

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING
HELD AT 10:00AM, ON
MONDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2021
SAND MARTIN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH**

Cabinet Members Present: Councillor Fitzgerald (Chair), Councillor Steve Allen, Councillor Ayres, Councillor Cereste, Councillor Coles, Councillor Hiller, Councillor Simons, Councillor Walsh

Cabinet Advisor Present: Councillor Bashir, Councillor Bisby, Councillor Howard, Councillor Gul Nawaz

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence were received.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

26. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON:

(a) 14 JUNE 2021 – SHAREHOLDER CABINET COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

(b) 12 JULY 2021 – CABINET COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

(c) 25 OCTOBER 2021 – BUDGET CABINET COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

27. PETITIONS PRESENTED TO CABINET

There were no petitions presented to Cabinet.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

28. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT REVIEW AND UPDATE

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The purpose of this report was to fulfil the legal requirement for the council to both have an SCI (2004 Act) and to update it at least once every five years (2004 Act and 2017 Regulations).

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Commercial Strategy and Investments introduced the report and advised that the SCI played an important role in setting out the Council's procedures for consulting the public on a wide range of planning matters, including the Local Plan, and how the Council assisted in the development of neighbourhood plans. It was good practice to update this document on a regular basis. The changes set out in this report related to updating it to reflect the latest technology.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- It was advised that the SCI set out the minimum level of engagement by the Council, however officers could and would go above this level for contentious cases.
- In relation to support for the development of Neighbourhood Plans, it was considered that the Council offered significant support and assisted in directing organisations to other support or grants available.
- It was noted that clarity was still sought in relation to new planning rules to be introduced by central Government, and how these would impact on local authorities' planning processes.
- Members were advised that the current Local Plan was not too restrictive and provided a clear strategic vision for the city since it was adopted two years ago. Officers would, however, continue to monitor this position.
- Members considered that when it was appropriate to move forward with an update to the Local Plan, that this should be done regardless of central Government's position.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to approve the updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for formal adoption.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

PCC were required, by regulations, to review their SCI every 5 years. With the current SCI around 3.5 years old, and a few elements of it in need of updating, it was timely to adopt a refreshed SCI.

Adoption of the SCI would ensure PCC continued to satisfy the regulations regarding SCIs, and continue to offer a sustainable planning consultation and support services to all its customers.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option considered was to not review the SCI at this time, and instead wait until late 2022 / early 2023 to commence the review, yet remain within the 5 year timeframe required by the 2004 Act.

This option was discounted for a number of reasons:

- At present, PCC was not preparing a Local Plan for Peterborough, therefore the team had some limited capacity to commence the SCI review at this time.

- There was opportunity to make some limited cost savings, which was important considering the council's current financial situation.
- There was opportunity to make some carbon savings, which was important given the council's climate emergency declaration.
- Some minor elements of the SCI were currently unable to be implemented (e.g. fax service) so valuable to remove such commitments as soon as possible.

No other alternative options were considered.

29. TREE MANAGEMENT: LIMITED REVIEW OF THE TREES AND WOODLAND STRATEGY (INCLUDING REVISED TREE PLANTING TARGETS)

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Trees and Woodland Strategy and tree planting targets.

The purpose of this report was for Cabinet to determine what, if any, amendments to the Trees and Woodland Strategy were considered appropriate

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Commercial Strategy and investment introduced the report and advised that trees provided many benefits, both aesthetically and in terms of biodiversity. Peterborough had 50,000 trees and 208 hectares of woodland, with 20% of its land covered with trees. The Trees and Woodland Strategy was last updated 3 years and was a vital tool in tackling climate change however, it was advised that consideration needed to also be given to what the Council could afford.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment, as Chair of the Climate Change Working Group, thanked his fellow Members of the Climate Member Group for their work and recommendations. The Group had been tasked by Full Council with reviewing the Council's tree planting targets, which the Group did via reach and input from both internal and external experts. Other matters that were taken into consideration by the Group was the purchase and maintenance cost of trees, as well as any grant funding available. This included a successful bid for £260,000 from the Forestry Commission for 3,300 trees in winter 2021. The targets recommended by the Group were recognised as ambitious, and the Group acknowledged the financial constraints of the Council, while still emphasising the importance of tree stock in the Peterborough area.

Councillor Sandford, as a member of the Climate Change Working Group, advised that Appendix 1 of the report set out the case for an increase in tree planting, particularly in light of the Council's ambition to reach a position of net zero carbon 20 years sooner than the national aim. Councillor Sandford supported the recommendations of the Group and thanked all those involved. He cited a workshop that had taken place in spring 2021, with a number of experts taking part, which was the first evidence gathering session of a Task and Finish Group to take place in public. It was noted that a wide range of grants were available for planting and maintenance, and that while the target proposed was ambitious, previous targets had been low.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- A broad range of trees would be planted, using the intelligence gathered regarding where canopy already exists and opportunity mapping. The aim was to maximise the benefit of further planting.

- The arboricultural portal was live online, learn more about the tree stock within the city and to allow for tree sponsorship.
- Comment was made that it would be beneficial to plant a variety of trees and to be more flexible with the planting stock.
- Members highlighted the importance of placing the right trees in the right place in order to permit for lower maintenance costs.
- It was noted that the Government had a climate fund of £500 million which could be applied for, with further funding available from the Lottery.
- It was advised that Peterborough had previously been fortunately in relation to Ash Dieback, however, it had been affecting the larger Ash trees, with a significant impact. Current predications suggested that it would impact up to 80% of the areas Ash trees, through mitigated measures were being taken and safeguarding action for threats was to be built into future planting.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Endorse the tree planting and other related recommendations of the Climate Member Group to Full Council, as set out in Appendix 1, subject to the following change:

“6. That Council investigates all reasonable options to secure additional external revenue funding, of around £70,000 per annum, in order to secure (a) additional staffing support (cost c£50,000 pa) to: undertake the work required to bid for funds; to maintain the evidence base to support locations to deliver new planting; undertake ground truthing of sites identified for potential planting; and overall manage the delivery of the ambitious tree planting programme, the scale of which will be similar to that achieved under the Development Corporation programme of the 1970s/80s; and (b) a small funding pot (c£20,000 pa) to be used to help directly deliver the tree planting targets in any particular year where 100% grant funding cannot be secured.”

2. Recommend to Full Council that the Trees and Woodland Strategy, in addition to any amendments arising from recommendation 1, be further amended by way of (a) an updated Tree Risk Management Plan, as set out in Appendix 2; and (b) introduction of new operational guidelines in respect of daylight loss and vegetation encroachment, as set out in para 4.24.
3. Welcome the national ‘Queen’s Green Canopy’ scheme, and instruct officers to (a) take all reasonable opportunities to promote the scheme with the public, encouraging the public and businesses to ‘plant a tree for the Jubilee’; (b) determine whether any of the council’s land holdings due to have tree planting introduced over the next two winters be specifically designated (with appropriate signage) as a ‘Queen Green Canopy’ planting (such as a new copse, woodland or orchard), and (c) where appropriate, submit where appropriate tree planting done by the council over the next 2 winters to the national Queen’s Green Canopy database, so that the council’s contribution can be recognised.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

There was widespread acknowledgement of the vital role trees played, not only for human benefit but wider planet and biodiversity gains. The recommendations in this report were aimed at further strengthening the council's commitment to tree planting and a high quality tree management service.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Tree Planting Target

A wide range of options had been considered for increasing tree planting by the council, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. The option of planting less trees was rejected from the start of the process, as this would be contrary to the climate and biodiversity emergencies that we face.

Tree Risk Management Plan

Other rejected options included:

1. Keep plan as existing. This was dismissed as it was considered that the Council would not comply with best practice guidance or its legal duties.
2. Specify a Plan that exceeds best practice guidance or resources. Although commendable this approach would impose unacceptable financial pressures on the authority.

Amendments to Trees and Woodland Strategy (including exceptions)

Rejected options include:

1. Prune any tree that shades or overhangs private property. This would introduce a significant financial burden exceeding existing budget along with the destruction of one of the city's most valuable natural assets.
2. Insert a broad range of exemptions. This would make the role of the Tree Officer untenable and would impose financial burdens far in excess of existing budgets.

30. DOMESTIC ABUSE – SAFE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Safe Accommodation Strategy.

The purpose of this report was for Cabinet to endorse and agree the Safe Accommodation Strategy as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Communities introduced the report and advised that the strategy was a requirement of legislation. The Council had received a £477,374 for the 2021/22 year, in order to focus on addressing domestic abuse, with an emphasis on refuge services.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- Members were advised that the strategy was owned by the Council, but had been worked on by various organisations, including the police. This would assist in ensuring that the Council had a solid support network to deliver against the plan.
- It was noted that the Strategy would focus on how perpetrators would be dealt with outside of the criminal justice system.
- It was considered the most of the Strategy was about providing outreach support and how to encourage individuals to come forward for support.
- Future funding sources were of a concern to Members, however it was noted that the Strategy was designed to be adaptable. It was considered that funding would likely be available for the next three years, through this was not confirmed.
- Members noted that a number of support programmes were already in place in Peterborough, though duties had been added to the role of local authorities to include financial control and coercive behaviour.
- It was noted that the Strategy covered a range of areas, including voluntary areas, who worked together to provide child support.
- Members were advised that the Council had a reciprocal arrangement with neighbouring authorities in relation to refuge if individuals were not safe in their district.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to approve the Peterborough Safe Accommodation Strategy.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Having a Safe Accommodation Strategy was a statutory requirement of the Domestic Abuse Act.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

This was a statutory requirement, there were no alternative options.

MONITORING ITEMS

31. BUDGET CONTROL REPORT SEPTEMBER 2021

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the budget control report for September 2021.

The purpose of this report was to provide Cabinet with the forecast outturn for 2021/22 as at the September 2021 budgetary control position.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that the report confirmed a forecast breakeven position at year end, due to departmental underspend. Improvements were required in the Place and Economy Directorate and the Resources Directorate. The collection of business rates had improved, however was still slightly behind expected levels. Council tax collection were rates were similarly a little behind targets. The Capital Programme had been reduced by a further £3.7 million. It was noted that, following a report from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, capital expenditure must be stopped.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- Members were advised that the capitalisation direction would not be used in the current budget year. The budget had reached its current position through improved departmental position and use of reserves.
- Officers were working towards the year end position and were confident that the budget would remain at its current breakeven level.
- It was noted that 25% of the Capital Programme had been spent halfway through the year, with a current freeze on spending that was not essential.
- The Section 151 Officer advised that there was still some concern in relation to business rates collection, particularly in relation to the late billing of leisure services.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note:

1. The budgetary control position for 2021/22 at 30 September 2021 is a forecast breakeven position.
2. The key variance analysis and explanations are contained in Appendix A.
3. The Council's performance with respect to Business Rates(NNDR) and Council Tax Collection, as outlined within section 6.
4. The Council's reserves position, as outlined within Appendix B.
5. The Councils Capital performance as outlined in Appendix C.

Cabinet further **RESOLVED** to approve:

6. Capital Budget virements as outlined in Appendix C, these include:
 - a. £0.018m - Capital funding for re-landscaping works at the Dell (funded from Section 106 contribution).
 - b. £0.014m - Capital funding for re-landscaping works at Hampton Court (funded from Section 106 contribution).

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To provide Cabinet with the forecast of 2021/22 as September 2021 budgetary control position.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None provided.

32. OUTCOME OF PETITIONS

The Cabinet received a report in relation to petitions submitted to Council officers and Council meetings.

The purpose of this report was to update Cabinet on the progress being made in response to petitions submitted to the Council.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- The matter of an Article 4 Direction in Hampton was raised, with questions regarding its progress.
- The Executive Director for Place and Economy was asked to circulate progress information to all Members, including clarification on the separate between planning and licensing issues.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the actions taken in respect of petitions.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

As the petitions presented in this report had been dealt with by Cabinet Members or officers, it was appropriate that the action taken was reported to Cabinet.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There had been no alternative options considered.

Chairman
10.00am to 11.34am
15 November 2021