

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH ON 20 JANUARY 2009**

Present: Councillors Wilkinson (Chairman), D Day, S Dalton, S Day, S Allen
and J R Fox

Officers in attendance: John Harrison, Executive Director, Strategic Resources
Adrian Chapman, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Nick Hutchins, Head of Business Support
Karen Franklin, Head of Business Support
Carrie Denness, Principle Solicitor
Paulina Ford, Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer
Gemma George, Governance Support Officer

Also in attendance: Councillor Peach
Councillor Sandford

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor David Over.

Councillor Harrington had resigned as a substitute from the panel and Councillor Bella Saltmarsh had been appointed as a substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held 17 December 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2008 were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- Item 5, Peterborough Crematorium Mercury Abatement, second to last point;
“Members sought clarification on the process for mercury removal. Members were advised that the removal involved a carbon filter, based on a honeycomb mesh which extracted the mercury”.

4. Budget 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2011/12

The Panel received a report which outlined the proposed budget for 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2011/12 on which Scrutiny and Scrutiny Panels had been invited to make comment. The purpose of the report was to review aspects of proposals relevant to the functions and remit of the Panel, with any observations highlighted to be included in a report back to Cabinet.

The main areas of focus for the Panel were:

- The executive summary which outlined the issues facing the Council and proposed actions;
- The details of projects forming phase 3 of the business transformation programme;

- The new departmental efficiencies;
- The proposed service policy variations;
- Some of the capacity bids which had been submitted for the forthcoming three years, including those relating to the impacts of the credit crunch and actions to be taken to alleviate these effects, as well as the costs of financing the proposed capital programme related to the remit of the Panel;
- Also the capital programme which included funding for housing, growth and regeneration and culture and recreation projects.

Members were invited to consider and comment on the report and the following issues were raised:

- Concern was expressed regarding the proposed reduction in opening hours of the libraries and the swimming pools, and if implemented, what would the overall savings actually be. Members were advised that a structure was to be developed to work out any savings, but at that point in time it was a work in progress.
- Members queried whether the swimming pools were in fact losing money. Members were informed that bottom line costs for both swimming pools and libraries would be provided for information at a later date.
- Further concern was expressed regarding the possibility of a reduction in opening hours of the swimming pools and the libraries during weekends and evenings, and would this prove to be a cost effective move as ultimately, this would be decreasing the hours which had the potential to be the busiest. Members were assured that there would be both libraries and swimming pools open at key times, and the public would have access, but not necessarily to a library or swimming pool in their direct locality.
- A query was raised regarding the charges for internet usage in libraries, and the amount of revenue that was expected to be raised if the idea was adopted. Members were informed that around £30,000 was expected. Members were further informed that the plan was for school children to receive free internet access. Ultimately a broad view of cost versus benefit would be incorporated into the plan.
- A further query was raised regarding the prospect of any of the libraries closing down. Members were assured that there were no proposals for the closure of any of the libraries.
- Members sought clarification on the nature of the proposed changes to the tourist information centre. Members were advised that from the three options initially considered, including creating a mobile tourist centre, none of the options had been adopted. There was however a preferred option, and further information would be circulated at a later date as appropriate.
- Concern was expressed with regards to the substantial increases in charges against inflation, specifically, the increased rates for room hire at the museum and also the City tours and walks. Members were assured that these increases had been agreed and had not been challenged. The popularity of the City Tours and the demand for the room hire would, in all probability, remain constant, and where there was no need for a concession, rates should be charged accordingly. Members were reminded that all money generated helped to maintain the level of council tax charges.
- Members questioned whether the work being undertaken within the pricing policy review panel, would in future, be incorporated into the Budget. Members were advised that the pricing policy review panel was set up to review levels of concession, and work undertaken would be incorporated and enable discussions to be held before the following years Budget.
- Members queried whether it would be possible in future for Ward Councillors to be provided with a Budget overview sheet for their Ward. Members were advised that this request would be looked into.

- A query was raised regarding the assets listed in the disposal summary, and whether they were to be sold off before the next Budget. Members were advised that these assets had already been incorporated into the current asset disposal plan.
- A further query was raised regarding assets, and whether any of them would be kept if targets set out were not thought to be achievable. Members were further advised that if all of the assets on the list were disposed of, then that would prove to be an over-achievement, so there was no cause for concern in that arena.
- Members questioned when the updates on the risks around the Budget would be available. Members were informed that the report was underway and was due to go out before the end of the week. Members were further informed that there appeared to be no significant changes from the comprehensive list that was provided in the first instance.
- A query was raised regarding the possibility of forecasting the end of year Budget figures to enable a comparison to be made with the actual figures, and also to enable an overview to be produced, highlighting any achievements likely to be accomplished by the end of the year. Members were advised that this information was already held within the Budget.
- Members expressed concern at the prospect of the City Centre restructuring possibly affecting the Street Wardens. Members were assured that the restructuring was based on delivering better outcomes and was not linked with a reduction in service.
- A query was raised regarding the nature of the £240,000 saving within Community Planning Activity, and what the overall proposed change entailed. Members were advised of the plans for the shared neighbourhood investment strategy model, which had been brought to the Panel for consideration at its previous meeting.
- Members queried the future plans for the cash office and the possibility of its closure. Members were assured that the cash office would not be closed. The situation was under review and the desired outcome would be to try and deter people from using it as much as possible.
- Clarification was sought on whether the asset disposal summary list contained all of the disposable assets. Members were advised that the list was not comprehensive, and only contained those assets that were of no financial benefit to own.
- Further clarification was sought on whether certain schools listed in the disposable asset summary were in fact disposable assets. Members were further advised that the assets comprised of the surplus land surrounding the schools and not the schools themselves. Members were informed that Government consent would need to be obtained in order to part with any of this land.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel noted and commented on the draft budget 2009/10 and medium term financial plan to 2011/12.

5. Executive Decisions

The Panel considered the following Executive Decisions made since the last meeting:

- Peterborough Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Report 2008
- Peterborough Housing Register and Allocations Policy
- Riverside Community Sports Pavilion

There were no requests from the Panel for any further information on the items.

ACTION AGREED

The Panel noted the report.

6. Forward Plan – 1 January 2009 to 30 April 2009

The latest version of the Forward Plan was presented to the Panel for consideration.

There were no suggested areas for inclusion and no observations were raised.

ACTION AGREED

The Panel noted the Forward Plan.

7. Work Programme

The Panel received the latest version of the Work Programme for consideration.

ACTION AGREED

The Panel noted the latest version of the Work Programme.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 11 February 2009 in the Bourges and Viersen Rooms.

The meeting began at 7pm and ended at 7.35pm.

CHAIRMAN