

**MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD
17 April 2013**

The Mayor – Councillor George Simons

Present:

Councillors Arculus, Ash, Casey, Cereste, Dalton, Davidson, Day, Eley, Fitzgerald, Fletcher, Forbes, JA Fox, JR Fox, Goodwin, Harper, Harrington, Hiller, Holdich, Jamil, Johnson, Kreling, Lamb, Lane, Lee, Maqbool, Martin, McKean, Miners, Murphy, Nadeem, Nawaz, North, Over, Peach, Rush, Sanders, Saltmarsh, Sandford, Scott, Seaton, Serluca, Shabbir, Sharp, Shearman, Simons, Stokes, Swift, Sylvester, Thacker, Thulbourn, Todd and Walsh.

A minute's silence was held for the late Baroness Thatcher.

A request had been received from a member of the public for them to be permitted to make and audio and visual recording of the meeting. Councillor Sanders outlined the reasons behind the request and a vote was taken (31 For, 15 Against) and it was **AGREED** that the recording be permitted.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Fower, Khan, Knowles and Shaheed.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meetings Held on 6 March 2013

Councillor Sylvester moved an amendment to the minutes on page 2, item 7, Community Involvement Time, paragraph 3 to read (additional text underlined):

A heated debate was held where Members raised concern at the length of time allowed for receipt of questions from members of the public.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting so that after a 15 minute break, the meeting could continue in an orderly fashion. During that time advice would be given to members of the public on the correct rules of procedure concerning the submission of questions and petitions.

The motion was seconded.

A vote was taken (17 For, 30 Against) and the amendment was **DEFEATED**.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2013 were agreed to be an accurate record.

4. Mayors Announcement Report

Members noted the updated report outlining the Mayor's engagements for the period commencing 4 March 2013 to 7 April 2013.

The Mayor addressed the meeting and wished Councillor Stokes, the Mayor Elect, well for the forthcoming year. The Mayor further thanked a number of other Councillors and Gillian Beasley for their continued support during his term.

5. Leader's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Leader.

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

Two questions had been raised by members of the public, these were in relation to:

1. Whether the Council's Planning Committee had been compromised in respect of decision making on the solar farm planning applications; and
2. Why it had been decided that an archaeological survey would not be conducted on Morris Fen, and why was there a proposed dispensation of condition for an archaeological survey on Newborough Farms for the temporary meteorological mast?

A summary of the question and answers raised within agenda item 7 is attached at **APPENDIX A** to these minutes.

8. Questions with Notice by Members of the Council Relating to Ward Matters to the Cabinet Members and to Committee Chairmen

Questions relating to Ward matters were raised and taken as read in respect of the following:

1. Flooding at Werrington Meadows;
2. The Neighbourhoods structure in the city and the quality of life experienced by Millfield residents;
3. Money available to introduce new bus shelters; and
4. Flooding issues on the school field adjacent to properties situated along Brookside, Werrington.

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 Fire Authority

There were no questions received for the Council's representatives of the Fire Authority.

10. Petitions Submitted by Members or Residents

Councillor Shearman submitted a petition, signed by residents in Princes Gardens, St Mary's Close and visitors to properties in those two streets, requesting the introduction of speed reduction measures into Princes Gardens in order to make the street a safer place for residents, pedestrians and motorists.

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 raised, with all of the questions being taken as read, in respect of the following:

1. Results of the Children's Play Services Consultation and a report to the Scrutiny Committee;
2. The continuation of the strategic role of the Neighbourhoods Team following the review of the Neighbourhoods structure;
3. Whether the play centres will be affected following the Neighbourhoods Team restructure;
4. Revocation of car parking permits for some social workers and the importance of them being able to retain these permits;
5. Should the Code of Conduct be amended in relation to Councillors lobbying and offering advice on Planning applications within their own authorities, as per the comments made by the Local Government Minister;
6. What measures are in place to handle the possible inward migration of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria and the additional provisions that have been made in terms of housing, health and education;
7. How many Councillors use their own computers to access the City Council systems and emails and the reasons for this; and
8. The plans in place to help those who fall behind in rent arrears due to the bedroom tax and new Council Tax changes.

Due to the time limit for this item being reached, the following questions were to be responded to in writing:

9. How much do zebra crossings cost to introduce and had the Council a dedicated budget for this;
10. The extra money put into Enterprise's budget and how this was to be spent; and
11. Whether there were any plans to open Bayard Place at the weekend.

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 taken at the Cabinet Meeting held on 25 March 2013;
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 been invoked once in respect of the decision to award the Council's insurance contract; and
4. Cabinet Member Decisions taken during the period 28 February 2013 to 22 March 2013.

Questions were asked about the following:

Citizens Power Programme

Councillor Sandford sought clarification from the Leader as to whether the £250k spent on the Citizen's Power Programme over the last two years had represented good value. There had been a number of success stories, however there had also been a number of projects that had not been so successful. With this in mind, it was felt that the project management needed to be improved should future programmes be considered. Councillor Cereste advised that he considered the costs of the Programme to represent good value, the

Programme having attracted £1m of investment to the city, and he would be happy to circulate the final report to all Councillors.

Affordable Housing Capital Funding Policy

Councillor Lane sought clarification as to why the Policy was to be re-addressed so soon following its implementation less than two years ago and why there was £30m unallocated from this fund, and would this be addressed? Councillor Cereste responded that the Policy was not to be re-addressed, but rather it was to be targeted differently. There was a need for social housing and city centre living and this money would be spent in and around the city centre in order to create a more vibrant and energetic city centre.

Councillor Murphy sought clarification as to whether additional Cabinet Meetings would be called as required. Councillor Cereste confirmed that additional Cabinet Meetings could, and would, be called as required.

Appointment of Authority Governors (all decisions)

Councillor Shearman stated that filling Governor vacancies was most likely a difficult job. Would the Cabinet Member for Education consider running a recruitment campaign within the Peterborough Telegraph? Councillor Holdich stated that he would put the idea forward.

COUNCIL BUSINESS TIME

13. Committee Recommendations

(a) Cumulative Impact Policy

Licensing Committee, at its meeting of 14 March 2013, received a report following the consultation carried out to assess the level of evidence in favour of, and against the creation and adoption of a Cumulative Impact Policy (Special Policy) within the Operation CAN-do Area of the city.

The Licensing Committee had considered the representations and evidence produced during the consultation and it resolved in favour for the adoption of a Special Policy within the Operation CAN-do Area for all licensed premises.

Councillor Hiller introduced the report and highlighted the importance of the implementation of such a policy within the locale stating that in recent years the area had become saturated with licensed premises which had resulted in a negative effect on the Licensing Objectives. Councillor Hiller moved the recommendations that Council agree that the Cumulative Impact Policy and specified area, as set out in the appendices to the report, be incorporated into the Council's current Statement of Licensing Policy and that Council resolved that the Policy came into effect from 18 April 2013. This was seconded by Councillor Thacker, who reserved her right to speak.

Members debated the recommendations and raised points including:

- There had been a number of issues experienced within the Park Ward and there had been a number of recent applications for alcohol licences;
- The Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee had limited powers to refuse new licence applications;
- The increase in the number of licensed premises had seen a rise in anti-social behaviour and littering;
- The Policy had the backing of local residents and residents groups;
- The blame could not be laid solely on the number of premises alone, the sale of cheap alcohol also needed to be addressed;
- Consideration should be given to the implementation of Late Night Levys;
- The entire Operation CAN-do retail area needed to be revitalised;

- The implementation of a Policy in the CAN-do area could lead to the problem being shifted to other areas. This needed to be monitored going forward;
- The Licensing Act 2003 had seen a negative impact on the trade overall, particularly the late night trade within the city centre.

Councillor Hiller summed up as mover of the recommendations and in so doing reaffirmed the importance of the incorporation of the Policy within the Statement of Licensing Principles.

A vote was taken (unanimous) and it was **RESOLVED** that Council:

1. Agreed that the Cumulative Impact Policy and specified area as set out within the appendices to the report be incorporated into the Council's current Statement of Licensing Policy; and
2. Resolved that the Cumulative Impact Policy comes into effect from 18 April 2013.

(b) Annual Report of the Audit Committee

Audit Committee, at its meeting of 27 March 2013, received a draft copy of the Annual Report for discussion, which reflected its business for the Municipal Year. Following its agreement, the report was being 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 introduced the report and moved the recommendation for Council to note the work carried out by the Audit Committee in improving the governance arrangement across the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Arculus.

A vote was taken (unanimous) and it was **RESOLVED** that Council:

Notes the work carried out by the Audit Committee in improving the governance arrangements across the Council.

14. Notices of Motion

1. Councillor Murphy moved the following motion:

That this council:

1. Notes and welcomes the UK-wide campaign to end 'legal loan sharking' and welcomes the establishment of Peterborough's new credit union shop at 3 Cattlemarket Road by the Rainbow Saver Anglia Credit Union;
2. Believes that unaffordable credit extracts wealth from the most deprived communities, and that the lack of access to affordable credit is socially and economically damaging with unaffordable credit causing a myriad of unwanted effects such as poorer diets, colder homes, rent, council tax and utility arrears, depression (which impacts on job seeking behaviour) and poor health;
3. Believes it is the responsibility of all levels of government to try to ensure affordable credit for all; and therefore
4. Pledges to use best practice to promote financial literacy and affordable lending to help to ensure that wealth stays in the local economy;
5. Pledges to promote credit unions in Peterborough, community-based co-operative organisations offering access to affordable credit and promoting saving to all members of the community;

6. Will work to make credit union payroll deduction facilities available to council staff to facilitate easy access to local credit unions and support saving for people in the area;
7. Asks the Leader of the Council to write to the government to introduce caps on the total lending rates that can be charged for providing credit; and to give local authorities the power to veto licences for high street credit agencies where they could have negative economic or social impacts on communities.

Councillor Murphy introduced his motion and stated that, particularly in the current economical climate, it was important that this issue was addressed and supported by the Council.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Jamil who reserved his right to speak later in the debate.

Councillor Seaton moved an amendment to the motion. In moving his amendment, Councillor Seaton stated that it was important to recognise the work that was currently underway between the Council and the credit unions, particularly the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme. The amendment reflected that further training and support was required in order to assist people back into employment in the first instance, and it further acknowledged that work to address the issue of illegal doorstep lending would continue going forward. Councillor Lee seconded the amendment and commended the work of the credit unions.

Councillor Murphy agreed to incorporate the amendment in his original motion, stating that the additional wording would not negate the thrust of the original motion. This was agreed by Council.

There was no further debate on the substantive motion, a vote was taken (unanimous) and the motion was **CARRIED** as below (additional wording incorporated shown as underlined):

That this council:

1. Notes and welcomes the work that Peterborough City Council is currently undertaking with credit unions with the proposed new Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme which is being implemented to help families to deal with their debts and financial management issues. This scheme incorporates the expanded credit union facility, but also provides emergency welfare assistance where it is needed and longer term debt and money management advice;
2. Further supports the inclusion of employability and skills training as part of this service, and that it directly helps people into paid employment to reduce their reliance on the welfare state;
3. Supports the promotion of financial literacy training and will continue to ensure this is provided where it is needed;
4. Will continue to address the issue of illegal doorstep lending through the work of our trading standards service and in collaboration with our Police partners;
5. Notes and welcomes the UK-wide campaign to end 'legal loan sharking' and welcomes the establishment of Peterborough's new credit union shop at 3 Cattlemarket Road by the Rainbow Saver Anglia Credit Union;
6. Believes that unaffordable credit extracts wealth from the most deprived communities, and that the lack of access to affordable credit is socially and economically damaging with unaffordable credit causing a myriad of unwanted effects such as poorer diets,

colder homes, rent, council tax and utility arrears, depression (which impacts on job seeking behaviour) and poor health;

7. Believes it is the responsibility of all levels of government to try to ensure affordable credit for all; and therefore
8. Pledges to continue to use best practice to promote financial literacy and affordable lending to help to ensure that wealth stays in the local economy;
9. Pledges to encourage and promote credit unions in Peterborough, community-based co-operative organisations offering access to affordable credit and promoting saving to all members of the community;
10. Will work to make credit union payroll deduction facilities available to council staff to facilitate easy access to local credit unions and support saving for people in the area; and
11. Asks the Leader of the Council to write to the government to introduce caps on the total lending rates that can be charged for providing credit; and to give local authorities the power to veto licences for high street credit agencies where they could have negative economic or social impacts on communities and to outline the work that Peterborough City Council is already doing to address these issues.

2. Councillor Sandford moved the following motion:

That this council:

1. Notes that, as reported on the local government news website www.localgov.co.uk on 8 April 2013 http://www.localgov.co.uk/index.cfm?method=news_detail&id=109392, Communities and Local Government Secretary, the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP has launched a consultation with a view to preventing local authorities from publishing council newspapers and other material with a political slant.

Mr Pickles is quoted as saying:

‘Some councils are undermining the free press and wasting taxpayers’ money which should be spent carefully on the front line services that make a real difference to quality of life. ‘It should not, under any circumstances, be used to fund political propaganda and Town Hall Pravdas and yet a hardcore minority of councils continue to ignore the rules despite public concern...legislation will stop this disgraceful misuse of public money, which damages local democracy and threatens an independent, free and vibrant local press.’

2. In view of these concerns expressed by Government, Council requests the Cabinet to reconsider its proposed expansion of Your Peterborough and to cease publication of the council newspaper with immediate effect.

In introducing his motion, Councillor Sandford stated that historically the Your Peterborough publication had included articles such as ward profiles, however these had ceased as it was not felt that they relayed enough positive press. The publication did however still include a yearly spread focussed around the Budget proposals and other articles focussing on the work of the Cabinet. The publication was therefore in effect politically biased and in breach of the code, it should therefore be ceased and more support offered to the local press. The motion was seconded by Councillor Davidson.

Members debated the motion and raised points including:

- The Department for Communities and Local Government guidelines only opposed those publications produced weekly, as these publications directly competed with the press;
- Your Peterborough was published quarterly, therefore it could not be classed as unfair competition;
- There had been a number of complaints received relating to the prospect of ceasing the publication of Your Peterborough magazine;
- E-communications expansion was to be pursued, however not all people had access to computers, it was therefore felt that a quarterly publication was still required;
- The publication only contained factual issues outlining the work of the Council. If this information was not published i.e. the Budget proposals, how would the information be relayed?
- There was value in retaining the publication, however it should include more letters from the public and should be more focussed on the people;
- If it was retained, the publication was in need of a refresh;
- The publication needed to contain the information that the public needed to know.

Following debate, Councillor Sandford stated that if retained, the publication should reflect a degree of balance between the political groups, but he remained of the view that the publication should cease and other sources utilised.

Councillor Sandford moved an amendment to his motion to delete the final words which stated 'and to cease publication of the council newspaper with immediate effect'; this amendment would retain the 'request to review' aspect of the motion.

A vote was taken on the amendment (8 For, 32 Against) and the amendment was **REJECTED**.

There was no further debate and a vote was taken on the original motion (3 For, 35 Against, 12 Abstentions) and the motion was **DEFEATED**.

3. Councillor Sandford moved the following motion:

That Council notes:

1. The clear evidence which shows that restricting traffic speed has a significant beneficial impact on reducing the number and severity of road accidents, particularly those involving children; and
2. That 34 local authorities (including Bristol, Cambridge, Newcastle, York, Liverpool, Islington, Southwark and Camden) have introduced 20mph speed limits in residential areas covering more than 8 million people and that many other councils have either agreed in principle or are actively considering similar proposals.
3. Council therefore calls upon the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee to investigate the benefits of extending 20 mph speed limits throughout residential areas in the Peterborough District and to present proposals to the Cabinet not later than 30 September 2013.

In introducing his motion, Councillor Sandford stated that in simple terms, reducing traffic speed would reduce the number of road casualties, a review of the implementation of 20mph speed limits should therefore be investigated as a matter of priority. The motion was seconded by Councillor Murphy who reserved his right to speak later in the debate.

Councillor Walsh moved an amendment to the motion to remove the words 'not later than 30 September 2013' and replace with 'as soon as these are available'. Due to the amount of work that would need to be conducted, a deadline of 30 September 2013 may prove to be unfeasible.

Councillor Peach seconded the amendment and stated that he also agreed with the motion in principle. Bringing traffic speeds down, particularly around schools, would be a positive step forward.

Councillor Sandford expressed concern that the amendment did not reflect a clear end date and suggested a twelve month period, up to 31 March 2014 instead. Councillor Walsh deemed this suggestion acceptable and Council **AGREED** for the amended deadline date to be incorporated within the original motion.

Councillor Ash moved an amendment to the substantive motion to incorporate the investigation of 'other road safety issues' alongside investigating the benefits of extending 20mph speed limits within 'suitable' residential areas within Peterborough. Councillor Ash stated that there were other issues which needed to be addressed alongside speed limits and therefore the scope for investigation should be widened. Councillor Ash further commented that not all areas within the city would be suitable for the imposition of such speeding measures and hence the amendment looked to reflect this. Councillor Saltmarsh seconded the amendment and stated that she felt it important to incorporate other road safety issues within the motion.

Members debated the amendment and it was commented that incorporating other road safety issues within the investigation would take away from the importance of the 20mph speed limit issue, which did need to be addressed. Although other issues did need to be addressed going forward, it was not felt that this was the most appropriate time to do so. Furthermore, the definition of a 'suitable' area was unclear as it was felt that all areas were as equally important when it came to addressing such an important issue.

A vote was taken on the amendment (10 For, 33 Against and 6 Abstentions) and the amendment was **REJECTED**.

A further debate was held in respect of the substantive motion, and it was commented that the imposition of a set 20mph speed limit, particularly around schools, would be an extremely important move forward and assurance was given to Members by the Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Safety that schools would be given priority.

A vote was taken on the substantive motion (45 For, 1 Against, 3 Abstentions) and the substantive motion was **CARRIED** as below:

That Council notes:

1. The clear evidence which shows that restricting traffic speed has a significant beneficial impact on reducing the number and severity of road accidents, particularly those involving children; and
2. That 34 local authorities (including Bristol, Cambridge, Newcastle, York, Liverpool, Islington, Southwark and Camden) have introduced 20mph speed limits in residential areas covering more than 8 million people and that many other councils have either agreed in principle or are actively considering similar proposals.
3. Council therefore calls upon the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee to investigate the benefits of extending 20 mph speed limits throughout residential areas in the Peterborough District and to present proposals to the Cabinet not later than 31 March 2014.

15. Reports and Recommendations

a) Peterborough City Council Pay Policy Statement for 2013/14

Council received a report which recommended the approval and adoption of the Pay Policy Statement for 2013/14, which was required by the Localism Act 2011. This was moved by Councillor Walsh and seconded by Councillor Casey.

A vote was taken (Unanimous) and it was **RESOLVED** to:

Adopt the Pay Policy Statement for 2013/14.

b) Programme of Meetings

Council received a report which sought its approval for the programme of meetings for 2013/14 and to approve, in principle, the draft programme of meetings for 2014/15. This was moved by Councillor Harper and seconded by Councillor Peach.

Councillor Murphy queried whether the scheduled dates would fit in with the boundary review report deadlines. The Solicitor to the Council advised that the scheduled dates would fit the timescales.

A vote was taken (Unanimous) and it was **RESOLVED** to:

Approve the programme of meetings for 2013/14 and approve, in principle, the draft programme of meetings for 2014/15.

The Mayor
19.00 – 21.35

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions have been received under the following categories:

<u>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TIME</u>	
7.	<u>Questions with notice by members of the public</u>
1.	<p>Question from Huw Thomas</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:</p> <p>Has Peterborough City Council's planning committee and planning department who are currently contemplating the solar farm proposals been compromised due to the leader of the city council being quoted saying <i>'It is important it is successful. If it does not happen it will be serious. We would have difficulties with the budget in future years.'</i></p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>I thank Mr Thomas for his question but have to initially correct the premise in the question that the Planning Committee Members are currently considering any solar farm proposals. We are not and will not consider or debate any proposals before the due Committee date.</p> <p>The Local Planning Authority although part of the Council is an independent department which considers planning applications in respect of the Peterborough area on a case by case basis, applying national and local policies and any further material considerations associated with an application. A delegated planning officer will determine applications taking into account policy requirements and material planning considerations and balancing these against objections and any other relevant material, any decision will be made on sound planning recommendations. Every planner is bound by their professional code of practice and any breach of their code of practice may result in them being disbarred, as such planners provide their professional opinion only in respect of planning applications, they will not take into account any political aspirations of the Council when dealing with an application made by the City Council directly.</p> <p>The Planning & Environmental Protection Committee is a quasi judicial body that carries out the planning functions of the Council when required. The committee is cross party and apolitical in its decision taking process. This means that they cannot and must not take into account any political wishes or influence when determining council applications, they can only determine applications on national and local policies and any other material planning considerations pertinent to the individual application.</p> <p>As a member of this Committee for some years, I can again assure you Mr Thomas that this is absolutely correct and the current Chair of this Committee, Councillor Serluca, ensures these tenets are strictly followed. I therefore do not, and nor should any other individual, consider that either the Planning Department Officers or the Planning & Environmental Protection Committee have been compromised by the Leader's comments as they will determine the solar farm applications in line with government policy and relevant material.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Huw Thomas</p>

When can tax payers expect to see the income figures for these solar panel planning applications, as the leader of the city council is quoting a wide range of figures from £100m-£140m and can you comment, yes or no, to the statement that the Council have, for these planning committee hearings in future, employed the services of consultants?

Councillor Hiller responded:

That is not relevant to the original question Mr Mayor.

2. Question from Rosemary Briston

To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:

In view of the wealth of archaeological finds in this area, recent ones of which were revealed at Newborough Farm featured in the Peterborough Evening Telegraph, and the well known, and often council-funded projects associated with the acknowledged Bronze Age significance of the area around Flag Fen, plus the discovery of the oldest wheel in the UK in close proximity to all proposed solar sites, why has Peterborough City Council decided not to conduct an archaeological survey on Morris Fen, and is considering a dispensation of condition for an archaeological survey on Newborough Farms for the temporary meteorological mast, a condition the Local Authority stipulated when granting permission?

Councillor Hiller responded:

There are two parts to this question, these are essentially:-

1. Why have the Council decided not to conduct an archaeological survey on the Morris Fen planning application site 12/01905/R3FUL, when it has at Newborough planning reference 12/01906/R3FUL.

Environmental Impact Assessments were submitted for both the Morris Fen and Newborough planning applications and they included comprehensive heritage statements, which covered archaeology issues. Further geophysical evaluations were undertaken, identified a higher archaeological potential for finds on the Newborough site than was previously known, causing the delay in the Newborough application, whilst further archaeological investigations are undertaken to understand what archaeology is or isn't present on the site.

The geophysical investigations and aerial photographic assessment at Morris Fen have produced very limited evidence of any archaeological interest in this area. The City Council Archaeologist has assessed the evidence available and concluded on the basis of the low probability of historic finds and the likelihood that any finds present would be likely to be at a considerable depth, that the impact of the proposed development is likely to be able to be mitigated for. The City Council expert recommends that if permission is granted then planning conditions are imposed to secure the completion of the geophysical works carried out to date, together with some trial trenching, and with further works to follow, if these investigations discover any unknown archaeology.

2. Why is the Council considering an application to allow the applicant to proceed without providing an archaeological survey, that was previously required by planning permission for the temporary meteorological mast at Newborough.

Planning permission was granted under planning permission 12/01458/R3FUL for a temporary meteorological mast. Condition 3 of this permission required the submission and approval of a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the proposed works, prior to commencement of the works. It then required on completion of the works the submission

and approval of a report detailing the findings.

To comply with the requirements of this planning condition, an application has been submitted reference 13/00394/DISCHG. This application comprises the written scheme of investigation (WSI). The City Council's expert has assessed this WSI and deemed it to be acceptable, as all groundwork will be archeologically monitored. The Local Planning Authority {LPA} has therefore determined the application to say the applicant has complied with part of the requirements of this condition in other words they have submitted a WSI and the LPA have approved it. The applicant now needs to carry out the works on site in accordance with this WSI and once works are complete, comply with the remainder of this condition and submit a report detailing the findings to allow full compliance with the condition.

Supplementary question from Rosemary Briston:

Why is Peterborough City Council now conducting surveys on tenanted farm land outside the 900 acres of solar panels, when residents were assured by the Leader of Full Council that they were not looking at farmland outside the current proposed planning applications, this appears to be an additional survey?

Councillor Hiller responded:

I am not aware of those additional surveys that you site, I will endeavour to find out if and why additional surveys are being conducted outside the area and let you know of course. I cannot comment on any particular application because it is coming before the Planning Committee and I am a member of that Committee.

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

1. Question from Councillor Davidson

To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:

During periods of wet weather, we are seeing an increasing amount of flooding on Werrington Meadows. This makes it difficult for many residents to use the public footpath, including a number of elderly residents of Werrington Lodge. The meadow is used by the community and families with children alike and the disabled. Recently while doing our ward walks we witnessed a man with a guide dog, trying to wade through the water which came up to his knees and this was very disturbing to watch.

Could it be the water table level is being compromised and could the Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning look into raising the path to a higher level?

Councillor Hiller responded:

Council Officers are aware of the issue and understand that it has been causing concern during the recent sustained downpours. But the Councillors and Officers I have spoken to agree that this hasn't ever happened before and the problem has arisen because it has been such an exceptionally wet year. The grassed land next to the footpath has been saturated and excess runoff flows to the footpath because it has a low spot within it. To the best of our Officers knowledge this is the first time in the last 15 years that this localised ponding has occurred in this place. There are many other locations where flooding has also caused access problems for the first time during the recent unprecedented wet weather period and these issues have to be assessed and considered based on risk and priority.

Since February options have been considered for works to this area in Werrington. Potential options include installing a drainage gully within or beside the pathway which is owned by the Homes and Communities Agency, which could outfall via a pipe into the Environment Agency watercourse – Werrington Brook. PCC and Enterprise are currently working with these partners to identify what could be feasible from an engineering and cost effective point of view. Our Officers appreciate cheaper options such as installing a soakaway would not help as the ground would be too saturated for water to drain away.

It would obviously be more efficient for agreed works to be carried out once the ground has properly dried out. No date has been set yet for any works as this depends on the outcomes of discussions with partner organisations and our operational budgets for this new financial year. I have asked that all Ward Councillors are consulted before any scheme is determined.

Councillor Davidson asked the following supplementary question:

I've reported it to Enterprise but they felt it was an Environment Agency problem, which you have answered partly in your response, but a recurrence of this would impact on all of those who use the meadow. My suggestion is that the thousands of pounds that are being used to maintain the city centre but equally there are other areas that would welcome the same effort.

Councillor Hiller responded:

My personal opinion would be that the city centre improvement works that this administration is currently conducting, will be here for decades and decades and will benefit hundreds of thousands of people that not only live in this city but that also visit this city. A single pathway in Werrington where we have had flooding once in living memory, is not currently given the same priority.

2. Question from Councillor Shearman

To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:

Residents in the Millfield part of Park Ward recognise and appreciate the improvements being made in the area as a result of Operation CAN-Do.

Can the Cabinet member give an unqualified assurance that the improvement in the quality of life experienced by these residents will not be undermined as a result of the review of the Neighbourhoods structure in the City?

Councillor Hiller responded:

I thank Councillor Shearman for his encouraging words about our team's CAN-do operation and agree with him that it's rewarding that resident's are recognising the significant impacts this long term operation is having within their community. It is this Authority that recognised the need to do something different in the Millfield and New England area following a series of incidents and heightened community tensions, and I can assure Members our commitment to this programme remains resolute.

The Neighbourhood Management team is indeed changing and the emerging service will be absolutely focussed on delivering responsive and timely solutions to problems, issues and opportunities right across Peterborough.

We ourselves are so enthused by the positive results already evident in the Operation Can Do area that Councillor Shearman has my assurance that the team will continue to

	<p>lead the operation, working alongside colleagues in the Police and other agencies to maintain and drive forward long term and lasting improvements.</p> <p>Councillor Shearman asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>One of the keys to the success of Operation Can Do has been not only the work that our colleagues in the Council have been undertaking with other agencies, but the structure and the number of officers that we have had within the Neighbourhoods Team. I understand, talking to colleagues or Members right across the floor, that people are concerned of what the end result is going to be of this review and can I ask you that this review is carried out very quickly so we can all know what the situation is going to be with regards to the neighbourhoods structure?</p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>I can assure all Members and Councillor Shearman in particular that the Neighbourhoods restructure is imminent.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Councillor Fower</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:</p> <p>Residents in South Werrington and North Gunthorpe, have contacted me about the prospect of improving the bus stop located opposite Lewes Gardens, including the introduction of a bus shelter, and also at the location along Coniston Road, nearest to Campbell Drive. Could the relevant Cabinet member please let me know whether there is money available for the introduction of new shelters, how much they cost to introduce and how I can go about securing the introduction of such shelters and improvements?</p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>The City Council has a budget for integrated transport schemes and an indicative budget figure for public transport improvements may be found in the Local Transport Plan 3, chapter 14, and page 151.</p> <p>www.peterborough.gov.uk/ltp</p> <p>The cost of a bus shelter is approximately £5,500.</p> <p>We receive a large number of requests each year for bus shelter upgrades. As there is a limited budget available to implement these requests, our Officers use a standard assessment procedure to score potential sites and to determine priority.</p> <p>I have passed Councillor Fower's information to Planning Transport and Engineering and they add these upgrades to their request database.</p> <p>An officer will report back to Councillor Fower once the request has been assessed</p> <p>In the mean time, if you would like to contact Mark Speed he will be happy to provide you with more information on this subject.</p>
4.	<p>Question from Councillor Fower</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:</p> <p>Both Councillor Davidson and I have been contacted by residents living in Brookside (South Werrington) about problems regarding flooding of the school field, adjacent to their properties. Can the relevant cabinet member please tell me whether or not this</p>

	<p>authority owns the land, if they do, does Voyager School rent it from them and if so how much, and who legally is responsible for addressing the issue of ongoing flooding on the land causing damage to nearby property?</p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>The Council owns the freehold of the land he refers to and all of this land is leased to the Voyager Academy. Under the terms of that Lease, it is the Academy that is responsible for repair and maintenance.</p>
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9	<u>Questions with notice by Members to Council representatives of the Fire Authority</u>
	None received.

EXECUTIVE BUSINESS TIME

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

1. **Question from Councillor Saltmarsh**

To Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

I have made several requests concerning a report regarding the future of Children's Play Services as this item still appears on the Key Decisions notice for discussion by the relevant Scrutiny Committee of Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities.

As the decision has now been made to close all eight of the Children's Play Centres please can the Cabinet Member advise me of the results of the consultation with key stakeholders and when the report to determine the future of Play Services in the City will be available to the Scrutiny Committee?

Councillor Scott responded:

A full programme of work is underway which seeks to retain all former play centre buildings for community use. Two rounds of meetings with community groups and Ward Councillors have just been completed, and viable solutions for the future of the buildings have been identified.

As a result of this extensive consultation, a vision statement and action plan are being finalised and, when complete, Officers will be in a position to submit a report to Scrutiny detailing:

- The outcomes of the consultation exercise;
- The viability for each centre in terms of asset transfer;
- The action plans to support transfer; and
- What the centres will be used for with an emphasis, wherever possible, of continuing some form of play activity.

We will also be submitting applications to access funding from the Government's Asset Transfer Programme, which will help to support and build the capacity of groups that are interested in taking on the responsibility of these valuable community assets.

Councillor Murphy raised a Point of Order and queried what two rounds of consultation had taken place in Ravensthorpe with the elected Members? As he believed there to have been only one round.

Councillor Scott responded and stated that her understanding was that a formal consultation had taken place early on and a more formal consultation had taken place since. Councillor Scott stated that she would come back to Councillor Murphy with further clarification.

Councillor Scott continued with her response to the original question from Councillor Saltmarsh as follows:

In the meantime, funding remains to support the continued daily maintenance of the buildings which will prevent them from being boarded up or deteriorating. There is an expectation that decisions regarding the centres' future need to be made by the end of a

	<p>sixth month period in order to achieve the savings required.</p> <p>Councillor Saltmarsh asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>Surely the decision has already been made to close the eight play centres, so is the report that we are going to get just telling us what is going to happen after this decision has been made?</p> <p>Councillor Scott responded:</p> <p>There are two matters here, one is the buildings that are important in the community and the other is the play service and throughout the consultation around the budget, I spoke about that there will need to be continued work with children and their families and that's how that work will be provided in the future. Times have changed and it's the belief of myself that the work with children is best provided at the heart of the family.</p>
2.	<p>Question from Councillor Shearman</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:</p> <p>Residents in Park Ward have benefitted from the strategic management role of the Neighbourhood Managers. Can the Cabinet member give an unqualified assurance that as a result of the review of the Neighbourhoods structure, the strategic role, specifically community infrastructure planning, will continue and the Neighbourhoods team will not become a mere reactive body?</p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>Both I and our senior officers recognise the need for our Neighbourhoods department to provide not only a reactive response to community issues, but also to lead on longer term programmes of renewal, social and economic regeneration, and inward investment. Tackling one without the other will not deliver sustainable and effective solutions for our residents and communities.</p> <p>It is therefore with confidence that I can say that, following the outcome of the restructure in the department, Neighbourhoods officers will continue to work closely with colleagues in the Planning department to ensure that communities are best placed to plan for and prioritise investment in their area.</p> <p>I can further reassure Members that as part of the Neighbourhoods restructure, I have asked the Head of Neighbourhoods Services to present me with a series of options that demonstrate our commitment to Localism and to ensure communities are supported and positioned appropriately to help drive forward change and improvement in where they live.</p> <p>As soon as this is ready to be shared I would be very happy to arrange for a specific All Party Policy briefing.</p> <p>Councillor Shearman did not have a supplementary question.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Councillor Jamil</p> <p>To Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services:</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please confirm what plans are in place to ensure that Play Centres will not be affected in light of the decimation of the Neighbourhoods Team on Peterborough City Council? At the previous full council meeting we were given assurances that the Neighbourhood Teams will work with groups to ensures these centres</p>

stay open.

Councillor Scott responded:

First, let me reassure colleagues that Cabinet have asked officers to ensure an effective neighbourhoods service is maintained despite needing to make financial savings. Details of these arrangements have now been circulated to all members, and we have assurances from the Head of Service that delivery of an effective and responsive service to all 57 councillors is his main priority.

Second, the Neighbourhoods service is continuing to lead the programme of work to ensure that former playcentre buildings are retained for community use. An extensive series of discussions have taken place in all 8 locations, and a viable solution in all cases is being pursued. We will be submitting a series of applications to access funding from the Government's Asset Transfer fund with a view to supporting community groups to take on responsibility for these important buildings. Regardless of any structural changes within the Neighbourhoods department, they will continue to prioritise this programme of work to its completion.

This is a demonstration of this council's commitment to the Localism agenda, recognising as we do the important role that communities play in identifying their own needs and priorities.

4. **Question from Councillor Davidson**

To Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

Could the Cabinet Member for Children's Services confirm whether it is true that some social workers in the Children's Services department have been threatened with having their car parking permits revoked and does she not agree that whilst it is important for environmental reasons to discourage car use for officers who are predominantly office based, it is important that permits are retained for workers in roles which involve extensive travel all over the city?

Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Cohesion and Safety respond on behalf of Councillor Scott:

I'd like to explain the background to car parking permits. It was agreed in April 2011 with union representatives that a key user scheme would be implemented across all council directorates and that members of staff identified as key users would be entitled to free car parking.

Eligibility criteria included mileage, frequency of use, need to transport heavy equipment, security and there were others. A panel was set up which included trade union representation to consider issues around key user eligibility. It was agreed at that time also that a review would take place after a year to maintain fairness and consistency. It should be noted that Adult Social Care staff have been, over the past year, entitled to free parking but will now become part of this review process. Under the recent review of key user eligibility, staff who travel 2400 per annum are automatically eligible for car parking permits. Those members of staff who are doing below this mileage were given the opportunity to submit, for the Panel's review, the reasons why they felt they should be justified a parking permit. As part of this process, there was also the possibility to lodge an appeal.

Out of the 17 key users identified by the Panel as not adequately fulfilling the agreed criteria, six were trainee social workers i.e. people who travelled as passengers in other people's cars. The remaining 11 members of staff could not demonstrate that they

	<p>adequately fit the criteria. So I would like to emphasise that no arbitrary action has been taken with regard to the withdrawal of the permits. It has been done in full compliance with the procedure that was agreed with union representatives a year ago. I would be happy to meet with Councillor Davidson on another occasion if she requires any further information.</p> <p>Councillor Davidson did not have a supplementary question, however she stated that she would like to take up the offer of an appointment with Councillor Walsh.</p>
5.	<p>Question from Councillor Shearman</p> <p>To Councillor Cereste, Leader of the Council:</p> <p>A national newspaper has recently revealed that councillors in other parts of the country have set up consultancies to offer advice on, and lobby for, planning applications within their own authorities. In response to these revelations the Local Government Minister has stated he believes this is not only unacceptable but is possibly illegal, and that Local Authorities should ensure their Codes of Conduct take account of this.</p> <p>Does the Leader of the Council agree with the Local Government Minister, and will he undertake to meet with the Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council in order to consider, and report back to full Council, whether our Code of Conduct requires amending in view of the Minister's comments?</p> <p>Councillor Cereste responded:</p> <p>Thank you for your question. It is not necessary for me to meet with the Chief Executive and the Solicitor to the Council, as I have already done so. When I received your question I decided to discuss this matter with them, to make certain that we were fully covered in Council and I did not want to wait until July to offer Councillors the confidence that this Council is not in any way in breach of any of the Code of Conduct. So there is nothing really further to say, we are not in breach, our Code of Conduct covers this fully and we can rest assured that that is the case.</p> <p>Councillor Shearman did not have a supplementary question.</p>
6.	<p>Question from Councillor Jamil</p> <p>To Councillor Cereste, Leader of the Council:</p> <p>Could the council leader tell us what measures the council has in place to smoothly handle the possible inward migration of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria when these accession states gain legal access to Great Britain and the E. U. at the end of this year? What extra provisions have been made in terms of health, housing, education etc to ensure that we are not caught out like last time?</p> <p>Councillor Cereste responded:</p> <p>At this stage it is difficult to predict the impact, if any, that these changes will have locally or nationally. A very recent study from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research shows that the UK is not likely to be a preferred destination for Romanian and Bulgarian nationals. Council will know that the government is also looking at ways of discouraging migration into the UK from new states by, for example, limiting access to benefits.</p> <p>However, we are not complacent here in Peterborough. Unlike the last wave of inward migration from the EU we now have an expansive network of partner agencies and community organisations that work alongside us to manage the impacts of changes in our</p>

population which I feel sure will help to mitigate any additional pressures on our public services.

Officers will continue to monitor intelligence over the coming months and will report to Cabinet as and when new information emerges.

Councillor Jamil asked the following supplementary question:

Can the Leader give us an idea of who the agencies are that are in place that the Council will work with in order to make sure there is a smooth transition?

Councillor Cereste responded:

We work with the voluntary sector, the health service, the fire service and the police. We work with the Border Agency and we have got some very interesting work that is done in the city; we've piloted a number of schemes. But I think we have got to remember that our first duty is to treat the people who come to this city with respect and humanely. That's what we have to do first, we cannot stop them coming through our borders; it's not our job to try. We can lobby government to make sure that the impact on the city is as minimalised as possible, but I repeat, once they are here we have to treat them humanely and with respect and try and make sure they do integrate into our community and become productive members of our community as quickly as possible if they are going to stay.

7. **Question from Councillor McKean**

To Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources:

Could you please advise how many Councillors are using their own computers to access the City Council systems and how many use them for their Councillor email accounts and the reasons for this?

Councillor Seaton responded:

We do not hold information on Councillors who use their own equipment. However we do know that 51 Councillors are in receipt of a Council iPhone or iPad, which allow access to their Council e-mail accounts. These devices have software installed by ICT that provides a level of security, are PIN protected and one of the main considerations when purchasing these devices in the first instance was the minimal risk of potential viruses.

With regards using personal email addresses, again we do not keep specific data although we know that certain members use these (for example hotmail) from the spam e-mails that have been generated from time to time, which I am sure many of us will have received.

In both instances, the security of personal data can be compromised. I have highlighted on many occasions to members the risks of using their personal equipment and email addresses but I think it is right that I repeat the points;

- As members, we are all registered Data Controllers. If we do not use Council equipment, the device used must have encryption. Passwords should regularly be changed (and should not be 'obvious' as current software can 'crack' simple passwords very easily).
- If confidential data is obtained from personal equipment, the member would be personally liable to being fined. This is taken extremely seriously by the Information Commissioner and fines are heavy.

I'm sure members will all agree that it is extremely important for the Council and us as

individual Data Controllers, to demonstrate our adherence to data security. The Council has a secure framework which protects us, and our customers. If we choose not to adhere to this process then I repeat we can be individually liable for any breach that may occur as a result of our non compliance.

Councillor McKean did not have a supplementary question but thanked Councillor Seaton for his reply and the guidance given to all Councillors.

8. **Question from Councillor Thulbourn**

To Councillor Cereste, Leader of the Council:

Can the Leader tell us whether he has a plan in place to help those who fall behind in rent arrears due to the bedroom tax and new Council Tax charges on the unemployed?

Councillor Cereste responded:

Our government has recognised that some people may fall behind with their rent payments, and so have increased the budget available to the council to award Discretionary Housing Payments. This fund will be available to assist some of the households who are affected by the reduction in housing benefit as a result of the Housing Benefit Size Criteria. However, this will only be a short term solution, which could be used to protect the family from falling into arrears until they are able to secure alternative more suitably sized accommodation.

Unfortunately the Discretionary Housing Payments fund will not cover Council Tax arrears and there is no alternative funding available. However, this council is responding to this through a review of our debt recovery policy in order to alleviate additional recovery costs being levied on residents who owe small amounts and who fall into arrears.

Further support and debt advice for people in Peterborough is available from the new Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme, the details of which can be found on the council's web site. We have also as an administration worked extremely hard to introduce a series of new measures that will help those people on low incomes to save whatever they can in order to be able to live better and to meet their payments.

You have the Switch Scheme which as you know has gone live recently and as an average will save the individual family about £120 a year, that will be available on a two or three month basis so people can apply for that and that in itself would alleviate much of the problems that we are likely to face and lets not forget the announcement made recently about the partnership between Peterborough City Council and British Gas which is particularly directed at families on low incomes, ergo the families that are likely to suffer mainly from this situation and that in itself should be able to save them anywhere up to £300-£400 per annum and that would be a tremendous benefit to them.

We as a Council will do everything that we can to make sure that the people of this city know where they have to go to get the information and to get benefits from these things so they will not be unduly impacted by some of the changes.

Councillor Thulbourn asked the following supplementary question:

Could you point me in the direction of how these funds can be accessed? I have been receiving a number of queries and there is a lot of distress because people do not understand how they are going to get access to it. Could you tell me how I can get that information and then publish it, because it's not out there at the moment?

Councillor Cereste responded:

	<p>I will undertake to make sure you get a full briefing so that you've got all of the information you require and you are able to pass it on as quickly as possible to your residents, we'll circulate to the entire Council.</p>
9.	<p>Question from Councillor Fower</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:</p> <p>How much, on average, do zebra crossings cost to introduce, does this City Council have dedicated budget for such actions and where was the most recent installation in the city?</p> <p>Councillor Hiller may have responded:</p> <p>The cost of zebra crossings varies greatly depending on the circumstances of the highway and although an average cost is not a useful figure to pass on to members generally you can expect one to cost approx £20-30K.</p> <p>The City Council has a budget for integrated transport schemes and an indicative budget figure for safer roads, local safety schemes may be found in the Local Transport Plan 3, chapter 14, and page 151.</p> <p>www.peterborough.gov.uk/ltp</p> <p>We receive a large number of requests each year for pedestrian crossings. As there is a limited budget available to implement these requests so we use a standard assessment procedure to score potential sites and determine priority.</p> <p>As part of this assessment, we conduct a site visit and undertaken preliminary counts of vehicles and pedestrian movements to determine demand for a crossing.</p> <p>Requests that score sufficiently in the assessment are then recommended by the Transport and Engineering Board to be included in the Capital Works Programme. This programme is then scrutinized before being agreed by the Cabinet Member.</p> <p>The most recent Zebra crossing was installed in Eye Green and on Newark Avenue.</p> <p>In the mean time, if you would like to contact Mark Speed he will be happy to provide you with more information on this subject.</p>
10.	<p>Question from Councillor Peach</p> <p>To Councillor Lee, Deputy Leader:</p> <p>Residents in Park Ward and no doubt throughout Peterborough City will be pleased about the extra money the Administration were able to put in the budget for Enterprise to go towards getting and keeping the city clean.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member give Council an idea on how this extra money is to be used, will it for example see increased street cleaning frequencies throughout parts of the city and if so when and where and will it see the reintroduction of the very popular spring clean next year?</p> <p>One thing that has been raised by residents within the past few months has been the very poor state of the Parkways, especially the litter in the central reservations and the side of the Parkways.</p>

Could the Cabinet Member please tell us when these were last cleaned and if they are being cleaned on a regular basis and what is the specification in the contract with Enterprise for parkway and central reservation cleaning and how does this compare to the current cleaning schedule?

Councillor Elsey may have responded:

Councillor Peach is correct that an additional amount of has been made available for street cleansing related services. However, as Councillor Peach is aware it was only just over a month ago that the additional amount was allocated as part of the Council's budget process.

We need to be prudent how this additional money is spent and are doing a number of things to ensure that the money will be spent where there is the most need.

My officers have been carrying out a review of the street cleansing specification and working with Enterprise Peterborough to review the standards and frequencies across the City. As a result of this Enterprise Peterborough are currently implementing a new service model which already appears to be delivering improvements and we want to understand the impact that will have. As you know, we are currently undertaking an extensive programme of ward walks with all Councillors through to May and a further programme will take place in the Autumn.

We will use the results of these initiatives to identify and agree the hotspot issues that need to be tackled and allocate money to these. And yes, It is also my aim to keep some money back for a spring clean next year.

11. **Question from Councillor Fower**

To Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources:

Can the relevant Cabinet member please explain why Bayard Place is closed at weekends, and are there any plans for it to open up, at least during office hours, so that local residents can make use of the services and help on offer at times that are more accommodating in today's world?

Councillor Seaton may have responded:

The customer service centre does not open at weekends because it is not believed the demand for the service would justify the additional cost. We do keep all options under regular review and will look again to confirm this. In today's world the use of on line services is increasing and these are accessible 24/7. This is the direction the council will continue to take to ensure full value for tax-payer money - as recently shown with on-line Council Tax and Housing Benefit applications. However we do acknowledge the more expensive face to face option must still be available for customers who need it.