

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENT
CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE BOUGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL
ON 20 MARCH 2013**

- Present:** Councillors M Todd (Chairman), G Casey (Vice Chairman),
M Nadeem, Y Maqbool, JA Fox, N Thulbourn
- Also Present:** Cllr Sandford, Group Leader, Liberal Democrats
Cllr JR Fox, Representing Group Leader, Peterborough Independent
Forum
Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and
Planning
Councillor Seaton Cabinet Member for Resources
- Officers Present:** Simon Machen, Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering
Services
Mark Speed, Transport and Planning Manager
Jack Eagle, Transport Planning Officer
Andy Tatt, Transport and Engineering Group Manager
Anne Keogh, Housing Strategy Manager
Helen Turner, Lawyer
Dania Castagliuolo, Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

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

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

4. Peterborough Highways Services Contract 2013 - 2023

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning introduced the report which provided the Committee with information on progress on the consolidation of the existing four highways contracts into one contract with a single partner.

The Committee were recommended to note and endorse the actions taken, and to be taken in connection with this procurement.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members commented that taking on apprentices and graduates was a good idea and queried whether the Committee would have any further involvement in the decision of the preferred bidder. *The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering advised the Committee that it would only come back to Committee if the decision was called in.*
- Members suggested that the Committee should have access to Service Level Agreements and Key Performance Indicators to enable them to scrutinise and advise constituents of future work. *Members were informed that with the new contract there*

would be no new developments, it would remain the same as the existing one. The detailed specification was being led by the Council and not the future contractor. The existing contracts were due to expire at the end of July 2013 however they had been extended until the end of September 2013. The work would need to start at the beginning of October and there would not be time for the Specifications to be scrutinised. The specifications were safety driven and they had to remain within the Highways budget.

- Members were concerned that residents did not have knowledge of the Highway Service's plans and therefore did not know what to expect. *Members were advised that residents expectations should not change as the Highway Services intervened in terms of the asset based upon safety criteria as the Council did not have money to focus on aesthetics.*
- Members queried whether it would be an additional risk for the Council to be involved with a single contractor and whether there were any clauses within the ten year contract to enable the Council to pull out if the contractors were not carrying out their work correctly. *The Transport and Engineering Group Manager advised the Committee that the contractor would be a major company and would get efficiencies working with the supplier and sub contractors therefore there should not be any cause for concern. There would be penalties for the contractors if they did not meet the key performance indicators and they could lose years off the contract however they could also gain years for good performance.*
- Members commented that street lighting in Peterborough had improved although in some areas of the city the street lights had not been changed could this be included within the new contract. *Members were informed that inspections were carried out regularly and proactive work would be carried out on streetlights in the Autumn/Winter time. In Peterborough there were over 24,000 street lights and it was impossible for them all to be checked, therefore the bidder would be challenged as they would need to resolve the issue and make it easier for streetlights to be monitored.*
- Members queried with the merging of four contracts which was savings led would the Council be able to assure that Peterborough would not lose the quality of service. *The Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning advised members that they should not see a difference in the level of service once the contracts had been merged.*
- Members commented that they thought Peterborough City Council could do more to clear footpaths during the winter months when they were frozen and dangerous. *The Transport and Engineering Group Manager advised Members that the Council had to prioritise within the city centre as to which routes were cleared and gritted. A new product was now in use on some footbridges which released the salt gradually on those structures gritted, other new initiatives were also being investigated.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted and endorsed the actions taken and to be taken in connection with the procurement of the contract with a single partner for the Peterborough Highways Service Contract 2013 – 2023.

5. Local Transport Plan Programme of Works

This report was presented to the Committee to seek their views on the draft Local Transport Plan Capital Programme of Works and the Highways Revenue Maintenance Schemes 13/14 prior to its consideration by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning.

The Local Transport Plan 2011-2016 and the generic five year programme were adopted by the Council on 13 April 2011 following an extensive consultation with consultees and a wide range of stakeholders.

The Neighbourhood Committees had been consulted and agreed the programme for 2013/14 at a meeting on 13 February 2013.

Appropriate consultation would also be undertaken on individual schemes in the programme as required.

The Committee were asked to scrutinise the proposed programme of works contained in annexes 1-4 and make any recommendations.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members requested further information on the Dropped Kerb Programme mentioned on page eleven of the report and queried whether it was citywide and if so would it be possible for Officers to Contact Councillors to find out where the dropped kerbs were needed. *The Transport and Planning Manager advised the Committee that the Drop Kerb and Mobility Improvements Programme were concentrated on the city centre at the request of DIAL as they felt it was not very accessible to disabled people. This was now being extended to other parts of the city. A request database was kept and requests were put in to order of priority. Members were advised to write in with any requests.*
- Members commented that the Congestion 'Hot Spot' Treatment Scheme on page eleven was a good idea as when road works were in progress the traffic became excessive and the bus routes were blocked. *Members were advised that the new technology Intelligent Transport Systems had become more popular and its function was to report traffic flow. The Council worked closely with the Bus companies to resolve problems they had with traffic.*
- Members were concerned that cycle chains were being left on cycle racks within the city centre and some of them had been there for long periods of time. They could be a hazard or seen as unsightly and queried whether this issue could be resolved. *Members were advised that this issue would be looked in to.*
- Members queried how the streets were chosen in Annex 2 of the report to be included in the Highways Maintenance Programme. *The Transport and Planning Manager informed the committee that the maintenance assessment procedure included the condition factor, the strategic importance of the road and the cost factor.*
- Members queried whether every street was inspected as it seemed that some areas on the main highways were never included on the list. *Members were advised that it worked on a hierarchy system therefore the streets that were used more frequently or were in bad condition would appear on the lists.*
- Members queried why Bus Priority Measures were mentioned within the Local Transport Plan and not the report to the Committee. *Members were advised that the Intelligent Transport System was part of the Bus Priority Measure.*
- Members commented that within the projects using the £5M from the sustainable travel fund there was no mention of bus priority. *Members were informed that the Intelligent Transport System was targeted towards busses. The Network Management Group Manager advised Members that Peterborough had over 880 Kilometres of road and over 1 million kilometres of footway therefore it was an immense task to keep it all safe and maintained.*
- Members commented that there had been a Bus Users Group formed which Stagecoach representatives regularly attended therefore any complaints could go through them.
- Members queried whether the Department for Transport had been informed that while £727,000 of funding was being received from them £600,000 of bus services subsidies were going to be cut. *Members were informed that the Department for Transport were advised of what the money had been spent on and then the money would be reimbursed therefore they were aware of exactly how the money had been spent. The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering advised the committee that there was no condition within the Department for Transport to restrict the usage of funding to bus services.*
- Members commented that they felt that the Micro Asphalt Surface Treatment made no difference to the treated surfaces and suggested that the roads were fully resurfaced as this would save money in the long term. *The Network Management Group Manager advised Members that it was not just the worst condition roads that were being noted it*

was also the roads that were not far from deterioration and if these were left untreated it would cost more to fix the whole road and the funds may not be available.

- Members queried whether there was a system in place to recognise the usage of the roads and when they needed to be inspected. *Members were advised that recent surveys stated that roads needed to be inspected on average every eighty years although Peterborough City Council carried out annual surveys on highly trafficked roads.*
- Members commented that a significant number of extra roads would be added to Great Haddon once the development plans were adopted and queried how this would impact city management and setting up a new contract. *The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering Services commented that this would be one of the attractive aspects for the bidders. There was a highway asset management plan in place and the Council would check that the roads were to the correct standard before they were adopted in the city.*
- Members queried whether cycle paths had the same management system as the roads. *The Network Management Group Manager informed the Committee that the cycle paths were built to a very robust standard and they were inspected every twelve months*
- Members referred to the accessibility schemes on page eleven of the report and requested an update on the disabled parking bays on St Peters road. *Members were informed that the order for the disabled parking bays had been placed however the date for having the facility in place had not yet been confirmed.*
- Members queried whether the Council still monitored noise levels as some dwellings ran side by side with major highways. *The Transport and Planning Manager informed the Committee that noise control played a big part in major schemes as it was required to be controlled by law.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested that the Transport and Planning Manager look into resolving the issue of cycle locks being left on cycle racks within the city.

6. Affordable Housing Capital Funding Policy

The purpose of this report was to enable the Committee to scrutinise recommendations to be put before Cabinet on 25 March 2013. The primary recommendation having been the suspension of any further grant allocations from the Council's Affordable Housing corporate resources part of the Capital Programme until a thorough review of the Council's policy on funding schemes from this source was undertaken. Such a review was considered necessary to ensure the Council gains maximum benefit and value from the use of its Capital Programme resources.

The report to Cabinet would recommend that schemes that discharged obligations to provide affordable housing in accordance with individual Section 106 agreements would still be considered and Section 106 receipts would continue to be applied to fund such schemes in accordance with the 2011 Policy Framework.

The following issues had arisen which had prompted the recommendation that a review of the Policy was undertaken:

- Grant uptake had been relatively low, perhaps a result of the fairly constrained bidding criteria within the policy.
- The finances of the Council had, in general terms, become even tighter; there was therefore a need to review whether best value was being achieved from this funding policy.
- Adult Social Care had been brought back in to the Council, there was therefore a need to review whether the policy should be revised to compliment the Council's amended Adult Social Care duties.

- The Council had some particular areas it wished to target investment, such as the continued transformation of the city centre. There was therefore a need to review whether the policy should be amended to compliment those priority areas.
- The Council continued to support the growth of the city, including new homes, but recognised the difficult economic conditions the house building industry faced, there was therefore a need to review the Policy to see if amendments to it could further stimulate the house building market.

A number of options for policy amendments had provisionally been explored and it was in the following areas which Cabinet were to be asked to endorse officers to investigate:

- (i) Whether the scoring criteria within the policy be amended so as to favour bids in specific priority locations, such as the city centre and rural areas
- (ii) Whether priority could be given to those bids which assisted the Council in meeting its children and adult social care duties
- (iii) Whether it was legally possible and would offer better value if funds were made available as a loan rather than a grant or a mixture of the two
- (iv) Whether the funds could be made available to the wider house building market rather than, as was the case with the current policy, just registered providers
- (v) Whether the current definition of 'Affordable Housing' used in the policy could be widened so that other forms of low cost housing could become eligible for funding
- (vi) Whether the policy could be amended so as to better link with wider growth and investment possible initiatives of the Council, such as a Local Housing Company, other joint ventures or making the best use of our own land and property portfolio

Due to the more restrictive nature of Section 106 funds, it was recommended that grant allocations were still considered, where funded from this source. This was so that the Council could:

- a) Continue to fulfil its legal obligations arising from individual Section 106 agreements
- b) Continue to allocate some funding during the policy review period on any high quality schemes which required funding support
- c) Acknowledge the fact that very few, if any, of the list (i) – (vi) above was likely to be able to be applied to the funds held in this second pot (and therefore suspension would be futile)

The Committee were asked to comment on the issues raised within the report before it was presented to Cabinet on 25 March 2013. The Committee's views would then be reported to Cabinet to help them inform their decision.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members queried why it was necessary to put the fund on hold whilst a review of the policy was being conducted and how long the review would take. *The Housing Strategy Manager advised the Committee that the funding was to be suspended whilst the Council decided what the best use of that money would be although there would still be Section 106 money available that could be allocated. It was difficult to estimate how long the review would take as it would also involve officers from other departments.*
- Members were concerned that if funding was frozen then and the review took longer than expected this would affect affordable housing and the demand on the Social housing list. *The Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering Services advised Members that there were other schemes available which were affordable with no funding contributed from the Council therefore affordable housing would be continued to be provided in Peterborough.*
- Members requested information on the applications for funding that had already been made. *The Housing Strategy Manager informed Members that the first bid was in May 2012 for £230,000 which funded seventeen affordable units and a second bid had been approved in March 2013 for £450,000 which would fund twenty six units eight of which*

would be supported units for people with mental health issues. The average cost per unit was £17,000 for both schemes.

- Members queried where these schemes were going to be delivered in Peterborough. *Members were informed that the schemes were located in Windsor Avenue and Eastfield Road.*
- Members commented that the review requested was reasonable and requested that this item was brought back to the Committee after the review.
- Members queried page twenty four part 4.2 and 4.4 of the report which mentioned Children and Adult Social Care Duties, what did this entail. *Members were informed that duties implied that the cost was now back with the council therefore if people were housed outside of Peterborough because there needs could not be met then the cost would usually be high. The Council's priority was to reduce these costs by providing the necessary facilities in Peterborough.*
- Members queried whether any of the funding could be contributed towards the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme. *Members were advised that the plan was to provide a further £1M to Lloyds Bank for the Mortgage Scheme and to extend the scheme to other lenders.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested that a further report on the Affordable Housing Capital Funding Policy be brought back to the Committee following the review of the Council's Policy of funding schemes.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 08.55pm

CHAIRMAN