

MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD 29 FEBRUARY 2016

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members: Councillor Holdich (Chair), Councillor Coles, Councillor Elsey, Councillor Hiller, Councillor North, Councillor Seaton and Councillor Serluca

Cabinet Advisors: Councillor Casey and Councillor Stokes

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Lamb and Councillor Maqbool. Councillor Stokes was in attendance, on a voluntary basis, in place of Councillor Maqbool.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. PETITIONS PRESENTED TO CABINET

There were no petitions presented to Cabinet.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

5. SAFER AND STRONGER PETERBOROUGH MULTI-AGENCY PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT TEAM

Cabinet received a report which followed a recommendation from the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting, held on 20 January 2016.

The purpose of the report was to outline detailed proposals to Cabinet for the introduction of a multi-agency Safer and Stronger Peterborough Prevention and Enforcement Team.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital introduced the report and advised that following on from Cabinet's approval in December 2015, the Integrated Single Enforcement Team was now in place. This team would be significantly enhanced by bringing together staff with similar functions from across the wider service sector in Peterborough and the proposals before Cabinet would lead to a wide multi-agency prevention and enforcement service. Furthermore, it was requested that Cabinet approve, as part of the recommendations, the transfer and exercise of powers between the Police to the Joint Enforcement Team and from the Council to the Police, as illustrated within the report.

The Corporate Director People and Communities commented that one of the main recommendations arising from the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting, held on 20 January 2016, had been to ensure that communities were informed appropriately about the new arrangements. Assurances were given to Cabinet that if the decision was approved, a range of events would be held to inform the community.

Supt. Melanie Dales and the Council's Head of Communities were present to respond to questions. Cabinet debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The public would be able to distinguish a difference in the service owing to Council staff and external organisations being brought together, including the Police, the Fire Service and Cross Keys Homes. All Officers would be recognisable because they would wear the same uniform and Officers would have the powers and remit to deal with a wider range of issues;
- It was stated within the report that the number of Officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) remaining the same had had no direct or negative impact on crime. This was incorrect as although the levels of reported and serious crime had not increased, the levels of low level crime had increased within the last six to eight months, including graffiti, fly tipping and more issues with illegally parked cars;
- It was commented that reported incidents of anti-social behaviour had only risen by four cases in the last year;
- With regards illegal parking, the Police had started to work in conjunction with Neighbourhood Watch to delegate parking notices. If three parking notices were given out to an individual, by Neighbourhood Watch, then there was a guarantee that somebody from the enforcement team would attend and enforce the parking issue;
- The new approach would offer one control area which would manage issues and then feed them through to Officers in order to better target and deal with low level crime;
- Enforcement powers and court action had and would be used against people committing low level crimes, for example littering;
- Members commented that they welcomed the initiative and commended the joined up working approach; and
- Staff would remain as employees of the organisations that they worked for, however their line manager may be an individual within another organisation.

Cabinet considered and **RESOLVED** to approve:

1. The creation of a Peterborough-wide multi-agency Safer and Stronger Peterborough Prevention and Enforcement Team; and
2. To achieve that, the transfer of relevant functions to and from the Police and other Partners, subject to agreement by the Corporate Director People and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital as to the relevant functions to transfer.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To provide approval for the formal creation of a multi-agency Prevention and Enforcement Team.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To continue the status quo would continue with duplication of visits, the passing of responsibility between departments and organisations and not reduce costs or increase efficiency.

6. SELECTIVE LICENSING OF PRIVATELY RENTED ACCOMMODATION

Cabinet received a report following a referral from Councillor Peter Hiller, the Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development.

The purpose of the report was to outline detailed proposals to Cabinet for a Selective Licensing Scheme for the private rented housing sector within Peterborough following public consultation.

The Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development introduced the report and advised that this was the final proposal for the introduction of selective licensing following the public consultation which concluded on the 14 January 2016. Suggestions were outlined that the Selective Licensing Scheme would work most effectively alongside formal arrangements for a joint prevention and enforcement team.

The Chairman advised that there were two local residents and landlords who had been permitted time to speak on the proposals.

Mr Zaffer Iqbal, addressed Cabinet and in summary highlighted key points of concern as follows:

- Local authorities often viewed Selective Licensing as a cure for problem areas but that there was no evidence that it would bring about the desired changes;
- The proposal lacked robust and empirical data to support its aims; and
- The consultation should have been used to engage with people and take their opinions into account but it had been implemented as a means to an end.

Mr Azhar Hussain, addressed Cabinet and in summary highlighted key points of concern as follows:

- Fees for costs such as electrical testing and the Landlord Accreditation Scheme were not covered within the report;
- As there were already legal requirements enforced upon landlords for safety compliance, requirements for areas such as electrical testing and the need for carbon monoxide alarms should be removed from the proposal. It was further stated that these demands could however be enforced once the property had been visited;
- Room size requirements should be removed from the proposal because it may result in an increase in homelessness; and
- The Equality Assessment had not been completed correctly.

In response to points raised by the speakers, the Council's Head of Communities commented that:

- Peterborough City Council did not view the Selective Licensing Scheme as a panacea to the problems in the selected areas and complimentary policies would be introduced alongside;
- In general, Selective Licensing schemes were not intended to be long term fixtures within councils and were often not renewed at the end of their five year term because they had achieved their proposed goals;

- If no action was taken, it would be likely that house prices would stagnate and crime and antisocial behaviour would continue to rise in the areas which the Selective Licensing Scheme was proposed to cover;
- The seven drop-in sessions which had taken place throughout the consultation period had promoted effective dialogue and challenge;
- The Peterborough proposal promoted the biggest range of discounts of any national Selective Licensing Scheme;
- Landlords who were members of an accredited scheme would have to pay £50 per property over the whole five year period; and
- Although electrical testing and carbon monoxide alarm requirements were not prescribed by law, Peterborough City Council viewed these as being crucial to tenant safety.

Cabinet debated the report. In summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Tenant welfare should be the first priority of a landlord;
- The majority of local landlords were not members of a registered association but consultations with the National Landlords Association had shown that there were 50 to 100 members attending local meetings;
- Some landlords would also have mortgages and/or agency costs on their properties so additional costs may affect profit margins;
- The enforcement strategy would be deliberately and robustly enforced against anybody purposefully avoiding registration or dishonestly answering questions as part of the registration process;
- The area boundaries were based around the Office of National Statistics Lower Super Output Areas; and
- Consideration had been taken to create a zero fee for accredited landlords but fees were needed to run administration and to pay for Officers to carry out licencing checks.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to approve the introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme for the private rented accommodation sector within Peterborough, subject to Secretary of State approval, in the areas described in Appendix 4 to the report, the conditions of which were as set out in Appendices 1, 6 and 7 to the report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In accordance with the Housing Act 2004, proposals for the scheme required submission to the Secretary of State for approval as the areas proposed for selective licensing covered more than 20% of the local private rented housing stock below which a local decision can be made. The proposals for the scheme as outlined within the report equated to 37.9% of the local stock.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The multiplicity of issues faced by geographic areas of the City were complex and deep rooted. To do nothing would lead to further decline. As a result the status quo was not something that the Council considered appropriate.

The introduction of a voluntary scheme had been considered but it was not felt appropriate for Peterborough.

7. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2016/17 - 2025/26

Cabinet received a report which formed part of the Council's formal budget process as set out within the Constitution and as per legislative requirements to set a balanced budget for 2016/17.

The purpose of the report was to consider budget proposals for recommendation to Council on 9 March 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the report and advised that it updated on the financial picture for the next year and beyond, it outlined the feedback from the budget conversation on the Phase 2 Budget Proposals and the relevant changes since the consultation began. A separate addendum document of all feedback received since the publication of the Cabinet agenda had been circulated prior to the meeting and the consultation would remain open until 7 March 2016 and a further update would be given to Cabinet and Council.

Cabinet debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Peterborough City Council had one of the lowest Council Tax charges when compared to other unitary authorities; and
- The importance of increasing the Council Tax in order to support Adult Social Care was stressed.

Cabinet considered the report and **NOTED:**

1. The advice of the Chief Finance Officer per Schedule A, the continuing uncertainty of national public finances, and the risks surrounding forecasts and budget proposals.
2. The outcome of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement as outlined within the report and Schedule A.
3. The updates to the budget since 8th February 2016 as detailed within the report and Schedule A.
4. The feedback to date on the budget proposals from residents, staff and community groups as detailed in Schedule H.

And **APPROVED:**

5. To Schools budgets as set out within Schedule A, part 10.
6. The Street Lighting Business Case as set out within Schedule E (i), including the works to be delivered by Skanska.

And further **APPROVED AND RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:**

7. The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2025/26 (including Phase 2 budget proposals and subsequent adjustments) as set out within the Schedules attached to the report which comprised of:
 - a) Report of the Chief Finance Officer
 - i. Adult Social Care Precept Briefing
 - b) Forecast Revenue Outturn 2015/16
 - c) Budget Proposals, Key Figures & Cash Limits
 - d) Treasury Strategy, Prudential Code & Minimum Revenue Provision

- e) Capital Strategy, Programme & Disposal 2016/17 – 2025/26
- f) Asset Management Plan

- 8. The Fees & Charges proposals as detailed within Schedule C, part 13.
- 9. A general Council Tax rise of 1.99% for 2016/17, with indicative increases of 1.99% for future years for planning purposes.
- 10. A Social Care precept of 2.00% for 2016/17.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Council must set a lawful and balanced budget.

The approval of the Phase 2 budget proposals would enable the Council to implement savings at the earliest opportunity, either under Director Delegation, Cabinet Member Decision notice or a further report to Cabinet.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There were no alternative options considered as the Council was statutorily obliged to set a lawful and balanced budget by 11 March at the latest.

Chairman
10.00am – 10.58am