

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON
THURSDAY 7 MARCH 2013**

Present: Councillors Peach (Chairman), Day (Vice Chairman) Kreling, Nawaz, Johnson, Forbes and J R Fox.

Also Present: Alex Hall Youth Council
Councillor Goodwin PCC

Officers in Attendance: Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhood Services
Sean Evans Housing Needs Manager
Sarah Hebblethwaite Assistant Housing Needs Manager
Belinda Child Strategic Housing Manager
Annette Joyce Head of Commercial Operations
Kevin Tighe Chief Executive of Vivacity
Pam Whitbread Head of Finance, Vivacity
Heather Walton Library and Customer Services Manager, Vivacity
Dominic Hudson Strategic Partnerships Manager
Nigel Joseph Lawyer
Dania Castagliuolo Governance Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Paul Phillipson, Director of Operations.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no Declarations of Interest

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2013

The minutes of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 January 2013 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. Vivacity – Performance Report and Draft Business Plan

The purpose of this report was to give the Committee an opportunity to hear from and question both officers of the Council and Vivacity's Chief Executive on how Vivacity had performed to date and the draft business plan for 2013 – 14 since last reporting to the Committee in March 2012.

Since May 2012 Vivacity, which was a charitable trust, had been providing cultural and leisure services on behalf of the Council. Vivacity was one of the Councils key strategic partners.

A presentation was delivered to the Committee and the following was highlighted:

- Performance
- Customers
- Income
- Profile of spend
- Staff
- Arts in the city
- Heritage of Peterborough
- Libraries and Archives
- Sport
- Business plan
- Delivering more and costing the Council less

The Committee were asked to review and comment on Vivacity's current performance and the draft business plan for 2013/14.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members congratulated Vivacity on their work and commented that there had been a vast improvement in the provision of cultural and leisure services over the past year.
- Members were concerned about the future of Werrington Library. *The Library and Customer Services Manager advised members that Vivacity was looking to work with staff in a flexible way so that staff, along with volunteers could make more hours available to keep the libraries open.*
- Members queried the average age of Vivacity's volunteers and how many hours they worked for Vivacity on average. *The Library and Customer Services Manager advised Members that volunteers were of all age ranges and they worked thousands of hours between them, there were 60 volunteers delivering Library services. Most of them would work during the Great Eastern run as this was one of the busiest times.*
- Members queried whether Vivacity would be supporting the Werrington Anniversary Park. *The Chief Executive of Vivacity confirmed that Vivacity would be investing £5,500 in to the Werrington Anniversary Park to support the project and its resources.*
- Members queried how Vivacity could bring Art in to Communities. *The Committee was informed that there were two theatre groups that took place in the city. Vivacity had a small team which bid for funding to use for local community groups who did inspiring art and music in schools.*
- Members queried whether issues around the pay as you go gym had been resolved. *The Chief Executive of Vivacity informed Members that they had experienced staffing issues however these had been resolved, therefore, the gym was working normally as a pay as you go gym again.*
- Members queried whether Vivacity were aiming to get involved with the Children's play Services which was being transferred in to the Council's Neighbourhood Services. *Members were informed that if the Council approached Vivacity then they would be happy to discuss this with them*
- Members queried how the volunteers were recruited. *The Library and Customer Services Manager advised the Committee that job roles were advertised for particular projects and volunteers would apply for them as they would for a paid job*
- Members were concerned that Vivacity had not included the Mayor of Peterborough in any of its projects over the last year. *The Chief Executive of Vivacity informed the Committee that Vivacity would contact the Mayor regarding future plans.*
- Members suggested that Vivacity involved groups within their projects which the Council had awarded Freedom of the City. *The Chairman of Vivacity agreed with this suggestion and advised that this would also be a good way to incorporate young people in to their projects.*
- Members commented that it was a shame that the Broadway Theatre was left empty and queried whether there were any plans for Vivacity to get involved in a bid to purchase it.

The Chief Executive of Vivacity advised members that it was difficult because it was a provincial Theatre and did not make financial gains.

- *The Chief Executive of Vivacity informed the Committee that Vivacity would be working with Inspire Peterborough on the Road to Rio event for 2014.*

ACTION AGREED

The Chief Executive of Vivacity would meet with the Mayor to discuss the Mayor's involvement in future Vivacity events within the city.

6. Draft Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018

The purpose of this report was to present the Draft Homelessness Strategy Review and Draft Homeless Strategy 2013 – 2018 to the Committee.

A presentation was also delivered to the Committee and the following key points were highlighted:

The Homelessness review and Draft Strategy were developed using:

- The Homelessness Act 2002
- A homelessness review
- A Clear profile of homelessness
- Access to Accommodation
- Homelessness Services
- Identification of gaps and duplication
- Information from the development of the Draft Homelessness Strategy

Priorities were decided through:

- An Action Plan
- Aims of the Strategy
- Four Strategic Aims:
 1. Preventing and relieving homelessness
 2. Increasing access to accommodation
 3. Reduce and prevent rough sleeping
 4. Promoting settled lifestyles and sustainable communities

Ways in which the aims were to be achieved:

Strategic Aim 1:

- Risk of homelessness was identified early
- Effective action was put in place to prevent homelessness
- Partnership Working
- Prevent homelessness and reducing levels of homelessness against the main cause for presentations

Strategic Aim 2:

- Increased access to private rented sector accommodation
- Access to supported accommodation
- Promotion of the Empty Homes Partnership
- Maximising the opportunities for the best use of social housing stock

Strategic Aim 3:

- Action Plan
- Aims of the Strategy

Strategic Aim 4:

- People to be empowered to set up and settle in their home
- Ensuring that homeless persons had access to appropriate support

Vision:

To prevent and respond to homelessness by ensuring that a range of effective targeted services that responded to customers needs were provided.

The committee was asked to:

- (i) Scrutinise the findings of the Homelessness Review
- (ii) Scrutinise and agree the strategic objectives set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018
- (iii) Approve the Draft Homelessness Strategy and recommend it for approval by Cabinet ahead of it being presented to full Council

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members were concerned with what would happen to their constituents once the new Bedroom Standards Policy was implemented as there were not enough one and two bedroom houses available for families to move in to. *The Housing Needs Manager agreed that this would bring difficulty to the city, however, if people were unable to meet the shortfall then priority would be given to them in finding a smaller property. There was also the Rent Deposit Scheme Available to them or a discretionary housing payment pot.*
- Members queried whether there were many changes made since the last draft of the Homelessness Strategy. *The Housing Needs Manager advised Members that the current draft was a complete rewrite reflecting the pressures of the Welfare Reform.*
- Members requested information on the Jam Jar Scheme which was included within Strategic Aim 1 on page 85 of the report. *The Assistant Housing Needs Manager informed the Committee that the Scheme was set up working with Rainbow Credit Union helping people to save money for their bills, there would also be support available for them to help manage their money.*
- Members queried how many people were currently being re-housed each year. *The Housing Needs Manager informed the Committee that last year around 17,000 people were assisted and 276 of those used the Rent Deposit Scheme.*
- Members were concerned for the future of the Peterborough Citizens following the Welfare Reform. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed members that last August the Welfare Reform Action Group was formed and included representatives from all sectors of the city. He suggested that at the next meeting of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee a robust presentation could be delivered on the impact of the Welfare Reform.*
- Members were concerned that they did not know what to advise their constituents regarding the Welfare Reform. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed Members that a phone number would shortly be released for their constituents to ring for help and advice.*
- Members were concerned that help was required for people with learning disabilities as they were panicking and worried about the Welfare Reform.

ACTION AGREED

1. The Committee requested that a presentation be delivered at the next Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting regarding the impact of the Welfare Reform.
2. The Head of Neighbourhood Services to provide all 57 Councillors with the telephone number for help and advice on Welfare Reform issues to enable them to pass it on to their constituents.
3. The Committee requested that the draft Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018 returns to the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting in June 2013 for further scrutiny and final sign off.

7. Commercial Operations

The purpose of this report was to provide the Committee with an overview of Commercial Operations and forthcoming plans for the City Centre.

Commercial Operations provided a framework for the day to day operations of the city and focused on the strategic efforts to enhance the city in the long term. The department's vision was to provide a high quality, safe and easily accessible environment that underpinned commercial and social success. The following areas of business made up Commercial Operations:

- The Enterprise Centre
- Parking Services
- CCTV
- General Market
- City Centre Management and Tourism
- Events

Key strategic objectives were as follows:

Objective 1 – Promoting the city

- Broadening the visitor offer of the city by extending the events diary and marketing existing attractions more extensively

Objective 2 – Managing the city

- To communicate and co-ordinate the work of all city stakeholders and monitor outputs
- To communicate and engage effectively with businesses

Objective 3 – Improving the Environment and the public spaces

- To encourage and facilitate improvements to the environment and public spaces that were inviting, clean and a safe environment to be enjoyed

Objective 4 – A prosperous city

- Diversifying and strengthening the economic base. The city should be the catalyst for encouraging the growth of both new and existing businesses within the city

An additional presentation to supplement the information in the report was delivered to the Committee.

The Committee was recommended to note and comment on the work of Commercial Operations and propose further scrutiny in relation to its business fields.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that the work of Commercial Operations was outstanding, they had always tried their best to make the city fully accessible to disabled people and had always supported the Disability Forum.
- Members commented that one of the best events in the city was held by the Womens Centre which involved food being cooked and distributed in the city centre and queried whether this event would take place again in future. *The Head of Commercial Operations advised the Committee that the event would be coming back in the future and would like it to be community led. The Head of Commercial Operations would be happy to work with different community groups on this.*
- Members praised the work of the street cleaners. Members commented that overnight the city centre became a disgrace and urged money to be invested in Omni directional CCTV cameras to prevent this happening in future. *The Head of Commercial Operations acknowledged that there were too many CCTV cameras in the city that were not being used.*
- Members queried whether the Council would be funding the Italian Festival this year. *Members were informed that the Council contributed towards the festival however the Italian Community Association also contributed a lot of money towards it.*
- Members were disappointed that Craig Street Car Park was going to be sold as they did not want to see more car parking taken away from the city. *The Head of Commercial Operations agreed and commented that if the car parks were sold it could reduce income in to the city*
- Members were concerned with the state of the Peterborough Market. *The Committee was advised that the issue with the market could not be put off any longer, Opportunity Peterborough would be looking at the long term growth of the market. The right type of traders needed to be encouraged on to the market. The location of the market was good it just needed to be marketed better.*
- Members queried why British markets and festivals were not celebrated in the City Centre. *Members were advised that it was very difficult to find a touring British Market as they were not keen on coming to Peterborough.*
- Members queried what had happened to the farmers market. *The Committee were advised that there was no longer a Market Manager in place at present to encourage traders from the Farmers Market.*
- Members queried whether there would be another Accommodation Day this year following the success of last year's event. *Members were advised that there were no plans at present however the team were considering planning one for the future.*
- Members commented that the Beer Festival needed to raise its profile as it could potentially be more successful. *Members were advised that this was an ongoing issue that events were not marketed beyond Peterborough this again was due to staff shortages.*
- Members were concerned that the Christmas lights were being installed during the Remembrance Sunday Parade. *The Head of Commercial Operations agreed that this was unacceptable that contractors were working during the parade and advised that this comment would be taken back to the Engineers Department.*
- Members were disappointed that there were no celebrations on the Cathedral Square last New Years Eve.
- Members suggested that before the Council invested in events for other companies that their accounts be checked as they could have enough money to fund the event themselves.

ACTION AGREED

The Head of Commercial Operations to notify the Engineers Department of Members concern regarding the Christmas lights being installed at the same time as the Remembrance Parade.

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 four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Notice of Intention to take Key Decisions and agreed that there were no items for further consideration.

The meeting began at 7.00 and ended at 9.25pm

CHAIRMAN

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