



Minutes of a meeting of the Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee held at the Forli Room -
Town Hall
on 8 November 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors C Burton (Chairman), S Allen (Vice Chairman), N Arculus, J Peach, E Murphy
and N Sandford
Parish Councillors

OFFICERS PRESENT:

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor D Day.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Agenda item 5 - Portfolio Progress Report

Councillor Murphy declared a personal interest in that he was an employee of a regeneration company and a school governor.

Agenda item 4 – Draft Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document

Councillor Burton declared a personal interest in that Witham Fourth District Internal Drainage Board mentioned in the report was a customer of Councillor Burton's employer.

3. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

4. Draft Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document

The report informed the Committee about the draft Flood and Water Management SPD. It was a technical document which had been written to assist applicants and decision makers deliver schemes that took into account flood and water management issues. The objective of the SPD was to provide guidance to applicants and decision makers on:

- a. how to assess whether or not a site was suitable for development based on flood risk grounds.
- b. the use of different sustainable drainage measures within Peterborough.
- c. how development should contribute to protecting aquatic environments.

The Strategic Planning Officer and the Flood and Water Management Officer went through the draft Flood and Water Management SPD. Once adopted the SPD would form part of Peterborough City Council's Local Development Framework (LDF). The Committee were asked to comment on the document prior to submission to Cabinet on 12 December 2011.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Was this the same document that had been presented to the Committee in June of this year? *The document previously presented in June was the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment which had been based on flood risk to existing areas from rainfall and smaller watercourses. In contrast, the document being presented at the meeting was solely about new development.*
- Members commented that there was very little mention of green infrastructure in the document. One of the Councils Corporate objectives was to become the Environment Capital and therefore there had been an expectation that policies would reflect this. *The Officer noted the comment and advised that this would be looked at as the green infrastructure was a key point and very important to sustainable drainage systems. The Officer also informed Members that when writing the document it had been decided that it would be better not to repeat all the existing national technical guidance on sustainable drainage because the developers could be signposted to these. The national guidance gave more detail about green infrastructure.*
- Section 5.3 on Sustainable Drainage Systems. Can you advise if this was going to be reflected in all Council projects? *The Officer advised the Committee that going forward all developments would have to consider sustainable drainage. Brownfield sites especially in the City Centre where there were no nearby watercourses were noted to be more complex.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommended that the Green Infrastructure element within the policy is strengthened before being presented to Cabinet.

5. Portfolio Progress Report

The report informed the Committee on how the Growth Agenda had been taken forward in Peterborough. The Growth Agenda was being delivered through the work of three separate groups:

- **Growth and Regeneration** – responsible for enabling and facilitating physical growth activity on specific sites in the city with a focus on regeneration of the city centre. Current activity was being focused on the following sites:
 - Station Quarter
 - North Westgate
 - Southbank Phase 1 which involved the delivery of the Government backed 295 Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 Carbon Challenge Scheme being administered by the Homes and Community Agency (HCA). PCC had a variety of roles including landowner, co-funders, planning authority and project owner for the overall comprehensive development of Southbank area of which this scheme formed one of the 3 phases.
 - Southbank Phase 2 - London Road Frontages and Stadium project aimed to redevelop 3 of the 4 stands of the existing Stadium into a vibrant multi functional community stadium as part of a comprehensive scheme to regenerate the balance of the land south of the Nuneaton to Felixstowe rail line not covered by the Phase 1 project. This included seeking to deliver

- substantial redevelopment of the eastern side frontages to London Road, an important gateway to the city centre
 - Southbank Phase 3 - Fletton Quays which was a comprehensive regeneration of the key river frontage site east of the Town Bridge around a mixture of uses with the main activities potentially “higher end” residential uses and leisure
- **Strategic Planning functions:**
 - (Planning, Transport and Engineering Services) – current leading initiatives were:
 - Planning for Future Growth
 - Long Term Transport Strategy (2011-2026) and the Local Transport Plan (2011-2016)
 - Education
 - New Development
- **Opportunity Peterborough - Economic Development**

The Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Business Engagement was in attendance to take questions.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members felt that the Station Quarter project was a key and important project to the city. Councillor Murphy wanted to know why the latest proposal for the ING site had not yet been to planning committee. The proposal was for office suites, retail units, food store and integrated car parking. *The Legal Officer advised that it was a specific planning application and therefore could not be discussed.*
- *The Cabinet Member informed Members that work on the Station Quarter was due to start in the spring of 2012.*
- What was being done to keep residents of the city up to date on what was happening with all the projects? *Members were informed that there was no regular publication of updates on the status of projects in place. The status of developments had been published when there was something happening on a project. For example the Moyes End Stand and the Southbank Development.*
- Members wanted to know which site in the city did the Cabinet Member rank as the most important to the long term growth and regeneration of the city. *Members were informed that there were four main sites in the city all of which were hugely important. Each of the sites would create jobs, new housing and new investment in the city. Work was being done on each of the projects to try and get them started as soon as possible. There had been a regular stream of investors coming to the city looking for sites. However a fully comprehensive integrated scheme was required which was right for the city and this had been difficult to deliver under the current economic climate.*
- Do you accept that when people arrive in Peterborough by train that the station gives a bad example of Peterborough? It would be helpful if that aspect of the city could be delivered sooner rather than later. *The Cabinet Member agreed.*
- What is the timescale for completion of the Primark Store and were there plans to further increase the retail side in Peterborough. *The completion date for Primark was November 2012. Other shops that had been boarded up in Queensgate had been committed and would not remain empty. There was a new team in place at Queensgate and they were getting more involved in the city. Members were also advised that Antonio Carlouccio had planned to open a restaurant in Queensgate.*
- Was it still the intention of the Council when regenerating the station quarter to regenerate both sides of the track and have platforms on the Thorpe Road side. *Members were informed that Network Rail had recently given a presentation detailing their intention to invest £3.8M into Peterborough station which included details on plans*

for the Thorpe Road side and increasing the length of the platforms so that Euro star trains could be accommodated. This would provide a marketing opportunity to promote Peterborough as a gateway to Europe. The Cabinet Member advised that he would come back to the Committee when he had more information from Network Rail.

- *Members were concerned that the North Westgate development had still not progressed. Members were informed that it had been extremely important to get a fully integrated solution which ensured that North Westgate was integrated with Queensgate shopping centre and that it added value to the existing retail provision. The plan was currently being updated to reflect this and would be sent out for consultation when completed.*
- *Peterborough was one of a few cities that had a river running through it but it had not been utilised and made the most of. What was being done to rectify this? Members were advised that Southbank Phase 3 - Fletton Quays was a comprehensive regeneration scheme for the key river frontage site east of the Town Bridge and would incorporate a mixture of uses with the main activities potentially "higher end" residential uses and leisure. Bridge House had not been demolished yet because of the murals and consideration had been given to how they could be preserved. Some of the buildings along the riverbank were being demolished and the rest would go shortly. There were two developers who were interested in developing the Southbank site. Negotiations were taking place and work should commence shortly.*
- *In the Peterborough Core Strategy the Council signed up to build 25,000 houses by 2021 are we on target for achieving this target. Members were advised that this was still the ambition and target but the council was not on target due to market conditions.*
- *If the target is still to build 25,000 houses then the council should be looking at innovative sustainable transport solutions to accommodate the future increase in population. The current transport plans should be revisited. Members were informed that all suggestions for sustainable transport solutions would be considered and there was a commitment to plan for the increase in population.*

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Business Engagement for attending and providing the Committee with an interesting and informative update.

ACTION AGREED

That the Committee note the report and the progress that had been made on the Growth Agenda for Peterborough.

6. Opportunity Peterborough - Update Report

The report informed the Committee on the work of Opportunity Peterborough highlighting recent successes and priorities. The Opportunity Peterborough business plan 2011-12 had also been included in the report. The priorities for 2011/12 were:

- a) Ensuring that Peterborough was visible to investors
- b) Support local business ambitions
- c) Create conditions to increase skills level across our communities
- d) Increase our knowledge of the local economy and utilise intelligence effectively
- e) Supporting the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership

Following a restructure in 2010 Opportunity Peterborough had taken on a more focused role around economic development and working with the private sector. The Council had now become the sole funder of the organisation following the demise of the East of England Development Agency and a withdrawal of the Homes and Communities Agency. The Director of Economic Development was in attendance to take questions.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- There is a projected future population of 250,000 for Peterborough. Where are these people going to work? *Members were advised that there was currently strong growth in Peterborough. Peterborough was well known for environmental technology companies and this was continuing to grow. Peterborough was growing in confidence and this would attract businesses to Peterborough.*
- A member of the Youth Council wanted to know why Peterborough was now the sole funder of Opportunity Peterborough. *Due to changes in government policy there was now a single funder. The previous funder the East of England Development Agency had been abolished and there had been a withdrawal of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency.*
- What progress is being made with skills and learning. *Members were informed that there was a champion for business who was the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills. Work was being done to find out what skills businesses required when looking to employ people so that the right kind of skills and learning was being delivered to meet the needs of business in Peterborough. There had been a lot of interest from senior schools in Peterborough and surrounding areas.*
- Are we still investing in someone to lobby for us in Europe? *There was still a connection in Europe who was currently working on some bids for Peterborough.*
- Peterborough people have a perception that Opportunity Peterborough has only delivered the Cathedral Square. Can you advise what else you are working on? *Opportunity Peterborough received approximately 30 to 40 business enquires in a day. Each enquiry was at a different level of gestation. The advertising campaign at King's Cross had brought in many enquiries. Several projects were being worked on and there were a large number of jobs coming into the city. Opportunity Peterborough now had a good standing within the business community and held a valuable role in helping businesses through the process of setting up in Peterborough.*
- Do you feel that there is a benefit to having a University in Peterborough? *The role of the University in the City was very important. Education for business purposes was around having people who were employable. The University provided a lot more and was extremely important to the City.*
- Has any exploration been done to try and set up the University on a privately funded basis? *The research regarding a private investor had been done but no one had come forward.*
- To what extent do you feel that part of your role is to promote Peterborough's Environment Capital aspirations? *Members were informed that this was a key sector for Peterborough and there were already a large number of companies from that sector in Peterborough. The green sector would grow globally over the next 20 to 30 years and Peterborough could be at the forefront.*
- The business plan states that Opportunity Peterborough supports businesses to resolve 'growth blockages' – such as planning, funding and skills. Is planning therefore a blockage to businesses coming to Peterborough. *Companies do approach Opportunity Peterborough about the planning process and OP are then able to help them by talking to planning about any potential issues and help them through the process. The planning process is often the point where businesses get stuck and therefore OP can guide them through the process to help them resolve issues quickly.*

ACTION AGREED

That the Committee note the report and request a further progress report to the Committee in one year.

7. Use of Consultants - Recommendations Monitoring Report

The report informed the Committee on the progress that had been made on the recommendations of the Consultancy Review which had been endorsed by Cabinet in June 2011. The Cabinet Member for Resources and Head of Corporate Services presented the report.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Councillor Murphy commented that he had previously asked officers to address the issue of Code of Conduct and transparency of Consultants. He had highlighted that employees of the Council had to follow a higher level of Code of Conduct than Consultants and that Consultants should be required to follow the same level of Code of Conduct. Councillor Murphy referred to Appendix 2 of the report; the Consultancy and Interim Policy and schedule 1 of the policy which had addressed some of his concerns but he felt that the Conflicts of Interest listed had still not met the standard that an employee of the council had to abide by.
- Why had the Cabinet chosen not to adopt all of the recommendations in the final report from the Task and Finish Group? *The Cabinet Member for Resources informed Members that there had appeared to be duplications within the recommendations and therefore six of them were not accepted on the basis that they would be covered in the remaining 27 recommendations.*
- Members discussed each part of Appendix 2: The Consultancy and Interim Policy and made the following comments:
 - Section 1 Aim
 - Members agreed that the wording was suitable.
 - Section 2 Definitions
 - Councillor Arculus requested that the comma should be removed after the wording “Consultants are external third parties”
 - Section 3 Objectives
 - Members requested that an objective be included regarding levels of disclosure which mirrored that of officers and members of the Council. *The Head of Corporate Services said that he would have to take advice on this as there was a wide range of consultants being used and that it may not be appropriate for all companies. An example of that was the use of Experian. However there was no reason why staff filling interim roles should not follow similar levels of disclosure and code of conduct to that of Council employees. The Head of Corporate Services advised that he would prepare some wording to be included under objectives to cover this.*
 - Section 4 Policy Statement.
 - Members requested that the wording:

“The Consultancy Review report made a number of recommendations upon its publication in March 2011”

be amended to reflect the fact that Cabinet had approved the recommendations.
- Members discussed the Consultancy or Interim Policy – Procedure and made the following comments:
 - Section 1 Process for Engaging Consultants or Interims
 - Members wanted clarification on who would be the ultimate arbiter on whether expenditure on consultants should be authorised or not. The Consultants review group had been concerned at the level of spend on consultants and interims and wanted to ensure that it was monitored. *The Cabinet Member for Resources informed Members that the Director of Strategic Resources would sign off the business case for expenditure of between £5,000 and £50,000 and anything over £50,000 would be passed to the Cabinet Member for Resources for review before sign off. The*

- Legal Officer advised that this responsibility fell within the Cabinet Members delegations and would not require a Cabinet Member Decision Notice.*
- Members noted that the sign off from the Cabinet Member of Resources was not mentioned in the policy and requested that this be made clear.
 - *The Head of Corporate Services informed Members that business cases were logged on the Verto system and one of the recommendations from the review was that Members would have access to the Verto system. This would shortly be put in place.*
 - Councillor Sandford highlighted that there were two links within the policy to documents on Insite that could not be accessed by members of the public. Members felt that this did not provide transparency and that all contents in the document should be accessible to the public. This was to be avoided in future documents.
- Schedule 1 – Conflicts of Interest
 - Members felt that consultants and or Interims ought to have an obligation to declare any conflicts of interests and that this could be set at the same level as Members or Officers. This could be dealt with by adding a paragraph relating to the Member and Officer protocols. *The Legal Officer informed Members that this was already dealt with through the normal contracting arrangements through the standard contracting documentation. There was a question asking contractors to declare if they had a conflict of interest with the Council.*
 - Councillor Arculus felt that the wording in Schedule 1 needed to be in a more legalistic format.
 - *Cabinet Member for Resources suggested that he and the Head of Corporate Services work on a revised version of the policy taking into account all comments and suggestions. The revised version would be emailed to all Members of the Committee along with the Code of Conduct for Officers and Members for comment prior to being presented back to the Committee in January. The Cabinet Member for Resources advised that if the work could not be completed for the January meeting he would contact the Chair.*
- Members queried the table in the report detailing the cumulative total savings over the past five years. Was it standard practice to calculate a recurrent saving on what in many cases was just a one off event? *The Head of Corporate Services advised that the figures were bankable savings and were amounts that had been taken out of the budget in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Where somebody had left a post those savings would be repeated year on year. In the case of a one off event the savings would not appear in later years.*
 - In 2008/2009 there had been an annual expenditure on consultants of £8.5M. Can you confirm if expenditure on consultants was increasing or falling? *The Cabinet Member for Resources informed Members that there was a general downward trend on expenditure on consultants but the most important thing had been to ensure that the Council was getting value for money. The table in Appendix 3a of the report had shown a grand total of spend for Quarter4 of 2010/2011 and Quarter1 of 2011/2012 as £2,568,937.49. If doubled the figure for the year would be approximately £5M.*

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends that the Cabinet Member for Resources and Head of Corporate Services take in to account all comments made by the Committee and produce a revised Consultant and Interim Policy and Procedure. The revised policy and procedures to be emailed to the Committee with the Code of Conduct for Members and Officers for comment prior to presenting the policy back to the Committee.

8. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

To note the latest version of the Forward Plan.

9. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2011/12 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2011/12 and the Scrutiny Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

Councillor Murphy commented that the Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee had received and scrutinised some good quality reports from officers and wished to acknowledge the quality of reports received from officers.

10. Date of Next Meeting

10 January 2012

CHAIRMAN
Times Not Specified