax of 2.99% and an adult social care precept increase of 2%, thus providing £2.625m of recurring funding was approved;

- iii) The overall budget proposal set out in the report, including the two amendments in relation to the removal of proposed budget savings and to utilise the £500,000 business rates surplus to support a reduction in use of reserves, details of which were set out in the report were approved;
- iv) That any capital receipts generated, be used to fund revenue costs associated with delivery of the transformation programme, as required;
- v) The robustness advice detailed in section 11 of the report was noted;
- vi) It was noted that any changes arising from the completion of the NNDR1 and receipt of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement be adjusted in the 2025/26 budget.

Given the approval of the above recommendations, the vote was put on the statutory budget and council tax calculations.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.6 a recorded vote on paragraph 14.2 was taken.

Those in favour: Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Cook, Creevy, Dodds, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Jorgeson, Male, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp and C Wallace.

Those against: Councillors Buchan, Cranney, Darby, Lindridge, Little, Moore, Reeve and Smith.

Those abstaining: None.

The vote was carried.

RESOLVED:-

- vii) The statutory budget calculation for the Council budget as detailed in Appendix A and the detailed supporting departmental budgets detailed in Appendix B were approved;
 - viii) The statutory Council Tax calculations detailed in Appendix A, which included the Council Tax increases approved by the individual precepting bodies were approved.
- (iii) **COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN 2024-2027 – REPORT OF FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

Council was presented with a report of the Finance and Policy Committee who had considered Safer Hartlepool Partnership's Community Safety Plan 2024-2027, which in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act

1998 and associated regulations, the Authority was required to produce to set out how it intended to tackle crime and disorder, substance misuse and re-offending in Hartlepool. It was highlighted that the Community Safety Plan had been published for public consultation from 16 September 2024 to 11 November 2024 and an outline of the results of this consultation was included in the report. Council was asked to note that the delivery of the Community Safety Plan would be via existing agencies, organisations and partnerships and, where necessary, the development of new working groups. Performance against the Community Safety Plan would be monitored by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership, through the Community Safety Action Plan.

RESOLVED – That Community Safety Plan 2024-2027 be adopted.

(iv) HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25 –
REPORT OF FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Council was presented with a report from Finance and Policy Committee where consideration was given to a rent increase for the local authority's housing stock for the forthcoming financial year 2024/2025. It was noted that previous Council decisions to approve a rent freeze or below the maximum level allowed, had reduced the rental income and negatively affected the health of the HRA. The proposed increase of 2.7% from April was in line with other social housing providers such as Thirteen Group and Karbon Homes. The Leader of the Council stated that without the proposed rent increase, the HRA budget would become unsustainable and would go into deficit.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.6 a recorded vote was taken.

Those in favour: Councillors Allen, Bailey-Fleet, Boddy, Buchan, Cook, Creevy, Darby, Dodds, Feeney, Hall, Hargreaves, Harrison, Jorgeson, Lindridge, Male, Moore, Morley, Nelson, Oliver, Reeve, Riddle, Scarborough, Sharp and C Wallace.

Those against: Councillors Cranney and Smith.

Those abstaining: Councillor Little.

The vote was carried.

RESOLVED:-

That a rent increase of 2.7% for 2025/26 for the Council's housing stock as set out in Annex 1 was approved.

40. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Little declared a prejudicial personal interest and left the meeting.

Three motions had been received as follows:-

(a) SUPPORTING PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN HARTLEPOOL AND ACROSS THE TEES VALLEY

Council notes:

- The Labour government has pledged the biggest overhaul to buses in a generation, pledging £1 billion for bus services, and supporting local authorities to place bus services under public control in the 2024 Bus Services Bill.
- The Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham has provided a model for placing buses under public control with the Bee Network, a franchised bus network introduced by Burnham and operating across Greater Manchester. Burnham has capped fares at £2 for a single adult fare, £1 for a single child fare, and £5 for a full day fare, placing local people at the heart of public transport in the region.

Council recognises:

- The Mayor of Liverpool City Region Steve Rotheram has also used his powers to franchise local bus services, and the Mayors of the North East, South Yorkshire, the West Midlands, and West Yorkshire are looking at using these same powers.
- Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen and the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) can exercise such powers under the 2017 Bus Services Act, and by doing so, they would make a real difference to the residents of Hartlepool and people across the Tees Valley, allowing residents to travel easily across the region in order to access education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and more.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen and the TVCA, urging them to:
 - o Franchise local bus services using the powers afforded to the Mayor by the 2017 Bus Services Act to ensure quality public transport for the residents of Hartlepool and the Tees Valley
 - o Fund a maximum £2 bus fare across the Tees Valley, and maintain the £1 bus fare cap on under 21's
 - o Reinstate a regular and reliable bus service to areas with unreliable links to buses and public transport, such as, but not limited to, Burbank, Dalton Piercy, Elwick, and Hart village.

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

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

Seconded by Councillor Allen.

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

A discussion ensued during which all Members that addressed Council expressed support for this motion to provide a much needed service for the residents of Hartlepool. As a representative on the Tees Valley Combined Authority Bus Transport Committee, Councillor Oliver informed Members that further improvements to the bus services in Hartlepool had been put forward to the Committee. In addition to this, it was noted that there would be a review undertaken of all bus services and there would be further opportunities to suggest improvements.

RESOLVED:-

That a letter be sent to the Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen and the TVCA, urging them to:

- (i) Franchise local bus services using the powers afforded to the Mayor by the 2017 Bus Services Act to ensure quality public transport for the residents of Hartlepool and the Tees Valley
- (ii) Fund a maximum £2 bus fare across the Tees Valley, and maintain the £1 bus fare cap on under 21's
- (iii) Reinststate a regular and reliable bus service to areas with unreliable links to buses and public transport, such as, but not limited to, Burbank, Dalton Piercy, Elwick, and Hart village.

Councillor Little rejoined the meeting.

(b) COUNCIL MOTION: REFORMING COUNCIL TAX FOR HARTLEPOOL

Council Tax is placing an unacceptable burden on the residents of Hartlepool. It is fundamentally unfair and unjust, and it is imperative that we pursue comprehensive change on this issue.

Currently, a Band H property in Hartlepool incurs a charge that is £3,000 higher than an equivalent property in Westminster. To put this into perspective, a homeowner in Hartlepool with a property valued at £90,000 is paying more in Council Tax than someone who owns a £3 million property in Wandsworth.

Such stark inequality is simply unacceptable.

The Council welcomes the initiative by Hartlepool's MP, Jonathan Brash, in forming a cross-party group of MPs and Peers dedicated to advocating for change on this critical issue. However, we express our disappointment that while Labour, Conservatives, Lib Dems, and Greens have all accepted the invitation to join, the Reform Party has declined.

Council also notes that there is a public petition being raised and urges all residents to sign it, before Jonathan Brash presents it to Parliament on Hartlepool's behalf.

Additionally, the Council acknowledges and appreciates the £9.8 million in additional grants for Hartlepool issued by the Labour government. Many have been involved in lobbying process over the years, with a significant contribution from our current MP. This marks a positive step towards reversing the damage inflicted by the Conservative government over the past 14 years.

Therefore, Council resolves to:

- Write to Jonathan Brash, extending our unwavering support and cooperation in the ongoing efforts to secure meaningful change to the inequitable Council Tax system.
- Endorse the public petition and carry copies in Council buildings.
- Share details of the public petition in Hartbeat and other media outlets to raise awareness of the regressive and unfair nature of the Council Tax system.
- Encourage Elected Members to sign the petition individually and actively engage with residents, community groups, and stakeholders to promote awareness of the petition and the benefits of reforming the system.
- Write to the Deputy Prime Minister to demand action on changing the council tax system.

Together, we can strive for a fairer and more just system for all residents of Hartlepool.

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

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

Seconded by Councillor Dodds.

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

In response to a question from Councillor Moore, the Managing Director confirmed that any data included on a petition would be destroyed after a period of time. Jonathan Brash, MP added that it was a requirement that all petitions submitted to Government must be on paper format which meant data was not

held electronically. A discussion ensued during which it was noted that Elected Members would all be happy to see a reform of council tax. The Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources confirmed that the petition in question included a privacy notice and showed how the Data Protection Act had been complied with, as a result of this could be placed in Council buildings and within the Council's publication Hartbeat as long as it remained politically neutral.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) A letter be sent to Jonathan Brash MP, extending the Council's unwavering support and co-operation in the ongoing efforts to secure meaningful change to the inequitable Council Tax system.
- (ii) The public petition was endorsed and would be placed in Council buildings.
- (iii) Details of the public petition to be shared in Hartbeat and other media outlets to raise awareness of the regressive and unfair nature of the Council Tax system.
- (iv) Council encourage Elected Members to sign the petition individually and actively engage with residents, community groups, and stakeholders to promote awareness of the petition and the benefits of reforming the system.
- (v) A letter be sent to the Deputy Prime Minister to demand action on changing the council tax system.

(c) SUPPORTING WASPI WOMEN

Council Notes:

- The 1995 Pensions Act increased the State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with a further rise to 66 in the 2011 Pensions Act.
- These changes were not adequately communicated to 3.8 million women born in the 1950s, with many receiving as little as one year's notice of a six-year delay in their anticipated retirement age.
- The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has found the Department for Work and Pensions guilty of maladministration in handling these changes.
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women concluded that this maladministration caused devastating emotional, physical, and financial harm to those affected.
- Despite the Ombudsman's findings, the previous government did not act, and the current government has decided not to pay compensation as proposed by the PHSO.

Council Recognises:

- That the current Labour Government has inherited a dire economic picture, with severe financial constraints stemming from years of mismanagement by successive Conservative governments, including a £22 billion black hole in public finances identified in a recent Treasury audit.
- That despite these constraints, the moral case for a fair and proportionate resolution to the WASPI injustice remains overwhelming.
- Council recognises and welcomes the stance of our Leader, Brenda Harrison in supporting the WASPI women for many years, alongside our MP, Jonathan Brash in opposing the government position.

Council Supports:

- The findings of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality, which highlight the gross injustice faced by 1950s-born women and the severe consequences on their emotional, physical, and financial wellbeing.
- A reconsideration of the government's decision not to pay compensation, in light of the Ombudsman's findings and the compelling evidence of the profound hardship caused.
- A fair and proportionate resolution that provides appropriate compensation to those affected, acknowledging the financial constraints facing the nation but also recognising the urgency of this issue.

Council Resolves to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging them to:
 - Recognise the profound impact of this injustice on Hartlepool's communities.
 - Reconsider the government's decision on compensation, exploring a fair and affordable resolution in line with the PHSO's recommendations.
 - Commit to preventing similar injustices in future by improving transparency and communication around significant changes to pensions policy.
 - Reaffirm Hartlepool Borough Council's commitment to standing in solidarity with 1950s-born women in their fight for justice.

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

Councillor Harrison, Leader of the Council moved the motion and addressed the Council in support of the motion.

Seconded by Councillor Cook.

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

RESOLVED -

That a letter be sent to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging them to:

- Recognise the profound impact of this injustice on Hartlepool's communities.
- Reconsider the government's decision on compensation, exploring a fair and affordable resolution in line with the PHSO's recommendations.
- Commit to preventing similar injustices in future by improving transparency and communication around significant changes to pensions policy.
- Reaffirm Hartlepool Borough Council's commitment to standing in solidarity with 1950s-born women in their fight for justice.

41. MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT**(1) APPEALS COMMITTEE – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER**

It was confirmed that on 22 January 2025 interviews were held for an Independent Member on Appeals Committee as agreed at Council on 3 October 2024. Council was informed that Mr John McDade was appointed to this role, subject to references and a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

RESOLVED – Council noted the appointment.

(2) ADDITIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Council approval was sought to hold an additional meeting of Council on 1 May 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.

RESOLVED – That the additional meeting noted above was approved.

(3) POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Council was informed that the Managing Director had reviewed Polling Districts and Places in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Review of Districts and Polling Placement Regulations 2006. Attached by way of appendix was the conclusion of that review.

RESOLVED – The outcome of the review was noted and Council noted that all polling places were reviewed for suitability prior to any election.

42. PAY POLICY 2025/2026

Under Section 38 of the Localism Act (2011), a Pay Policy Statement should be approved on an annual basis. The updated document for 2025/26 was attached at Appendix A for Council's consideration.

Council was requested to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 which is attached as Appendix A.

RESOLVED – The Pay Policy Statement 2025/2026 was approved.

43. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The following question had been received from Ronald Buglass to Councillor Gary Allen, Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee:-

To Whom this may concern.

We would like to pose a question around the current health and wellbeing facilities at Mill House, and the new proposed site at Hartlepool Marina. Myself and more than 500 of my fellow members would like to know why the sauna and steam room at Mill House was never ever reopened following Covid 19.

Additionally, we would like to know why this facility has been omitted from the new development and why the members were not consulted or surveyed about suggestions for the new development. There is a petition with approaching 1000 signatures supporting this facility and the members are demanding their opinions are listened too.

The Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee responded in the following terms:-

In the four years leading up to Covid the facilities generated approximately £4k per year in income, however the associated operational and maintenance costs far exceeded the income (as an example, in 2019 alone we spent nearly £5k on repairs). It was estimated that bringing the areas up to an acceptable standard would cost over £40k and capital funding was not available to support this, particularly given the development of Highlight and the limited life of Mill House Leisure Centre as a result.

Why weren't members consulted or surveyed about the new development? Residents across Hartlepool and users of Mill House Leisure Centre and other Council venues were consulted on future leisure provision on a number of occasions.

Active Hartlepool conduct annual surveys of users and non-users and the 7 surveys conducted between 2020 and 2024 collected 870 responses which included 22 comments in favour of having a steam room and sauna. Throughout the surveys people were asked what the top 5 considerations were

when looking for a facility to use and steam room/sauna did not featured in the top 5 reasons given.

As part of the planning for Highlight there has been extensive analysis and research of information and community responses. In 2019 a piece of work on 'Future of Leisure Facilities in Hartlepool' looked at how and why people use leisure facilities; what they would like to see in new facilities and where new facilities should be located. The consultation was online and in person, including face-to-face opportunities at Mill House Leisure Centre. 1,001 people completed the survey and a sauna or steam room ranked 20th out of 23 options in importance for facilities to be provided. Of 451 written comments in response to questions, there were no references to demand for a sauna or steam room from respondents.

In 2020 Sport England's Strategic Outcomes Planning Model was used to identify current and future participation and demand, to help inform the facility mix for the new strategic leisure facility. It included an online community survey which generated 607 responses and, although there was no specific question which asked respondents to list the facilities that they would like to see, there were no references to sauna or steam room facilities in response to any of the questions asked. Customers at Mill House Leisure Centre and other leisure and sport sites were actively encouraged to participate in the respective surveys.

Why wasn't a sauna/steam incorporated in Highlight? Sport and leisure facility planning must consider current and future demand to ensure that whatever was developed could secure capital investment and was sustainable.

The Strategic Outcomes Planning Model in 2020/21 identified the community need and demand; how outcomes could be delivered sustainably and the proposed facility mix for Highlight, Brierton and Headland Sports Hall.

The facility mix for Highlight was based on the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model and Sport England's strategy and funding priorities and took into account making best use of the space available, capital costs and operating costs, which resulted in a focus on:

- Optimising opportunities for people to become more active, more often;
- Young families and intergenerational activity;
- Facilities which reflected demand (including aquatics; gym; fitness; wellbeing; children's play and access to the marina/watersports);
- Facilities and services that could generate income to support the operation of the building (i.e. NHS leased consultation suites; commercial café operator);
- Being as energy efficient and "green" as possible.

The funding model for Highlight includes contributions from Sport England and Tees Valley Combined Authority. The investment that had been secured was subject to grant and business case conditions and a steam room and sauna would not fulfil these requirements because the evidence base did not support this.

Furthermore, based on revenue projections and the evidence base, the option to include a sauna or steam room was discounted on the grounds of limited demand; significant operational costs and the likely requirement for significant maintenance and investment to maintain service quality.

Summary

In summary there had been extensive community engagement, analysis of evidence base and analysis of financial implications extending back to 2018.

It was not viable to include a sauna or steam room in Highlight without a stronger evidence base and doing so would have been to the detriment of other facilities with a far stronger case for inclusion, either due to commercial viability, contribution to socio-economic outcomes or providing access to facilities with a wider population level demand.

To include a facility at this stage in the project would cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, as a minimum, and would result in extensive time delays as well as significant risk to the completion of the overall scheme, meeting grant obligations and fulfilling our contracts.

Councillor Allen concluded he would be happy to attend a meeting with Mr Buglass and Councillor Hargreaves, Chair of Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee to discuss the above further. Mr Buglass welcomed the opportunity to discuss this further and referred to a petition that he had been seeking signatures from people who use the Mill House Leisure Centre.

RESOLVED – That a meeting be arranged for the Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee and the Chair of Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee to meet with Mr Buglass to discuss this further.

44. QUESTIONS ABOUT RECENT DECISIONS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND FORUMS WITHOUT NOTICE

None.

45. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TO THE CHAIR OF ANY COMMITTEE

The following question had been received from Councillor Young and was addressed to Councillor Harrison, Leader of the Council.

How will the Leader of Hartlepool Borough Council, ensure the council:

Continue to recognise VAWG as a local and national emergency and prioritise trauma-informed specialist services?

Uphold the integrity of public office by barring individuals with sexual crime convictions from campaigning to represent the community in council?

Lead the call for a national independent inquiry into grooming gangs to secure justice for survivors and protect future generations?

Monitor and transparently report on the council's progress in combating VAWG and supporting survivors?

The Councillor Harrison, Leader of the Council responded in the following terms:-

Thank you for raising this issue and promoting the matter. As leader of Hartlepool Borough Council, I recognise the importance of addressing issues related to violence against women and girls (VAWG) and can offer some reassurance that HBC are proactively involved in a number of initiatives to help promote, educate and address the culture of misogyny.

Although in many cases (due to the criminal nature of the offences) such initiatives are Police led, HBC are a leading partner working in association with other agencies to improve awareness, encourage reporting and help protect victims. Crimes and behaviour covered, include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, "honour" based abuse and include offences that may have been committed online.

The National Police Chiefs Council have published a framework which details activities that enable Policing to tackle VAWG and this is now included in the Force's Strategic Policing Requirements Assessment Framework which aims to provide a better understanding of the influencers and levers that contribute to VAWG. There is also a recognition that VAWG is linked to other high-risk offending including domestic abuse, which there are high levels across Cleveland.

The Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner's current Crime Plan recognises VAWG as a key priority and sets out a desire for partnership working across the criminal justice system identifying how partners can address the behaviour of people who harm women. HBC recognise the importance of this priority and locally see this is a key objective of our own Serious Violence Strategy within the Community Safety Plan.

You should be assured that several service areas from HBC are represented at Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) which allows agencies to assess and manage offenders on a multi-agency basis by working together, sharing information and managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community.

In terms of active involvement, officers have recently attended events to discuss specific issues such as stalking, whilst some of the UKSPF grant funding we received has been used to promote "Licensing Savi" across our licensed premises – an initiative which includes raising awareness for staff and customers of the nationally promoted "ask Angela" campaign, offering a safe

environment to women who feel threatened and promoting awareness of the dangers of drink spiking. Other schemes include promoting the use of Claire's law and Sarah's law referrals for women wishing to check on the history of a partner or request information about a person who has contact with their child and where they have concerns that this person may be a risk. There are also measures to improve the environment and make women feel safer, with improved CCTV coverage planned in our town centre to support our night-time economy. More recently the additional threat of grooming gangs is now discussed as a specific item at the Police morning briefing where intelligence and any knowledge of tensions can be quickly shared and acted on amongst represented partners.

With regard to domestic abuse, the Hartlepool Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership has developed the local strategy and delivered two years of a three year action plan including, but not limited to, increasing the range and choice of safe accommodation options, working with Cleveland Police to strengthen the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference process to protect victims and working with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to develop a perpetrator strategy. The domestic abuse needs assessment will be reviewed in 2025 and from this a refreshed strategy will be developed the implementation of which will be led by the Council.

With regard specifically to violence towards girls, the Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership has a priority focus on safeguarding children and young people from harm outside the home, particularly the risk associated with sexual and criminal exploitation. HBC has a dedicated team that works with partners to disrupt exploitation and harm and protect victims from harm. The Ofsted inspection of children's services found that 'risks are being reduced for children because of the strengths-based relationships and determined intervention of workers across all teams. The coordinated information is captured and used effectively to contribute to the highly effective multi-agency work undertaken to disrupt exploitation activity.'

Most agencies are also represented at the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and although the above is a summary of ongoing work taking place to address VAWG, I would propose that it may be worth including VAWG as a specific topic at a future SHP meeting.

46. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TO THE COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL AND CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

None.

47. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD BY THE CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2024 AND THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2024.

Received.

48. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council held a two minute silence in respect of the recent passing of Honorary Alderman Denis Waller and Honorary Freewoman Jill Kitching.

The meeting concluded at 8.55pm

DEPUTY CEREMONIAL MAYOR



Report of: Constitution Committee

Subject: FURTHER PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable Full Council to consider the recommendations of the Committee following a periodic review of the Constitution

2. BACKGROUND

This report follows Full Council's consideration on 20 February 2025 of the recommendations of the Constitution Committee in response to the periodic review of the constitution. In accordance with Rule 22.2 the following recommended changes to the Council Procedure Rules must stand adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of Full Council.

In addition, at the meeting of the Constitution Committee on 24 April 2025, Members considered the Committee delegations and the following recommended changes were proposed for consideration by Full Council.

3. PROPOSALS

Calling of Extraordinary Council meetings

- 3.1 The Committee has made a number of recommendations in relation to the Council Procedure Rules which are set out below:-

Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules – Extraordinary Council meetings – It was proposed to specify the reason for calling an Extraordinary Council as follows:

Recommendation – That the Council Procedure Rules be amended to incorporate the following:-

“Any request or requisition for an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council shall specify the reason for the calling of the meeting and give notice of a motion/motions to be debated (unless the purpose is to receive reports or adoption of recommendations of Committees or Officers or any resolutions following from them).”

The purpose of an Extraordinary Meeting is to enable business to be transacted, or a matter to be debated, that is urgent and cannot wait until the next ordinary Full Council meeting.

Recommendation - The Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the above wording be included within Part 4 of the Constitution in relation to requisitions of Extraordinary Council.

3.2 Part 3 – Delegation Scheme

Members considered Part 3 – Delegation Scheme and suggested the following changes to the current arrangements:

- (a) Rename Finance and Policy Committee ‘Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee’ and change its functions/service areas as follows:

Move Facilities Management (Catering and Cleaning) to within the remit of Neighbourhood Services Committee;

Move Safer Hartlepool Partnership to within the remit of Neighbourhood Services Committee.

Recommendation - The Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the above changes to Part 3 – Scheme of Delegation be made with immediate effect.

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Full Council considers the recommendations noted above in relation to changes to the Council Procedure Rules and the Scheme of Delegation and to delegate authority to the Director of Legal, Governance and Human Resources to make the necessary changes to the Constitution arising from the agreed changes.

5. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Constitution Committee – 27 January 2025

Full Council – 20 February 2025

Hartlepool Borough Council – Constitution (Part 4)

Contact Officer:

Hayley Martin, Director of Legal Governance and Human Resources

Email: Hayley.martin@hartlepool.gov.uk

Tel: 01429 523003

COUNCIL

8 May 2025



Report of: Managing Director

Subject: BUSINESS REPORT

1. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

At the meeting of Audit and Governance Committee on 15 October 2024, it was agreed that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the process to appoint Independent Persons to the Audit and Governance Committee be undertaken. Following interviews on the 5 March 2025, David Whitmore and Martin Slimings were selected for appointment to the positions, subject to references and Full Council approval.

Recommendation

That Council approves the appointment of David Whitmore and Martin Slimings (Term of Office – 2 years).

2. TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY

TVCA were issued a Best Value Notice 3rd April 2025. This is a non-statutory notice; however it is a formal notification that the MHCLG Department has concerns regarding the combined authority and requests that the authority engages with the department to provide assurance of improvement. The department's concerns relate primarily to governance, culture, partnerships, and continuous improvement.

This notice is issued outside the statutory powers held by the Secretary of State under the Local Government Act 1999 to inspect or intervene in local authorities where there is evidence of best value failure and, separately, under Section 230 of the Local Government Act 1972 to request information from local authorities. However, a failure to demonstrate continuous improvement may be judged to contribute to best value failure and the Secretary of State will consider using these powers as appropriate. The notice will be kept under review in light of any developments.

The constituent local authorities, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Stockton, are the Combined Authority, and the Council Leaders and Mayor make up the Cabinet, therefore we have a role to play in ensuring

we work with TVCA to embed change across the organisation. It is likely to take time and will require sustained effort from both officers and members. This notice will be reviewed after 12 months, at which point the MHCLG will confirm whether it will be necessary to continue to seek assurance through such a notice, in which case it will remain in place. The notice may also be withdrawn or escalated at any point based on the available evidence.

3. CARLTON ACTIVITY CENTRE

Leah Harrison, aged 10, had been staying at Carlton as part of a residential break with her school and sadly died 22nd May 2024. There was a joint investigation by North Yorkshire Police and the Health and Safety Executive. An investigation is common practice in these circumstances and following an in-depth investigation which reviewed all aspects of the incident, and we were informed late last year that the investigation had concluded that this was a tragic and unforeseen accident.

A coroner's inquest was held 24th April 2025, the jury heard details about a woodland adventure walk where a mudslide took place which tragically resulted in the death of Leah. After considering all of the evidence over the course of the day, the jury and the coroner concluded that the cause of death was accidental.

The last year has been incredibly difficult for many of our colleagues who have been involved both in responding to the accident and supporting the investigation and inquest.

I wish to make a commendation to Council regarding two employees who have shown extreme resilience and bravery from the 22nd May 2024 when Leah Harrison died until the coroner's inquest 24th April 2025, Snothiel Read, Activity Instructor and Paul Godwin, Senior Activities Coordinator. Sno and Paul were present at the tragic accident and have been involved throughout the investigations and the inquest. I want to pay tribute to the professionalism and courage they have shown. They have been a credit to our organisation.

The professionalism and commitment our employees at Carlton Activity Centre provide young people great experiences in a safe and well managed way has been recognised by the HSE and the coroner, and within the Council.

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

6 DECEMBER 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, Steve Kay, David Taylor

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,
Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Mary Ovens – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Councillor Sufi Mubeen – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

66. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

It was noted no Declarations of Interests were submitted to the meeting.

67. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 18 October 2024 be confirmed.

68. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 15 November 2024 and Audit & Governance Committee on 22 November 2024 be confirmed.

69. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

70. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

70.1 Annual Statement of Assurance 2023/24

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the Authority's Annual Statement of Assurance 2023/24 containing details relating to financial, governance and operational matters.

70.1 Annual Statement of Assurance 2023/24 cont.

This document is a statutory requirement produced in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 and had been scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee on 22 November 2024.

The CFO informed Members that the style of the document had been refreshed to make the information more accessible while still capturing the spirit of the Framework and was indicative of how Brigade's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-2030 would look. Members supported the new look of the Statement and suggested that a summary version could be produced to capture the key points to display in public places to encourage greater reach within the community.

RESOLVED – That, as recommended by the Audit & Governance Committee on 22 November, the Annual Statement of Assurance 2023/24 be approved.

70.2 Information Pack

- 70.2.1 Employers Circulars
- 70.2.2 Campaigns
- 70.2.3 HMICFRS Chief & Chairs Event, London
- 70.2.4 NFCC Council Meeting

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

71. 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."

72. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

That the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 15 November 2024 be confirmed.

73. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

73.1 Cleveland Fire Brigade's HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 – verbal update

The CFO provided Members with an update on the progress of the Brigade's third round inspection following the Hot Debrief on 28 November 2024.

74. CONFIDENTIAL JOINT REPORT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

74.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27

Members considered an update of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy and details of the proposed timetable for setting the 2025/26 budget and council tax.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

14 FEBRUARY 2025



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Gary Allen

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs John Kabuye, Naweed Hussain, Dennis McCabe

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Steve Kay, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

FORVIS MAZARS

James Collins – Audit Director

BRIGADE OFFICERS

Area Manager – Emergency Response

Area Manager – Prevention, Protection and Engagement

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Bob Buchan, Ben Clayton – Hartlepool Borough Council

Councillor Sufi Mubeen – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

83. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

It was noted no Declarations of Interest were submitted to the meeting.

84. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 6 December 2024 be confirmed.

85. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 24 January 2025 be confirmed.

86. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

87. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

87.1 Review of Scale of Charges 2025/26

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the Authority's Scale of Charges which had been fully reviewed for 2025/26 for implementation from 1 April 2025. The review was undertaken in agreement with the Treasurer and entailed a 4% uplift to all pay-related elements to reflect the medium term financial strategy forecast pay award and a 3.5% uplift to all non-pay items based on the November 2024 CPI figure.

The CFO confirmed that the Scale of Charges had been approved in line with the delegation scheme and will be published on the Brigade website by 31 March 2025.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the Scale of Charges for 2025/26 to be implemented with effect of 1 April 2025.

87.2 Information Pack

87.2.1 Campaigns

No Notice Tactical Exercise Nightflare – 29 January 2025

The CFO informed Members that the Brigade had recently undertaken its first ever fully resourced no-notice high rise tactical exercise at Spencerbeck House in Middlesbrough which involved police, ambulance, the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and local authorities.

He thanked everyone involved in arranging the exercise, which also involved emergency services colleagues from County Durham and Darlington and North Yorkshire as well as 70 role players from Middlesbrough College.

Members asked how the public had been informed about the event and what the cost was to the Brigade. The CFO confirmed that the Brigade's social media channels had issued notice about the exercise from 8pm on the evening. Nearby communities had been leafleted about the exercise prior to the event taking place. He confirmed that the main cost for the Brigade was from bringing in on-call firefighters and in the planning and preparation. However, he confirmed that the key value was the assurance given to all parties involved and the areas of learning highlighted from the exercise.

The CFO informed Members that only two other fire and rescue services had undertaken a no-notice exercise and agreed that valuable learning would be shared with the region, as well as brought to the Authority at a future meeting.

Awareness Day

Councillor Peter Chaney passed on thanks to crews from Grangetown and to the Brigade's Matthew Lister for providing a road safety talk at Teesville Academy on Friday 7 February with a focus on the dangers of parked cars blocking appliances attending incidents.

Child trapped in Parcel Locker

The Area Manager for Prevention, Protection and Engagement provided details of an incident which occurred at Aldi, Redcar on Sunday 9th February and involved an 11-year-old boy being trapped in an airtight locker for around 30 minutes before he was released. The CFO praised the quick response and problem solving of the crews involved and confirmed that the prevention team was working with manufacturers of the lockers and national colleagues to share the learning.

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

87.3 HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 (verbal update)

The CFO informed Members that the Brigade's Draft HMICFRS report had been received on 12 February 2025. Members agreed to discuss this item further in closed session (Min. No. 93.1 refers).

87.4 Service Plan 2025/26

The ACFO Strategic Planning & Resources (ACFO-SPR) provided Members with a verbal update on the work underway to streamline the Brigade's internal operating plan (IOP) ahead of presenting the priorities for inclusion in the Service Plan 2025/26.

She confirmed that the 350+ actions in the current IOP had been reduced to 63 actions to take forward to deliver the final iteration of the Brigade's four-year Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) covering 2022-2026. This would be presented to Members at the meeting on 28 March 2025 for approval.

The CFO welcomed this streamlined approach which made it clearer for staff to understand their workload and easier for the Authority to scrutinise the progress.

RESOLVED - that the verbal update be noted.

87.5 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-2030

The ACFO-SPR provided Members with a verbal update of the planning work underway for the Brigade's next CRMP which will cover the four-year period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2030.

Members received an infographic of how the priorities will sit under five key themes: Prevention, Protection, Response, People and Resources with associated plans for each area. The annual Service Plan will be replaced with a four-year delivery plan which will give the flexibility to adapt to any new workload pressures that may emerge locally or nationally.

The ACFO-SPR confirmed that this new format had been shared with the Brigade with positive feedback and it was key to have staff buy-in throughout to ensure the plan remains accessible and relevant.

Members supported the planning work to date and welcomed the flexibility to change the number and names of pillars as necessary as the plan evolves.

RESOLVED – that the verbal update be noted.

88. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

88.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28 (including 2025/26 Budget and Council Tax Setting)

Members received the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2027/28 and detailed proposals for the 2025/26 budget and council tax setting, which had been considered by the Executive Committee on 24 January 2025.

88.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28 (including 2025/26 Budget and Council Tax Setting) cont.

The report covered the following key areas:

- Changes in recurring resources
- Impact of previous budget reductions
- National Pay awards and inflation
- Provisional 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement
- Core Spending Power Increases
- Impact of provisional settlement on standalone FRAs Core Spending Power
- Funding for Employers National Insurance Increase
- Asset Management Plan
- Reserves Review
- Robustness Advice

The Treasurer reported that the 2025/26 Final Local Government Finance Settlement was published late January and tabled the supporting statutory budget and council tax calculations at Appendices E and F respectively.

He outlined the key changes announced in the settlement which impacted the Authority which included: Revenue Support Grant and Top-up Grant increased in line with September CPI (£0.233m); Funding Grant Removed (-£0.294m); Services Grant Removed (-£0.065m); and forecast increase in business rates (£0.102m). This totals a forecast net decrease in resources (excluding Council Tax) of £0.024m.

The Treasurer reported that Cleveland, as a stand-alone Fire Authority, has a Core Spending Power increase for 2025/26 of 2.7% which is based on the government's assumption that authorities will use the available council tax flexibility of the £5 Band D limit. For Cleveland adopting the £5 Council Tax limit in 2025/26 will secure a recurring additional income of £0.813m which avoids having to make additional cuts to services to balance the budget.

The Treasurer outlined the following updated measures proposed to address the gross 2025/26 Budget Deficit of £2.522m:

- £0.813m Council Tax
- £0.294m Budget Support Reserves Fund
- £0.266m Tax Base Growth
- £1.067m Savings
- £0.082m Final Local Resources

The Treasurer stated that using the Budget Support Fund defers a deficit from 2025/26 to 2026/27 with updated planning forecasts showing a deficit for 2026/27 and 2027/28 of between £0.599m and £1.675m, dependent on national pay awards, inflation and changes to the funding system from 2026/27.

Councillor Kay asked whether it was possible to look for further efficiencies rather than accept the £5 council tax limit. The CFO confirmed that he had already identified £1m efficiencies and anything above that would need to come from the front line – which would be the equivalent of removing the on-call service to East Cleveland. The Treasurer added that not accepting the £5 council tax limit and deferring the deficit would set the Authority up for further financial problems in 2026/27 and 2027/28 and it was important to make incremental decisions every tax year.

88.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28 (including 2025/26 Budget and Council Tax Setting) cont.

Councillor Ovens noted that the Authority's financial position had been precarious for many years with little opportunity to build-up reserves. She added that the £5 council tax increase equated to only pennies per week and going lower than this would store problems up for the future. Councillor Beal re-iterated these comments and proposed that Members support the £5 increase in the precept.

The Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer (LAMO) informed Members that in line with best practice a vote would be recorded on the budget decision. Votes were cast and Members unanimously supported the recommendations from the Executive Committee, which had been updated to reflect the latest information tabled at Appendices E and F.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That as recommended by the Executive Committee on 24 January 2025, Members:-

- 1. Noted that the provisional Core Spending Power (CSP) increase for FRAs of 2.8% (2.7% for the Authority) is less than half the national CSP increase of 6%, which reflects the prioritisation of social care within the overall settlement.**
- 2. Noted that the provisional 2025/25 CSP increase for FRAs is wholly predicated on all FRAs using the £5 Council Tax referendum limit (details paragraph 4.14 and Appendix A).**
- 3. Noted that the provisional settlement details the proposed formula for allocating funding for increased employers National Insurance costs may disadvantage FRAs. The current funding assumption is the grant will fund 50% of these costs, with the remaining 50% (£0.250m) falling on the existing budget and therefore increasing the forecast 2025/26 budget deficit.**
- 4. Noted the forecast deficit scenarios for 2025/26 to 2027/28 detailed in paragraph 5.5 show a forecast deficit between £0.599m and £2.254m depending on the level of Council Tax for these years.**
- 5. Noted that the robustness advice detailed in section 8 and approved the recommendation to fund the gross 2025/26 budget deficit from the following combination of measures:**

| | Value | %age of gross deficit |
|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| Budget savings | £1.067m | 42% |
| £5 Band D Council Tax increase | £0.813m | 32% |
| Use of Budget Support Fund | £0.294m | 12% |
| Tax Base Growth | £0.266m | 11% |
| Sub Total | £2.440m | 97% |
| Increase in Local Resources (as per Appendix E) | £0.082m | 3% |
| Total | £2.522m | 100% |

88.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28 (including 2025/26 Budget and Council Tax Setting) cont.

- 6. Noted that the use of the Budget Support Fund in 2025/26 of £0.376m defers this deficit to 2026/27 and means that a forecast deficit of between £0.599m and £1.675m will need to be addressed in 2026/27 and 2027/28.**
- 7. Noted that approving recommendation (6) will result in approximately 216,000 households (82%) having to pay a weekly increase of 9p or less, as highlighted in the following table:**

| 2024/25 | | 2025/26 | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Annual Council Tax | Property Band | Annual Council Tax | Weekly Council Tax | | Annual increase | Weekly increase (pence) | Number of households (approx.) |
| £59.64 | A | £62.97 | £1.21 | | £3.33 | 6p | 119,000 |
| £69.58 | B | £73.47 | £1.41 | | £3.89 | 7p | 49,300 |
| £79.52 | C | £83.96 | £1.61 | | £4.44 | 9p | 48,100 |
| £89.46 | D | £94.46 | £1.82 | | £5.00 | 10p | 24,600 |
| £109.34 | E | £115.45 | £2.22 | | £6.11 | 11p | 14,000 |
| £129.22 | F | £136.44 | £2.62 | | £7.22 | 14p | 5,400 |
| £149.10 | G | £157.43 | £3.03 | | £8.33 | 15p | 2,900 |
| £178.92 | H | £188.92 | £3.63 | | £10.00 | 20p | 300 |
| | | | | | | | 263,600 |
| | | | | | | | 100.0% |

- 8. Noted that if the recommended £5 Band D Council tax increase was not approved recurring income will be lower and replacement budget cuts will need to be implemented. Owing to the timetable for setting the 2025/26 budget these additional budget cuts would need to be approved at the Authority meeting on 28th March 2025. The implementation timetable for savings in 2025/26 will depend on the level of consultation required for additional saving proposals.**
 - 9. Approved the Asset Management Plan detailed in Appendix B, which updates the existing approved plan.**
 - 10. Noted the Reserves Review detailed in section 7, which underpins the robustness strategy and ensures the Authority maintains appropriate one-off resources to manage existing commitments phased over more than one financial year and provide some financial flexibility to manage ongoing financial uncertainties.**
- (II) Members noted that the final 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement was issued in late January 2025 and approved the final statutory budget calculations as detailed at Appendix E and the Council Tax Calculations at Appendix F, which were tabled at the meeting.**

88.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28 (including 2025/26 Budget and Council Tax Setting) cont.

Following the meeting a small increase in the overall Council Tax base was confirmed, which increased this from 165,757.6 Band D equated properties to 165,762.8. As a consequence Council Tax income creased by £491 from £15,657,462 to £15,657,953. This additional income will reduce use of the Budget Support Fund from £294,000 to £293,509. The Fire Authority is asked to note this position.

89. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

89.1 The Financial Report 2023/24 and Audit Completion Report

The Treasurer reported that the Draft Financial Reports had been published on the Authority's website on 31 May 2024 and presented to the Audit & Governance Committee for scrutiny on 28 June 2024.

He noted that the statutory audit deadline was 30 September 2024 but owing to a national backlog the government had extended this providing a backstop date of 28 February 2025 for the completion of all 2023/24 accounts.

The Audit Director tabled the Audit Completion Report (Appendix B) which covered: Executive Summary; Status of Audit; Audit Approach; Significant Findings: Internal Control Conclusions; Summary of Misstatements, and Value for Money. He thanked the Authority and Hartlepool Borough Council for their support to Forvis Mazars and confirmed that the Audit was substantially complete. He gave Members assurances that there were not expected to be any changes to the Authority's useable reserves that would impact the medium term financial planning.

Councillor Ovens acknowledged improvement on the timelines compared to previous years and thanked all officers involved for working closely to keep the Audit on track. The Treasurer noted that delays receiving assurances from Teesside Pension Fund auditors should be reduced with Forvis Mazars in place as their new auditors.

The Audit Director confirmed that the Auditors Annual Report would be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 21 February 2025 and would contain commentary on the Authority's arrangements.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the 2023/24 Financial Report attached at Appendix A be approved.
- (ii) That the Audit Completion Report at Appendix B be noted.
- (iii) That Members noted that the Management Letter of Representation will be issued once the audit has concluded.

90. 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 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 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."

91. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

That the Confidential Minutes of the meeting on 6 December 2024 be confirmed.

92. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

That the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 24 January 2025 be confirmed.

93. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

93.1 HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25

The CFO provided Members with a confidential update regarding the Brigade's recently published draft third round inspection report (referred to closed session as per Min.No. 87.3).

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**