



MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD 19 JANUARY 2015

PRESENT

Cabinet Members: Councillor Holdich, Councillor Elsey, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Hiller, Councillor North, Councillor Seaton and Councillor Serluca.

Cabinet Advisers: Councillor Casey and Councillor Lamb.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Cereste.

Councillor Holdich chaired the meeting in Councillor Cereste's absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2014 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

It was agreed to take item 5, Erection of Barriers at Northminster Multi-Story Car Park, as the next item of business.

4. ERECTION OF BARRIERS AT NORTHMINSTER MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK

Cabinet received a report from the Cabinet Member for Resources, the purpose of which was for it to consider a Regulation 28 report submitted by the Coroner and to agree any appropriate action to be taken.

On 30 July 2014, the Coroner issued a Regulation 28 report in respect of a suicide by jumping from one of the Queensgate car parks. Under the Coroners' Regulations 2013, a coroner has both the power and a duty to raise concerns where the coroner considers that actions could be taken to prevent future deaths.

A Regulation 28 report was addressed to the organisations the coroner believed could take action to prevent further deaths and such organisations had a duty to respond to the Regulation 28 report giving details of action taken or proposed to be taken, with a timetable for action. Alternatively, the organisation(s) were to explain why no action would be taken.

Councillor Seaton introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within. The Council's Assistant Director for Education, Resources and Corporate Property added further points of clarification.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the Senior Coroner's report dated 30th July 2014 titled "Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths" received by the Council;
2. To consider how the findings of the Senior Coroner's Regulation 28 : Report to Prevent Future Deaths relate to the Council owned Multi Storey Car Park known as Northminster Car Park, Peterborough (Northminster MSCP).
3. To note that the Council is aware that Peterborough has a higher suicide rate than the England average and is committed to taking action to address this through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Suicide Prevention Strategy and the Stop Suicide Pledge.
4. To note that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Suicide Prevention Strategy Three Year Action Plan includes a recommendation to reduce the risk of suicide from multi-storey car parks through a multi-faceted approach including suicide awareness training for car park staff, signage to direct people to sources of support and promotion of the use of barriers to restrict access to jumping points.
5. To consider the budget implications of undertaking the works set out in feasibility study to install infill panels and fencing on the upper car park deck, the budget implications and the proposed review processes to determine future decision making.
6. To confirm that the Head of Corporate Property and Children's Resources, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Cabinet Member Resources, will determine whether the works to install preventative measures on the Northminster MSCP are carried out in whole or part together with the decision making process and timetable associated with these options, subject to sufficient budget allocation.
7. To approve an addition to the capital programme to include an unbudgeted provisional sum of £250,000 in the event that the Assistant Director – Education, Resources and Corporate Property in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources concludes that the intervention works are required and barriers and fencing are erected as set out in this report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Council was not required by the Senior Coroner to carry out suicide prevention works to the Northminster MSCP. However the Council took the issues set out in the Coroner's report very seriously and was considering a range of options including the erection of fencing and infillpanels within the Northminster Car Park having regard to the operational life of the car park, redevelopment proposals and associated budget implications.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To do nothing. This was the least cost option but did not address the points made in the Senior Coroner's Recommendation.

To monitor what impact the works at Queensgate Car Parks had on the numbers of suicides and suicide threat incidents at Northminster MSCP. For reasons set out within the report to Cabinet, this was the approach the Council was taking, although making budgetary provision in the event that the ongoing review determined that the investment was to be made into the car park.

To undertake interventions requiring significantly less investment such as additional signage and increased monitoring one site despite the evidence base for the effectiveness of these being weaker than for barriers. The situation would be reviewed once proposals for the medium to longer term future of the car park had been developed. The Council had already undertaken to implement these interventions.

5. NEW DELIVERY MODEL FOR PETERBOROUGH LIBRARY SERVICE

Cabinet received a report from the Cabinet Member for City Centre Management, Culture and Tourism.

The purpose of the report was to allow Cabinet to consider the consultation responses received from the first consultation process, and subsequent approval for the next steps on libraries including a second, eight week public consultation on possible, affordable delivery approaches, to libraries which would meet the Council's statutory obligations.

Councillor Serluca introduced the item and highlighted the main issues contained within. The Council's Culture and Leisure Partnership Manager added further points of clarification.

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

- Further work was still being undertaken in respect of Community Centres, and there was as yet, no recommendations in relation to the future of the 33 Council Community Centres;
- The Mobile Library and Books at Home Service were not part of the consultation and would continue as previously;
- The timetables for the libraries would be confirmed after the consultation;
- In relation to disabled users, all libraries were situated on single floors, bar Bretton, which had a lift;
- The new Open+ technology was fully accessible by disabled users;
- Training on the Open+ system would be provided for new users and the general public had been witnessed using the service at a recent trip to Leeds;
- The group sessions for young people at the libraries were not due to cease, more group activities within the libraries were being encouraged;
- There were links with the Council's Digital Strategy and there was 24 hour access to downloadable books direct from the library websites. City Fibre would be located within all the libraries allowing for super-fast broadband connections;
- A version of the model was already functioning at Hampton Library and there had been no issues encountered during the un-staffed hours. The monitoring in place and the ownership of the community would enable a successful system;
- All neighbourhood police would start using the libraries and there would be volunteers;
- There was no intention to make the libraries fully automated in the future; and
- There had been 375 libraries closed throughout the country over the past two years.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider the responses received to the first consultation as set out in the report; and
2. To approve the basis for the second public consultation on the future delivery model of library services in Peterborough.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The reasons for the report were for Cabinet to approve the proposed new approach to delivering Peterborough's library services in the future and approval to conduct a second consultation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council had explored, but for the time discounted two other options for the delivery of library services in Peterborough that would achieve a similar level of saving:

1. The option of putting all of the available staffing resource into Central Library to create an enhanced 7 day city centre offer, supplemented by the library mobile service;
2. Central, Bretton, Orton, Werrington and Dogsthorpe libraries remain open with reduced staff hours, but would be available for further hours with no staff. Hampton to remain as a purely self-service library; and
3. Eye, Dogsthorpe, Stanground, Thorney and Woodston libraries to close. However if community groups came forward any of these could remain open by being run by volunteers at no additional cost to the Council.

6. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Cabinet received a report following the consultation on proposals for Council Tax Support for 2015/16 launched by a Cabinet Member Decision Notice on 2 December 2014 which had included a discussion at the Joint Budget Scrutiny on 3 December 2014.

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to make a recommendation to Full Council on the Council Tax Support Scheme to be implemented in Peterborough from April 2015.

Councillor Seaton introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within.

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

- There would be approximately 11,000 households throughout Peterborough affected by the proposals;
- It had been extremely difficult to obtain Council Tax feedback in recent years, 4,000 letters had been sent out and feedback was relied upon from partners such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau;
- The Police and Fire Services would also face a shortfall if a scheme was not introduced; and
- The scheme was not ideal, but was required. No increase was advocated at the current time, with the scheme being kept under close review going forward.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the feedback received to date on the consultation on proposed changes to the council tax support scheme, including the updates tabled at the meeting; and
2. To recommend that Council agree the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Peterborough, including the level of reduction in benefit for working age claimants, for which Cabinet recommended that the reduction be kept at 30%.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Constitution required the Cabinet to approve the draft Council Tax Support scheme for consultation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. No change and keep council tax support at a 30% reduction

For Peterborough this would result in an additional pressure of around £1m and savings to be made from elsewhere in its budget. This could also affect the services provided by our Fire and Police Authorities as over 17% of the council tax that is collected is distributed to these preceptors.

If the Council were to absorb the deficit, it would then have to find savings elsewhere in the budget due to the limited amount of resources available to run all Council services. Given the reductions in grant the Council was facing, further reductions of £1m would have a significant impact.

The Council had released its first phase of budget proposals for 2015/16. Respondents to the CTSS consultation would be encouraged to review the budget proposals to determine whether they would prefer changes to CTSS, or additional savings to be found elsewhere in the Council budget.

2. Design a local scheme to deliver £1m savings – a 50% reduction

To reduce all CTB equally - as the Government had made clear that pensioners must be protected, the whole of this shortfall would need to be met by working age claimants. As a result, to meet the £1m funding shortfall, the reduction would need to increase from 30% to around 50%.

3. Somewhere in between

As with the option of 'no change', absorbing any deficit from a shortfall in funding would impact on the services that the Council currently delivered, but would mean a lesser impact on benefit recipients. Options to be considered could include further reducing council tax support:

- From 30% to 35% to save £0.25m (and £0.75m being found elsewhere in the council's budget)
- From 30% to 40% to save £0.50m (and £0.5m being found elsewhere in the council's budget)

The Council had previously considered other changes, for example, introducing a maximum or minimum level of support. These had been rejected as they made the scheme more complex and generated little saving. As such the straightforward overall reduction was maintained for any changes.

7. COUNCIL TAX AND NNDR

Cabinet received a report which formed part of the preparation for setting the council's budget. It needed to be considered so that figures for the tax base, the Collection Fund and the amount of business rates to be collected could be used in setting the Council Tax and business rate income and could be notified to other affected authorities.

Councillor Seaton introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within. The Council's Executive Director Resources added further points of clarification around the issue.

Following a brief debate it was agreed by Cabinet that a letter be written to Government with regards to addressing outstanding business rates appeals.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

1. To propose the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2015/16 set at a level of 52,748.5 Band D equivalent properties based on a council tax support scheme of 40%, delegating authority of final confirmation of the Band D equivalent properties to Executive Director Resources following approval of the council tax support scheme by Council on 28 January;
2. To note the estimated position on the Collection Fund in respect of Council Tax as at 31 March 2015 being:

Council Tax £0

3. To note the estimated position on the Collection Fund in respect of Business Rates as at 31 March 2015 being a deficit position from increasing the appeals provision for the power station:

Business Rates £3.106m deficit

4. To delegate to the Executive Director Resources authority for approving and returning the final NNDR1 return to the Secretary of State by 31 January 2015 to include any further revision to the business rates position 2014/15 and Business Rate income 2015/16.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Council Tax Base could be set at a higher or lower level. However, this could have the effect of either inflating unnecessarily the amount of Council Tax to be set or setting the tax at a level insufficient to meet the Council's budget requirements. A similar position could arise if the surplus or deficit were set at a higher or lower level.

The calculation and return of the information included in the NNDR1 was a statutory requirement which could be formally delegated to an officer. As with council tax if the amount of business rates estimated to be collected was increased or reduced or the surplus or deficit was set at a higher or lower level then the amount of income available to the council would change with the consequent effect on service provision or council tax levels.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The report to Cabinet covered calculations that were all prescribed by regulations with the effect that no other options needed to be considered. Furthermore, alternative tax base calculations had been prepared dependent on the option Council approved on the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16.

8. BUDGET 2015/16 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2024/25

Cabinet received a report as part of the Council's formal budget process set out within the constitution and legislative requirements to set a balanced budget for 2015/16 and medium term financial strategy to 2024/25.

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to commence the second and formal process to set a balanced budget for 2015/16 and medium term financial strategy to 2024/25 in line with the provisional local government finance settlement for 2015/16.

Following Council approval of phase one budget proposals at the meeting of 17 December 2014, the report set out phase two budget proposals for consultation to enable Cabinet at its meeting on 23 February to make recommendations to be made to the meeting of Council on 4 March 2015.

Councillor Seaton introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within.

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

- The proposals which had been deferred from phase one to phase two, including were subject to ongoing discussions;
- It was disappointing that comments had been made by some Members in relation to a couple of small typos contained within such an extensive and well put together report;
- There had been no increase in council tax as this would mean the Council would lose a substantial government grant awarded to council's that froze council tax, the amount lost against any additional charges would only mean a small increase in the Council's budget;
- Keeping council tax low was a positive thing for household finances; and
- If Council Tax was increased, this would have an incremental affect upon Council Tax Support.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

1. To commence formal budget consultation that set a balanced budget for 2015/16 and the medium term financial strategy to 2024/5 in line with the announcement of the local government provisional settlement for 2015/16 that:
 - a. is set in the context of the council priorities;
 - b. takes note of the budget monitoring position for 2014/15;
 - c. presents the draft revenue budget for 2015/16 and proposed cash limits for 2016/17 to 2024/25 (including the investment and saving proposals);
 - d. presents the draft capital programme for 2015/16 and proposed cash limits to 2024/25 and associated capital strategy, treasury strategy and asset management plan;
 - e. proposes a council tax freeze in 2015/16 with indicative increases for planning purposes of two per cent for 2016/17 to 2024/25;
 - f. education funding is spent at the level of funding resources available to both schools and the council in 2015/16 and future estimates to 2024/25;
 - g. the budget for 2015/16 is supported adequately with reserves, provisions and robust budget estimates set in the context of the risks outlined in the report; and

- h. presents the draft fees and charges for 2015/16.
2. To seek feedback from Scrutiny and views from all residents, partner organisations, businesses and other interested parties on the budget and budget proposals outlined in the budget consultation document for phase two;
 3. To have regard for the continuing uncertainty of national public finances that would not become known until the next parliament commenced, making it unrealistic to forecast with accuracy future government grants beyond the further grant reductions; and
 4. To note that government grants would not be confirmed until the final settlement was released in February 2015.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Council must set a lawful and balanced budget.

The Council was required to set a Council Tax for 2015/16 within statutory prescribed timescales and in accordance with the local referendum requirements contained within the Localism Act 2011.

Before setting the level of Council Tax, the Council must have agreed a balanced budget.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Alternative budget proposals had been considered and rejected by Cabinet and had also been shared with the budget working group over the budget setting period. Cabinet rejected these budget proposals on the basis that the proposals would be detrimental to public service delivery or impact on delivery of the council priorities following feedback from the budget conversation undertaken over the past few months.

Cabinet considered alternative council tax levels and for the reasons set out within the Cabinet report, recommend that the offer by government to freeze council tax represented the best value for the residents of Peterborough.

9. CREATION OF A PETERBOROUGH DOMESTIC ENERGY SUPPLY TARIFF

Cabinet received a report to further the Council's strategic aim of becoming an environment capital.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to enter into a strategic partnership agreement with OVO for the development of an energy partnership in Peterborough and as part of the first project under that strategic partnership, to enter into a tariff agreement with OVO for the provision of domestic energy supply tariffs in Peterborough.

Councillor North introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within. The Council's Executive Director Resources added further points of clarification around the issue and advised of the benefits that the tariff would bring to the city.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

1. That Council entered into a strategic partnership agreement for the development of an energy partnership in Peterborough with OVO Energy Limited ("OVO"); and

2. That Council entered into a tariff agreement for the provision of domestic energy and supply tariffs in Peterborough with OVO.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To enable the Council to offer what was anticipated to be the UK's lowest-priced energy tariff for dual fuel and prepayment metering to be implemented in Peterborough area; as well as introducing a highly competitive single-fuel offering.

The opportunity to enter into a partnership with OVO as an established regulated energy company within the market reduced the cost and regulatory burden to the Council in fulfilling its strategic objectives.

The strategic partnership agreement would allow the Council and OVO to explore and develop other energy supply opportunities which could assist the Council in reducing fuel poverty in the Peterborough area and contribute to the Council's wider strategic goal of becoming the UK's Environment Capital.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council could determine not to pursue the Peterborough Tariff and simply continued with the existing schemes. However, it would then lose the opportunity to make a significant impact on local fuel poverty through a direct reduction in residents' fuel bills.

The Council could pursue a local tariff by becoming a utility and creating its own tariff. This had been ruled out on the basis of the significant additional regulatory and other administrative set up and running costs which would be incurred.

10. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL AND AVIC INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION (UK) LTD

Cabinet received a report from the Executive Director, Resources.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding a strategic partnership arrangement (SPA) between Peterborough City Council and AVIC International Corporation (UK) Limited (AVIC).

Councillor Elsey introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within. The Council's Executive Director Resources added further points of clarification around the issue, advising of the benefits that the partnership would bring and further advising that each project coming forward would be subject to individual scrutiny.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

To approve Council entering into a memorandum of understanding regarding a strategic partnership arrangement with AVIC International Corporation (UK) Limited.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To enable a memorandum of understanding regarding a strategic partnership arrangement to be entered into.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To continue pursuing existing priorities without having an international partner in place. This would mean that the Council would not benefit from the expertise, experience and supply chain benefits of an international partner.

To pursue the additional projects anticipated by the strategic partnership separately. The Council would then incur additional expense in treating each project individually and in procuring individual solutions.

MONITORING ITEMS

11. OUTCOME OF PETITIONS

Cabinet received a report following the presentation of petitions at the Council meeting of 17 December 2014.

The purpose of the report was to update Cabinet on the progress made in relation to these petitions, these being:

- i) Petition relating to Bushfield Bowls Club; and
- ii) Petition relating to Bretton Library.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

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

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

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.

The proposals in respect of bowling greens had been deferred for phase 2 of the Budget consultation. Phase 2 of the budget also covered the proposals for the library service. The petitions received would be considered alongside the Council's analysis of all further consultation responses received in respect of phase 2 budget proposals.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There were no alternative options considered.

Chairman
10.00am - 11.10am