

PETERBOROUGH



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE BOUGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL ON 16 OCTOBER 2014

Present: Councillors N Arculus (Chairman), R Brown, S Allen, J Stokes, JA Fox, N Thulbourn, M Fletcher

Also Present: Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement
Councillor North, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital
Councillor Sandford, Group Leader, Liberal Democrats
Councillor JR Fox, Group Leader, Werrington First
Steve Bowyer, Acting Chief Executive, Opportunity Peterborough (OPP)

Officers Present: Simon Machen, Director of Growth and Regeneration
Andrew Edwards, Head of Growth and Regeneration
Charlotte Palmer, Environment Strategy and Future City Manager
Jon Petralanda, Climate Change Technical Officer
Jonathan Lewis, Assistant Director Education Resources and Corporate Property
Paulina Ford, Senior Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Maqbool and Councillor Iqbal. Cllr Stokes was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Maqbool and Councillor Allen was in attendance for substitute for Councillor Iqbal.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of Meetings held on 4 September 2014.

The minutes of the meetings held on 4 September 2014 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. Portfolio Progress Report from Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing Development and Business Engagement and provided the Committee with an update on the progress of items under the responsibility of the Cabinet Member.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members noted that it was positive that nearly all the shops were occupied on Bridge Street and were optimistic about the future partnership with the Cosy Club. *The Cabinet Member advised Members that the vacancy rate in the city was the lowest it had been for some time. There was only one shop which was yet to be let not including the pop-up Christmas shop which was a temporary arrangement for the holidays.*
- Councillor Sandford referred to page 13, paragraphs 5.13 and 5.14 of the report and commented that two thirds of Peterborough was not parished. What strategy was in place to ensure that residents living in non parished areas could benefit from the Community Infrastructure Levy? *The Cabinet member responded that there were many areas which had expressed an interest in parishing. The Community Infrastructure Levy did not preclude non parished areas from having 25% of the CIL.*
- Councillor Sandford asked what strategy was in place to ensure Parishes had meaningful powers. *The Cabinet Member responded that he would like Parishes to have more power and that new legislation could assist with this however communities could not be forced to do this.*
- Councillor Sandford stated that the Council was under severe budgetary constraints and that there was no capping of Parish Precepts as there were for council tax rates. He asked therefore if there was a strategy in place to change this. *The Cabinet member responded that there was no strategy in place and that Parishes had their own powers and they could use them in the way they wished within the law. The Council could not dictate what Parishes could do with regard to their Precept.*
- Members stated that the majority of Parish Councils were comprised in large part of co-opted members and therefore volunteers and whilst they often began with good intentions they often lost their way. *The Cabinet member responded that he understood these concerns but there was always an election for Parish Councillors and members were only co-opted in the absence of an elected candidate.*
- Members asked how the growth strategy would tie in with the work of Opportunity Peterborough. *The Director of Growth and Regeneration stated that Opportunity Peterborough's Economic Action Plan was the same as the Council's as the company was owned by the Council. The Acting Chief Executive, Opportunity Peterborough stated that he worked closely with the Director of Growth and Regeneration and that the Growth Strategy would be reviewed by scrutiny. The Cabinet Member stated that Opportunity Peterborough was only responsible for delivering part of the city's Growth Strategy and therefore could only answer for those areas for which it was responsible.*
- Members requested that in future reports data presented should show both positive and negative information so that Members could see what areas needed to be improved as well as those that had been successful.
- Members stated that the economic page on the council's website was showing outdated reports from 2009. *The Cabinet Member responded that the website was currently being overhauled but if members could supply links to where there was outdated information this would be addressed. The Acting Chief Executive, Opportunity Peterborough stated that the Opportunity Peterborough website had more up to date information and there would be regular 'State of the Nation' reports published in the future.*
- Councillor Sandford stated that there had been concerns regarding the transparency of who was investing in the joint venture company including the possibility of investment from despotic regimes. *The Director of Growth and Regeneration said that information regarding investment would become available soon however it was not always available as investors were not always known as they were owned by investment institutions. There were however regulatory mechanisms in place to ensure that an investment was legitimate.*
- Members asked for a brief statement of where the city would go in the next 12 months. *The Cabinet Member responded that a deal was being negotiated with landowners in the city to support a manufacturing company to come into the city bringing 300 new jobs. There were also two major projects currently being undertaken which could be of a very large scale. Further Public Realm work would be undertaken along Bridge Street towards*

Asda. Peterborough needed to ensure its competitiveness in order to ensure that it was not strangled by the economic powerhouses to the North and the South.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report.

6. Asset Disposals – 2014/15

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director, Education, Resources and Corporate Property and provided the Committee with an outline of the council's requirements for asset disposal in the medium term financial plan and progress to date in achieving these disposals.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members stated that it was not market value which needed to be addressed, but the cost to the council of holding assets in terms of its budget. *The Assistant Director, Education, Resources and Corporate Property stated that some assets would generate income. There were costs and benefits to holding assets.*
- Members stated that the debt repayment model had been changed a few years ago from an annual interest model to an annuity model which was more expensive to the council. It had been sold to councillors at Full Council on the basis that additional capital asset disposals would be made above and beyond those usually scheduled. How was this progressing? *Members were informed that the figures delivered were reflective of the discussion which had taken place in 2009 when the model had been changed. Targets were likely to be nearly met.*
- Councillor Sandford referred to paragraph 5.7 on page 19 and the statement that 'surplus recreational space' would be sold and asked what this referred to. *Members were advised that every asset that the council owned was being looked at in order to potentially generate capital receipts. The areas would likely be surplus plots within recreational spaces which could be yielded but this would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There was no definitive list.*
- Members were concerned about the possibility of natural green space being sold off. *Members were informed that this would have to be looked at closely in order to comply with legislation and that plots of land used for example in anti-social ways would be looked at in terms of how they could be better used.*
- Members referred to the assets listing on page 21 and asked for an explanation regarding the food hall and market particularly how the logistics of the sale would be managed. *Members were advised that this referred to the land not the function of the market. The market needed investment and many options were being considered but the function would not necessarily disappear but the site could be used in a different way.*
- Members asked which area in Orton Brimbles was being referred to in paragraph 5.6 on page 19, and what "larger portfolio" referred to. *Members were advised that information on the land at Gostwick, Orton Brimbles could be supplied but was not available at the meeting. With regard to the larger portfolio consideration was being given to grouping some assets together to give a better size and scale which would make them more interesting to such organisations as housing associations.*
- One Member stated that the 3,000 acres of farm estates could be sold making around £36M and would solve many of the Council's debt problems. *Members were informed that it was not a straightforward process and the farms estate was currently valued at around £12M on the council's accounts. The farm estates were currently being looked at by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group including the value of the farm estates.*
- Members felt that the Council should have the farm estates valued by an agricultural valuer. *The Assistant Director, Education, Resources and Corporate Property stated that the Council had last valued the estate at the start of 2012 and there would be a new valuation coming up shortly.*

- Members asked how communities would be interacted with to ensure that their opinions were heard on these matters. *Members were advised that non-financial and financial aspects were considered when disposal of an asset was being considered. Regarding public engagement there would be consultation exercises in all instances where there was community interest in assets that were being considered for disposal.*
- Members followed-up asking what procedure was in place if for instance there was widespread community opposition to a recommendation to sell a particular asset. *Members were advised that officers would actively seek the views of the community.*
- Members asked whose responsibility it was to deliver community opinions to officers. *The Assistant Director, Education, Resources and Corporate Property stated that it was his responsibility to solicit community opinions but the decision to sell would be made through a Cabinet Member Decision Notice.*
- Members stated that the community group running the Green Backyard had produced a business case and asked whether the provisions in paragraph 4.6 would apply regarding the Council disposing of an asset below market value. *The Assistant Director, Education, Resources and Corporate Property responded that it would. The value of an asset could not be struck off however and an appropriate value still needed to be yielded.*
- Members referred to paragraph 4.5, page 18 which stated “*borrowing a £1M capital receipt which costs around £63K a year in borrowing*”. How many of the council assets yielded 6.3%. *Members were informed that some of the commercial sites did and in some cases return even more than that. These were not listed in the report.*
- Members asked how assets were added onto the list which was in the report. *The Assistant Director, Education, Resources and Corporate Property responded that things are added and taken off by officers and the list was a dynamic and changing one.*
- Members felt that there should be more information about the consultation process included in the report. *The Assistant Director, Education, Resources and Corporate Property stated that he would put more detail in future reports.*
- Members asked if the Green Backyard was suitable to build on. *Members were informed that there was an electricity line nearby but it was nonetheless safe to build on.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report.

7. Update on Peterborough City Councils 2013/2014 Carbon Emissions as Submitted Under Different Reporting Requirements.

The report was introduced by the Environment Strategy and Future City Manager and provided an update on Peterborough City Council's 2013/14 carbon dioxide emissions. The report covered three different carbon emission reports:

- Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRC)
- Carbon Management Action Plan (CMAP)
- Greenhouse Gas Report (GHG)

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members asked what Honeywell were doing. *The Environment Strategy and Future City Manager stated that they were looking at all of the council's assets to see how they can improve the energy efficiency of each building.*
- Members asked how a tonne of CO₂ was measured. *Members were informed that it was a complex process. For every kilowatt hour of electricity that was used in a home there was a conversion factor to work out how much carbon dioxide was emitted into the atmosphere. This was a government conversion calculation and was used uniformly across the country.*

- Members referred to the data in the report which showed that schools had shown higher reductions in CO2 emissions than council buildings which had increased. Why was this? *Members were advised that a lot of work had been done with schools to improve their carbon efficiency. The Director of Growth and Regeneration stated that with regards to council buildings one of the reasons the reduction was not as good as it could have been was because the council had not invested in some buildings that were likely to be disposed of.*
- Councillor Sandford asked if getting an overview of the impact on climate change also need included carbon sequestration. *Members were advised that the measurement of carbon sequestration was not measured within the scope of the study. The carbon reduction scheme complied with very specific mandatory rules which had to be adhered to.*
- Members asked how many emissions in the city come from farmland in the city. *The Environment Strategy and Future City Manager responded that she did not know but would come back to members at a later date with this information.*
- Members asked whose job it was to look into street lights which were left on in barely-used car parks. *Members were informed which service area looked after street lighting. Street lighting could be motion-activated but this would come with a cost.*
- Members expressed concern that CO2 per capita in Peterborough was close to being considered “very high”. Why was this? *Members were advised that Peterborough compared favourably across the East of England. Some of the data which the council draws upon was based on historical data. Measures implemented more recently would take longer to have an effect.*
- Members asked which figures were being used as a baseline and most reliable for the city as a whole. *The Director of Growth and Regeneration responded that different figures represented different priorities and the key was the application of the figures.*
- Members felt that there needed to be a more proactive approach to reducing CO2 emissions rather than merely monitoring CO2 emissions. *Members were advised that there had been significant reductions in business transport emissions as a result of action by the council. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital responded that a considerable amount was being done to reduce the CO2 emissions but there were budgetary considerations and therefore a need to be realistic about what could be delivered.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report.

8. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following month. Members were invited to comment on the Forward Plan and, where appropriate identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee’s work programme.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and requested further information on the following key decision:

- Future of the Eight Former Play Centres – KEY/02MAY14/01

9. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee’s Work Programme for 2014/15 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

After a short discussion it was agreed that the following item - Community Assets Rationalisation Programme be removed from the work programme for the 6 November 2014 meeting.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2014/15 and the Senior Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 6 November 2014

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.15pm

CHAIRMAN