

PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD 2 DECEMBER 2009

The Mayor – Councillor Irene Walsh

Present:

Councillors: Allen, Ash, Burton, Cereste, Collins, Croft, M Dalton, S Dalton, C Day, D Day, S Day, Dobbs, Elsey, Fazal, Fitzgerald, Fletcher, Fower, JA Fox, JR Fox, Goldspink, Goodwin, Harrington, Hiller, Holdich, Khan, Kreling, Lane, Lee, Lowndes, Miners, Morley, Murphy, Nawaz, Newton, North, Over, Peach, Rush, Saltmarsh, Sanders, Sandford, Seaton, Sharp, Swift, Todd, Trueman, Wilkinson and Winslade.

In accordance with the Council's Constitution (Standing Orders, Part 4, Section 3) Members agreed to a request from the Press to take photographs of proceedings during the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Benton, Hussain, Lamb, Nash, Scott and Thacker.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Sandford declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, the Core Strategy, advising that his employer, the Woodland Trust, had commented on the Strategy.

3. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD 14 OCTOBER 2009

The minutes of the meeting held 14 October 2009 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as an accurate record, subject to the answer to a question relating to Members' Allowances (question 7, page 29) being amended to read:

'That the 2008/9 actual was £627,814, the projection for the current year is £705,984 and the initial outturn forecast for 2010/11 is £714,505'.

Members were advised that the amount quoted in the agenda papers was overstated by just under £20,000 as some of the proposals originally discussed, such as payment of Vice Chairs, were subsequently rejected and had not been removed from the figures.

4. COMMUNICATIONS TIME

4 (i) Mayor's Announcements

The report outlining the Mayor's engagements for the period 1 October to 20 November 2009 was noted.

The Mayor thanked those who had attended the Remembrance Service at the Cathedral and the Armistice Service. Members' attention was drawn to the following forthcoming events:

- Civic Carol Service - 6 December 2009 at St. John's Church, Stanground;
- Holocaust Memorial Service - 27 January 2010 at the front of the Town Hall;

- Katherine of Aragon Commemoration Service - 29 January 2010 at the Cathedral;
- Mayor's Charity Ball - 12 March 2010 at the Town Hall.

4 (ii) Leader's Announcements

There were no announcements for the Leader of the Council.

4 (iii) Chief Executive's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TIME

5 (i) Questions with Notice by Members of the Public

A question was asked in respect of the Core Strategy and the proposed number of homes planned for the city centre.

5 (ii) Questions with Notice by Members of the Council relating to Ward Matters and to Committee Chairmen

There were no questions raised.

5 (iii) Questions with Notice by Members of the Council to representatives of the Police and Fire Authorities

A question was asked in respect of the attendance of local Police Community Support Officers at Councillor Surgeries.

A summary of all questions and answers raised within agenda item 5 (i), (ii) and (iii) is attached at **Appendix A**.

5 (iv) Petitions submitted by Members or Residents

There were no petitions received.

6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS TIME

6 (i) Questions with Notice to the Leader and Members of the Executive

Questions were asked of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members in respect of the following:

- The Council's policy and procedure in respect of project management;
- The Council's future commitment to the Cresset;
- The Christmas Park and Ride service;
- The Civic Wreath Laying Ceremony held at the War Memorial in the grounds of the Cathedral;
- The provision of a designated transit site for use by gypsies and travellers;
- The Trees and Woodlands Strategy;
- Provision of church and school facilities at Hampton;
- The Council's policy in respect of 'Common Purpose' training courses;
- Concessionary bus travel scheme for pensioners.

A summary of all questions and answers raised within agenda item 6 (i) is attached at **Appendix B**.

6 (ii) Questions without Notice on the Record of Executive Decisions

Members received and noted a report summarising:

- Decisions from the Cabinet Meeting held 12 October 2009;
- The outcome of petitions previously presented to full Council;
- The Council's call-in mechanism which had not been invoked since the last meeting;
- Special Urgency provisions in respect of the decision to extend Woodston Primary School to provide three additional classrooms and associated facilities;
- Cabinet Member Decisions taken during the period 5 October 2009 to 19 November 2009.

Questions were asked about the following:

Medium Term Financial Plan 2010/11 to 2014/15

Councillor Sandford queried the approach to managing budgetary pressures in the current financial year and expressed concern regarding the decision to use Council reserves to help counteract overspend. As this would result in a loss of one third of the general fund balance within the first half of the financial year, he asked whether this represented prudent use of reserves. In response, Councillor Seaton assured Members that he was aware of the impact of this action, however he believed that the steps taken in delivering savings and the use of balances to be prudent.

Councillor Goldspink sought a commitment to establish firm timescales in respect of the reference in the report to achievement of Environment Capital status. In response, Councillor Lee assured Members that work was being carried out to create the UK's Environment Capital, strengthening that already undertaken by the previous administration to ensure delivery. Further written detail would be provided to Councillor Goldspink.

Petition against the erection of a high security fence around playing field adjacent to Norwood School

Councillor Fower sought assurance that petitioners would be advised of the findings of the investigation undertaken by the Neighbourhood Management Team in respect of this matter. Councillor Cereste confirmed that all petitioners would be informed of the outcome.

Discretionary Rate Relief from Business Rates on the Grounds of Hardship

Councillor Fower asked how many businesses had, to date, applied for discretionary rate relief. In response, Councillor Seaton advised that this information was detailed in the decision notice. He emphasised that Cabinet placed the needs of local business and voluntary groups high on its agenda and that each request was considered in a fair and balanced manner.

East of England Plan to 2031 – Scenarios for Housing and Economic Growth Consultation: Response

Councillor Sandford expressed concern regarding the timing of the publication of this decision in relation to the associated timescale for implementation of the call-in process and emphasised that he had raised a similar concern in respect of the timing of an earlier consultation response. Councillor Cereste advised that timescales for consultation documents were often limited, however, he assured Members that every effort was made to ensure that sufficient time was allowed for the implementation of call-in and the associated scrutiny process wherever possible.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.00 p.m. and reconvened at 8.10 p.m.

7. COUNCIL BUSINESS TIME

7 (i) Executive Recommendations

Peterborough Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Proposed Submission Version

Cabinet, at its meeting of 12 October 2009, had received a report on the Peterborough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (Proposed Submission Version). Councillor Croft moved the recommendation that Council approve the Core Strategy for the purposes of public consultation and submission to the Secretary of State, subject to the following amendments, which were seconded by Councillor Hiller.

- That a new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 5.3.19 (page 32) to read: 'Additional Development – the dwelling numbers set out in policy CS1 are expressed as minimum figures. They are not artificial 'ceilings' to growth. If residential development proposals come forward in appropriate locations that will enable growth which exceeds these, the Council will work with the prospective developer to address all the issues in order to deliver that development'.
- That a new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 6.3.15 (page 55) to read: 'Paragraph 6.3.13 refers to the relative shortage of large houses at the top end of the market and the policy makes reference to widening the range of property sizes available. Through its Site Allocations DPD, the Council will allocate and safeguard some sites (or parts of sites) specifically for large houses at low densities'.

Members noted that the document proposed an additional 25,500 dwellings in the period to 2026, including outward expansion of the city at Stanground South, Paston Reserve, Norwood and Great Haddon and the provision for around 100 more hectares of employment land. The Strategy also outlined proposals in respect of:

- Types of housing,
- Regeneration;
- Promotion of the city centre;
- Planning Obligation contributions from developers;
- Environmental issues, including a specific policy to support the Council's bid for Environment Capital Status.

Members were reminded that the Core Strategy derived from the integrated growth study and extensive consultation had taken place. The 'preferred options' version was approved by Cabinet on 31 March 2008 and all comments had been taken into account in preparing this latest version. The views of Neighbourhood Councils had been sought during October and November 2009 and there would be further opportunity for formal comment early in 2010. This would be followed by a public examination including a hearing session and the final Strategy would be adopted only after receipt of the inspection report.

Councillor Wilkinson proposed the following amendment:

'That all references to the creation of a Regional Freight Interchange be removed from the Core Strategy'. She raised a number of concerns in respect of the impact of such a development on the area and to nearby residents, in summary:

- The increased risk of flooding to nearby homes caused by developing on a flood plain ;

- Light and noise pollution;
- Impact of additional HGV traffic on local road network;
- Impact on the landscape, wildlife and the environment.

Councillor Rush seconded this amendment.

A debate on the amendment followed during which the following points were raised:

- Creation of a regional freight interchange would increase employment opportunities, attracting approximately 5,000 jobs to the area;
- The development would have the capacity to reduce HGV traffic as it would maximise use of the railway network. This would have a positive environmental impact.

The Mayor announced her intention to speak as a Ward Councillor. She fully endorsed the comments made by Councillors Wilkinson and Rush and expressed concern in respect of the impact of such a development on the local area, nearby residents' lives, the environment and the city itself.

A vote was taken on the amendment put forward by Councillor Wilkinson which was **DEFEATED** (17 in favour, 29 against, 3 abstentions).

A vote was then taken on the motion as moved by Councillor Croft (33 in favour, 6 against, 7 abstentions) and it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Approve the Peterborough Core Strategy (Proposed Submission Version) for the purposes of public consultation and submission to the Secretary of State subject to the following:
 - That a new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 5.3.19 (page 32) to read: 'Additional Development – the dwelling numbers set out in policy CS1 are expressed as minimum figures. They are not artificial 'ceilings' to growth. If residential development proposals come forward in appropriate locations that will enable growth which exceeds these, the Council will work with the prospective developer to address all the issues in order to deliver that development'.
 - That a new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 6.3.15 (page 55) to read: 'Paragraph 6.3.13 refers to the relative shortage of large houses at the top end of the market and the policy makes reference to widening the range of property sizes available. Through its Site Allocations DPD, the Council will allocate and safeguard some sites (or parts of sites) specifically for large houses at low densities'.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Development Plan Documents (Submission Stage)

Cabinet, at its meeting of 12 October 2009 considered a report on the Minerals and Waste Plan which had been produced jointly by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council and which set the framework for all minerals and waste development up to 2026. The plan allocated sites to ensure a steady supply of minerals to supply the growth agenda and to facilitate modern waste management facilities to secure a major change in the management of waste. Councillor Croft moved the recommendation for adoption and this was seconded by Councillor Hiller.

A vote was taken (41 in favour, 0 against, 4 abstentions) and it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Approve the publication of the following Cambridgeshire Minerals and Waste Development Plan documents for pre-submission consultation in February/march 2010 and the submission of the documents to the Secretary of State:
- Core Strategy Development Plan Document and
 - Site Specific Proposals Development Plan Document); and
- (ii) Approve the publication of the following Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Draft Supplementary Planning Documents for consultation in February/March 2010:
- Location and Design of Waste Management Development RECAP Waste Management Design Guide.

7 (ii) Committee Recommendations

There were no recommendations from Committees.

7 (iii) Notices of Motion

(1) Motion from Councillor Lane:

That this Council:

- (i) Notes that the current economic crisis is having a significant impact on this city and its people and that this Council has already experienced difficulty with regard to available income which has compelled a number of unfortunate decisions to be made that were driven by elements of cost saving;
- (ii) Recognises that the recession has also left an untold and immeasurable effect on our communities, where some have been left to cope with wage cuts and freezes and in many cases job losses; and therefore
- (iii) Agrees that it would not be appropriate for Members to receive any increase of allowances at a time when others are experiencing such hardships; and
- (iv) Approves the implementation of a three-year freeze on all increases to Members' basic allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances with effect from the start of the 2010/11 financial year.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor John Fox.

Councillor Sandford moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Fower:

To **delete** paragraphs (iii) and (iv) of the motion and **replace** with:

That this Council:

- (iii) Agrees that it would not be appropriate for there to be any overall increase in the Members' Allowances budget for 2010/11 and indeed, it could be reduced by reducing the number of Cabinet Members, abolishing posts of Cabinet Advisers and reviewing payments to Committee and Neighbourhood Council chairs; and
- (iv) Requires that Cabinet implements the review of car parking passes for Councillors and employees as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy

and supported by the Independent Members' Allowances Panel, with a view to saving £100,000 in the current financial year and £200,000 in the following year.

Following debate, a vote was taken on the amendment which was **DEFEATED** (3 in favour, 34 against, 3 abstentions).

The motion as proposed by Councillor Lane was put to the vote and was **DEFEATED** (6 in favour, 35 against, 5 abstentions).

(2) Motion from Councillor Goldspink:

That this Council:

- (i) Agrees that, as a matter of policy, in the interests of ease of access, openness and transparency and to be consistent with the spirit of the Standards Board for England's National Code of Conduct, Members' interests will be automatically published online via the Council's website, unless a Member specifically requests otherwise, in which case a note to that effect will appear on the website instead.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

Councillor Cereste moved an amendment to this motion, namely that the matter be referred to the Council's Standards Committee for consideration with a recommendation subsequently being referred back to full Council. This was seconded by Councillor Lee:

Following debate, a vote was taken on the amendment which was **CARRIED** (33 in favour, 3 against, 8 abstentions).

The substantive motion was put to the vote and **CARRIED** (37 in favour, 0 against and 8 abstentions).

(3) Motion from Councillor Sandford:

That this Council:

- (i) Notes that a number of Councils across the country have increased public access and accountability by broadcasting live over the internet proceedings of full Council meetings, and in some cases, also Cabinet and Committee meetings. Councils currently broadcasting full proceedings include Derby, Devon, Brighton, Bristol and Hull;
- (ii) Requests the Leader of the Council to investigate broadcasting Peterborough's full Council and Cabinet proceedings and to submit a report on the matter to the next meeting of the Council outlining key costs and other relevant considerations.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Trueman.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

(4) Motion from Councillor Ash:

The Mayor advised that Councillor Ash wished to move an altered version of the motion set out on page 78 of the agenda book. Following Council's consent to consideration of the altered motion, Councillor Ash moved the following and drew Members' attention to the alteration at paragraph (iv) which proposed that the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee, rather than a working group, considered the introduction of a cross-city bus network and other travel options:

That this Council:

- (i) Notes that when designed, our road network easily met the demands of the day. However, forty years on it is beginning to struggle to meet the ever increasing demands of modern day traffic;
- (ii) Recognises that essential road works now have a major impact on traffic flows and severe increases in the highways budget will be needed to keep pace with the potential growth of road traffic and maintain the current traffic flows;
- (iii) Acknowledges that sustainable growth is a key ingredient to becoming the Environment Capital and the growth of recorded bus passenger figures is a step forward to meeting that aim. However, Council remains conscious that it is far easier to make cross city journeys by private transport and that the current network does not encourage travellers away from cars for those journeys;
- (iv) Resolves, that as part of our ambition to become the Environment Capital, and the preferred destination venue in the area, easy access be maintained in and around the city and, as a key part of that goal, refers to the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee for consideration the setting up of a cross-city bus network and other travel options that can be introduced, as soon as possible, to encourage people away from their cars.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Miners.

Councillor Sandford moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Trueman:

To **delete** paragraphs (i) and (ii) of the motion.

A vote was taken on the amendment which was **DEFEATED** (4 in favour, 40 against, 1 abstention).

A vote was taken on the motion which was **CARRIED** (41 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention).

7 (iv) Reports and Recommendations

(a) Appointments to Committees

The Council had received a report at its last meeting regarding the re-allocation of seats to committees following the formation of the English Democrats Group. Whilst appointments were made in accordance with political balance rules, there had been a consensus that there should be an opportunity for further dialogue between the respective group leaders over the allocation of seats to all committees and that Council would then consider any changes to the membership of committees arising from liaison between the respective group leaders.

Councillor Fower moved the following proposal which was seconded by Councillor Lee:

- (i) Councillor Sandford be appointed to serve on the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee as the Liberal Democrats nominee, relinquishing the seat previously allocated to the Liberal Democrats on the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee; and
- (ii) Councillor Goldspink be appointed to serve on the Strong and Supportive Scrutiny Committee as the English Democrats nominee, relinquishing the seat previously allocated to the English Democrats on the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Appoint Councillor Sandford to the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee as the Liberal Democrats nominee, relinquishing the seat previously allocated to the Liberal Democrats on the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee; and
- (ii) Appoint Councillor Goldspink to the Strong and Supportive Scrutiny Committee as the English Democrats nominee, relinquishing the seat previously allocated to the English Democrats on the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee.

(b) Gambling Act 2005: Review of Statement of Principles

The Gambling Act 2005 requires that licensing authorities must review and revise their Statement of Principles on a three yearly basis in order to reflect any changes in legislation and/or guidance. Council had approved the original Statement of Principles on 13 December 2006.

At its meeting of 17 November 2009, the Licensing Act 2003 Committee had considered the Statement, together with responses to the consultation exercise.

In moving the recommendation, Councillor Dobbs drew Members' attention to the three key changes to the Statement of Principles set out in paragraph 1.6 of the report. Council was asked to approve and adopt the revised Statement. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Hiller.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Approve and adopt the Statement of Principles as the Council's formal three year Statement under Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005.

Meeting closed at 10.10 p.m.

**SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RAISED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 5 -
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TIME**

1. Questions with Notice by Members of the Public

Mr Ed Murphy asked the Leader of the Council:

Recently at a public meeting, I was joined by the MP for Peterborough, who agreed that 5000 dwellings for the city centre as proposed under the Core Strategy may be too many. The city MP stated that rural areas, along with the city centre, should take their share of new homes under Peterborough's growth. Do you agree with the incumbent city MP that the villages should have more development of new homes than is proposed in the current core strategy?

The Leader of the Council responded:

Our Core Strategy (before Council later on the agenda) recommends a figure of approximately 4,300 more dwellings be built in the city centre over the period to 2026, rather than 5,000, which I agree would be slightly too high. The work that has been done so far on the City Centre Area Action Plan shows how this 4,300 figure could be achieved.

The Core Strategy also proposes that there should be some development in villages (around 1,100 altogether) and I believe this strikes the right balance between bringing new investment and vitality to villages, widening the choice of locations for housebuyers and safeguarding the character of the villages, so that they can maintain their individual identity.

When the Core Strategy is examined by an independent Inspector, this is precisely the type of issue that will be debated and the Inspector will make binding recommendations as to whether or not these figures should be changed, in the light of the evidence presented.

Mr Murphy asked the following supplementary question:

Do you then agree with me that the current plans for several hundred houses for villages such as Eye, Thorney and Newborough are appropriate and that any more would possibly ruin the character of these villages?

The Leader of the Council responded:

It is important that any development that takes place in any village, or indeed in any part of our city, is sustainable development that does not spoil the area.

**2. Questions with Notice by Members of the Council relating to Ward Matters and to
Committee Chairmen**

There were no questions submitted.

3. Questions from Members to Representatives of the Police / Fire Authorities

Councillor Sandford asked the Council's representative on the Police Authority:

Are the representatives aware that several Councillors including myself have invited local Police Community Support Officers to attend our Councillor surgeries and have advertised them as such? However, at my surgeries attendance by the Police has been sporadic at best and many months go by without them attending any surgeries. Whilst accepting that occasionally emergencies or problems may prevent attendance, do the representatives share my view that the Police should honour such commitments wherever possible. so that members of the public can discuss problems with both Councillors and the Police where appropriate?

Will the representatives join me in urging senior police officers to take appropriate action to ensure that surgeries are attended when a commitment to do so has been made and advertised to local people?

Councillor Fazal responded:

I am concerned to hear that local Police Community Support Officers are not always attending Councillors' surgeries when they had agreed to do so and will raise this matter directly with the Chief Constable asking that a response be sent to Councillor Sandford. We also need to work together to look at how best we can develop existing Neighbourhood Panels and street briefings to ensure communities views are heard.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RAISED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6 (i) – EXECUTIVE BUSINESS TIME

1. Questions with Notice from Members to the Leader and Members of the Executive

1. Councillor Goldspink asked the Leader:

Can the Leader explain the Council's policy and procedure on project management, and let me know all the steps that it entails, including whether it includes preparing a project brief and business case before the project begins, to ensure that there are real and quantifiable benefits that justify the expenditure, and a review at the end of the project to ensure that it has delivered what it set out to deliver, on time and within cost?

The Leader responded:

The Council operates a scalable and flexible project management method based on PRINCE2. Processes are in place to take projects from idea to delivery, ensuring appropriate levels of governance and structure exist to ensure the benefits of a project are realised. Key steps include:

- Entry on the Council's project register, with outline timetables, costs, and benefits
- Business case development, clarifying objectives, benefits, costs and delivery options
- Progress reporting, specifically around performance against milestones, cost and benefits

How and when these steps are applied varies from project to project, reflecting both the different needs of projects of different size and complexity and that projects develop in different ways, some very formally along a process from idea to brief to business case and some more organically. This flexibility is one of our method's strengths; a one size fits all approach is inefficient, risky and constrains the very innovation Peterborough is increasingly renowned for.

Councillor Goldspink asked the following supplementary question:

Can the Leader supply a copy of such documentation as it was drafted for the Neighbourhood Council project so that the people of Peterborough can reassure themselves that this project was properly assessed before it was started and that it will be reviewed to ensure the benefits quantified have been delivered?

The Leader responded:

The implementation of Neighbourhood Councils was not categorised as a project as one would consider, for example, a building project or development. They were introduced as a method to bring democracy to communities.

2. Councillor Swift asked the Leader:

Will the Leader tell this Council what its commitments are to the Cresset? Is the Council honouring the discussions that were held when the merger of the YMCA and the Cresset Company Limited took place and what is the total amount of money the Council is investing, at the present time, in the future of the Cresset Centre? Can the Leader outline the Council's future commitments to the Cresset, and is this equal to the amount of money being put into other resources such as the City Centre and Peterborough United?

The Leader responded:

Officers are working with the YMCA to seek to achieve agreement on a regeneration scheme for the neighbourhood including the Cresset that would re-provide its facilities and services while introducing new, high-quality, green homes. The YMCA believes that if agreement can be reached it can find a way to sustain the provision of the Cresset's services in the meantime. I have met the Cresset's leadership team personally and explained that the council cannot provide an open-ended revenue subsidy, but I also endorsed officers' efforts to achieve a viable, deliverable and equitable development proposal for the area. This means that the council is retaining land and keeping premises unlet in order to be able to collaborate with the YMCA on a development scheme that benefits the Cresset.

There are costs arising out of this support being provided to the YMCA and the Cresset. The annual cost to the council of the current arrangements is £570,000.

We have invested more capital in the city centre, unsurprisingly, since most people who visit, live and work in Peterborough come to the city centre – that isn't true of the Cresset, popular venue though it is.

In the last financial year, the Council's contribution to Peterborough United was limited to match sponsorship, which costs £8,000.

Councillor Swift asked the following supplementary question:

I appreciate that no 'blank cheque' can be given for the Cresset, but neither should one be given for other projects such as the South Bank. Would the Leader not agree that the city should have an equal share of resources?

The Leader responded:

I agree that we need to ensure equality for the city and the people who live here. The Cresset is an important venue and if we can find a way to support and retain it, we will do so.

3. Councillor Murphy asked the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development:

I was pleased to see that, following public pressure, the Christmas Park and Ride service has been reinstated, but note there is no budget for it in the current year. As it was the first of the Cabinet budget setting meetings at Wittering on 16 November, can the Cabinet Member please advise if it is his administration's policy to provide Christmas Park and Ride, and if he is going to budget for it in 2010/11?

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development responded:

The decision to reinstate the Park and Ride service was taken after the Leader, myself and Councillor Elsey listened to the considered representation from our own Conservative colleagues, members of the Independent Party and the Liberal Democrats and we have had no representation or assignation from any members of the public as the question suggests. Details of the 2010/11 budget will be included in the Budget report going to Cabinet in December; and this information will be published on 4 December.

Councillor Murphy asked the following supplementary question:

According to passenger transport figures of last year, 7000 vehicles were removed from the road by use of the Park and Ride scheme. Surveys from the last two years have demonstrated that people are happy to pay £1.00 for the service, so why has the charge not been adapted to reflect this, given that this would have raised monies to help run the service this year?

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development responded:

We will monitor this year's take-up of the service very closely and when the figures are available we will act accordingly and prudently.

4. Councillor John Fox asked the Leader

On Remembrance Day, I attended the Civic Wreath Laying Ceremony at the War Memorial in the grounds of the Cathedral. Although the event was very dignified, it was difficult to hear the proceedings due to the Cathedral bells and it was also necessary to stand on wet grass. Can a commitment be given to re-siting the War Memorial to a more prominent position within our city centre, with a view to including it in future plans for St. John's Street which would be an ideal location and under the eyes of the surveillance equipment?

The Leader responded:

Removing the War Memorial would require all veteran organizations, stakeholders and today's citizens of Peterborough to reach a consensus of agreement. This request would then be put forward to the Cathedral's 'Fabric Advisory Committee' (local non church body) for opinion. The application is then passed to the 'Cathedral Fabric Commissions for England' (national statutory organization). If the application is approved Peterborough City Council would facilitate the next stage of the project.

The recommendation (via Canon Cattle) from the Cathedral Architect, who specially designed this Memorial to replace the one that used to be in Bridge Street, is that it would not be possible to move the Memorial as it was designed to be of a robust standing and to remove it would severely damage its structure and possibly damage it beyond recognition.

In the meantime the Head of City Operations is working with Canon Richard Cattle to improve the area around the War Memorial to include benches and will discuss with him the matter of the timing of the bells and the possibility of installing temporary flooring for future Remembrance Day services.

5. Councillor Swift asked the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development:

Can the Council stop the situation in this City whereby people can travel and deposit their vehicles or caravans on grass verges on the roads all over the place? Can we make a piece of land available and designate it for use by these people so that they can go straight on to it when they come here illegally, and, as we are allowed to do by law, charge them a rent for being on the site but under the control of the City Council. It is

costing thousands of pounds of officers' time clearing up rubbish for people who contribute nothing at all to the City in rateable value and we want something urgently doing about it. We should stop turning a blind eye and be more positive. This was the action I took when I had the privilege of being Leader.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development responded:

In October a Steering Group was set up to look at issues facing the Gypsy, Traveller and Settled Communities in Peterborough. With over 20 members from all the agencies and departments in Peterborough dealing with these groups, we prioritised areas of concern that needed addressing.

One particular area is the need for Transit Site provision to alleviate the problems faced of unauthorised encampments in and around the City. We have set up a working group to look at how we can provide a transit site to Travellers and Gypsies passing through Peterborough. The group recently met with the LGA lead on Gypsy and Traveller issues – Richard Bennett – who advised us on national best practice on implementing a transit site and consultation processes involved. We are currently in discussions on how to move forward with this.

6. Councillor Sandford asked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Culture:

Could the Cabinet Member explain what has happened to the Council's draft replacement Trees and Woodlands Strategy? A working group was set up in 2005 to draw up a new strategy and a draft document was produced in September 2007 and was handed over to the Council's City Services Department when they took over responsibility for the trees and woodland function. However, over two years later the draft strategy still has not been submitted for approval to the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet and to full Council, as is required by the Council's constitution for strategies which are part of the Council's Major Policy Framework. Meanwhile, the previous 1998 strategy has been removed from the Council website and it appears that the Council is currently operating without a trees strategy, which may explain why so many trees and shrubs are being removed and destroyed without replacement.

Will the Cabinet Member take immediate action to ensure that the draft Trees and Woodland Strategy is submitted for approval without further delay and that both the current strategy and the replacement one when approved are properly enforced by all council departments?

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Culture responded :

I would like to thank Cllr Sandford for bringing this to my attention. I have now arranged for the Strategy to be published on the Council's website for one month's final consultation, allowing for any additional comments about the Strategy which may then, if appropriate, be incorporated. Following this final consultation the matter will proceed through the usual Council decision making processes before coming back to Council. In the meantime the Council continues to operate to the 1998 strategy.

Councillor Sandford asked the following supplementary question:

I am also concerned that the Council's Open Spaces Strategy, discussed by the Environment Committee in 2005, has to date not been progressed. Would the Cabinet Member agree that this matter should also be addressed?

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Culture responded :

I am happy to investigate the matter raised with regard to the Open Spaces Strategy and will advise Councillor Sandford accordingly.

7. Councillor Saltmarsh asked the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University:

I welcome the contribution from Cross Keys and other Social housing providers in Hampton as they have reduced the number of families waiting for homes. There are, however, some essentials for family life which do not appear to have kept pace with the house building programme. It is ironic that there is a Vicar appointed to Hampton yet there is no Church building as noted by the Archbishop of York on his recent visit. Hampton Hargate County Primary has requested planning permission for an extension but there are still not enough school places for the current residents. Is it reasonable to move families into social housing, knowing there are not enough school places for their children?

Can the Cabinet Member assure Members that this lack of community facilities will be addressed to ensure an improvement to the quality of life for the current residents and the families moving into Hampton.?

The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University responded:

The Council does not have a remit for religious functions and therefore cannot comment on the lack of provision for a Church at Hampton.

No child within Peterborough is without a school place. Not all children living in Hampton have access to a place within their catchment, but we do have spare capacity in the adjacent schools in the Ortons. Hampton School places were planned in the early/mid 1990s, with an expectation of 75% owner occupied houses and 25% social housing, but the impact of a strong rental market and high family based migration, child yields are significantly higher than expected.

The project to expand Hampton Hargate increases the annual reception intake by 30. It will also create a Children's Centre which is of significant benefit to the community.

Two further Primary Schools are to be provided on Hampton Leys and an extension to the Secondary School will take it up to an 8 form entry facility. Also, it was announced today that we have a grant from Government of £5.2m to address the shortage of primary school places across the City.

8. Councillor Goldspink asked the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Growth and Human Resources:

What is the Council's policy regarding employees and Members who wish to pursue 'Common Purpose' courses and seminars and become graduates? Are they funded by the Council and what is the approximate annual cost of any such education and training to the Council for 2007/8 and 2008/9?

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Growth and Human Resources responded:

I assume that your reference to 'Common Purpose' courses/development programmes refers to those that can be found on the website www.commonpurpose.org.uk. Common Purpose is a not for profit organisation that brings together people from a variety of backgrounds to help them become effective leaders and offers a wide range of open and customised programmes. The website contains an explanation of Common Purpose courses and summarises what they do, should Members wish to learn more about this organisation.

I can confirm that to the best of our knowledge, the Council has not funded in the past any training/development programmes provided by this organisation either for employees of the Council or Members.

Should a request be received, like any other training/development activity proposed, the agreement to fund would of course need to be fully justified.

You may be aware that we have recently launched a new, simplified Performance and Development Review scheme to replace the existing versions of the appraisal document. This new document provides the opportunity for a Manager to review the training and development needs of the employee and in so doing, ensure that any agreed training is based on the needs of the Council as well as the individual needs.

Councillor Goldspink asked the following supplementary question:

Could the Cabinet Member provide me with an electronic copy of the simplified Performance and Development Review scheme?

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Growth and Human Resources responded:

Yes, this will be supplied.

9. Councillor Sandford asked the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development:

The Conservative leader of South Kesteven Council recently announced that pensioners and disabled people in South Kesteven will have unrestricted free travel on local bus services from 1 April 2010, whereas in Peterborough these groups are only allowed to travel free after 9.30am. Could the Cabinet Member explain why Peterborough pensioners cannot have the same rights to free travel as their counterparts and near neighbours in South Kesteven ?

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development responded:

The current legislative requirement, under the Concessionary Travel Act 2007, is to provide free travel to over 60s and disabled groups from 9.30am to 11pm Mondays to Fridays and all day at weekends and on Bank Holidays. Councils may decide to provide discretionary elements to the concessionary travel scheme. Peterborough currently provides the following discretionary elements:

- free travel to blind and visually impaired at all times; and
- free travel on community dial-a-ride services.

Peterborough has an extensive network of bus services which are extremely well used, particularly at peak times by those commuting to work and school children.

As such, the bus operators do not consider, at this time, that there is sufficient capacity to provide the free travel entitlement prior to 9.30am without incurring the additional expense of introducing further buses into the network. Under the Act, Peterborough would be responsible for these costs as well as the travel reimbursement costs.

The budget for 2009-10 for concessionary fares is insufficient to meet the current demand. Therefore, further budget would be required to provide additional discretionary elements to the current concessionary travel scheme.

Councillor Sandford asked the following supplementary question:

The Council's Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee recommended that pensioners should be able to travel free from at least 9.00 a.m. I would query the assertion that there is not sufficient capacity on the bus network to accommodate extra passengers in the early morning. Is the reason that this proposal cannot be accommodated due to the proposed cuts to the Council's early morning urban bus services in areas such as Ravensthorpe?

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development responded:

We have been informed by the service provider that there is not sufficient capacity to extend the scheme. Given the city's ambitious growth agenda and the wish to attract more businesses to the city it would make sense to ensure that a sustainable transport service can be provided for workers during peak commuting times, supporting their use of buses rather than cars.