

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

18 MARCH 2010

Present: Councillors Todd (Chairman), Day, Collins, Kreling and JR Fox

Co-Opted Member: Ansar Ali – Cambridgeshire Police Authority

Also present: Councillor Sandford Representing the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Councillor Lee Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Culture
Councillor Goodwin Chair Neighbourhood Councils, South 1 & 2
Councillor Lowndes Chair Neighbourhood Councils Central & East 1 & 2
Chief Inspector Kevin Vanterpool Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Shelagh Smith Chair, Shadow Trust Board
Councillor Benton Cabinet Adviser for Neighbourhoods, Housing & Community Development

Officers in Attendance: Paul Phillipson Executive Director - Operations
Kevin Tighe Head of Cultural Services
Vicky Palazon Financial Services Manager
Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhood Services
Christine Graham Safer Peterborough Partnership Manager
Julie Rivett Neighbourhoods and Empowerment Manager
Sean Evans Senior Housing Options Officer
Sarah Hebblethwaite Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer
Helen Edwards Solicitor to the Council
Paulina Ford Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors Fletcher and Goldspink.

2. Declarations

Councillor Collins declared a personal interest in item 7 in that he worked for Cambridgeshire Constabulary and was involved in training staff on the Policing Pledge. He advised the Committee that he had consulted with the Solicitor to the Council prior to the meeting and was advised that this would not exclude him from discussion on this agenda item.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2010

The minutes of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 January 2010 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.

5. Cultural and Leisure Trust

The Head of Cultural Services introduced the report and draft business plan which set out why and how a Culture and Leisure Trust would be able to offer better cultural and leisure services to the people of Peterborough. A Shadow Trust Board had been formed which had six members on it. The impact on the pension rights of staff transferring over to the Trust had been looked into and was addressed in the report. The report also included the financial implications of a Trust. The Head of Cultural Services went through the draft business plan highlighting:

- What the vision and strategy for the Peterborough Culture and Leisure Trust would be
- What the Trust would deliver in the first 18 months.
- The values of the trustees, staff and volunteers
- The four main areas of work: Arts, Heritage, Libraries & Archives and Sports
- The strategic governance structure
- The staffing structure – the current staff would move into the Trust under the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment Regulations (TUPE)
- How the Trust would invest their finances
- That indicative funding that would be sought from the Council
- How the Trust would work in partnership with the Council
- How performance would be measured

There were currently over 120 Culture and Leisure trusts in England, of which the most successful had a good partnership relationship with the Local Authority. 40% of Leisure facilities in England were currently delivered by Culture and Leisure Trusts.

The Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Culture addressed the Committee stating that moving to a Trust would make the services offered more agile, more responsive and less bureaucratic. Shelagh Smith, Chair of the Shadow Trust, spoke to the Committee stating that culture was at the heart of any City and the Trust would provide a great opportunity to enhance what was already being provided. The Trust wanted to achieve good quality heritage, culture and sporting events and achieve a bigger offer with more variety and good quality services. The team of people acting as the Trustees combined commercial expertise and acumen which would be much more customer focussed. They were keen to make sure people were welcomed and enjoyed what was on offer. There would be challenging events and experiences in the future.. The Trust would be registered as a charity and would be able to lever funds and resources that the Council could not.

Observations and Questions:

- Members asked if the Trust would be able to work independently without pressure from outside. The Head of Cultural Services explained that it was important that the Trust worked independently but also worked closely in partnership with the Council. There would be financial pressures in the future and that was where the financial acumen of the Trust would be important so that the right decisions were made.
- Members wanted to know how confident the Trust would be at achieving the savings of £200K per year. The Head of Cultural Services advised Members that the efficiencies were about making more money and spending it more wisely. It also showed that investing in the capital programme, which included new gym facilities, would bring in more income by increasing the level of gym memberships. Through this and other efficiencies there was confidence that the savings would be achieved.

- Members asked what the main risks were from the Council's point of view in outsourcing to the Trust. The Head of Cultural Services told Members that the main risk was if the Trust got it wrong but expertise had been drawn from expert advisers and financial advisers to make sure the Trust did not get it wrong. The Council would in effect be transferring some of the risk to the Trust.
- Members asked what would happen if the Trust failed? The Head of Cultural Services responded that the existing staff were very competent and more expertise and financial acumen would be added to make sure it worked.
- Members noted that whilst visits to libraries across the country were generally on the decline the proposed business plans showed that there would be an upward trend in the use of libraries in Peterborough. How did the Trust hope this would be achieved? The Head of Cultural Services said that a new development team had been created to create new opportunities e.g. more story times, book challenges, bringing books to life, micro libraries.
- Members wanted to know if the reason for transferring to a Trust was due to the economic recession and a cost saving exercise. Councillor Lee advised that the administration believed that a Trust was in the best interests of the City. The government had asked for efficiencies to be made and regardless of whether a Trust was formed or not efficiencies would still have to be made. Things needed to be done differently in the City to make it more vibrant.
- Members asked if a consultation exercise had taken place with members of the public. The Head of Cultural Services advised that all of the groups and societies that used the Council's buildings had been written to explaining what the proposals were. They had been invited to contact the Council if they wanted a further presentation on the proposals. Some organisations had made contact and the Head of Cultural Services had visited some groups including Heritage World and the Civic Society.
- Members asked what guarantees were in place that there would be no high increases in charges. Councillor Lee advised that the Council would hold the Trust to account on this. There would be price rises but not enough to price them out of the market.
- Members asked what consultation had taken place with members of the public who used the libraries. Councillor Lee advised that he had spoken to and answered dozens of letters from members of the public. What customers of the library service really cared about was the look and feel of the building, the environment, the staff, the books and titles available and investment in new technologies and these were areas where the Trust would continue to invest
- Members asked how many of the local authorities that had established Trusts had included library services. The Head of Cultural Services did not have the information available but would provide it outside of the meeting.
- Members felt that some of the cultural services could be seen to be exclusive rather than inclusive. There were many communities across the City where take up was very low and would this be addressed under the Trust? The Chair of the Shadow Trust Board advised that the Trust would welcome all sectors of the community to get involved but it was acknowledged that there was a lot of work that needed to be done to listen and talk to these communities. Peterborough had a very rich cultural society and the Trust needed to capture and share this and the culture and arts agenda would be a key way to facilitate this. The business plan stated that it would maximise hard to reach groups and this would be measured through a new management information system.
- Members asked if the Committee would receive regular reports from the Trust especially financial ones. The Head of Cultural Services advised that they would.
- Members asked what mechanisms would be in place to remove people from the Trust if it was felt that they were not acting in the Trust's best interests. The Chair of the Shadow Trust Board advised that to remove a Director it would require a motion supported by 50% of the other members of the Trust. Whilst the Trust would be required to have a level of independence, two representatives from the Council would eventually sit on the Board.

- Members wanted to know if this Committee could hold the Trust to account if they felt that something was happening which was not right. The Chair of the Shadow Trust Board advised the Committee that they had a contract with the Council and if the Trust did not perform then the contract could be cancelled. This was a way of keeping control and ensuring that the services were delivered to the benefit of the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet is advised of the Committee's endorsement for the creation of a Culture and Leisure Trust and that the following comments should be taken into consideration:

- I. That the Trust engages with representatives of all communities across the Authority to ensure that their interests are represented in the delivery of cultural and leisure activities across the City.
- II. That a close working relationship with Peterborough City Council will be maintained.
- III. That the Trust will report back to Scrutiny after a period of nine months from the date of its formation to advise on the progress of the Trust including financial implications.

ACTIONS

The Head of Cultural Services to advise the Committee of how many local authorities that had a Cultural and Leisure Trust had library services included in the Trust.

CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6. Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan 2010-2011

The Safer Peterborough Partnership Manager introduced a report on the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan and explained that it was the statutory responsibility of the Safer Peterborough Partnership to produce a plan on an annual basis. The process that had been taken to arrive at this plan was that a comprehensive strategic assessment had been undertaken which painted a picture of what Peterborough was like. There would be a user friendlier version of the Plan available for the public which would draw out the highlights and priorities for the year.

Observations and Questions:

- Members noted that the performance indicator for Serious Acquisitive Crime was still not near target and wanted to know what action was being taken to improve this. The Officer advised that the performance data would be updated at the end of the financial year and that Serious Acquisitive Crime (NI 16) was currently showing as green. There were still some elements of Serious Acquisitive Crime which were causing some concern such as burglary and robbery, however there had been an improvement and Operation Alert had made a difference. In the last month a new group had been formed called the Safer Peterborough Partnership Tactical Action Group which met on a fortnightly basis. This group brought all of the partners together to look in detail at all of the nominal's and look at how partners could work together in gathering intelligence to bring individuals to justice.
- Members asked what was being done about the high amount of arson cases. The Officer advised that the latest figures had showed a reduction in the number of arson cases. There was an arson investigation unit which looked at new ways of tackling arson and would focus on the people responsible and not just the victim and location. There would be CCTV cameras in fire appliances as it was not unusual for arsonists to stay around the scene of the incidents. Intelligence allowed resources to be put in to the areas where the hot spots were.

- Members asked if extra resources had been put into the most vulnerable neighbourhoods in the city. The Officer responded that resources were targeted at the areas where the need was greatest.
- Members wanted to know what other evidence could be provided to assure them that resources were being used in Central Ward? The Officer advised that Central Ward also covered the City Centre and night time economy. Extra resources were being put into this through initiatives like neighbourhood management.
- Members asked if there was a way of differentiating in public documents that there was a residential and a City Centre area under Central Ward. The Officer suggested that a statement in brackets saying that it includes the City Centre could be put next to Central Ward.

ACTION AGREED:

The Committee:

- (i) Endorsed the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan 2010-11; and
- (ii) Recommended the approval of the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan to Cabinet.

7. Policing Pledge

Councillor Todd welcomed Chief Inspector Kevin Vanterpool from the Cambridgeshire Constabulary to the meeting. Chief Inspector Vanterpool was the lead officer responsible for the implementation of the Policing Pledge in Cambridgeshire and he advised that the Pledge was now fully implemented and embedded. An HM Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) inspection report last year had rated the Constabulary as fair in implementing the Pledge. There had since been a re-inspection and whilst the overall grading remained the same some areas had now improved to a rating of good. A Pledge Delivery Group had been formed and had developed the Building Confidence Delivery Plan and Pledge Score Card which showed how the Force was doing and where they needed to improve. The Pledge Delivery Group was tackling each of the areas for improvement within the HMIC plan and also focused on the work in progress in identifying 33 deliverables, with responsible leads, across the Constabulary. The Pledge was about a culture and the way of doing business. During training staff had been made to understand what the Pledge meant to them and that it was core to policing. CI Vanterpool said if there was one request that he could make it would be to have greater representation of elected members at neighbourhood panel meetings.

Observations and Questions:

- Councillor Goodwin commented that most problems happened at the weekend in Orton Longueville and whilst there was an excellent response from the police there was an absence of police in the area on Mondays and Tuesdays. CI Vanterpool responded that a survey had recently been completed of when police were most likely to be needed and that there would be a change in shift patterns to address these issues.
- Members felt that most officers seemed to get sent into the City Centre at the weekends. CI Vanterpool responded that the City Centre accounted for 20% of violent crime and was the busiest place at weekends; therefore it meant that staff were deployed there from other areas according to the needs of the City Centre night time economy.
- Members asked if the police visited all victims of burglary. CI Vanterpool advised that every single victim of a house burglary would receive a home visit.
- Members commented that they had concerns that the Government may have given the police service an impossible task to achieve. The police service needed more man power available to achieve the targets of police being out and visible in neighbourhoods. Complaints from residents were that they did not see their local officer. CI Vanterpool responded that it would always be a challenge to meet the targets as Cambridgeshire was significantly under resourced, however he was confident that they were being met

across the board. There were many Police Community Support Officers who supported the local police officers to achieve the visibility in local neighbourhoods. More admin staff was being employed so that the police spent less time having to do the admin tasks and more time in the community.

- Members wanted to know how the police were proposing to tackle low level anti social behaviour. CI Vanterpool advised Members that the priority would always be the most vulnerable victims of anti social behaviour. Resources had been allocated to co-ordinate police activity with the anti social behaviour team and this had already increased the number of anti social behaviour contracts. All officers were fully trained and equipped to deal with anti social behaviour.
- Members commented that the rate of attendance of police at councillors' surgeries was about 25% and they would like to see higher attendance. CI Vanterpool said that he would endeavour to make sure that if invited the police would attend surgeries unless they were called away on police business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that the Cabinet continue to lobby Government for additional resources for the Police Authority on a national basis.

8. Portfolio Progress Report

The Head of Neighbourhood Services gave apologies on behalf of the portfolio holders for Environment Capital and Culture; Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development; and Regional and Business Engagement and presented the report on their behalf. He reminded the Committee of the focus of each portfolio holder and referred to the report update.

Observations and Questions:

- Members expressed their disappointment that there were still significantly large retail premises lying empty in the City Centre. The Officer would take this comment back to the relevant portfolio holder and provide an update on the situation to the Committee outside of the meeting.
- Councillor Sandford expressed his disappointment at the non attendance of the three portfolio holder Cabinet Members.
- Councillor Sandford advised that he had heard rumours that some of the trees in Bridge Street were to be removed and wanted confirmation if this was true. The Officer advised that the plan for Cathedral Square was to plant new trees onto one side of the Square but he did not know about the removal of any trees in Bridge Street. He would find out the position and report back to the Committee.
- Members wanted clarification that the new seats in Cathedral Square were made of timber from certified sustainable sources. The Officer would seek clarification and report back to the Committee.
- Members wanted to see more diverse representation at Neighbourhood Council meetings and wanted to know what was being done to try and achieve this. Councillor Benton, Cabinet Adviser for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Community Development advised that there was a lot of work being done via New Link and the Cohesion Board to encourage people to attend the Neighbourhood Councils. Members wanted to see some kind of performance measure in place to measure this.
- Members wanted to know how the performance of the Destination Centre was being measured. The Officer advised that income and foot fall was being measured and this had shown to be increasing and he would provide the relevant statistics to the Committee.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Head of Neighbourhood Services to provide the Committee with a briefing note to update them on the following information:
 - I. What action is being taken to find new tenants for the vacant retail premises within the City Centre?
 - II. Details of whether any trees are to be removed from Bridge Street and the reason why.
 - III. Statistics showing footfall and income for the Destination Centre since its opening in November 2009.
2. The Head of Neighbourhood Services to look at pro active ways of encouraging a more diverse attendance at Neighbourhood Council meetings and how this could be measured.

9. Neighbourhood Councils Progress Report

The Head of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report, along with the Neighbourhoods and Empowerment Manager; Councillor Goodwin, Chair of Neighbourhood Councils, South 1 & 2 and Councillor Lowndes, Chair of Neighbourhood Councils Central and East 1 & 2.

The Neighbourhoods and Empowerment Manager advised the Committee that two full rounds of meetings had now been completed and that a third round was in progress. The Neighbourhood Council meetings had been well received but there was ongoing consultation as to how they could be improved. Suggestions that had been made included:

- Neighbourhood Council meetings needed to be more dynamic, informative, interactive and relevant
- Agendas should focus on feedback from previous meetings and open debate sessions and discussion
- There should be visually impactful content using mapping and photographs
- There should be time before the meeting set aside to display items of public interest
- There should be some targeted marketing work to boost public attendance, including highlighting the differences between the roles and responsibilities of Neighbourhood Councils, Neighbourhood Panels and Parish Councils
- Agendas, Minutes and associated paperwork should have less jargon and be more accessible
- The Neighbourhood Council meetings should be less officer and more Member led

Observations and Questions:

- Members asked if there was a possibility of running the Neighbourhood Council and Neighbourhood Panel meetings together or back to back as there were often similar issues discussed at both. The Neighbourhoods and Empowerment Manager advised that the Council and Panels were designed to run six weeks apart to work in partnership with each other and that the current length of the meetings would make back to back meetings lengthy and difficult to manage.
- Members congratulated the Neighbourhood Management Team on the success of the Neighbourhood Council meetings so far and the numbers attending them. A £25K budget had been allocated to each of the Neighbourhood Councils but Members noted that this funding would not be unlocked until the Community Action Plans were in place. When was this going to happen? The Neighbourhoods and Empowerment Manager advised that no decisions had yet been made and noted their concerns.
- Members advised that the Successful Community Planning meeting had been held during the day and therefore no Councillors were able to attend. The Neighbourhoods and

Empowerment Manager advised that the meeting was only the start of process and Councillors and other people would be involved throughout the process.

- Members commented that in some areas there was confusion as to the role of the Neighbourhood Council, Neighbourhood Panel and Parish Council.
- Councillor Goodwin advised that in the short time the Neighbourhood Councils had been running she felt that they had gone exceptionally well and people were much more positive.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Neighbourhoods and Empowerment Manager to note the comments made by the Committee and to feed them into the process for the ongoing development of the Neighbourhood Councils.

10. Homelessness Prevention Action Plan 2008-2011

The Senior Housing Options Officer and the Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer introduced the report highlighting the key issues around the following areas:

- Repossessions
- Private rented sector
- Rough sleeping
- Choice based lettings

The credit crunch was having far reaching implications, some of which had not yet been fully realised. Housing Options had seen a 72% increase in people seeking advice regarding mortgage arrears and a 59% increase in relationship breakdowns resulting in the threat of homelessness. The mortgage rescue scheme had been introduced in January 2009 in response to rising mortgage repossessions and the associated increased risk of homelessness. The scheme was a specific targeted homelessness prevention tool for vulnerable households. There had been high numbers of A8/A2 Nationals rough sleeping in the city. The A8 countries included Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia; and the A2 countries included Romania and Bulgaria. Peterborough was considered to be a hot spot for rough sleepers.

Observations and Questions:

- Members advised that 15 individuals had been seen living in the Potters Way flood plains and wanted to know what was being done to stop this. The Officer advised that they were aware of this and that assertive outreach continued. They were also working with the Department of Communities and Local Government and the UK Border Agency on a National Relocation Pilot (NRP) project to try and resolve that type of issue. The NRP offered the client group (A8/A2 Nationals) reconnection to their country of origin, or assistance with obtaining identification documents to enable them to seek employment. The project had carried out 56 assessments, of which 23 wished to be reconnected with their country of origin. 18 had been successfully reconnected and 24 had been issued with documents to enable them to seek employment.
- The Executive Director of Operations advised that he had visited all of the homeless sites and there were many people making lifestyle choices who did not want to work or were drinking and taking drugs. The Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer was working hard to get the homeless on the workers registration scheme and agencies had been providing replacement clothes to people who did not take care of their own possessions. If people had been in the country for more than three months and had not worked they would be sent back to their home country. A robust stance was being taken with people who did not want to help themselves.

- A Member asked what help was being given to people with mental health problems. The Officer advised that she was working with a doctor who conducted mental health assessments.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and the excellent work being done throughout the City by the Housing Options Team.

10. Local Area Agreement Performance Report 2009/10 – Quarter 3

The Head of Neighbourhood Services presented the Quarter 3 progress report on the Local Area Agreement priority Creating Strong and Supportive Communities. The priority had four outcomes:

- Making Peterborough Safer
- Building Community Cohesion
- Empowering Local Communities
- Building Pride in Peterborough

Overall performance of the priority had remained similar to that of Quarter 2 performance and was showing a rating of amber.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Head of Neighbourhood Services to bring to the next meeting the end of year performance data for the Creating Strong and Supportive Communities priority.

12. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, 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 Forward Plan and agreed that there were no items to bring to the Committee.

The meeting began at 7.00 and ended at 9.45pm

CHAIRMAN

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