



MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD 8 FEBRUARY 2016

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members: Councillor Holdich (Chair), Councillor Eley, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Hiller, Councillor Lamb, Councillor North, Councillor Seaton and Councillor Serluca

Cabinet Advisors: Councillor Casey and Councillor Stokes

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Coles and Councillor Maqbool. Councillor Stokes was in attendance, on a voluntary basis, in place of Councillor Maqbool.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. PETITIONS PRESENTED TO CABINET

There were no petitions presented to Cabinet.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Cabinet agreed to vary the order of the agenda and to take item 8, Annual Audit Letter, as the first item of business.

5. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

Cabinet received a report which followed a referral from the Council's External Auditor, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to consider and respond to the Annual Audit Letter for 2014/15, as prepared by PwC.

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the report, highlighting the main issues contained within. It was advised that the Council had once again received a clean bill of health and had received an unqualified Value for Money Opinion from PwC, in regards to the use of resources. As the Council's budget became tighter, the need for rigorous financial management would become ever more important.

The Cabinet Member for Resources thanked Julian Rickett and his team from PwC and wished them all the best for the future as this was the final external audit that PwC would undertake for the Council. This was endorsed by the Cabinet.

Julian Rickett from PwC addressed the Cabinet and added further points of clarification. The lack of issues and brevity of the Audit Letter reflected well on the authority as a whole. Julian Rickett thanked the Cabinet for all of their assistance over PwC's tenure as the Council's external auditors.

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

- The only relative measure, from an auditor's perspective, to rank local authorities was through the Audit Opinions. It had been easier to determine whether Peterborough would be given a clean Opinion than it had been for some other local authorities, but some time had been spent considering Peterborough's budget arrangements.

Cabinet considered and **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Audit Letter for the financial year 2014/15.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Council was required to consider the statutory Annual Audit Letter and to make appropriate arrangements in response to recommendations.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There were no alternative options considered in this instance.

6. PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES' STRATEGY 2016-2020

Cabinet received a report following a recommendation from the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting, held on 20 January 2016.

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to consider the approval of the People and Communities' Strategy 2016–2020 for Peterborough.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital introduced the report highlighting the main issues contained within. The People and Communities' Strategy set out the framework of how the Council would transform the way in which services were delivered and the role that the community and other partner organisations would have in meeting the needs of residents. The Strategy was intended to be the overarching framework for all other policies within the People and Communities Directorate.

The Strategy aimed to engage, involve and empower residents and would build upon the recently adopted Parish Charter. Problems within communities would be identified at an earlier stage so that they could be tackled before they became entrenched.

Peterborough's vibrant voluntary sector and community groups were praised and the intention to support them, in the face of increased demand for services and cuts to funding, were outlined. The valuable input and work of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee was also commended.

Following additional comments from the Council's Service Director Adult Services and Communities, Cabinet debated the report. The Council's Social Inclusion Manager and

Intelligence Manager were present to respond to questions and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The People and Communities' Strategy would help the Council to manage its finances and resources more effectively;
- The People and Communities' Strategy was linked to the Digital Strategy. Tangible outcomes would be visible through the use of technology and its effect on delivering services more successfully. More information would be provided on the website and more services would be available online making information easier to access. Staff would also use technology more efficiently in their everyday roles to facilitate out of office work;
- Staff, in the most part, were enthusiastic about a shift towards more digital work;
- The Council would work with Parish Councils to continue to bridge the gap between the wider public sector and communities;
- The Council would progress the Parish Charter and work would occur to consider how powers could be transferred or delegated to Parish Councils;
- Proposals for the Joint Enforcement scheme, with a particular emphasis on prevention, would come to Cabinet at the end of February. This would consider options for delegating powers to other parts of the system or enabling Parish Councils to purchase additional services or resources;
- Members and Parish Councils could aid the implementation of the Strategy by signposting and advising members of the community of the relevant information and also by reflecting views on how services were being delivered in the community and how these could be adapted;
- The next steps would be to develop the content and plans within the building blocks contained within the Strategy, this being the delivery vehicle of the Strategy. Work would be undertaken with the leads who had developed those building blocks and the Community Innovation Partnership in order to develop the work further;
- Volunteers played a crucial role and increased investment into voluntary groups and community organisations would support volunteers in a more targeted way;
- All parishing work that had been undertaken had been community driven and there was not a 'one size fits all' to community governance; and
- The Belgian model of community support was being explored to see whether it would be appropriate to implement in Peterborough.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to approve the People and Communities' Strategy 2016-2020 for Peterborough, for adoption and implementation across Council services.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Strategy recognised that demand for Council services was increasing and the way services had previously been delivered would be difficult to sustain. The Strategy set out how the Council would manage this increasing demand for services through transforming the way in which services were delivered, whilst ensuring the most vulnerable people still received the help and support they needed.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The only alternative option considered was to do nothing, however this option was not recommended. Given the changes in demand and the reduction in funding to the Council, the Council required a strategy to transform its services to meet these pressures. By not approving this Strategy, the Council could not respond to effectively respond to the demand and financial pressures or strengthen the capacity and resilience within communities.

7. SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT: CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE – REVISED SUMMARY

Cabinet received a report which provided details of the actions recommended to be agreed in order to address the findings of the Ofsted inspection of Children's Social Care which had been undertaken in 2015.

The purpose of the report was to outline a Transformation Plan for Children's Social care for agreement in order to improve practice and outcomes.

The Corporate Director People and Communities introduced the report highlighting the main points contained within. A self-assessment had identified that the turnover of key staff within Children's Social Care, in the 12 months prior to the Ofsted inspection in April 2015, had been too great, this having a negative impact on children, young people and their families. Ofsted had agreed with this and had recommended that steps should be taken to improve the recruitment and retention of permanent qualified social workers.

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

- It was commented that it was difficult for Peterborough to recruit and retain experienced social workers because agency's offered higher wages than the Council and Peterborough provided a more challenging working environment for social workers in comparison to other areas;
- The figure stated within the report of hiring 25 qualified social workers in 2016/17 was an estimated amount and it was hoped that a lower amount would be employed in reality;
- The majority of alternatively qualified workers were settling into their roles well;
- It was not one of the aims of the programme for the alternatively qualified workers to become traditionally qualified social workers but if they wished to, the Council would help them to achieve this;
- Ofsted had specifically recommended that the Council develop a Neglect Strategy because there was evidence of a relatively high level of neglect in Peterborough. This would be implemented in partnership with the Safeguarding Children Board;
- The costs of the recruitment payment scheme had been determined by consulting with other local authorities and by focusing on high levels of retention in the second year of employment for newly qualified social workers;
- The Corporate Director People and Communities was due to chair a workshop focussing on how Peterborough could be sold more positively in terms of recruitment retention aimed at social workers, GPs and teachers; and
- Discussions were due to be undertaken with Cross Keys Homes concerning key worker housing.

Cabinet considered the report, and taking into account the financial implications arising, **RESOLVED** to agree the Transformation Plan for Children's Social Care in order to improve practice and outcomes.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To improve practice and outcomes and respond to Ofsted findings in Children's Social care and to reduce spend on agency social workers.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The only alternative option considered was to do nothing and this would see the continuation of the areas Ofsted had noted for improvement not being addressed and outcomes for children not being improved. It would also see a continued increase in spend of agency social workers.

8. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2016/17 TO 2025/26

Cabinet received a report which was formed part of the Council's formal budget process, as set out within the Constitution and as per legislative requirements to set a balanced budget for 2016/17.

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to consider budget proposals for recommendation to Council on 9 March 2016.

Cabinet would have a further opportunity to review proposals on 29 February 2016, before making a final recommendation to Council.

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the report highlighting the main points contained within. The report updated on the financial picture for the forthcoming year ahead and beyond and how the Council proposed to tackle the financial challenges. The first phase of the budget proposals had been approved and the report started the budget conversation on the second phase.

Following on from government grant cuts of approximately £54 million and increased demand for services worth over £14 million, the Council would need to adapt and improve its efficiency in order to save over £24 million, whilst continuing to invest in the city for the benefit of this, and future generations. The Council had not yet received its financial settlement from the Government for the next year, which had been delayed. An update would be provided on the position at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 29 February 2016.

The second phase of proposals detailed how remaining savings would be made, with there being no proposed reduction in services for residents. The Council aimed to become more self-sufficient by selling services to other local authorities in order to generate income and to continue to take the dividends from growth and invest to make savings in the long term.

The proposals did include a council tax increase, half of which would be used to invest in Adult Social Care. Peterborough would continue to have one of the lowest Council Tax levels in the country.

The budget consultation would remain open until 7 March 2016 and feedback would be considered at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 29 February 2016, with recommendations to be made to Full Council on 9 March 2016.

Following further comments from the Council's Corporate Director Resources and the Service Director Financial Services, Cabinet debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- It was commented that the creation of a Housing Joint Venture Company, with a third party, was actively underway to create all types of housing in the city;
- The Council could only borrow to fund expenditure on assets that had a long term life e.g. schools and road infrastructure improvements;

- In the Phase 2 Budget Proposals, the debt repayment profile would change to a repayment of the same amount every year;
- Investment in transport infrastructure proposed a £10.5 million planned investment in Bourges Boulevard which would focus on cyclists and pedestrians, the development of Junction 20 serving Paston and Norwood and the resurfacing of Nene Parkway;
- There were significant investment proposals alluded to relating to street lighting which would be brought to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration; and
- If the increase in Council Tax did not go ahead then the Council would face £50 million worth of cuts.

Cabinet considered the report and **NOTED**:

1. The advice of the Chief Finance Officer per Schedule A, the continuing uncertainty of national public finances, and the risks surrounding forecasts and budget proposals.
2. That all grant figures were provisional pending the Final Settlement in February

and **APPROVED**:

3. The approach to the Phase 2 budget consultation.
4. The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2025/26 (including Phase 2 budget proposals) for consultation as set out in the Schedules attached to the report which comprised of:
 - a. Report of the Chief Finance Officer.
 - i. Proposed a Council Tax rise of 2% for 2016/17, with indicative increases of 2% for future years for planning purposes.
 - ii. Proposed a Social Care precept of 2% for 2016/17.
 - b. Forecast Revenue Outturn 2015/16.
 - c. Budget Proposals, Key Figures & Cash Limits.
 - i. Approved for consultation the Fees & Charges proposals as detailed in Schedule C section 12 of the report.
 - d. Treasury Strategy & Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.
 - e. Capital Strategy, Programme & Disposal 2016/17 – 2025/26.
 - f. Asset Management Plan.
 - g. Phase 2 Budget Conversation Document.

and further **RESOLVED**:

5. To delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to investigate the government's offer of a four-year finance settlement (Schedule A of the report) and to take action if necessary before the next Cabinet meeting. If this delegated authority was exercised, details would be reported at the next scheduled meeting.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To enable consultation to occur, which will in turn allow Cabinet to recommend to Council the Phase 2 budget proposals.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There had been no alternative options considered in this instance.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital advised that he had recently collected two awards, one on behalf of the Council and one on behalf of Blue Sky Peterborough.

The Peterborough City Council award was the green level award, the most prestigious of the three accreditations and the criteria had been met for the award by achieving a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions; the introduction of five electric cars into the Council's fleet cutting 4137 kg of carbon dioxide; undertaking work to reduce energy consumption and associated carbon emissions; undertaking a tariff optimisation review with Anglian Water which identified savings totaling £14k across corporate sites and school buildings.

The award for Blue Sky Peterborough was also the green award and had been achieved by a 15% reduction in paper use; 7½% reduction in pages printed; 25% reduction on car journeys; opting for conference calls instead of driving to meetings and successfully taking part in zero waste week.

Chairman
10.00am – 11.17am