

MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD

31 July 2013

The Mayor – Councillor June Stokes

Present:

Councillors Arculus, Ash, Casey, Cereste, Dalton, Day, Elsey, Fitzgerald, Fletcher, Forbes, Fower, Goodwin, Harper, Harrington, Hiller, Holdich, Jamil, Johnson, Khan, Knowles, Lamb, Lane, Lee, Maqbool, Martin, McKean, Miners, Murphy, Nawaz, North, Over, Peach, Rush, Sanders, Saltmarsh, Sandford, Scott, Shabbir, Sharp, Stokes, Swift, Sylvester, Thacker, Thulbourn and Walsh.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Davidson, John Fox, Judy Fox, Kreling, Seaton, Serluca and Simons.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Cereste stood to clarify an item which had appeared on the Peterborough Telegraph website. It had been alleged that he not declared an interest in the football club. Councillor Cereste stated this to be untrue; he had registered all of his interests, taken legal advice and had nothing to declare.

Councillor Elsey stated that he understood that holding a season ticket was not a prejudicial interest but in the interests of transparency he declared that he was a season ticket holder at Peterborough United.

Councillors Sharp, Shearman, Holdich, Casey, Dalton and Fitzgerald also separately declared that they were season ticket holders.

The Legal Officer clarified the situation with regards to season ticket holders. She explained that holding a season ticket did not automatically mean that a Councillor was biased in favour of the decision or otherwise. Providing Members were able to maintain an open mind, and consider all of the matters in the report fairly and impartially, then there was no evidence of bias. If anyone did not feel they could do this then they should desist from voting on this matter but would still be able to speak.

3. Budget Allocation for London Road Stadium

Councillor Cereste, the Leader of the Council, moved the recommendations within the report, adding that it was clear that this was something that was needed for the city, the club and the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Holdich, who reserved his right to speak.

Members debated the recommendation and raised points including:

- Did Council fully understand the implications of the decision, as it would mean borrowing additional money;
- This investment would not benefit the council taxpayers directly, but would be of benefit to a private enterprise;
- Was this a proper use of public funds?
- Council had a duty to provide and support statutory services and not a commercial enterprise; and

- The decision would mean further pressure placed upon statutory services.

Councillor Thulbourn rose to move an amendment to the recommendation. He stated that an action plan should be put together in order to address the issues faced by a large number of residents living locally to the ground on match days. This action plan should incorporate parking, congestion, transport to and from London Road, enforcement of existing restrictions, litter and rubbish. The main impact area was Fletton and Woodston and some parts of Stanground Central should also be incorporated. The action plan should be adopted prior to any decisions being taken on the site.

The Legal Officer advised Councillor Thulbourn that this was not a relevant amendment within the terms of the Constitution.

Councillor Murphy rose on a point of order to second Councillor Thulbourn's amendment.

The Legal Officer confirmed that the amendment would not be relevant as the remit of Council was to consider budget issues rather than strategy issues in relation to the football club, therefore this would not be a relevant amendment to the recommendation.

The debate continued as follows:

- The Council would support any business if they were approached to install infrastructure in a Council asset;
- The football club was involved in community work such as the Football Academy;
- The loss of a thriving football club would be a great loss to the city; and
- The money being put into the club was borrowed and had a capital cost, this money was not the same as would pay for areas such as bus provision.

Councillor Cereste rose on a point of order in respect of the amendment put forward by Councillor Thulbourn. He stated that he was happy to take the suggestion forward by way of a meeting of Ward Councillors and the relevant persons to further discuss the issues raised in Councillor Thulbourn's amendment in order to attempt to resolve them.

The debate continued as follows:

- Anything that could be done to develop the South Bank should be welcomed;
- Concerns were raised about reduced capacity at Moy's End, which could in turn have an effect on revenue and mean an increase in ticket prices;
- The stadium capacity would not be enough to sustain Premiership survival should the team rise through the leagues. Would this result in the stadium having to move out of the town centre?
- The football ground needed investment for the future of the club and the city;
- A tribute was paid to Joan Hill, the founder of the Peterborough United Foundation, who had passed away recently but who had left a legacy to support young people through the work of the foundation;
- Concerns were raised about profits made from the sale of land from Peterborough City Council and this in turn not being reinvested in Peterborough United;
- The economic impact: revenue and benefit and educational facilities at the ground should be considered. This deal had enabled land on the South Bank to be unlocked, which in turn would allow development to continue;
- Council was being asked to invest in Peterborough the city and Peterborough the club; the Council was linked with the fortunes of the club;
- There was a lot of work being done with young offenders;
- By maintaining the club, the Council would maintain a very important part of the history of the city;

- Some residents had expressed concern about the £8 million already paid out. It did not appear ethical that some people had made money from the club, yet the Council was struggling to borrow another £1 million to make further improvements;
- Services were being cut and the general voter did not understand the difference in the money used for this particular purpose;
- People who visited Peterborough had to see such a run down site and this would give the Council an opportunity to showcase the city;
- The Council had worked with local residents who accepted that there was always going to be some disruption from matches;
- The Council could do more in talking to Partners, such as the Police, around parking enforcement issues;
- Having invested this money, the Council should retain this site as a public asset;
- Could the reasons why the Council could find £1 million for this development but not keep play centres, buses and grants operating be provided? and
- When people visited matches they were not just judging the football ground but the city as a whole. They should go away thinking highly of the city and the club.

Councillor Holdich exercised his right to speak and stated that POSH was a great family club. He explained that there was a potential to extend the ground should the club progress through the league. He congratulated officers for their work during these negotiations adding that this was one of the best reports presented to Council. He added that the cost to the taxpayer was £10k.

Councillor Cereste summed up as mover of the recommendation and in so doing provided an explanation of the £1 million investment. He added that this would not cost anything as the revenue would cover the cost of the borrowing. The report detailed major projects around the property, which would also bring in more revenue and provide long term benefit to the city. He asked for a recorded vote to be exercised.

A recorded vote was taken (45 For, 4 Against) with Councillors voting as follows:

For: Arculus, Casey, Cereste, Dalton, Day, Elsey, Fitzgerald, Fletcher, Forbes, Goodwin, Harper, Hiller, Holdich, Jamil, Johnson, Khan, Knowles, Lamb, Lee, Maqbool, Martin, McKean, Miners, Murphy, Nadeem, Nawaz, North, Over, Peach, Rush, Saltmarsh, Sanders, Sandford, Scott, Shabbir, Shaheed, Sharp, Shearman, Stokes, Swift, Sylvester, Thacker, Todd, Thulbourn and Walsh.

Against: Ash, Fower, Harrington and Lane.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Council approved the allocation of £1 million in the annual budget to enable the retrofitting or redevelopment of the London Road terrace at the Peterborough United Football ground in order to provide an all-seater stadium.

The Mayor
19.00 – 20.15