

JOINT MEETING OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND AREA COMMITTEES

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2013
 AT 7PM AT THE TOWN HALL**

Members Present:

Councillors N Arculus, G Casey, M Dalton, S Day, W Fitzgerald, L Forbes, J A Fox, J R Fox, C Harper, D Harrington, J Holdich, M Jamil, J Johnson, P Kreling, S Lane, M Nadeem, J Peach (Chairman), B Rush, B Saltmarsh, D Seaton, L Serluca, J Shearman, J Stokes, A Sylvester, P Thacker, N Thurlbourn and I Walsh

Officers Present:

John Harrison, Executive Director of Strategic Resources, PCC
 Steven Pilsworth, Head of Strategic Finance, PCC
 Adrian Chapman, Head of Neighbourhoods, PCC
 Mark Speed, Transport Planning Manager, PCC
 Karen Dunleavy, Governance Officer, PCC
 Louise Tyers, Compliance Manager, PCC

Others Present:

17 members of the public were in attendance.

Item	Discussion and Actions	Action
1. Appointment of Chairman for the Meeting	A nomination was received for Councillor Peach. The nomination was seconded and Councillor Peach was duly elected as Chairman.	
2. Apologies for Absence	Councillors Allen, Ash, Cereste, Elsey, Goodwin, Hiller Lee, Maqbool, Martin, McKean, North, Over, Scott, Shaheed and Sharp.	
3. Declarations of Interest	None	
4. Consultation on the Budget 2013/14 and Medium Term Finance Strategy	The Neighbourhood Committee received a presentation from the Councillor David Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources regarding the Budget 2013/14 and Medium Term Financial Strategy. Key points within the presentation were as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been a significant increase in population in 	

	<p>Peterborough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was now 50% more people over the age of 85 in the city. • The Council will now be able to retain 50% of the business rates it collected. • Peterborough was the only Council in the eastern region to provide a free play service. • Bringing the Halfords Tour Series had to be considered as the Council was unable to bring in its own sponsorship for the event, unlike events such as the Great Eastern Run. • This meeting was a chance for members of the public to make comments on the proposed budget. <p>Comments and responses to questions on the proposed budget are contained in Appendix 1 of these minutes.</p> <p>Agreed that the comments and questions raised at this meeting be forwarded to the Cabinet at their meeting on 25 February 2013 for consideration as part of the Budget consultation.</p>	
<p>5. Highway Capital Programme of Works</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Committee received a report from the Transport and Infrastructure Planning Manager regarding the Highways Capital Programme of Works 2013/14.</p> <p>Agreed to approve the annual programme of works contained within the Highways Capital Programme for 2013/14.</p>	

Meeting Closed 8.55pm

APPENDIX 1

Budget Section	Question / Comment	Response
Meals on Wheels	If the Council had a look at some of its projects, such as £2m for city centre works, then important services such as Meals on Wheels could be protected.	Comment noted. City centre projects needed to retain retail business as Council now directly responsible for business rates income. Any fall impacts Council bottom line.
Direct Payments	Adult Social Care has officers who go out into the community and look at people in need, look at their bank statements and their investments and come up with proposals for payments. I understand that this part of the assessment of older people is going to be handed over to a private company. There is concern that a private company would have access to people's personal details.	Officers do go out to check how people are spending their direct payments and that has always happened. People cannot expect to be given a large sum of money for their care and for it not to be checked that it is being spent correctly. Where it has been checked there is often money coming back to the Council because it should not be due to those individuals due to the fact that they have assets and other income. In terms of handing that part of the process outside of the Council we have no plans. A lot of rumours circulate that are not true.
City Centre Improvements	Millions of pounds have been spent on Cowgate but the work has been going on for so long that it has actually put businesses into financial difficulties because of the lack of footfall. Cowgate is like a big white elephant because there has been no exit made from Primark onto Kings Street which would have brought extra people onto the street.	In the long term the Cowgate works will make a difference. When the work was being done on Cathedral Square the Council received a complaint from one trader who asked for discretionary rate relief because of the impact on their business during the works there. However when we actually looked at the business, their turnover had actually gone up during the period when the works were outside their business. An exit from Primark would be an issue for Queensgate.
Members Allowances	We have not seen any announcement in the press about what the decision is for Councillors remuneration.	Members allowances was well covered in the press recently when the Council voted not to take any increase in allowances. The Council has to appoint an independent panel that recommends what they think councillors should get and they recommended an increase which the Council voted against.

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Communications	People are sympathetic about the communications issues especially now the Peterborough Telegraph is only published weekly. The website is not particularly user friendly and is often difficult to find your way around it as it is complex and you need to know where to look. It cannot be the key means of communication as many people do not have access to the internet.	We agree that the website is not currently good enough but it is a lot better than it used to be and we are getting much better at putting much more information on the website. The Communications Team are currently looking at the website. We will not be relying wholly on E-communications and that is why we need communication tools like Your Peterborough.
Your Peterborough	Anything that allows city councillors to explain their views to the wider public is a very good idea.	We have listened to peoples feedback since we reduced the frequency of Your Peterborough. We have talked with officers about publicity on the website around meeting dates. Agendas and reports are published on the website and we also use social media like Facebook and Twitter. We are fully aware that not everybody has access to the internet and so we are proposing to bring back Your Peterborough four times a year so that we can communicate both what the strategic message is about the council but also when council meeting are held and how the Council runs.
Children's Centres	The Council is likely to close some of the children's centres which are in the least deprived areas. How does the Council establish which are the least deprived areas?	The Council has statistics that tell us where the areas of greatest deprivation are.
	Does the Council have any statistics that show children who are left to their own devices enter into more criminal activities than those that use children's centres and are helped towards a more honest way of living? Shutting play centres is perhaps storing up trouble for the future, which will end up costing us a lot more money.	We need to be clear that the play centres are closing. These are different to Children's Centres (Surestart) which support pre-school. We are receiving less grant funding for children's centres from the Government because the funding is being aimed towards troubled families work and childcare for children aged 2 – 4 years old. We have seen a lot more after school clubs being set up around the city. Our belief is that through childcare provision, the troubled families funding and through after school clubs we will still be able

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		to give those families the support they need. Play centres currently only provide two sessions a week and do not currently provide a major facility for families. There are other facilities that are better supporting those families.
Play Services	A youth club has recently moved out of a location in Thistle Drive due to affordability issues and into the Stanground Play Centre as it was a PCC building that was given to the youth as a free venue to use. If the Council closes somewhere like Thistle Drive young, deprived people from that local area will have nowhere to go.	We are currently the only council in the East of England that provides free play centres. Discussions have already started about how the local community could use the buildings. There are opportunities out there for community groups to run facilities and those are the sort of issues we need to look at.
	It would only cost £460k to maintain play centres across the city including Crofts Corner in North Bretton. The play service for 8 – 14 year olds provides children with a safe environment to develop their personal and social skills. The play service has been working hard in the past year to provide greater support to children who are likely to achieve poor outcomes or enter social care. It is unbelievable that the Council are proposing to close these play centres. Play workers engage with children and families who do not wish to engage with other preventative services, so by closing this service you are putting pressure on other services which you provide.	
	Whilst it would be great to have a nice looking city centre, children in the most deprived areas of the city are having to pay the price for a pretty city centre. I think you have got your priorities wrong, so please have another look. A plea for the	

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	<p>children of the city - keep their play centres open.</p> <p>I would like to ask the Police attending this evening how the Police's work around reducing anti-social behaviour would be affected by the closure of play centres.</p>	<p>eastern region, which is to deliver free play?</p> <p>Inspector Dominic Glazebrook stated that the police work with the young people service in a number of ways to reduce anti-social behaviour across Peterborough. The police recognise that the Council has to make difficult budgetary decisions and are working to encourage young people to come forward and volunteer to help fill any gaps that may exist. It is not for the police to criticise any political decisions made by the Council but the police will work with all agencies to try and ensure that the best service possible is provided for young people so anti-social behaviour can continue to reduce.</p>
Street Lighting	<p>In some areas lamp posts have recently been replaced that were not necessary. The Council is spending money on things that people do not want and not spending money on things that people do want.</p>	<p>The reason that some lamp posts have been replaced is because we are putting energy efficient lights up in order to save money. A lot of councils are doing this and it is good for the environment and better for our budgets.</p>
Regulatory Services	<p>Some areas are greatly indebted to the Neighbourhood Management team for the excellent job they do and also indebted to the Regulatory Services team particularly in the Can Do area. It is proposed to take a lot of money from those regulatory services. Can the Council assure us that we are not going to continue with the problems that we have had in that area?</p>	<p>Comment noted</p>
Neighbourhood Committees	<p>With the proposed removal of Neighbourhood Committees how is the Council planning to discuss and debate local issues?</p> <p>There has not been enough information provided</p>	<p>Attendance at Neighbourhood Committees has not been good. The Committees have been in place for three years and support has been mixed. We agree that we will have to put in something different and we will look at that from area to area as to exactly what that will be.</p>

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	about the Neighbourhood Committees.	Some of the Neighbourhood Committee meetings are combined with a Police meeting and the Police meetings will continue.
Community Centre Grants	There has been little indication as to where communities associations fit in. Will the Council continue to support community associations that are run by volunteers on very small grants?	The current proposals set out a reduction to the funding for community associations which at the moment receive fairly small grants, which we know makes a big difference to the volunteers that run these important centres. A suggestion being put forward is that councillors, through their Community Leadership Fund, will be able to support more appropriately community centres in the future. So instead of a blanket approach, across all community buildings, what is being proposed is a more localised approach which allows councillors to focus their investment on the centres that they feel are most deserving and most needy of a grant. Whatever the outcome of the consultation is, we have made a commitment to work with community associations in the city, to make sure that we can find other sources of funding and provide community associations with the right support and right tools.
Review of Subsidised Bus Routes	In Gunthorpe there is the 406 bus which is the only bus that runs from Gunthorpe to Werrington. It is used by old people and also people who rely on that bus to take and collect their children from school. If that bus was not there, it would be a major issue for people in the area.	During the next six months the Council will be looking at how we provide services, where we provide services and when we have got more information about what we are going to do, look at subsidised services again. We will be doing a quality impact assessment that will look at the demographics of where people live and where the services are. Stagecoach has changed their services and we think we understand the gaps in services where commercial services are not currently operating.
Energy and Waste Projects	There has been some publicity over a council funded solar system on the former Freemans building that has never worked. What confidence does the Council have that its proposals on solar power are going to provide any income stream?	The Freemans building has received publicity but there are legal reasons why we cannot discuss. The figures we have put together for the energy park have been produced in conjunction with experts in the field and we are

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		confident in them.
	<p>£149m in capital investment has been proposed in order to take forward the proposals to develop renewable energy parks on three sites, is that investment coming from the Council?</p> <p>The savings from 2013 to 2018 is estimated at only £46m, so you are proposing to invest £149m to get £46m over five years. The Council could save £149m by abandoning the wind farms and solar panels at this time. The sun and wind will always be here and the Council could put them off to another time when the technology is better. We do not need to spend this money now. People are talking about how the reduction in services will affect children and old people and perhaps those are the priorities the Council should be looking at and not generating energy.</p>	<p>There are no new figures in this budget that have not already been published in the public arena. The figures that are in the report are in line with those that went to Cabinet at its November 2012 meeting. The £149m figure referred to is the amount of capital investment which would be paid for by borrowing money.</p> <p>The longer we wait to deliver the scheme, the Government's subsidy schemes get less and less each year. In simple terms, at the moment the project is intended to make a profit and that is why the Council is progressing with it. These schemes have not yet been through the Planning Committee for approval, so until the Council receives further reports, not a penny of that high investment into those schemes will happen.</p>
	<p>The Council is making an assumption that it will get planning permission for the solar farms. What contingency plans are in place if the schemes do not get approval or are delayed?</p>	<p>We do not take planning permission for granted. There is a future projection of where the Council's budget is heading over the next few years, so in 2013/14 it is in balance but there is a deficit of £7m in 2014/15 which rises to £11m in 2015/16. That is the first year where any significant financial contribution comes in from the wind and solar farms. If it does not happen then that £11m financial challenge that the Council faces will increase.</p>
	<p>The Council makes the point they are going to borrow the money for the capital investment but does not make clear that the capital sum as well as the interest needs to be repaid.</p>	<p>The presentation shows both the income and costs of the scheme under key investments so we have shown both investment and income. The capital repayments are built into the profile and that is over the life span of the schemes.</p>

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	If you have a scheme that relies on Government subsidies you are building your house on sand because they can become politically unfavourable very quickly.	It is an interesting point made about whether you rely on Government subsidies and ideally you want a scheme in due course that does not rely on subsidies. The real issue that we have at the moment is that unless there is a fundamental change in Government policy then the whole energy route map to where the Government wants to go will completely implode on itself because renewable energy will not be delivered on the ground. JOHN?
Strategic Client Services – Vivacity	Library services are not just about reading books but the other things that they provide. For example, Bretton Library provides a lot of things since the closure of Bretton Woods School a few years ago. Having a library is very important.	Comment noted
Council Tax	<p>If the Council was looking to increase Council Tax by either 1 or 2% how much money would that generate for the city to use?</p> <p>The Council is not proposing to increase Council Tax for most people but is raising it for certain groups such as people with a second home or empty property. A lot of the properties that are deemed as second homes or unoccupied are not capable of being occupied and yet there are no facilities available to improve them. People are going to get charged for homes that they cannot</p>	<p>A 2% percent increase on Council Tax would be worth about £430k next year.</p> <p>The Government have offered Councils funding if they do not increase their Council Tax for the next year. For Peterborough that is worth about £600k. If the Council wanted to increase Council Tax by 2%, then above that extra £600k we would be able to have about another £400k in resources. The real issue that needed to be considered was to get the extra £400k Council Tax payers would actually be paying £1m.</p> <p>Some people that receive Council Tax Benefit Support will not get as much in future. Single person discounts will continue.</p> <p>The Council does not decide what is a second home as there is a statutory definition. The Council has now got the flexibility to determine whether second homes should be charged at the full rate. If somebody has a property which is empty and is not their second home, then they will pay the full rate on it. The Council is</p>

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	afford to improve.	working on an Empty Properties Strategy at the moment and the Neighbourhoods Team are doing working with Cross Keys homes to bring these properties back into use.
Statutory and Discretionary Spend	The role of councils is changing by becoming more of an enabler or a facilitator. What percentage of the council's budget is actually for statutory services, what percentage is allocated to partnership/agency work and what is the amount left to provide discretionary services?	The amount of statutory spend is a difficult question because if you look at a service such as libraries, how far can you cut your library service before someone, as has already happened in another area, submits a judicial review. Within five to ten years time, the way the economy is at the moment, we will be getting down to the minimum legal level of spending.
Budget Consultation Process	Was this the only consultation meeting the Council intended to hold as I had not seen the full budget papers until the start of this meeting? If this is our only chance to speak on the proposals you are not giving us much of a chance.	<p>This meeting was part of a long process of consultation which enabled people to send in their comments by letter, telephone or internet, along with other consultation meetings.</p> <p>The budget document was issued on the 25 January 2013 and has been made available on the website, in libraries, discussed on the radio, featured in the Peterborough Telegraph. So it has been made widely available.</p> <p>We are not sure what else we could do other than send 75,000 copies of the document to every house in the city. We have kept the consultation document to 50 pages which as stated has been made widely available.</p>