

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENT  
CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD AT THE FORLI ROOM - TOWN HALL  
ON 8 NOVEMBER 2012**

**Present:** Councillors M Todd (Chairman), G Casey (Vice Chairman),  
M Nadeem, Y Maqbool, JA Fox, S Martin, N Thulbourn

**Also Present:** Cllr Sandford, Group Leader, Liberal Democrats  
Cllr Cereste, The Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for  
Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development, Business  
Engagement and Environment Capital

**Officers Present:** Simon Machen, Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering  
Services  
Gemma Wildman, Principal Planner  
Julia Chatterton, Flood & Water Management Officer  
Andrew Edwards, Head of Growth and Regeneration  
Neil Darwin, Chief Executive, Opportunity Peterborough  
Stephen Pilsworth, Head of Corporate Services  
Phil Thorn, Project Manager  
Osman Hamir, Lawyer  
Paulina Ford, Senior Governance Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

**3. Minutes of Meetings held on:**

- 29 August 2012
- 6 September 2012

Councillor Martin noted that his apologies had not been recorded for the meeting held on 29 August 2012 and wished it to be noted that he had sent his apologies and that Councillor Forbes had attended as substitute. The Senior Governance Officer advised that she would amend the records accordingly. With the exception of this the minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2012 were then approved as an accurate record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2012 were approved as an accurate record.

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

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

## 5. Progress Report from the Cabinet member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development, Business Engagement and Environment Capital

The Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development, Business Engagement and Environment Capital introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the Growth Agenda for the city. Areas of particular interest were:

- Station Quarter
- Northminster
- Southbank
- City Centre Plan
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Great Haddon
- Hospital Site, Thorpe Road
- Opportunity Peterborough

A member of public Olive Leonard, resident of Peterborough representing the Norman Cross Action Group requested to address the Committee. The Chair agreed to this request. Olive Leonard made a statement which included the following:

- The City Council had one opportunity to get Great Haddon right and it was a substantially bigger development than the Hamptons.
- The development would change the character of its surrounding areas and its community for ever.
- The employment area would be a gateway to the city but the original proposals were now out of date and no longer fit for purpose.
- There was no evidence for a demand for warehousing. Outline planning permission was originally given in 2006 for the first warehouses to go on Alwalton Hill but no building had taken place. Therefore none of the 5000 jobs promised had come to fruition.
- There was an application in place to build two massive cold storage units which were totally out of keeping with the plans for the area and too tall. If built they would be seen from miles away and would do considerable harm to Peterborough's strategy to attract employers, entrepreneurs and investors to the city. The size and height of the cold store would make the site unattractive to anyone else and may sterilise the area.
- The proposed development was not the right development for the site, surrounding areas or the city.
- A good development would be fewer than 5000 houses making it more of a village and this would then attract more of the types of investors needed in the city. It would require fewer schools, less health facilities, infrastructure and less transport issues.

The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering Services responded to the statement. Great Haddon had been included in the councils Core Strategy and site allocations development plan document which had both been seen by the Committee. The plans had also been through independent examination by a Government Inspector. The Employment side of Great Haddon had outline planning consent for 3million square feet of industrial floor space which would be split between offices, general industry, storage and distribution. There had been significant local investment interest in the area. The Planning Committee would consider the height of the buildings and the outline consent restricted height. The scale of the housing development at Great Haddon had already been set. There had been extensive consultation with the local community including the Norman Cross Action Group over the last two years.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Southbank Phase 3, Fletton Quays. Had any progress been made with regard to the two parcels of land not owned by the Council? *Members were informed that it would be in the interest of the council to purchase both of the parcels of land but no further comment could be made at this point.*
- Members had noted that water from the water features in Cathedral Square had been leaking water across other areas of the square and felt that it would be dangerous in cold weather. Why was it leaking away? *Officers were unable to provide an answer at the meeting and would come back to the Committee outside of the meeting.*
- Councillor Sandford commented that the Southbank Phase One development which was underway had been quoted as the greenest housing development in the country. To achieve this it would need to be a code level six development but this was not the case. Councillor Sandford requested that the development should not be quoted as the greenest housing development. *Members were advised that there were two Carbon Challenge sites in the country and both had started off as code level six pilot projects. Things had changed financially since both projects had been conceived and the government initially had required that all new housing developments would be built to code level six from 2016. Building to code level six was no longer financially viable and would be more costly to build to that standard adding approximately £40K to a house. The Southbank Carbon Challenge development would now be built to the new government definition which was zero carbon. The development would be one of the most environmentally friendly large scale developments in the country.*
- The Memorial Hospital which was part of the hospital site was a listed building. Would this building be kept as part of the new development site? *Members were advised that the Memorial Hospital was included in the local list of important buildings and would remain as part of the new redevelopment scheme.*
- The report stated that the Planning Committee had recently approved an outline planning application for a retail foodstore at Maskew Avenue. Could officers advise when this development would start? *Members were advised that a major planning application such as this required a three month judicial review period before any further action could be taken. This had now been completed and the planning department were now waiting for the detailed scheme from the developers. There was no timescale in place.*
- Members were concerned at the proposed 35meter high building that could be built at Great Haddon and the impact on further development in the area. Members were concerned that it would attract more low skilled jobs. *Members were advised that the whole of the Great Haddon employment area was under a single ownership and that the owner would not allow something to be built that would prejudice the prospects of the rest of the development. The Chief Executive, Opportunity Peterborough advised that there had been plenty of interest in the site and there would be a mixed range of development and job skills.*
- The report stated that activity had focused on understanding the potential uses for the Northminster area of Peterborough. Members wanted to know how the market would fit into those plans. *The Cabinet Member informed Members that the market was an interesting, valuable and integral part of the city. Everything would be done to protect the market and upgrade it to make it more successful. Several meetings had been held with the Chair of the Market Traders Association and there had been visits to London to look at the more successful markets. There were also plans being considered for opening the market on Sundays and holding car boot sales from the car park to attract more people. Everything was being done to protect, improve and grow the market in Peterborough.*
- Members sought clarification on what help was being given to the Green Backyard project. *The Cabinet Member agreed that it was a very good and interesting project to have in the city. The current location of the Green Backyard was located on a valuable site for potential development. In order for the project to get long term funding they would need to have a long term lease on a site. If the project could come forward with a proposal to buy the site even at a discount in order to protect what they were doing it would be looked at favourably. If they were unable to do this then there were other sites*

*that they could be moved to. The council would help get them started financially and give them a long term lease to help them get funding.*

- Some Members felt that the market was too far out of the centre of the city and people coming into Peterborough did not know where it was. *The Cabinet Member agreed with Members that it would be better to have the market more centrally located in the city centre and informed them that ideas were being sought and considered.*
- Councillor Sandford wanted to know if the objective was still sustainable growth or was it now growth at any costs. Councillor Sandford quoted National Planning policy and felt that the Peterborough Garden Park retail foodstore recent planning permission that was granted had gone against this policy. *Officers advised Members that the Secretary of State had confirmed that it had been in accordance with national and local planning policy.*
- Members noted that there was no mention in the report about the University. Members felt that this would be key to help the growth of the city centre. *Members were advised that there were currently 3000 students taking university degrees in Peterborough. It was anticipated that there would be a proper university in Peterborough within the next ten years with a cohort of 5000 students.*
- Councillor Sandford wanted to know what was happening to the remaining trees in Bridge Street. It had appeared that whilst the refurbishment work in Bridge Street had been carried out the roots of the trees had been left exposed. None of the contractors working on the project in Bridge Street had arboricultural experience. There was concern that the trees were not being managed properly. *The Head of Growth and Regeneration did not have the information at the meeting and advised that he would respond to the question outside of the meeting. The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering Services responded that there were officers in the planning service that were tree specialists and they had been involved in ensuring that the works carried out were managed properly around the trees.*

The Chair thanked the Cabinet member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development, Business Engagement and Environment Capital for attending the meeting and providing an informative update on the progress of his portfolio.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee noted the report and progress made on the portfolio of the Cabinet member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Economic Development, Business Engagement and Environment Capital.

The Head of Growth and Regeneration to respond to Councillor Sandford request for the following information:

1. Management of trees in Bridge Street whilst renovations works were being carried out
2. Zero Carbon criteria

## **6. City Centre Development Plan Document**

The report was presented to the Committee as part of the consultation process on the draft Peterborough City Centre Development Plan Document. The consultation draft version of the City Centre Plan had set out the council's long-term vision and objectives for the city centre for the next fifteen years. It set out the policies and proposals that would help direct how new development and regeneration would be achieved and how the council's vision for the city centre would be met. The plan identified and addressed a number of key themes which affected the strategy for the city centre as a whole, such as:

- retail
- leisure
- office development and employment

- housing
- historic environment
- transport and other infrastructure
- green spaces and access to the river Nene

A short DVD was shown to the Committee on the proposed City Centre Development Plan. This was a new way of presenting the vision for the City Centre and it was hoped that it would capture the interest of a wider range of people including young people.

The City Centre Development Plan formed part of the Statutory Plan for the City and when adopted it would be used to determine any planning applications for the city centre.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members were impressed with the DVD presentation and agreed that it was a good way of presenting the plan to a wider range of people.
- Where would the funding come from for the City Centre Development Plan? *Members were advised that some of the schemes within the plan were already approved planning schemes. It would be a long term plan and some of the developments e.g. Garden Park had Section 106 money that had been assigned to be spent in the city centre. The plan was embedded in commercial viability. A number of commercial stakeholders had inputted into the City Centre Development Plan and the work that had already been completed in the city centre had attracted new investment.*
- Members suggested that the area in Fengate called Middle Marsh which was near Fitzwilliam Bridge could be considered for use as a marina.
- Members noted in the plan under the section City Core Policy Area, Policy CC3 that it made reference to the proposal of the development of 100 flats above shops and 200 other residential developments in Northminster. Where would these be located? *Members were advised that the council wanted to bring more residential development into the city centre and encourage the use of vacant premises in the town centre to be converted into flats. There were vacant units in Cowgate above the shops. Exactly where in the City Centre could not be determined yet but it was estimated that 100 residential units could be achieved above shops and that 200 residential units could be achieved in the Northminster area. Increasing the residential offer in the city centre would help to drive the night time economy and prosperity of the city.*
- The plan referred to the Railway Station Policy Area and development of footbridges over the railway line. Members wanted assurance that the Disability Forum would be consulted when building these. *Members were informed that when the detailed design of the crossings were put forward all of the relevant stakeholders would be consulted which included the Disability Forum. There was a policy for transport and access which specified working with all of the disability groups.*
- Members were concerned that with the development of the City Plan section 106 funding may not reach areas like Fengate, Oundle Road and other neglected areas of the city. *Members were informed that the rest of the city had already been catered for and covered in the Site Allocations Document. Increasing the offer in the city centre would benefit areas feeding into the city centre.*
- Members commented that other development plans previously put forward for the city centre had failed and wanted to know what was different about this plan. *Members were advised that the plan had been embedded in financial reality. Investment in the city had been happening and many of the projects within the plan had already started or were about to start.*
- Members were concerned that with the proposed increase in development there would be an increase in traffic into the city centre and wanted to know how this would be dealt with. *Members were advised that traffic would always be a concern and more people needed to use public transport, cycle or walk. Too many people cut through the city centre as a shorter route and this needed to be addressed. Most traffic congestion*

*occurred at peak times during the morning and early evening when people were going to and from work. During the rest of the time there was no congestion and it was really easy to get around the city.*

- Members were concerned that transport in general had not been tackled in the plan and that there was far too much car parking in the city centre and that other cities provided Park and Ride schemes. There did not seem to be provision for a sustainable transport solution.
- Councillor Sandford was concerned that there had been no mention of trees in the plan. *Members were informed that the Trees and Woodlands Strategy incorporated dealing with new development and every scheme would look to include biodiversity and trees. Trees were essential to the health and well being of the city.*

The Chair thanked officers for an excellent presentation.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee noted the report and requested that the comments made be included as part of the consultation process on the draft Peterborough City Centre Development Plan Document.

### **7. Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

The draft Flood and Water Management SPD was presented to the Committee in order to seek their comments before being presented to Cabinet for adoption. The SPD provided detailed guidance to developers and decision makers to deliver schemes that took into account flood and water management issues from main rivers and surface water. The SPD formed part of a package of work arising from the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010, which made Peterborough City Council a 'Lead Local Flood Authority'. The Council was now responsible for co-ordinating surface water management.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Councillor Sandford had noted that the SPD had mentioned "*One of Peterborough City Council's aims is to sustainably maintain, improve and expand the quality of the existing tree and woodland cover*". The Peterborough Trees and Woodlands Strategy (2012) talked about maintaining the current tree cover but also expanding it. The Environment Agency were currently running a project called 'Woodlands for Water' which looked at expanding the amount of tree and woodland cover to act as a means of alleviating floods. Why did the SPD only talk about maintaining existing woodland cover and not increasing it. *The Officer responded that the intention was to maintain and expand the quality and quantity of the existing tree and woodland cover and would look at rewording the paragraph to provide more clarity.*
- Members welcomed the Flood and Water Management SPD and felt it would help developers to make better decisions.

The Chair congratulated the Flood and Water Management Officer on an excellent piece of work and an informative presentation.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee recommend that:

1. Cabinet adopt the Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document; and that;
2. The Flood and Water Management Officer reword section 6.11.8 to clarify that the tree and woodland cover would also be expanded in quantity as well as quality.

## 8. Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation

The report informed the Committee on the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme that would replace Council Tax Benefit on 1 April 2013. The Head of Corporate Services introduced the report highlighting the following:

- Current position and legislative changes
- Financial impact for Peterborough
- Options available to the Council
- Impact of the proposed new scheme and mitigating actions
- Consultation approach and feedback
- Survey results

The scheme would need to be approved by Full Council by the end of January 2013.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members sought clarification on the following statement in the report “Consultation has also taken place with the Community Cohesion Manager, although the Equalities Impact Assessment did not identify that black or minority ethnic groups would be adversely affected by these changes”. *The Project Manager informed Members that when the Equalities Impact Assessment took place different groups had been looked at that might be affected by the 35% reduction in benefits. This was an across the board reduction for anyone that was of working age excluding anyone of pensionable age and it was identified that the black and minority ethnic groups would not be adversely affected. It was however felt that engagement with the Community Cohesion Manager should take place to go through the proposals in detail. As a result officers were signposted to the Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service (PCVS) as a point of contact to disseminate information across various groups.*
- Members noted that only 93 people had completed the survey and wanted to know if all avenues of communication had been exhausted to ensure the message regarding the changes had reached everyone who might be affected. *Members were advised that in addition to the groups that had been engaged with an additional notification letter had been sent out to approximately 6000 people who claimed benefit and had a change of circumstance during the consultation period. Officers felt confident that a large range of groups had been contacted about the change. Liaison with other authorities had indicated that the overall volume of responses in other Councils had been low. Drop in sessions at the library and Bayard place had been successful.*
- Members were concerned at the low number of responses and wanted to know how much credence was being put on the results of the consultation. *Members were informed that every effort had been made to engage with as many people as possible. Any communication that the benefit team had with people in receipt of benefits had included information on the changes. Even though the response was low the results of the consultation were inconclusive with a fairly equal split between people on benefits who were not in favour of the changes and those paying full council tax and not on benefits who were in favour. It would be the responsibility of Cabinet and Council to make a decision based on their judgement and the limited feedback received.*
- The report mentions Fuel Poverty and a range of initiatives on offer to help people tackle fuel poverty. How would people find out about these initiatives? *The Head of Corporate Services advised that information regarding these initiatives could be obtained from the Strategic Housing team.*
- What other alternative mitigating options had been considered other than those listed in the report? *Members were informed that the Government were currently consulting on a range of ‘technical discounts’ on council tax for example if a property was empty a lower charge of council tax may be paid. The ‘technical discounts’ would be considered once they had been confirmed. The ability of councils across the country to close the gap*

*through 'technical discounts' varied greatly. Councils such as Ipswich and Cambridge City found that removing all of the discounts would offset the entire issue. Other councils including Peterborough found that by removing the discounts it would not close the gap.*

- The Head of Corporate Services advised Members that people who were currently in receipt of 100% Council Tax benefit would under the new scheme have to pay something and this would have to be managed very carefully. Those people would be given as much support as possible.
- Members were concerned about how those people who were in receipt of benefits and had long term health issues and people living below the poverty line would manage if they had to make extra payments. Members felt it was the council's duty to minimise the impact on those people.
- Had consideration been given to the longer term impact of the scheme whilst taking into account the changing demographics, population growth and increase in new arrivals to the city. *Members were informed that two elements in particular had been looked at in this regard and they were; if there would be any increased take up of benefit and also given that pensioners were exempt would there be an increase in numbers of pensioners moving into the exempt bracket. The council would be monitoring the impact of the new scheme and collection rates to see whether the scheme would need to be revised on an annual basis. If a change to the scheme was required it would be brought back through the approval process.*
- Had the council made any representations to the Government with regard to the impact that the new scheme would have on Peterborough. *Members were informed that there had been a consultation on the proposed new scheme which closed in September. Members were advised that representations had been made but no response had been received.*
- What would the overall impact be on people when the Universal Credit which was a National Scheme and the local Council Tax Support Scheme were both introduced? *The Head of Corporate Services informed Members that he was working with the Head of Neighbourhood Services on Welfare Reform and looking at the impact of the proposed changes. It was too early to say what this impact would be.*
- Councillor Thulbourn who had recently completed some research on the impact of the new scheme felt that the group of people that would be impacted the most by the new scheme would be those families that were working and receiving benefits. The impact may mean that they would have to stop work.

The Chair thanked the Head of Corporate Services for an informative presentation.

## **ACTION**

The Committee requested that the Head of Corporate Services look at solutions to reduce the impact of the new Council Tax Support Scheme on the following groups:

- people who were working and receiving benefits
- disabled people

## **8. Notice of Intention to take Key Decisions**

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

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the latest version of the Council's Notice of Intention to take key Decisions.



**9. Work Programme**

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2012/13 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

**ACTION AGREED**

To confirm the work programme for 2012/13 and the Senior Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

Members requested that the Corporate Complaints Annual Monitoring Report 2011/12 being presented in March to the Committee provide clarification on how complaints on planning issues were handled.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 28 January 2013

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 10.00pm

CHAIRMAN

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