

PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD 18 April 2012

The Mayor – Councillor Paula Thacker MBE

Present:

Councillors: Allen, Ash, Benton, Burton, Casey, Cereste, M Dalton, S Dalton, D Day, S Day, Dobbs, Eley, Fitzgerald, Fletcher, JA Fox, JR Fox, Goodwin, Harper, Harrington, Hiller, Holdich, Jamil, Khan, Kreling, Lamb, Lane, Lee, Miners, Murphy, Nadeem, Nash, Nawaz, North, Over, Peach, Rush, Saltmarsh, Sanders, Scott, Seaton, Serluca, Shabbir, Sharp, Shearman, Simons, Stokes, Swift, Thacker, Todd, Walsh and Winslade.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Arculus, Fower, Goldspink, Martin, Sandford and Shaheed.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Matthew Dalton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 13(i) on the agenda as his employer, Dalmart Group, was referred to and potentially affected by the proposals in the document.

Councillor Samantha Dalton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 13(i) on the agenda as her husband's employer, Dalmart Group, was referred to and potentially affected by the proposals in the document.

Councillor Ed Murphy declared a personal interest in item 12 on the agenda as he was employed by Gladstone Connect that was listed in one of the decision notices.

Councillor Ash declared a personal interest in item 12 on the agenda as he was a trustee on the board of the Citizen's Advice Bureau that was listed in one of the decision notices.

Councillor Cereste declared an personal and prejudicial interest in item 13(i) on the agenda as he was a part owner of some of the land referred to in the document.

Councillor Kahn declared a personal interest in item 12 on the agenda as he was Chairman of Gladstone Connect that was listed in one of the decision notices.

Councillor Shearman declared a personal interest in item 12 on the agenda as he was secretary of Victoria Park Residents Association and residents associations were listed in one of the decision notices.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 22 February 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2012 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as an accurate record subject to a correction on page 3, item 12, point 3 to remove the word 'twice'.

COMMUNICATIONS TIME

4. Mayor's Announcements

Members noted the updated report outlining the Mayor's engagements for the period 13 February to 8 April 2012.

5. Leader's Announcements

The Leader thanked retiring councillors for the work and efforts over the previous years and wished good luck to those standing for re-election this year.

6. Chief Executive's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TIME

7. Questions with Notice by Members of the public

No questions were raised by Members of the public.

8. Questions with notice by Members of the Council relating to ward matters to Cabinet Members and to Committee Chairmen

Questions relating to Ward matters were raised in respect of the following:

1. Parking charges at Welland House for staff;
2. Child poverty rates in Dogsthorpe; and
3. MP's comments about a planning application.

A summary of all questions and answers raised within agenda item 8 are attached at **Appendix A** to these minutes.

9. Questions with Notice by Members of the Council to representatives of the Police and Fire Authorities

No questions to the representatives of the Police Authority or the Fire Authority were raised.

10. Petitions submitted by Members or Residents

Petitions were presented on the following subjects:

1. Improved youth facilities around Belham Road;
2. Changes to voting procedures for Youth MP Elections; and
3. Improvements or adoption of First Drove, Fengate

EXECUTIVE BUSINESS TIME

11. Questions with Notice to the Leader and Members of the Executive

Questions to the Leader and Members of the Executive were taken as read in respect of the following:

1. Housing needs for military personnel;
2. Rent payments from Peterborough United;
3. Fuel poverty, supplier assistance; and

4. Children's Services failures.

A summary of all questions and answers raised within agenda item 11 are attached at **Appendix B** to these minutes.

12. Questions without Notice on the Record of Executive Decisions

Members received and noted a report summarising:

1. Decisions from the Cabinet Meeting held on 26 March 2012;
2. Use of the Council's call-in mechanism, which had not been invoked since the last meeting;
3. Special Urgency and Waiver of Call-in provision, which had not been invoked since the previous meeting;
4. Cabinet Member Decisions taken during the period 10 February 2012 to 4 April 2012.

Questions were asked about the following:

Section 75 agreement for Learning Disability Commissioning with NHS Peterborough

Councillor Murphy requested an update on how the work was progressing. Councillor Fitzgerald responded that that was not about the decision taken but can discuss any queries outside the meeting.

City of Peterborough Academy - Free School Academy and free special school

Councillor Miners requested clarification on how Academies were different to Local Authority run schools. Councillor Holdich responded that he would reply outside of the meeting.

Award of Contract: Children's Centres Service Providers

Councillor Khan sought reassurance that Children's Centres were not going to close in Central Ward following the award of the new contracts. Councillor Scott advised that the service was to be unchanged for four months and any changes would involve full consultation and would need council approval.

Renewable Energy and energy Efficiency Scheme – Installation of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels to Schools

Councillor Ash requested whether other Local Authority buildings were in line to have solar panels or just Local Authority schools. Councillor Cereste responded that he would reply in writing to Councillor Ash.

Grants to Not-for-Profit organisations

Councillor Nash queried why WRVS was to receive £11,140 whereas the Senior Citizen's Forum as to receive only £250. Councillor Benton requested why Victim Support was only to receive £4,425. Councillor Shearman requested why there was a reduction on some of the grants. Councillor Seaton advised that a breakdown of any changes to the level of grants and what was expected from each organisation in order to receive the money would be circulated to all councillors.

Write off Approval for debts over £10,000 in relation to Non Domestic Rates

Councillor Lane requested how long it would have taken for one of the debts, of around £45,000, to accrue. Councillor Seaton responded that there was around £185,000 written off in total and that the council would not have been able to get this money back and that the council was very proactive in pursuing its debts.

Councillor Cereste recommended that all the written responses mention above be circulated to all councillors.

COUNCIL BUSINESS TIME

Councillors M Dalton, S Dalton and Cereste left the room.

13. Committee Recommendations

(i) Peterborough Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)

Cabinet, at its meeting of 26 March 2012, received a report informing it of the publication of the Inspector's Report and its conclusion which found the Peterborough Site Allocations Development Plan Document DPD 'sound' and sought Cabinet approval to recommend that Council adopted the DPD at its meeting on 18 April 2012.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning introduced and moved the recommendation that Council adopts the Peterborough Site Allocations Development Plan Document, incorporating the changes set out in the Inspector's Report. This was seconded by Councillor Lee.

Councillor Sanders advised that he had previously made his views known on this document and that he would continue to support the residents of the Eye and Thorney ward in objection to it and therefore, so as not to vote against it tonight he left the meeting.

Members debated the recommendation and raised points including:

- Opposition existed to the rail Freight Interchange including environmental and archaeological concerns;
- Only part of the Norwood site was include in the document;
- Little consultation with villages on the proposals in the document and what preferred locations or developments were;
- Provision for a cemetery was needed and not included here;
- Development land should move to the west of the city not the east;
- Jobs and development opportunities now clear;
- Planning permissions were not yet granted for individual schemes; and
- Passed as a sound document by the Planning Inspector.

During debate Councillors Rush, Walsh and Harper raised local concerns regarding the Rail Freight interchange but reserved their right to consult and debate when or if that item came forward at a future meeting.

Following debate, a vote was taken (27 in favour, 6 against, 11 abstentions) and it was **RESOLVED** that:

Council adopts the Peterborough Site Allocations Development Plan Document, incorporating the changes set out in the Inspector's Report.

The meeting adjourned for five minutes.

(ii) Trees and Woodlands Strategy

Cabinet, at is meeting of 26 March 2012, received a report outlining the renewal of the Trees and Woodland Strategy Policies and Priorities. At its meeting, Cabinet endorsed the Trees and Woodland Strategy – Policies and Priorities and recommend it to Council for adoption as part of the Major Policy Framework and possible additional resource requirements post 2012/13.

The Cabinet Member for Environment Capital introduced and moved the recommendation that Council adopts the Trees and Woodland Strategy – Policies and Priorities. This was seconded by Councillor Goodwin.

Members debated the recommendation and raised points including:

- Money was available in the budget to deliver the recommendations;
- Need to ensure the right tree was in the right place i.e. not too close to buildings;
- More slow growing native trees were included in the strategy.

Following debate, a vote was taken (44 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions) and it was **RESOLVED** that:

Council adopts the Trees and Woodland Strategy – Policies and Priorities

14. Committee Recommendations

(i) Standards Committee and the Localism Act 2011

Councillor Todd introduced and moved recommendations in a report to Council outlining the process of reviewing the current arrangements for Standards and to introduce a new Standards regime, Members Code of Conduct and Members Interest declarations following the adoption of the Localism Act 2011. This was seconded by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Miners moved an amendment to recommendation 2 in the report to remove the words 'Audit Committee' and replace with 'a special committee for Standards' or 'Ethical Governance Committee' as below:

- (2) That the Council supports the incorporation of the Council's ethical governance functions within the terms of the ~~Audit Committee~~ Special Committee for Standards / Ethical Governance Committee upon commencement of the new regime and following approval by Council;

This was seconded by Councillor Sharp.

Following a brief debate a vote was taken (17 in favour, 30 against, 1 abstention) and it was **RESOLVED** that the amendment is **NOT CARRIED**.

Members debated the original recommendations and raised points including:

- Do need a model to follow;
- Other models outside of Cambridgeshire should be considered;
- Could develop a Peterborough model.

Following debate, a vote was taken (31 in favour, 7 against, 9 abstentions) and it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) That the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with group leaders, is to:
- (a) develop the proposed Code of Conduct (annex A);
 - (b) prepare a protocol for receipt, investigation and consideration of complaints against councilors;
 - (c) prepare revised terms of reference for any committee dealing with complaints against members; and
 - (d) consider and recommend whether an annual retention fee should be paid to the independent persons (providing comparative information from other councils).

Subject to formal approval of these arrangements by Council prior to implementation of the new standards regime;

- (2) That the Council supports the incorporation of the Council's ethical governance functions within the terms of the Audit Committee upon commencement of the new regime and following approval by Council;

- (3) That the Monitoring Officer is given delegated powers to devise and implement a procedure for recruiting one or more “Independent Persons”, subject to approval of such appointments by Council;
- (4) That the Monitoring Officer is takes all necessary steps to establish a register of members’ interests to replace the current register and to ensure that Councillors are made aware of any changes to registration and declaration of interests.

(ii) Annual Report of the Audit Committee

Audit Committee, at its meeting on 26 March 2012, reflected on its business for the Municipal Year. Following its agreement, a report was to be presented to Council to raise the awareness of the works of the Committee in scrutinising and challenging the processes in place to govern the organisation.

Councillor Lamb moved the report and recommendation that Council notes the work carried out by the Audit Committee in improving governance arrangements across the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Seaton.

A vote was taken (unanimous) and it was **AGREED** that Council notes the work carried out by the Audit Committee in improving governance arrangements across the Council.

15. Notice of Motion

1. Councillor Murphy moved the following motion:

That this council:

1. welcomes the £1 million lottery money for Ravensthorpe and Westwood; an area with child poverty rates above 30%; and
2. in recognition that the Big Lottery Funding has identified Westwood and Ravensthorpe as an area that has been deprived of investment in recent years, believes that the council should match this funding pound for pound with additional cash from its future years’ budgets and support a resident led approach in determining how to use these funds.

During his speech, Councillor Murphy commented about the conduct of his fellow ward councillor, Councillor Nawaz. These comments were considered to be inappropriate by some Members and a motion was moved and seconded that Councillor Murphy be not further heard. A vote was taken (39 for, 2 against, 7 abstentions) and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Murphy be not heard for the remainder of the motion.

The motion from Councillor Murphy was seconded by Councillor Khan.

Following a brief debate, a vote was taken (4 in favour, 41 against, 3 abstentions) and the motion was **DEFEATED**.

2. Councillor Murphy moved the following recommendation:

Following difficulties experienced by some members of the public, especially the elderly, in accessing council services, including Housing Options, through the Peterborough Direct (747474) facility, this Council agrees that:

1. Public confidence in the council diminishes if service calls from the public are not responded to in a timely fashion or at all; and
2. Cabinet Members should work with Directors to ensure that sufficient levels of staff are available to answer calls to service departments that are put through from the Peterborough Direct service, in order to avoid unnecessary delays for the public in receiving responses to their questions and queries.

This was seconded by Councillor Jamil.

Following brief debate, a vote was taken (9 in favour, 34 against, 2 abstentions) and the motion was **DEFEATED**.

16. Reports and Recommendations

(i) Changes to the Date of Annual Council 2012

Councillor Lee moved a report requesting that Council agrees to change the date of Annual Council from Monday 14th May 2012 to the new date of Wednesday 23rd May 2012. The change in date was required to allow more time for necessary administrative procedures and discussion of appointments to committees with the respective groups to take place. This was seconded by Councillor Walsh.

Following a brief debate a vote was taken (47 for, 0 against, 1 abstention) and it was **RESOLVED** to:

Change the date of Annual Council from Monday 14th May 2012 to the new date of Wednesday 23rd May 2012.

(ii) Independent Members Remuneration Panel

Councillor Matthew Dalton moved a report to outlining the process of the recruitment for an Independent Members' Remuneration Panel, as agreed by Council on 11 April 2001, and requesting Council agrees to the recruitment of a new Independent Members' Remuneration Panel, using the same Terms of Reference, which have been updated in part to provide a more generic approach as below:

- Point 4 of the Terms of Reference refers to the appointment of the panel being made by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the three group leaders, with any unresolvable disagreement to be referred to the Policy Executive Panel for determination.
- It is proposed to amend point 4 to read: The members of the panel will be appointed by the Chief Executive, in consultation with group leaders.

This was seconded by Councillor Lee.

Council **AGREED** to:

Note the process for the recruitment of an Independent Members' Remuneration Panel, as agreed by Council on 11th April 2001 and the recruitment of a new Independent Members' Remuneration Panel, using the same Terms of Reference, which had been updated in part to provide a more generic approach.

(iii) Programme of Meetings

Councillor Matthew Dalton moved a report detailing the annual programme of meetings for 2012/13 and the draft programme of meetings for 2013/14 for approval. The calendars had been prepared in accordance with the arrangements that had been implemented in previous years. This was seconded by Councillor Lee.

Council **AGREED** to:

Approve the programme of meetings for 2012/13 and approve, in principle, the draft programme of meetings for 2013/14.

Meeting closed at 9.25 p.m.

MAYOR

FULL COUNCIL 18 APRIL 2012

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions were received under the following categories:

<u>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TIME</u>	
7	<u>Questions with notice by members of the public</u>
1.	None received.
8	<u>Questions with notice by Members relating to ward matters To the Cabinet Members and to Committee Chairmen</u>
1.	<p>Question from Councillor Miners</p> <p>To Councillor Fitzgerald, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care:</p> <p>If there have been any parking charges introduced to the Welland House Residential Home staff by this local authority for them to park within the grounds of their workplace, why has this been introduced and what local consultation took place with the staff, local residents and local councillors?</p> <p>Councillor Fitzgerald responded:</p> <p>The Council introduced parking charges for all staff who bring their cars to work and park in a council car park, including workplace car parks, in 2011. When Adult Social care returned to the City Council on 1st March this year, staff working in the new department became subject to the same policy as all other Council staff. Welland House is one of the locations where staff will have to pay a charge to use the staff car park.</p> <p>Councillor Miners asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>It would have been prudent and an advocate for localism if the local residents and councillors were consulted. Poplar Avenue is a narrow one way street and people and staff park on the road and I think in this particular location could the rule be looked at again to see if these charges could be waived?</p> <p>Councillor Fitzgerald responded:</p> <p>The charge might not be able to be waived as there would then be different rules for different staff. There have been difficulties, for those following the car parking changes, since their implementation. There have been some queries. Regarding residents being consulted, I wouldn't disagree but with hindsight it could have been envisaged that there would have been a problem as occurred elsewhere. I am aware of the issue now and I believe there are discussions going on to alleviate the problem. It might be worth noting for officers in the future that where the change might affect local residents, because the staff do have a choice, and whilst I would sympathise that residential amenity might be affected if staff choose to park on the road, it is not actually illegal to do so providing they are not illegally parking. I understand their frustrations and do sympathise and I am personally aware that the Director is aware of the situation and there are discussions ongoing with the staff at Welland House but I don't think there would be a possibility in reviewing the charges as we can't have two different parking policies as that wouldn't be</p>

	<p>fair. Please bring any further issues to my attention.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Miners</p> <p>To Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services:</p> <p>Noting that Peterborough suffers some of the worst rates of child poverty in the country (see ET article 6/4/2012) with the Dogsthorpe community topping the areas of the most deprivation in the city, what extra measures are being undertaken locally to tackle this appalling state of affairs?</p> <p>Councillor Scott responded:</p> <p>This is not just an issue about children but about families.</p> <p>The citywide Poverty & Social Mobility Strategy outlines our identified approach to supporting families in moving out of poverty. We have carried out an extensive needs assessment to embrace both area based disadvantage i.e. Dogsthorpe and Central wards and also more thematic issues. Many of the issues highlighted relate to housing, employability and new arrivals, and we are closely working with colleagues to influence the neighbourhood action plans, which will have a positive impact on children living in those areas. We are linked into the current planning of the £1 million pounds lottery funding in Ravensthorpe. Along with our strategic partners, we have spent time developing a set of actions that can be delivered within the next 6 -12 months, whilst being mindful of longer term change that is also necessary. These include new ways of addressing troublesome behaviour and keeping children in the classroom as a way to improve their life chances, along with specific support for families with complex needs to claim the relevant benefits that might improve their quality of life. Councillors attended a recent conference where we looked at innovative ways of reducing debt, improving access to employment by reducing depression and stress. We are at the beginnings of seeing some of this work translate into practice. Within Children’s Services, more action is being taken to identify and tackle situations where children who may be falling into poverty. One of the key building blocks to support families is that 12 of our 15 Children’s Centres have had contracts awarded for five more years to ensure their good work is continued.</p> <p>Councillor Miners asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>Could all the Dogsthorpe ward councillors be included in the Poverty & Social Mobility group as their local knowledge may be able to better indentify priority areas in the ward.</p> <p>Councillor Scott responded:</p> <p>Yes. All ward councillors should be involved and the work should be directed from a local level.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Khan</p> <p>To Councillor Cereste, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Business Engagement:</p> <p>Does the Leader of the Council think that it is totally unreasonable for our local MP to oppose investment in land previously occupied by ‘Parcel Force’ in Maskew Avenue and thus deprive Central Ward of much needed investment?’</p> <p>Councillor Cereste responded:</p> <p>The planning process is open and transparent. Any individual is freely able to make their</p>

views known to the Planning Service on any development proposal they wish. It was investment for the city. Given the scale and nature of the development, the Secretary of State has expressly been given the opportunity to consider whether he wishes to 'call in' the application, so that the application is decided by way of Inquiry instead of by the City Council. We have just heard that the Sec of State does not wish to intervene in this case and this demonstrates that the application has been decided in a proper way with consideration of all the planning facts. It means £20million investment into the city and 400 more jobs for the city.

Councillor Khan asked the following supplementary question:

What if it was called in and would the local MP have used his influence to have it his way to turn it down and what effect would this have had?

Councillor Cereste responded:

Councillor Khan could ask the MP directly but the application was approved.

9 Questions with notice by Members to Council representatives of the Police and Fire Authorities

No questions were received in this section.

EXECUTIVE BUSINESS TIME

11 Questions with Notice to the Leader and Members of the Executive

1. **Question from Councillor John Fox**

To Councillor Cereste, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Business Engagement:

Would the leader of the council reassure this council that all members of the armed forces returning from active service are given priority to the housing list and the full support of adult social services to help with any needs that they may have, maybe as a result of combat stress or such like disabilities?

Councillor Cereste passed the response to Councillor Hiller and he responded as below:

The Government are consulting on proposed changes in legislation which will make it a requirement that local authorities give additional preference to former service personnel, when considering them for an allocation of accommodation. If agreed the changes are due to be implemented in the late summer and are already reflected in the early draft version of the new Peterborough Homes Allocations policy which will be consulted upon in the coming months.

In addition, the council is also working with RAF Wittering to draw up an Armed Forces Community Covenant for Peterborough. This will be a statement of mutual support between the Armed Forces community and the civilian community of Peterborough and will encourage local people to support members of the Service community and raise awareness of issues that affect them. In return, the Armed Forces community, including serving military personnel, veterans and members of their families, will be encouraged to play an active role within their communities. This Community Covenant will allow the city to show its commitment to supporting the Armed Forces in a formal way for the first time.

The additional preference which will be given to former service personnel, as part of the new Housing Allocations Policy for Peterborough, will also form part of the Armed Forces Community Covenant agreement and we are currently looking at further opportunities that can also be included.

This forward think administration will always treat service personnel with the respect they deserve both before during and after service. This was demonstrated recently with the creation of the city's new memorial, a permanent reminder of those who gave their lives during conflict.

With regard to adult social care element, Councillor Fitzgerald will discuss this with you in more detail outside the meeting and any returning forces personnel with care needs would be eligible for assessment and support through our community team. This could include assessment for further rehabilitation or reablement, aids and adaptations, care support or assistance with identifying appropriate supported housing. Direct Payments which provide greater choice and control may also be available for those meeting eligibility criteria.

2. **Question from Councillor Swift**

To Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources:

	<p>Following comments made at the end of March by the Chairman of Peterborough United about making no more rent payments, will you please give me your assurance that if Peterborough United defaults on their rent payments all City Councillors will be informed? Also that action will be taken against them, including repossession, as we do when other tenants default on their rent and private landlords are charged against their properties which they own. Is Peterborough United currently up-to date with their payments?</p> <p>I would also like assurance that they are informed not to make threats of any description against the City Council, as this will not be tolerated; they entered into an agreement that they must abide by and over the years they have had far more extra treatment from the Council than many other rate payers.</p> <p>Councillor Seaton responded:</p> <p>I can assure Councillor Swift that we will treat the football club in the same way that we treat all of our tenants.</p> <p>In addition we have to ensure that we protect the interest of the Council and the people of Peterborough. We will take action as appropriate to protect these interests.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Councillor Shearman</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing Neighbourhoods and Planning:</p> <p>Fuel poverty is an increasing source of distress, and in some cases death, for many families and the elderly in Peterborough. However in many cases the situation can be alleviated through the simple act of switching energy supplier. Will the Council consider, with others if necessary, identifying those suffering fuel poverty and offer them guidance and or assistance on switching suppliers.</p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>Fuel Poverty is indeed a serious issue, and often comes at a time when other factors within a family are causing financial or health-related difficulties especially considering the rising costs of fuel. This council has a strong track record of identifying and then supporting vulnerable residents who are either already in fuel poverty or who may become so.</p> <p>Advising residents on switching energy supplier is only one way of tackling the problem that officers are already using. Other measures used include installing insulation and draft proofing, advising on replacing light bulbs with energy efficient versions, and supporting behaviour change such as switching off appliances when not in use, keeping doors and windows closed in the winter and maximising natural daylight.</p> <p>The council has also recently successfully completed a three month project with partners from the Salvation Army, Age UK and PECT, to reduce winter-related deaths in Peterborough.</p> <p>Any councillor who would like further information is encouraged to contact the Housing Programme Team in the Neighbourhoods department where assistance is available for the provision of loft and wall cavity insulation where the household has an income under £25,000.</p>
4.	<p>Question from Councillor Fletcher</p> <p>To Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services:</p> <p>Mr Newsam, as the interim head of Children's Services, has been in post for some time and by all accounts is making good progress in sorting out the legacy of failure which he</p>

inherited.

Would the cabinet member now inform this council exactly why Children's Services was failing so spectacularly and who was to blame for such a shambles?

Councillor Scott responded:

The new management team is working well to address the concerns raised by Ofsted. The reason children's social care was judged as inadequate by Ofsted is because:

- The senior management of children's social care was not well-focused to lead improvements;
- Social work practice was not consistent and there was evidence of poor practice and poor management oversight; and
- The contact referral and assessment centre set up by officers as the front-door to children's social care services was not operating effectively.

Ofsted was critical of the senior management of the service and the director of children's services resigned as a result.

Following the inspection we took immediate actions to not only respond to the issues raised by Ofsted but to also put in place the foundations to deliver long-term and sustainable improvement.

I am pleased to say that significant progress has already been made in the last 6 months. We now have an experienced senior management team in place and I am confident that the improvement will continue under their leadership.

Councillor Fletcher asked the following supplementary question:

Considering the amount of money, around £1million, paid to consultants for transforming Children's Services before the Ofsted inspection, was this a waste of money and should the council not seek to get the money back?

Councillor Scott responded:

Previous structures put in place were believed to be operating well. However, focus of work shifted away from key issues to other work. The award of money for failures in the department was not how it happened.