

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON
TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2013**

Present: Councillors Lee (Chairman) Day (Vice Chairman), Kreling, Jamil, Forbes and Fox

Also Present:

Councillor North	Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Neighbourhoods
Councillor Elsey	Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Waste Management
Councillor Maqbool	PCC
Councillor Casey	Cabinet Advisor to the Cabinet Member for Recreation and Waste Management
Councillor Khan	Representing Labour Group
Jennifer Sherritt	Vice Chair of Communities Against Selective Licensing (CASL)

Officers in Attendance:

Gary Goose	Safer and Stronger Peterborough Strategic Manager
Jawaid Khan	Cohesion Manager
Adrian Chapman	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Dominic Hudson	Strategic Partnerships Manager
Lisa Helin	Strategic Client Manager
Belinda Child	Strategic Housing Manager
Jo Hodges	Housing Enforcement Officer
Dania Castagliuolo	Governance Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Simons and Councillor Johnson. Councillor Jamil was in attendance as Substitute for Councillor Johnson.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

With reference to item 8 on the agenda, 'Proposed Selective Licensing for the Gladstone, Millfield, New England and Eastfield Areas of Peterborough', the following declarations of interest were made:

- Councillor Jamil declared that he owned two properties in the proposed Selective Licensing area.
- Councillor Khan declared that he was a landlord in the proposed Selective Licensing area and the Director of Legal and Governance had given him dispensation to contribute to discussions.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2013

The minutes of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 September 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

CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SITTING FOR ITEM 5 ONLY

5. Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan 2011 – 2014

The Safer and Stronger Peterborough Manager introduced the report which updated the Committee on the progress and performance of the Safer Peterborough Partnership's approach to building stronger and supportive communities, in accordance with the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan 2011 – 14.

The following key points were highlighted within the report:

- The Safer Peterborough Partnership took the view that sustainable reductions in crime and disorder could not be achieved by the reactive response from services alone. Sustainable change came from within communities where peer pressure made crime and disorder socially unacceptable and was realised by behaviour change.
- This element of work was historically co-ordinated by the Council's Neighbourhood Management Team and was now coordinated by the management of the Safer Peterborough team and the Community Operations team.
- In order to progress towards such behaviour change the Partnership had taken the following strategic direction:
 - To actively support and assist the development of residents groups and community associations.
 - To support and champion such schemes as Neighbourhood Watch, Business Watch, Allotment Watch, Neighbourhood Champions and Street Pastors.
 - To develop real citizen involvement in the management of prioritised areas, such as the Operation CanDo programme and its governance.
 - To increase its visibility of, and response to, quality of life issues that were often a pre-cursor to anti-social behaviour and crime.
 - To embrace the work of Professor Wilkstrom and the Cambridge University Institute of Criminology's work: Peterborough Adolescent and Young Adult Development Study (PADS).
 - To host the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioners Outreach Worker, alongside the Safer Peterborough and Community Operations Team and to shortly offer the same facility to a Peterborough specific lead for victim support
 - To lead continuing work around Community Cohesion through the Cohesion Board and;
 - To ensure schemes for individual communities for those at risk of offending, where behaviour change is supported but poor behaviour challenged, were supported appropriately

Members were asked to note the approach, progress and performance so far and to endorse the partnership's direction of travel and to make any comments or suggestions as appropriate.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that that they had not seen the presence of the working relationship which was stated on page 12, 5.8 of the report and queried how to get the community involved in these projects. *The Safer and Stronger Peterborough Strategic Manager advised members that there had been problems historically with Neighbourhood Watch as members were generally middle aged white people, it did not appeal to the younger generation.*
- *The Head of Neighbourhood Services commented that it was important to note that there had been a newly announced restructure within the council and the new structure pulled together many of the council's departments which would make a difference.*
- Members commented that the termination of Neighbourhood Committees had lost the work that Neighbourhoods had achieved.
- Members queried whether having more Neighbourhood Panel meetings would help reach out to the communities. *Members were advised that this would help, especially in Central Ward as it was a challenging area.*

- Members queried whether Operation CanDo was making progress. *Members were advised that that it had been a success in the designated areas with a reduction in the number of calls being made and a reduction in crime. There were 3000 fewer victims of crime in Peterborough, even though crime was underreported.*
- Members commented that they were pleased with the reduction in burglaries in Peterborough and queried whether arson in the city had reduced as it was not shown in the report. *Members were informed that there had been a 30% reduction of arson in the city. There had been a recent bout of arson due to a specific issue, although the general trend was low.*
- Members queried whether the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme had made a difference to the number of burglaries. *Members were advised that the burglary rate was lower where there was a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in place and the aim was to encourage Neighbourhood Watch in areas where the burglary rate was high.*
- Members commented that the statistics shown within the report could be misleading and did not believe that Anti-social Behaviour and Criminal Damage was reducing. *Members were informed that this could be due to the underreporting of these crimes, however the final chart did indicate reductions in these crimes*
- Members requested information on the issues in Central Ward. *Members were advised that it was difficult to compare Central Ward with other areas in Peterborough. Diversity in Central Ward was great, it was a dense housing area with low cost housing. Central Ward needed long term commitment in order to make it a better area to live in.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report

6. Portfolio Holder Report from Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Neighbourhoods

The Cabinet Member Environment Capital and Neighbourhoods introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update in relation to matters relevant to the Committee. The Cabinet Member invited questions from the Committee.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members queried why the three initiatives on page 19 of the report (Sports & Leisure, Training and Environmental Crime) had no work being carried out on them. *The Community Cohesion Manager advised members that the projects listed on page 19 were based on work that had been carried out with Neighbourhoods over a long period of time. There were no live projects being led on these subjects at present which the Cabinet Member was overseeing.*
- Members queried what the situation was with the Children's Centres. *Members were advised that the Neighbourhoods team had visited the centres and met with the groups that would potentially run them. They were happy that the groups were doing well so far. The only problem would be if there were any major underlying issues with the structures.*
- Members queried if all of the Children's Centres would succeed and if the council was committed to resolving the issues that could potentially arise. *Members were informed that the council's commitment would depend on financial implications therefore they could not guarantee that all issues would be resolved.*
- Members queried whether the council would remain landlords of the children's centres. *Members were informed that long leases would be given although the council would remain owners of the land.*
- Members queried whether the council would still be involved in the running of the Children's Centres. *Members were advised that the idea was to move the centres further away from the council and let the community groups take over the running of them.*
- Members commented that properties and activities used to sit under the remit of Children and Education and queried whether this had been moved in to the remit of Neighbourhoods, or if they were doing the work and reporting back. *Members were advised that Neighbourhoods were making the decisions and moving forwards with the projects.*
- Members queried whether building surveys had been carried out and if the council were going to pay for the repairs required. *Members were informed that funding was a major factor as to whether*

the council would pay for any repairs needed on the children's centres. Funding had been extended until the end of March and the idea was to get each building in to a good serviceable condition before moving forward.

- Members queried if children's centres were going to be part of the Community Asset Transfer Strategy and if so suggested that the council should contribute towards the maintenance and insurances of the centres.
- *Members were informed that work was currently being carried out on Section 106 and POIS money in preparation for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The money would be pooled and distributed.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and agreed to receive a briefing note in the New Year regarding progress on each of the Play Centres.

7. The Heritage Ambition

The report provided members with an update on the city's Heritage ambition and Heritage Action Plan. The following key points were highlighted within the report:

- Heritage was one part of the city's culture.
- Peterborough had a rich, diverse and exciting heritage which was unique to the city. Peterborough's heritage had helped to shape how the city had grown over the years and people and cultures within it.
- Heritage played an important role in support of other council services and the aspirations for the city.
- The city council's objectives supported by the ambition were as follows:
 - Tourism and visitor engagement which in turn supported the local economy.
 - Supporting educational skills and learning.
 - Health and well-being by adding quality to people's lives.
 - Community cohesion and engagement through being accessible to everyone from all backgrounds and walks of life to help bring the city's culture to life.
- Peterborough had many heritage assets, the Museum, Flag Fen, the recent discovery of Bronze Age boats at Must Farm.
- High profile sites such as the Cathedral, St Johns Church, John Clare Cottage, Burghley House and Sacrewell Farm, were all in close proximity to Peterborough.
- Work was underway to refresh the Peterborough's approach to tourism to ensure the full economic benefit of all these heritage sites and attractions was realised.

The Commission was recommended to comment on the city's Heritage Ambition at Annex 1 and the Heritage Action Plan at Annex 2.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that Annex 2 was very useful and suggested that the opportunity for assistance from groups within the city with the World War 1 centenary was not lost. *Members were advised that the Leader of the council had commissioned Councillor Swift to look in to the World War 1 Centenary.*
- Members commented that they were concerned that a great opportunity was being missed by not having a festival which included diverse communities and Peterborough should play a role in celebrating diversity.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report

8. Proposed Selective Licensing for the Gladstone, Millfield, New England and Eastfield Areas of Peterborough

The report provided Members with information on the proposed Selective Licensing Scheme for privately rented accommodation in the Gladstone, Millfield, New England and Eastfield areas of Peterborough. The following key points were highlighted within the report:

- Providing warm, safe and secure housing was the cornerstone of a strong society and the proposed Selective Licensing Scheme was one of the tools available to the council to regulate the private rented housing sector to achieve this.
- Whenever considering whether to make a Selective Licensing designation councils must also ensure that the exercise of power was consistent with their overall Housing Strategy, in accordance with Section 81 (2) of the Housing Act 2004.
- **Objective One – To support the delivery of substantial yet truly sustainable growth.**
 - The first objective of the Housing Strategy related to the scale and nature of housing growth that was required to meet the needs of the existing and future population, as well as supporting Peterborough's economic performance and employment growth.
- **Objective Two – To secure the regeneration of and improvements to Peterborough's housing stock.**
 - The second objective of the Housing Strategy related to the role that housing regeneration and improvements could play in wider neighbourhood renewal, meeting Peterborough's Environment Capital ambitions and improving health of the local population.
- **Objective Three – To meet existing and future housing needs.**
 - Objective three related to how the city council and its partners would work to meet the growing needs of the residents of Peterborough, including disabled households, those unable to afford market housing and those threatened with or experiencing homelessness.
- **Objective Four – To create mixed and sustainable communities.**
 - The final objective set out in the strategy related to how the city council would seek to utilise its housing agenda to ensure that future neighbourhoods created and the communities that lived within them were mixed, thriving and sustainable.
- The proposed Selective Licensing area was a high density private sector residential area consisting of approximately 10,933 properties.
- In the Gladstone, Millfield and New England Area over 40% of the properties were privately rented and in Eastfield area 33% of the properties were privately rented.
- There were approximately 3446 properties which had been identified as privately rented and would require a license if the proposed Selective Licensing scheme was introduced.
- The area covered 108 streets in Gladstone, Millfield and New England and 76 streets in Eastfield.
- The council wanted to ensure that standards were high across the private rented sector and Selective Licensing would form a part of a wider set of measures that seek to address issues within the private rented sector associated with anti-social behaviour and low demand.
- The levels of private rented accommodation in the area had dramatically increased which was demonstrated with the private rented sector representing over 40% in Gladstone, Millfield and 33% in Eastfield compare to the 20.5% across the city and 16% nationally.
- Peterborough's private rented sector had many good, responsible landlords and agents, however the sector did have problems, including within the proposed Selective Licensing area.
- The increasing size of the private rented sector and decrease in the number of owner occupied dwellings was creating unbalanced communities
- Since 2009 the council had operated an additional licensing scheme within the Operation Can Do area of the city. Additional licensing required that all houses in multiple occupation (HMO) had a licence to operate as such.
- Since the inception of the HMO licensing scheme 67 properties had been licensed and 9 landlords had been prosecuted with fines ranging from £500 to £12,000.
- During the term of the current licensing scheme a number of landlords had taken the drastic step of illegally evicting tenants when the council had asked them to apply for a license.
- A recent survey conducted in the Selective Licensing area had revealed that 45% of the residents in the area thought that there was a high turnover of private tenants in the area, 88% thought that

landlords should make sure their properties were in good condition and well maintained, 71% thought that landlords should demand references from prospective tenants and 79% thought that landlords should be responsible for dealing with their nuisance tenants and anti-social behaviour.

- Selective Licensing would extend housing choice and increase the confidence of occupiers in the designated area.
- Landlords would be required to take ownership of their management responsibilities thus increasing the prospect of long-term trouble free renting.
- The Selective Licensing was proposed on the following ground:
 - The area was, or was likely to become an area of low housing demand; and
 - That making a designation would, when combined with other measures taken in the area by the local housing authority, or by other persons together with the local housing authority, contribute to the improvement of the social or economic conditions and therefore significantly reduce anti-social behaviour in the area.
 - Following agreement from cabinet a 13 week public consultation had commenced which would run until 27 December 2013.
 - Once the consultation had finished and all the responses had been analysed, and alternative proposals had been thoroughly investigated and researched, the final proposed scheme would be presented to Cabinet for approval and implementation.

The Committee was asked to review and scrutinise the proposed Selective Licensing scheme for privately rented accommodation in the Gladstone, Millfield, New England and Eastfield areas of Peterborough.

Councillor Maqbool addressed the Committee as a representative for West Ward with the following concerns:

- The Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest had refused to lend money to Selective Licensing landlords and it was common practice for landlords to buy properties in the city centre.
- The Selective Licensing scheme would affect 20% of Peterborough residents.
- The Selective Licensing criteria would affect landlords as well as tenants.
- Constituents felt that the Selective Licensing Scheme would stigmatise and label their areas.
- Landlords and tenants had already worked hard to reduce anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods and they felt that this scheme was discourteous to the work of Councillors and local residents.
- 0.3% of houses had been empty long term. Lincoln Road was a very busy place in Peterborough and this was the reason for the anti-social behaviour.
- There were 110 different languages spoken in the proposed areas, although the consultation was only distributed in English, constituents felt that the survey had been manipulated.

Jennifer Sherritt, Vice Chair of Communities Against Selective Licensing (CASL), addressed the Committee with the following:

- No landlords were against their areas being improved, although they did not understand why the Selective Licensing scheme was being brought in to Peterborough when most landlords were good landlords and abided by the rules.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that they understood the principal of the scheme and the objectives were very good, although they wanted to ensure that this scheme was the best one for Peterborough.
- Members commented that it was difficult to understand why this scheme was the best solution for rogue landlords in Peterborough and why these problems could not be solved without it. Antisocial behaviour was already decreasing which indicated that the other schemes the council had in place were effective. *The Strategic Housing Manager advised Members that part of the research in to this scheme was liaising with other Local Authorities that had Selective Licensing in place. The only two options for a licensing scheme were Selective Licensing and HMO Licensing, in 2009 the council chose HMO Licensing and this has proven not to be successful.*

- Members queried whether landlord accreditation would be mandatory. *Members were informed that it would be a voluntary decision for landlords to be accredited. The idea of the Selective Licensing scheme was to deal with the rogue landlords and promote good landlords.*
- Members commented that car insurance premiums for central ward were already very high and implementing this scheme would only give it a reputation as more of a problem area rather than an area which was improving.
- Members commented that there had been no consultation with ward Councillors prior to the Selective Licensing report which had left Members with serious reservations regarding the scheme.
- Members felt that the consultation questions were misleading and led everyone who filed it in to state that they wanted the scheme implemented.
- Members requested reassurance that the council had consulted with the genuine landlords to investigate how issues could be dealt with.
- Members commented that the anti-social behaviour statistics for Central Ward also included the night time economy statistics therefore the results were bound to be higher than anywhere else in the city.
- Members queried what would happen if a majority of landlords were against the scheme. *Members were advised that the Selective Licensing scheme brought together all powers relating to housing and management which the council do not currently possess. It brought everything under one license and enabled the Local Authority to take action.*
- *Members were advised that over 18.5 thousand people had been consulted for this scheme. The council had held drop in sessions and met with the National Landlords Association. The scheme was currently a proposal and not a final project.*
- Members queried what the money collected from Selective Licensing Scheme would be spent on. *Members were advised that the money would be used on the administration of the scheme and projections showed that the money collected would cover all admin costs.*
- Members commented that landlords would most likely include the Selective Licensing charges on to the monthly rental for their tenants.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that the following be fed in to the consultation:

- Evidence should be collected to ensure that Selective Licensing was the best scheme for the city.
- To take in to account the perception of racial exploitation that ethnic groups had with regard to the introduction of the Selective Licensing Scheme in the Can Do area and how this could be dispelled.

9. Scrutiny in a Day: Understanding and Managing the impacts of Welfare Reform on Communities in Peterborough

The report provided an update to all Scrutiny Committees and Commissions on the progress being made towards organising the Scrutiny in a Day event on 17 January 2014

Scrutiny Members were asked to:

- Review the progress being made, especially the plans for the day itself, and suggest other content that was relevant to their own Scrutiny Committee or Commission.
- Suggest a small number of key themes relevant to their Scrutiny Committee or Commission that they would especially like to focus on during the combined scrutiny event.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and suggested that the impact on children due to Welfare Reform was addressed at the event.

10. 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.

11. Work Programme 2013/2014

This was an opportunity for Members to review the Work Programme for 2013/14 and discuss possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

- Members noted the work programme and confirmed agreement with the current plan.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.55pm

CHAIRMAN