

**Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee held at the
Bourges/Viersen Room - Town Hall
on 8 September 2011**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors D Day (Chairman), N North, B Rush, J Peach, J A Fox and N Sandford

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Arculus.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following declarations of interest were made:

Item 5 - Biodiversity Strategy – Progress Report 2010/2011

Councillor Sandford declared a personal interest in that he was an employee of the Woodland Trust and Councillor Fox declared a personal interest in that she was a member of the Friends of Cuckoo's Hollow Group,

3. Minutes of Meeting Held on 14 July 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2011 were approved as a correct record

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

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

5. Biodiversity Strategy - Progress Report 2010/2011

The report provided the Committee with information on the progress that had been made against actions and targets contained in the Biodiversity Strategy which had been agreed in 2010.

Questions and observations were raised around the following areas:

- Cuckoo's Hollow was referred to in the report as a nature reserve. Can you advise if this has been renamed? The officer confirmed that there had been no change in status and it was still called Cuckoo's Hollow.
- Many parts of Peterborough have conservation areas but sometimes planning applications were approved which allowed development on green sites. Was there anything that could be done to stop this happening? The Wildlife Officer advised Members that he had been closely involved with the planning department and was

consulted on protected sites and that his role was to do everything to protect those spaces.

- Councillor Sandford highlighted that over the past twelve months several major reports had been published; Making Space for Nature by Professor Sir John Lawton and the Government White Paper on Biodiversity 2020. Both of the reports highlighted the need for a more integrated landscape-scale approach. This approach had been reflected in the Councils Biodiversity Strategy of 2010 but did not appear to show that it was being adopted in the progress report. What was the Council doing to reflect the changes in government policy? There was a need to adopt larger scale thinking. The Wildlife Officer advised that he was aware of the new policies and had taken them into account. Councillor Dalton informed members that the document had not just focused on the odd site but that there was a commitment to focus across the city and that there were many examples of wildlife habitat. In the Sustainable cities report the Council was ranked 1st out of 21 cities for biodiversity.
- Councillor Sandford advised of a report produced by the Woodland Trust advising of regimes where by short mown grass in woodland areas would be left to grow. Councillor Sandford felt that the regime should be adopted by the Council. Officers advised Members that the recommendations in the report from the Woodland Trust had been taken into account within the Trees and Woodland Strategy but that public safety also had to be taken into account.
- What has happened to the nesting bird's policy? The costs of the regime that had been proposed were excessive in terms of the work that needed to be done. There was now a blanket ban in place on work to shrubs from the end of February to September. The only exceptions to that would be where there was a concern for safety and emergency work would need to be carried out.
- Why are the grass verges on the dual carriageways cut and was it possible to have wild flowers instead of spending money on mowing? Officers advised that in certain circumstances it may be safer not to have to cut the verges and that the idea would be considered.
- Members wanted to see a mapping of the connecting habitats across the City with the key designated sites shown and have this overlaid on to the Core Strategy. The Planning Committee would find this of benefit. Officers advised that a mapping exercise was already in progress with the idea of developing a GIS layer. Work was being carried out with the Environmental Records Centre to record a data set of protected species in the area. Councillor Dalton advised that she would speak to Simon Machen in planning regarding the suggested mapping.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee requested that the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Wildlife Officer consider the new Government White Paper on Biodiversity 2020 and advise the Committee on how it will be implemented by the Council.

6. Environment Capital Performance Update

The report provided information on performance against the Council's Sustainable Cities Index as measured by the Forum for the Future through its Sustainable Cities Index 2010. Peterborough was measured amongst some of the largest cities in the UK including Newcastle, Edinburgh, Bristol, Liverpool and Birmingham. Peterborough had dropped in overall ranking from 10th to 11th out of 21 cities. Three baskets of indicators had been used to measure performance:

- Environmental Performance
- Quality of Life
- Future Proofing

The environmental performance indicator had improved the cities ranking from 11th to equal 7th. The quality of life indicator had dropped in ranking from 12th to 14th and the future proofing indicator had dropped in ranking from 3rd to 5th. Transport had not previously been measured for Peterborough but was included this year and contained in the basket of indicators for 'quality of life'.

Questions and observations were raised around the following areas:

- The waste indicators show Peterborough as 21st in ranking. This includes collection of garden waste. How many of the other cities collect garden waste. Officers advised that most large cities had not collected garden waste. The exact number of cities collecting garden waste within the index was not known. Peterborough had been quite unique within the basket of Cities in that it had collected garden waste and this had therefore affected the ranking as it had pushed up the amount of household waste collected per person in Peterborough. Members were advised that the amount of waste collected per person year on year in Peterborough had dropped showing an improvement but against the other Cities it had not. Councillor Dalton expressed disappointment in some parts of the report and some of the rankings and informed Members that those areas would be focused on over the next twelve months.
- Has the trial for food waste been completed and will collecting food waste improve our ranking. Collection of food waste would make the ranking worse due to the increase in the amount of waste per head collected. The trial had been completed and discussions with Enterprise Peterborough would take place to see how it might be taken forward.
- Members were in favour of the Council being part of the Sustainable Cities Index but were aware that Peterborough was being benchmarked against much larger cities.
- Members were concerned about the length of time it was taking to declare Peterborough as the Environment Capital and wanted to know the timescale for achieving it. There needed to be a timescale in place. Councillor Dalton advised that this would only be achieved when no one could challenge Peterborough. A number of poor performing indicators had needed to be addressed before this could happen and action plans would need to be put in place to achieve these. Peterborough was however ahead of other cities in that it had an Environment Capital Policy.
- The Home of Environment Capital was not mentioned in the report; did this slogan still exist? The report had been about the Sustainable Cities Index not the branding. The Home of Environment Capital branding remained the same.
- Twelve months ago the Committee asked for a set of objectives that the city could measure itself against to achieve Environment Capital status. The Sustainable Cities Index was chosen. The indicators show two years worth of performance but this had indicated that Peterborough was not doing well in some of the rankings e.g. climate change and transport. What was being done to address this downward trend? An action plan was being put in place to address these issues.
- The Committee were informed that the indicator on transport had been based on super output areas which had meant Peterborough had scored badly as Peterborough had a large amount of rural areas compared with the other larger urban cities in the Sustainable Cities Index.
- Members requested that a performance report be produced to report on all the indicators and sent to the Committee on a regular basis. Officers were advised that they were meeting with the performance management team to discuss the best way to report on the indicators.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee requested that they received the following information:

- Action plan on Climate Change.
- Forum for the Future detailed report including the transport data.

- Performance report for all indicators to be produced and presented back to the Committee at a future meeting.

7. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The latest version of the Forward Plan, showing details of the key decisions that the Leader of the Council believed the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would be making over the next four months, was received.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and requested that the street lighting policy be brought to the Committee for Scrutiny

8. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2010/11 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2010/11 and the Scrutiny Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 3 November 2011

CHAIRMAN
Times Not Specified