

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL 2016
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

THE MAYOR – COUNCILLOR JOHN PEACH

Present:

Councillors Aitken, Ash, Ayres, Bisby, Brown, Casey, Coles, Davidson, Elsey, Faustino, Ferris, Fitzgerald, Forbes, Fower, F Fox, JR Fox, JA Fox, Harper, Harrington, Herdman, Hiller, Holdich, Iqbal, Jamil, Johnson, Khan, Knowles, Lamb, Lane, Martin, Murphy, Nadeem, Nawaz, North, Okonkowski, Over, Peach, Rush, Saltmarsh, Sandford, Scott, Seaton, Serluca, Shaheed, Sharp, Shearman, Sylvester, Thacker, Thulbourn, Whitby and Yonga.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Maqbool, Miners, Sanders, Shabbir, Stokes and Swift.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Motions on Notice - Proposed East Anglia Devolution Agreement

Motion from Councillor Ferris, Councillor Fower, Councillor Johnson, Councillor Knowles, Councillor Murphy, Councillor Sandford and Councillor Shaheed

Council notes the announcement by the Chancellor of a devolution deal for the East in his Budget on 16 March; but regrets that the deal, in its current form, is not acceptable to this Council.

Council requests that the Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State for Local Government to bring this resolution to his attention.

Councillor Sandford presented the motion and expressed his thanks for the agreement to hold the Extraordinary Meeting of the Full Council. It was commented that the East Anglia Devolution Agreement was an extraordinary proposal and that each Councillor should have an opportunity at an early stage to express their opinion. It was stated that the wording put forward was the same as that which had been presented and agreed before Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor Sandford commented that the East Anglia Devolution Agreement was being imposed on the relevant local authorities by central government and stated that open debate should occur to determine which type of devolution was best for Peterborough and what area it would cover. Councillor Sandford explained that he rejected the East Anglia Devolution Agreement because of the proposed geographical area, the amount of money available under the deal and the proposed governance arrangements. It was commented that devolution and working with other Councils was supported, but the proposed East Anglia Devolution Agreement was not.

Councillor Murphy seconded the motion and commented that the people of Peterborough should be represented and that the East Anglia Devolution Agreement should have been rejected. He further commented that most of the aspects of the amendment could still occur if the motion was supported and that the amendment did not reject the proposed East Anglia Devolution Agreement. Councillor Murphy commented that Cambridgeshire County Council, Stewart Jackson MP and 90% of the people who responded to the poll in the Evening Telegraph had rejected the deal. Questions from citizens across Peterborough were outlined.

Councillor Murphy commented that the directly elected mayor would cover too large a geographical region and that the person elected would be too remote and expensive. It was further commented that the current deal should be rejected and Members should wait for an alternative offer that was more suitable for Peterborough.

The Mayor advised that Councillor Holdich wished to move an amendment to the motion. The amendment to be moved was as follows:

*This Council notes the announcement by the Chancellor of a devolution deal for the East in his budget on 16th March. But, regrets that the deal, in its current form, ~~is not acceptable to this Council.~~ **appears not to be acceptable to this Council.***

This Council resolves to:

- (i) Set up a Cross Party Working Group of Council to robustly examine the contents of the proposal from Government as well as receiving the results of the engagement/consultation with stakeholders, and the public, with a view to assisting this Council when it meets in June 2016 to determine whether to continue with the statutory consultation.***
- ii) In parallel to (i) above, work with Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council in support of its discussions with Government concerning the desire for a devolution deal to be based on a Peterborough and Cambridgeshire geography and, in particular, advocate for opportunities to join with other Council's surrounding Peterborough who represent a key part of Peterborough's economic geography.***
- iii) Request that the Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State for Local Government to bring this resolution to his attention.***

In moving his amendment, Councillor Holdich commented that when all 23 Leaders, including himself, had signed the Government's offer, they did so to ensure that the content of the deal was made public so that consultation could occur. Furthermore, Councillor Holdich commented that there was no rush to make a decision and the final decision need not be made until September.

Councillor Holdich commented that the amendment should be supported because Members had an obligation to debate the deal properly and in order to do this, they would need to understand the deal, robustly examine its content via the Cross Party Working Group and engage and consult with the public, businesses and stakeholders. It was commented that the deal did not appear to be acceptable at this point but it would be premature to say anything different until all Councillors understood the government's offer. Furthermore, Councillor Holdich expressed that the deal enabled Peterborough City Council to join with neighbouring Councils to allow better representation of the economic geography and to forge strong relationships.

Councillor Hiller seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

Members debated the amendment and in summary raised points including:

- The motion proposed by Councillor Sandford and seconded by Councillor Murphy stated that the deal was not acceptable but it did not cover the reasons why nor did it stress what would be acceptable;
- The Leader, with the support of the Opposition Leaders, had committed the Council to full debate and consultation by the end of June;
- The deal would transfer resources, powers and accountability from central government to local decision makers;
- The commitment in the deal for University Centre Peterborough to attain taught degree awarding powers and, in the longer term establish an independent university institution, must be recognised. This aspect was absolutely critical to the future of Peterborough and central government had recognised and stated its support it;
- The presence of a university in Peterborough would be of great benefit to the city centre, shops, hotels, restaurants, pubs, clubs and the arts and culture sector. It would also benefit public services, housing and new business start-ups;
- The benefit for Peterborough of establishing an independent university institution warranted keeping debate open;
- The democratic right of the people of Peterborough should not be compromised in order to gain a university;
- Although the university would be beneficial, Peterborough currently had a successful branch of the Anglia Ruskin University and Peterborough Regional College;
- The commitment to creating a university in Peterborough was not documented within the document and might not occur;
- The people of Peterborough deserved a democratic set up that would work for them and which would represent them;
- A strong message needed to be sent to central government expressing that Peterborough was not happy with the proposed deal;
- The East Anglia Devolution Deal was unwanted and would be a waste of money;
- The original motion was simple and straight forward and it would have been more beneficial to wait and see the government's response;
- Section two of the amendment was quite prescriptive and discussions with other local authorities should also occur;
- The concept of the East Anglia Devolution Deal set up a new hierarchy and the establishment of a new Mayor, a new administration and new Councillors would cost a lot of money;
- It was originally envisaged that the devolution agreement would be a strategic grouping of Peterborough City Council, working with a few neighbouring Councils, but what was proposed was completely different;
- Both the original motion and amendment were good because it meant that Members were talking about devolution;
- The East Anglia Devolution Deal was completely and utterly wrong for Peterborough;
- The original wording of 'but regrets that the deal, in its current form, is not acceptable to this Council' was more appropriate than the wording of the amendment;
- This was one of the biggest decisions for the Council to make and discuss. Consultation with the public of Peterborough was imperative;
- Questions were raised as to why only 19 Councillors attended the All Party Policy meeting to discuss the issue of devolution;
- The amended motion allowed the possibility of negotiation of further deals with the government;
- A Peterborough Enterprise Zone would be committed to under the East Anglia Devolution Deal;

- Peterborough City Council was not in a position to leave devolution discussions and risk a deal taking place around them;
- The amendment made it clear that any other neighbouring Council could be involved in conversations regarding a suitable devolution deal;
- The East Anglia Devolution Deal would send the Council back 20 years and Peterborough could lose its identity and the ability to make its own decisions;
- The East Anglia Devolution Deal was not a deal and in fact was simply an initial offer which may come to nothing;
- The public consultation time was not long enough and it would be difficult to set up a Working Group in that short timespan;
- There was concern that the East Anglia Devolution Deal was being rushed through by the government;
- There would be no direct benefit in Peterborough accepting the deal;
- The East Anglia Devolution deal would stem Peterborough's growth until the other local authorities involved caught up; and
- Although under the deal, more money would be provided per head than the Manchester deal, the Western powerhouse deal provided substantially higher income per head than the current Eastern deal.

Councillor Yonga presented a document of signatures of Peterborough residents who were against the introduction of the East Anglia Devolution Deal.

Councillor Shearman asked the Monitoring Officer whether the amended motion was appropriate given that it was so different from the original motion. The Monitoring Officer stated that the amendment was acceptable as it expanded upon the original motion.

Councillor Hiller exercised his right to speak and commented that the amendment offered a great opportunity to look further into the offer and the potential benefits to Peterborough but did not commit the Council to anything. Councillor Hiller further commented that the Council's remit would remain unaffected by the East Anglia Devolution Deal and Peterborough City Council's sovereignty as a unitary authority would be retained.

Councillor Sandford, as mover of the original motion, replied and commented that a comprehensive debate had occurred. It was further commented that the original motion was not politically motivated and it was the consensus resolution passed unanimously by Cambridgeshire County Council. Furthermore, Councillor Sandford commented on the wording of the amendment and that public consultation would be more important than a private Working Group in the short time scales.

A vote on the amendment was taken (26 for, 25 against, 0 abstention) and the amendment was **CARRIED**.

Members debated the substantive motion and in summary raised points including:

- It should be stressed that the Council made it apparent to the government how close the vote was and how close the Council had come to rejecting the deal as it currently was;
- Conversations around devolution were occurring on a daily basis between Officers and the Leaders of the respective Councils and no deal had been signed up to;
- All that had been agreed on at the meeting was to continue discussions and to send a positive message;
- Members commented that they would be happy to continue discussions but that the current deal did not amount to devolution and a signal needed to be sent to the government that the Council did not approve of the current deal;

- The money and powers gained through the deal would come from central government and Peterborough City Council's sovereignty would not be compromised; and
- It was commented that the question of what the Council did want of government must be asked.

Councillor Sandford summed up and placed emphasis on Members reading the East Anglia Devolution Deal document carefully. He referred to paragraph 45 of the deal and commented that the wording used did not suffice to a public commitment to a new university in Peterborough. Councillor Sandford further commented that the wording of the amendment pledged to construct a Working Group to examine the current proposals and not to examine future proposals. In addition, Councillor Sandford referred to page 13 and commented that part of the deal was the introduction of a non-statutory regional planning framework which would form part of the process for developing future Local Plans and mayoral development corporations which would handle major strategic projects and would have full planning and implementation powers.

A vote on the substantive motion was taken (28 for, 20 against, 3 abstentions) and the motion was **CARRIED**.

The Mayor
7.00pm – 8.29pm