

MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD 22 SEPTEMBER 2014

PRESENT

Cabinet Members: Councillor Cereste (Chairman), Councillor Holdich, Councillor Elsey, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Hiller, Councillor North, Councillor Scott, Councillor Seaton and Councillor Serluca.

Cabinet Advisers: Councillor Casey and Councillor Lamb.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hiller declared that in relation to item 4, 'report of the Solar and Wind Energy Review Group', he was a member of the original Solar and Wind Energy Working Group and his support for the financial element of the project was known, as evidenced by the report submitted to Cabinet, however he had not implied a predetermination of the scheme as a whole.

3. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS HELD ON 28 JULY 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2014 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

ITEMS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES/COMMISSIONS

4. REPORT OF THE SOLAR AND WIND ENERGY REVIEW GROUP

Cabinet received a report which detailed the findings and recommendations arising from the Solar and Wind Energy Working Group, and the subsequent meeting of the Review Group as chaired by Councillor Thulbourn, to enable a final decision to be made on the projects in question.

Councillor Hiller introduced the item and provided an overview of the background to the issue, advising that following the decision made at the February 2014 meeting of Cabinet to progress the America Farm site through to planning stage, the decision had been called-in and recommendations arising from the subsequent Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee call-in meeting had been, in essence, for Cabinet not to progress the scheme until consideration had been given to the findings of a cross party working group.

Further key points were highlighted by Councillor Hiller including the remit of the Working Group, which had primarily been to review the viability of the proposals, to concurrently look into the likelihood of a profit and finally to make any suggestions as to alternative schemes; the number of times that the Group had met and the information which had been provided to it for review; the majority decision of the Group which had been that the scheme should not progress, concluding that the financial returns were not viable and the risks were too high, this viewpoint having not been held by Councillor

Hiller owing to the independently produced expert advice which had determined the opposite and that the scheme should proceed; the view of the Scrutiny Committee that the decision of the Working Group was not considered acceptable due to the lack of evidence provided in support of its majority viewpoint; the further meeting which had been held and chaired by Councillor Thulbourn to review the decision rationale of the Group and the conclusion being that the original Working Group had provided no evidence of the disparity of evidence submitted by the Council's Resource Department and the Group's majority conclusion and the lack of supporting scenarios or outcomes and an overview of the recommendations to Cabinet, in summary being for Cabinet to exercise caution in its methodology of progressing with the scheme and to consider further the potential for a financial shortfall on the original projections due to the delay in timescale.

Councillor Seaton addressed Cabinet, thanking both the Scrutiny Committee for its work and Councillor Thulbourn for his involvement and comments. It was acknowledged that the issue in question was an extremely emotive one, however it was important that progression be made on the basis of doing what was right for the residents of the city, and this progression must be evidence based. The original Working Group had not submitted any evidence in order to support its conclusions, as had been specified within its terms of reference.

Councillor Seaton further requested that at a future Group Leader's meeting, the issue of reports being submitted to meetings which only expressed a viewpoint and did not contain any supporting conclusions or arguments, be raised.

The Chairman addressed the meeting and confirmed that he would raise the issue of report content with Group Leaders at a future meeting. In relation to the issue under discussion, he advised that thousands of megawatts of solar power were being produced around the country from solar farms which had proven to be extremely profitable and viable, bringing in much investment. Energy prices were consistently on the rise and there were concerns that should there been a severe winter in future years, blackouts could be experienced, action therefore needed to be taken.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

That any decision to progress the solar and wind projects be deferred until further consideration was given to the impact of:

- a) Any delay arising from the call-in by the Secretary of State of a planning decision, in terms of costs and profitability of the projects;
- b) A 30% reduction in subsidy (or a professional assessment of what might be a reasonable level of reduction in subsidy) for the projects; and
- c) A slowing or reducing sale rate of energy with a professional assessment of what a reasonable reduced rate could be.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The decision followed a request from the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee call-in meeting, held on 12 March 2014.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To implement the decisions of 24 February 2014 to progress the America Farm project to planning permission.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

5. EMERGENCY STOPPING PLACES

Cabinet received a report following an in-depth review of potential Emergency Stopping Places (ESP) which had been developed by a cross party advisory group at the request of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Services.

The report requested Cabinet to consider the recommendation of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Services to trial three ESPs for Gypsy/Traveller use in locations at Paston, Eye and Thorney and East Wards.

Councillor Hiller introduced the report and advised that between March of 2013 and April 2014 there had been 150 unauthorised gypsy and traveller encampments on Council land which had ultimately cost both the Council and taxpayers £100,000 per year in eviction and clean-up costs.

Further key points highlighted by Councillor Hiller included the mess that was regularly left in community open spaces and children's play areas which included churned grass, broken and damaged fences and barriers and even human excrement; the transit facilities already provided by many towns and cities across the country, permitting travellers to stop for short periods of time; the transit facilities which had been previously created in Peterborough and its subsequent closure due to its proximity in relation to a permanent traveller site and the tensions this had created; the rationale behind the formation of the Working Group and the input from partners and officers into the process of selection of the sites; the number of sites which had been identified and visited totalling 75 and the associated suitability scoring method and the benefits that the implementation of ESPs would bring to the city.

Cabinet debated the report and key points raised, along with responses to questions provided by Councillor Hiller and the Council's Assistant Cohesion Managers included:

- Emergency Stopping Places would enable the Police and the Council to perform their duties in relation to this issue effectively;
- It was confirmed that there would be a limit of 28 days per site per year, and any further would require planning consent;
- Over 1000 sites had been initially looked at, with sites to the north and south of the city being considered;
- Arguments against certain sites had been considered and acted upon accordingly;
- The sites had been recommended by a cross party working group, there had been no political considerations when choosing the sites; and
- Councillors affected had been briefed, as had the local MPs and there had been no comments received suggesting that the trial should not go ahead.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

To trial three Emergency Stopping Places (ESP) for Gypsy/Traveller use in locations in Paston, Eye and Thorney and East.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The introduction of ESPs in Peterborough would provide better management of short term Gypsy/Traveller encampments in the city. By providing dedicated places to stay, this would reduce the impact caused by unauthorised encampments to local communities and reduce costs to the city council associated with evictions costs, clean-up costs and officer time. ESPs or similar solutions are in place in many towns and

cities across the country and are generally accepted to be the most appropriate method of managing unauthorised encampments.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To continue to manage unauthorised encampments as at present:

This was rejected due to the ongoing cost and impact to the community. Encampments were increasingly being established in high profile or densely populated areas and although significantly improved, the legal procedures that the Council had to follow did not provide a swift enough response to enable the local authority or police to move the Travellers on.

Provide formal transit pitches:

The experience in Peterborough suggested that this could cause significant community tensions. Additionally, there was a risk that transit pitches over time would become permanent as they tended to be occupied for significantly longer periods than that proposed for the Council's ESP provision.

6. PETERBOROUGH FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Cabinet received a report which introduced the statutory requirement for Peterborough to have a local flood risk management strategy and presented the resulting Draft Peterborough Flood Risk Management Strategy (FMS). Cabinet was to be consulted on the proposals and its approval was sought for public consultation to take place. The report further requested Cabinet to consider the formal recommendation from the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee that the City Council's Constitution be amended to make the FMS a Major Policy item.

Councillor Hiller introduced the item and advised that under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA 2010) Peterborough City Council had been made a lead local flood authority, with responsibility for coordinating the management of surface water flood risk.

Further key points highlighted by Councillor Hiller included the duty of Lead Local Authorities to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a 'local flood risk management strategy'; the proposal to publically consult on the draft document for a period of six weeks, and with any changes being made prior to the document being presented to Full Council for adoption early in 2015; the agreement by flood risk management authorities in Peterborough that the Strategy would cover all sources of flood risk, not just those managed by the City Council; the excellent relationship that the Council had with all risk management authorities allowing for better coordination of approach and to ensure that projects and schemes were as efficient as possible and that joint funding opportunities were sought for those schemes; and the Strategy being well received by the Scrutiny Committee and its recommendation that the Strategy become part of the Major Policy Framework.

Members congratulated the Flood and Water Management Officer on the production of the Strategy, which was of extremely high quality.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Draft Peterborough Flood Risk Management Strategy for the purpose of it being publicly consulted on during October and November 2014;
2. To support the proposal of the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee to include further explanatory text in the Flood Risk Management Strategy prior to its publication, as set out in paragraph 5.7 of the report; and

3. To support the recommendation of the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee to amend the Constitution and thereby place the Flood Risk Management Strategy as a Major Policy Item.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The FMS would:

- Meet statutory requirements;
- Make Peterborough more resilient to flooding;
- Help to co-ordinate and attract investment into Peterborough for both flood risk management and wider environmental and amenity improvements;
- Assist with delivering a sustainable city that can embrace growth targets
- Be a reference guide for City Council officers, Flood Warden, Parish Council and communities who want to more know more about flood and water management.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council was required to produce a local flood risk management strategy in accordance with its duties as a Lead Local Flood Authority. It was therefore not an option to not produce a strategy. The only available alternative was to produce a document that covered only the sources of flooding that Peterborough City Council was responsible for. This option was rejected in favour of preparing a plan in partnership with all other flood risk management authorities, covering all sources of flood risk. The chosen option was believed to be more useful for the reader, more efficient and more likely to enable Peterborough to draw down partnership funding.

7. ICT STRATEGY 2014-2019

Cabinet received a report which sought its approval of a new five year ICT Strategy that would underpin major transformation projects and enable the Council to transform the delivery of services to a customer specific approach utilising cloud technologies.

Councillor Seaton introduced the item and advised that the ICT Strategy was key and would provide a more cost effective operation and greatly improve the way services were delivered to local residents. The majority of the ICT services were purchased with a specific service area in mind, however the new approach would encompass the whole Council in a more joined up manner.

Further key points highlighted by Councillor Seaton included the extensive leap forward in efficiency and service quality that the technology would enable; the system adhering to the highest standards of government guidance to ensure security; the consultation that would be undertaken with partners, particularly schools; investment being covered by the efficiency plans being developed by each department and the retention of the provision of traditional approaches when required.

Cabinet debated the report and key points raised, along with responses to questions provided by the Council's ICT Strategy, Infrastructure and Programmes Manager included:

- The proposed cloud based system would be more secure than the one currently in place;
- Cloud principles had been released which had to be adhered to by the Local Authority; and
- Some of the main clients utilising the technology included Coca-Cola, Toyota, Phillips, GE Capital, Tokyo Post, and Burberry which demonstrated the faith that these large companies had in the security of the system.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Council's ICT Strategy 2014-2019;
2. To authorise the Executive Director Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources to deliver future work streams arising from the Strategy; and
3. To authorise the Executive Director Resources to agree to changes to the ICT Managed Service contract with Serco resulting from the ICT Strategy.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The ICT strategy would help to fundamentally change the way that the Council operated and would lead to improved service provision and availability for all residents.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option for the ICT Strategy was to remain as was and to continue to use the current traditional technology that the Council had in place. This option had been rejected as it would not allow the Council to change the way that it operated in order to take advantage of the new solutions and practices that had emerged in the technology market. In order to meet the budget pressures that the Council was facing, the Council had to adapt its processes and utilise the flexibility and collaborative nature of these technologies to underpin its council wide transformation programmes.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL PLAN 2014–2019 – DELIVERING LOCAL PLACES FOR LOCAL CHILDREN

Cabinet received a report which outlined the proposal around meeting the statutory requirement for school places in Peterborough. The School Organisation Plan drew together the latest demographic data, the capital programme and identified the need for further school places. It also acted to support the growth agenda of the Council, including delivery of the ambitions set out in the Peterborough Local Plan.

Councillor Holdich introduced the item and advised that there had been difficulty in allocating school places due to the large number of new residents in the city. Between October 2012 and October 2013 there had been an additional 1100 young people in Peterborough's schools over and above that which the birth rate had catered for and over the summer period, from the closure of the schools to when they re-opened, there had been an additional 500 applications for school places, coming mainly from outside of the city.

Further key points highlighted by Councillor Holdich included the rebuilding and expansion of all of the secondary schools and the new schools due to be opened; the expansion of the primary schools, creating 1100 new places and the difficulties faced with regards to school placements due to the lack of knowledge with regards to people coming into the city.

Cabinet debated the report and key points raised, along with responses to questions provided by the Council's Assistant Director, Education included:

- Peterborough was a net importer of pupils from outside the city, there were a number of independent schools in the area and there was dynamic movement;
- There had been no new houses built in the Hampton area for a number of years, however the impact on school places was increasing year on year;
- A new secondary school was due to be built in Hampton and opening in 2017;
- Hampton was not the problem area that it had once been, and the choice for parents in the area had improved greatly; and

- Concern was expressed around the issue of the registration of the population in the city. If figures were accurate and suggested a large influx into the city, a case could be made to the government for more funding. This would assist in relieving some budget pressures. It was advised that this issue would be taken away and further explored.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

To approve the School Organisation Plan in light of the pressures on school places and in terms of planning growth in the city.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The report was for Cabinet to approve. Appropriate action was being undertaken to deliver the statutory requirement for school places.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option was not to adopt the strategy, however the impact would have been a lack of co-ordination around new housing development and negotiations with developers and a lack of clarity for the public around the council's intentions around school place planning.

MONITORING ITEMS

9. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2015/16 TO 2024/25

Cabinet received a report as part of the Council's agreed process within the Annual Budget Framework which required it to consider the Council's Budget and Financial Strategy and to set provisional cash limits for the forthcoming year. The purpose of the report was to provide Cabinet with an update on the likely financial situation of the Council both within the current and future financial years, to outline national issues which would need consideration within the medium term financial strategy for 2015/16 onwards, including funding consultations and to outline the approach to the budget process and budget consultation.

Councillor Seaton introduced the item and advised that the current financial position faced by the Council was a difficult one. The budget put in place at the start of the financial year had highlighted significant levels of savings to be made as well as achieving additional income.

Further key points highlighted by Councillor Seaton relating to the current financial position included the emerging financial pressures which had been identified as part of the current financial year such as the ever increasing demand on services such as Children's; the numbers of vulnerable children requiring support being higher than was anticipated; the overspend predicted if no further action was taken, this being £1.3m, and the work being undertaken by officers to review all areas of spend to ensure the budget be brought back into balance.

There had previously been a good track record of managing pressures in recent years and it was anticipated that the financial situation could be managed by the end of the year end if action was taken promptly. Cabinet would be kept informed of progress.

In terms of future financial plans and the emerging financial picture for forthcoming year Councillor Seaton highlighted key points which included the Council's commitment to maintaining the future of the city and its people therefore retaining focus on education, jobs creation, economic prosperity and quality of life for residents; the loss of grant funding, equating to £40m; the combination of the loss in grant funding and added

financial pressures, such as Looked After Children, meaning a gap of £22m in the following years budget.

Councillor Seaton summarised that a balanced budget would need to be produced by April 2015 and Councillors had been working alongside officers, with the involvement of all Political Parties, through the cross party Budget Working Group.

Members commended the Resources team for the work undertaken and acknowledged the work involved.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the financial pressures in the current financial year, the continuing work by CMT to deliver a balanced budget and that the financial pressures widened the budget gap in 2015/16;
2. To note that the current local government funding consultation and continued uncertainty on future years' government funding for local authorities increased the uncertainty of the council's medium term financial strategy; and
3. Council approved the approach proposed for the budget process, including provision resource cash limits, and that Cabinet agreed the approach to consultation with the cross party Budget Working Group, exploring the options to commence consultation at the earliest opportunity.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Constitution required Cabinet to outline its approach to developing the medium term financial strategy. This process helped to ensure that the Council achieved a balanced budget, aligned to corporate priorities.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

An alternative option would be to do nothing. This was rejected because the constitution required the Council to outline the approach to the following year's budget setting by the end of the preceding month of September. The current medium term financial strategy for 2015/16 estimated a budget gap of £17.6m, and the council must set a balanced budget.

10. CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE REPORT

Cabinet received a quarterly Director's update which reported on Children's Services improvement.

Councillor Scott introduced the item and provided an overview of the key points contained within the report which included an increase in early intervention assessments (CAFs); the number of single assessments completed in July 2014 100% of which had been completed within timescale; the significant number of child protection enquiries half of which had resulted in a case conference; the Looked After Children Awards which had taken place recently; the number of Looked After Children, remaining high owing to a number of complex cases; the multi-agency safeguarding hub which was almost in operation; the ongoing issues faced around the recruitment of social workers, for which there was a robust recruitment campaign underway and the improvement which had been seen over the last two years within the service.

Cabinet debated the report and key points raised, along with responses to questions provided by Councillor Scott and the Executive Director of Children's Services included:

- Concern was expressed at the possibility of there being historical issues with regards to child sex abuse, as per recent high profile cases in the press. It was

advised that there was no knowledge of any such issues in Peterborough. If historical concerns were reported, they would be investigated;

- There was a dedicated Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Team in place and discussions had been underway as to how more publicity could be given to child sexual exploitation issues within schools, other agencies and within the community;
- A presentation would be given at a future All Party Policy meeting to advise of the issues faced in relation to child sexual exploitation;
- It was commented that the dedicated CSE team was a budget pressure;
- The area of Looked After Children should be further explored in order to ascertain whether a case could be made for additional funding from government in order to relieve budget pressures and additional costs which had been faced by the Council; and
- It was requested that an in-depth presentation on some of the issues faced within Children's Services be given at a future Cabinet Policy Forum, in order for the Cabinet to better understand issues contained within future update reports.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

To note the contents of the report. Key points (as of 2014) being:

- Increase in CAFs
- Fewer contacts
- Single Assessment launched
- Decrease in re-referrals
- Number of CP and LAC
- Recruitment and retention

11. OUTCOME OF PETITIONS

Cabinet received a report which updated Cabinet on the progress being made in response to petitions submitted to Full Council on 23 July 2014.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

To note the action taken in respect of petitions presented to Full Council.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Standing Orders required that Council received a report about the action taken on petitions. As the petitions presented in the report had been dealt with by Cabinet Members or officers, it was appropriate that the action taken was reported to Cabinet, prior to it being included within the Executive's report to full Council.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Any alternative options would require an amendment to the Council's Constitution to remove the requirement to report to Cabinet.

Chairman
10.00am -11.14am

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