



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON
WEDNESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Present: Councillors: Forbes (Chairman), Ash (Vice Chairman) Iqbal, Faustino, Bisby, Martin, and J R Fox

Officers in Attendance:

Adrian Chapman	Service Director for Adult Services and Communities
Belinda Child	Head of Housing & Health Improvement
Clair George	Senior Road Safety Officer
Dania Castagliuolo	Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

Councillor Hiller	Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development
Councillor Sandford	Group Leader, Liberal Democrats
Councillor Jamil	Group Leader, Labour
Karl Bowden	Safer Peterborough Partnership, Deputy Manager
Sgt. Chris Huggins	Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Oliver Sainsbury	Youth Councillor
Hani Mustafa	Youth Councillor

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Item 8 – Proposed Selective Licensing Scheme for the Gladstone, Millfield, New England and Eastfield areas of Peterborough

Councillor Jamil, who was in attendance at the meeting as Labour group leader, declared an interest in Item 8 on the agenda and advised the Committee that he had obtained dispensation from the Monitoring Officer to speak on this item.

Councillor Khan and Councillor Nadeem were also in attendance, in the public gallery, and declared an interest in item 8 on the agenda, they advised the Committee that they had also obtained dispensation from the Monitoring Officer to speak on this item.

3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 22 July 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2015 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.

The Chairman advised the Committee that there had been a request from Officers to move Item 8, Proposed Selective Licensing Scheme for the Gladstone, Millfield, New England and Eastfield areas of Peterborough up to Item 5 on the agenda, due to the amount of public interest in the item.

The Committee agreed for Item 8 to be moved up the agenda to item 5.

8. Proposed Selective Licensing Scheme for the Gladstone, Millfield, New England and Eastfield areas of Peterborough

The Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development provided the Committee with a statement, which included the following proposal:

- To defer the decision to implement Selective Licensing and instead to develop proposals for a new scheme which would take full advantage of the opportunities created through the new legislation. This would enable the Council to consider how other areas of Peterborough might be impacted by the new eligibility criteria for Selective Licensing which may lead to a broader scheme.

Under these new arrangements, the Council would be required to consult publicly and in full again on the new proposals, and take in to account the outcomes of that consultation before a final decision was made. Details of this new consultation would be announced shortly.

It was confirmed that if the new proposals affected more than 20% of Peterborough's private rented housing under new regulations they would require Secretary of State approval, prior to implementation of the scheme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Statement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The Committee endorsed the statement made by the Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development and recommended the following:
 - That the Cabinet deferred the decision on selective licensing to enable further work to be carried out;
 - that all areas of Peterborough were assessed for eligibility for the Selective Licensing Scheme and any new proposals for Selective Licensing included all areas which had evidence to support the implementation of the Selective Licensing Scheme;
 - that all work was to be carried out in partnership with Members, Residents, Tenants and Landlords, and
 - that an update on progress was brought to the Committee at its meeting on 20 January 2016.
- 2) The Committee recommended to the Service Director for Adult Services and Communities that a Task and Finish Group was set up to support officers in gathering up to date evidence on areas affected by rogue landlords and identify the boundary which was most appropriate for the Selective Licensing Scheme to be implemented within the city.

5. Portfolio Progress Report from Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing, and Economic Development

The Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development introduced the report which provided the Committee with a progress report on work carried out on matters relevant to the Committee.

The Head of Housing and Health Improvement highlighted the following key points within the report:

Housing Programmes

- Empty Homes which included:
 - Empty Dwelling Management Orders
 - Empty Homes Partnership – this scheme had now come to an end, whilst in operation it saw the return to use of 7 long term empty properties.
 - Consulting with other Councils and Shared Service Arrangements
 - Council Tax Partnership – Owners of empty properties were notified of certain milestones within their Council Tax account.

- Housing Related Support which included:
 - Continued contribution to the funding of support staff in homeless hostels, floating outreach support and drop-in support services to vulnerable groups.
 - The new performance monitoring framework which had now been embedded with providers, reporting on a quarterly basis the number of people accessing services.

- Heataborough
- Care and Repair

Housing Needs

- Homelessness in Peterborough – the service continued to deliver a housing options approach when dealing with clients who approached the authority for assistance.
- Rent deposit scheme – which enabled people to access an interest free loan to be used for upfront costs associated with private rented properties.
- The Peterborough Homes Scheme and Choice Based Lettings – The Council worked in partnership with 10 registered providers of social housing who had significant numbers of social housing in the city.
- Rough Sleeping in Peterborough – The Council had a rough sleeper outreach officer who assisted individuals who found themselves sleeping rough after losing their accommodation.
- Single Person Homelessness – The service remained committed to supporting single homeless people to prevent them from sleeping rough.

Housing Enforcement

- Improving Energy Efficiency – Working with landlords in Central and East areas of the city to encourage and promote the Heataborough Scheme.
- Selective Licensing
- Raising Awareness – The Housing Enforcement Team had appeared on channel 5 in a series called 'Nightmare Tenants and Slum Landlords'.
- Partnership Working – The team had been working closely with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, Police and the Planning Department on a number of cases where landlords had turned commercial properties in to rented living accommodation.

- Tenancy Relations – The team continued to find some landlords who would evict tenants rather than carry out repairs on their properties.
- Mobile home Parks – The introduction of the Mobile Homes Act 2013, allowed the Council to charge owners of park home sites for inspection and issuing of the Park Home licenses.

The Committee was asked to scrutinise the report and, provide challenge where necessary and suggest ideas and initiatives to support the continued delivery of priorities.

Questions and comments were raised around the following areas:

- Members were concerned regarding the increase in people begging in the city centre and asked for reassurance that these people had been approached and offered help. *The Head of Housing and Health Improvement reassured the Committee that all people begging in the city centre had been approached and offered support. Officers would endeavour to get rough sleepers who were not from Peterborough back to where they had a connection. Members were informed that there was no need for rough sleeping in the city, in some cases it was a lifestyle choice.*
- Members queried whether there was support available to rough sleepers who did not have a connection with Peterborough and did not want to return to their place of residence. *Members were advised that the Council would attempt to offer help within the private rented sector with the Rent Deposit Scheme. Officers would try to contact friends and family of rough sleeper and also to discover the reasons why they were in Peterborough. They would not be entitled to access services until they had built up connection in Peterborough and met the necessary criteria.*
- Members queried whether all people seen begging in the city centre were rough sleeping or if it was a way of earning money. *Members were informed that not all of the people begging in the city centre were homeless, 17 were rough sleeping and would engage on and off with Officers, the others seen were not homeless.*
- Members were concerned that the work carried out with Channel 5 could portray people's problems as entertainment. *Members were advised that Channel 5 had never made any suggestions to sensationalise the issues. The series was directed towards myth busting and getting the accurate information out to the public.*
- Members queried whether the Council were strict when landlords were non-compliant with regulations. *Members were informed that if non-compliant landlords did not work with the Council to improve the state of their properties then a statutory notice would be served and they could be prosecuted.*
- Members queried what the role of Officers was with regards to Empty Homes and what action was taken to encourage the empty home owner to return their properties to use. *The Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development responded that the Council currently employed 4 Empty Homes Officers and some of the empty homes were relatively easy to get back in to occupation. Houses were left empty for reasons such as inheritance, people being cared for or repair costs being too high. The head of Housing and Health Improvement added that often people did not know what to do with their empty home and they would contact the Officers for advice, the Officers would advise them on options. If houses were not brought back in to occupation, an Empty Dwellings Management Order would be issued.*
- Members queried the milestones which were highlighted on page 11 of the report, part 5.1.7 'Council Tax Partnership'. *The Head of Housing and Health Improvement informed the Committee that the milestones were to ensure that information was shared between the Council Tax Department and the Empty Homes Officers to prevent wrong figures relating to empty homes being recorded.*
- The Chairman of the Committee congratulated the Care and Repair Team on the work they carry out.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee agreed for the Head of Housing and Health Improvement to investigate the possibility of the Council working in partnership with local businesses to assist vulnerable people in the city, this could fit in with the Council's emerging Volunteer Strategy.

6. Road Safety

The Senior Road Safety Officer introduced the report which provided Members with details of accidents happening on Peterborough roads, partnership work being delivered to reduce the number of casualties and future opportunities for casualty reduction.

Questions and comments were raised around the following areas:

- Members queried whether work related accidents could largely be caused by people rushing to meet a deadline or time limit set by employers. *The Senior Road Safety Officer responded that there were no definite figures to prove this. Employers were advised when receiving talks on road safety that they could be found liable in court if an accident did occur due to restrictions or deadlines given.*
- Members referred to page 28 of the report, section 4.8 and queried whether the Partnership had considered demonstrating to drivers that there were alternative means of transport to get across the city. *The Senior Road Safety Officer advised Members that work was carried out with the Travel Choice team to promote sustainable transport options.*
- Members queried how many of the accidents shown within the graphs on pages 29 and 30 of the report were caused by cyclists. *Members were advised that almost none of the accidents had been reported to have been caused by cyclists.*
- Members queried whether the Partnership went in to organisations to discuss Road Safety. *Members were informed that the Partnership had recently contacted HGV mobile drivers and been to Perkins and other distribution centres in Fletton, to discuss Road Safety.*
- A youth Council Representative asked for clarification on whether the Partnership worked with all schools in the city or with targeted schools only. *Members were advised that the Partnership offered to work with all secondary schools in the city and targeted primary schools.*
- A youth Council Representative queried how the Partnership decided which areas became targeted. *Members were advised that data was looked at and the targeted high risk areas were those which proved to have high casualty data.*
- *The Safer Peterborough Partnership, Deputy Manager commented that data provided from the past two years suggested that there had been a 20 % reduction in Fire Service attendance at Road Traffic Collisions, this indicated that the road safety education element was effective. The improvement of infrastructure on Peterborough roads had also contributed to the reduction of Road Traffic Collisions. The average speed cameras had also appeared to have had a beneficial impact on the reduction of Road Traffic Collisions.*
- *The Cambridgeshire Constabulary Representative commented that the road policing unit applied their specialist skills to look at offences or issues which occurred on the roads. The Department for Transport advertises several campaigns and their calendar was set to focus resources on important topics for certain times of the year.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee agreed for the Road Safety Officer to:

- Investigate the possibility of working with professional racers to deliver road safety advice to young people.

- Provide a briefing note on Operation Backfire.
- Provide a briefing note containing a breakdown of how many accidents were caused by cyclists in the city.
- Provide a briefing note on the percentage of KSI's which had occurred on Peterborough's trunk roads.
- Provide a briefing note on how many road traffic accidents were related to drink drivers.
- Investigate the possibility of using existing lampposts to display safety information and reminders.

7. Proposed Scope for the Scrutiny Committee's Communities Strategy Task and Finish Group

The report was introduced to the Committee by the by the Service Director for Adult Services and Communities to provide the Committee with a draft scope for the previously agreed Task and Finish Group which would focus on a new Communities Strategy.

The Committee was asked to review and scrutinise the proposed scope, and, subject to any requirements being incorporated, to approve it in order for the work of the Task and Finish Group to commence.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and agreed to the proposed scope of the new Communities Task and Finish Group.

9. Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the forthcoming month. 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 of Executive Decisions.

10. Work Programme

Members considered the Commission's Work Programme for 2015/16 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

Members noted the work programme for 2015/2016

11. Date of the Next Meeting

The Chair advised the Committee that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 24 November 2015.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.34pm

CHAIRMAN