

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING
HELD AT 9:00AM, ON
MONDAY 22 JUNE 2020
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Cabinet Members Present: Councillor Holdich (Chair), Councillor Allen, Councillor Ayres, Councillor Cereste, Councillor Farooq, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Hiller, Councillor Seaton, Councillor Walsh

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bashir.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 11 MAY 2020

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 May 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

4. PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCILS RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Cabinet received a report in relation to Peterborough City Council's response to the impact of the Coronavirus.

The purpose of this report was to update the Cabinet on the Council's response to the current Coronavirus pandemic, the progress made on assessing financial, service and community impact, and the Council's initial approach to recovery.

The Chief Executive introduced the report and advised that an Outbreak Control Plan was due to be submitted to Government on 30 June, with the draft currently awaiting feedback from the regional team. This would be published within the Health and Wellbeing Board agenda for its meeting on 29 June. It was noted that prevention formed a large part of this plan.

Members were advised that over 1,000 contracts had been awarded in relation to Covid-19 support work, along with the work of mental health services, domestic services, and significant volunteer support. It was further noted that schools were working on expanding their intake, and that local pubs and restaurants may be permitted to open from 4 July.

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

- NHS England and Peterborough Public Health England were currently investigating recent data processing errors.

- Members were advised that as of 20 June there had been 463 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Peterborough. Between 27 March and 29 May there had been 85 deaths.
- It was noted that deaths related to Covid-19 in Peterborough were now declining.
- It was advised that initial requests for support from the public had been in relation to food and medication, however, as time passed these requested shifted to focus more on emotional support around isolation and house maintenance.
- The education teams and social care teams had been working together to identify vulnerable children and assist them in returning to school, or, if this was not possible, schools were conducting wellness checks and providing work at home.
- It was noted that additional money had been received from central Government, which equated to care homes getting an extra £600 per bed. Further funding was also expected from the infection control fund, 25% of which would be allocated to care homes.
- Members discussed the plan for the reopening of the city centre, and considered that the city had been well marked up with assistance from volunteers. It was noted that a number of shops experienced a higher turnout than expected.
- It was noted that toilets were open in Queensgate Shopping Centre and in the Car Haven Car Park.
- Members were advised that officers were working closely with Disability Peterborough to ensure there was no impediment to access to the city for disabled individuals.
- It was noted that St Peter's Arcade had been shut due to the fact that social distancing was not possible.
- Discussion was taking place with business on Cow Gate and Crescent Bridge to determine how pedestrianisation of these areas would work best.
- Members considered that the medium to long term approach to how the city recovered from the pandemic would involve continued work with agencies and organisations, as well as taking a community lead approach.
- In relation to 'Test and Trace' facilities, Members were advised that testing was taking place at the East of England Showground, and the testing time had been reduced to 24 to 48 hours.
- Officers were confident that the Outbreak Management Plan would be able to successful deal with a second wave outbreak, should this occur.
- It was noted that powers to implement a local lockdown remained with central Government, though in such a situation the Council would work closely with local communities to provide necessary support.
- Comment was made in relation to the recent news that Vivacity had triggered its 90 transition period to transfer services back to the Council and Members advised that it was currently too early to make any comment about when services would be reopened.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To keep Cabinet up to date on the latest situation in relation to Covid-19 and the action taken by the Council in response to the emergency.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

If Cabinet were not updated in a formal meeting this would mean that information would not be available to the public and that Cabinet Members would not be able to question officers of debate relevant matters in relation to the Council's Covid-19 response in a transparent manner.

5. EXTENDED SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the extended support to businesses as a result of the Covid-19 Coronavirus.

The purpose of this report was to inform Cabinet of a decision taken in relation to changes to many aspects of the economy providing support to businesses and individuals in various ways.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that as part of this scheme the Government had awarded funding for businesses, which had been allocated to small business, market traders, bed and breakfasts and charities, who had applied for the scheme. As of 19 June, 164 applications had been received. It was advised that further lobbying of Government was taking place in order to provide further funding to business not included in the scheme so far.

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

- It was noted that rate relief for businesses was being received alongside this scheme.
- This scheme, it was advised, was funded by Government from the underspend resulting from the first wave of business support.
- Depending on the overall number of applications received, it may be possible to extend the scheme to a wider range of businesses.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the additional Discretionary Grant Payment Scheme being implemented.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Due to the coronavirus outbreak the government have over the last few months, commencing with the Chancellors budget on 11th March with further updates more recently, made significant changes to the level of support they are providing to business within certain sectors

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None required.

6. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FINAL OUTTURN 2019-20

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Peterborough City Council budget Monitoring Report Final Outturn for 2019/20.

The purpose of this report was to provide Cabinet with the outturn position for both the revenue budget and capital programme for 2019/20, subject to any changes required in the finalisation of the Statement of Accounts

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that through the work of officers at the end of the year £96,000 had been returning to reserves.

Significant actions had been taken throughout the year, including new controls on expenditure, implementing new baselines for budgets, and the successful lobbying of Government. There had, however, been a number of issues resulting from the Covid-19 crisis that had impacted the budget, including the Clinical Commissioning Group and the sale of the London Road Stadium not proceeding.

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

- Members noted the hard work from officers across the Council to reach a break even position.
- It was felt that, due to the Covid-19 crisis, consideration of risk was much more realistic than it had been at the beginning of the financial year.
- It was noted that if the capitalisation direction had not improved as it did the Council would not have had the reserves in place to help it deal with the Covid-19 crisis.
- Staff had successfully adapted their behaviour in relation to recruitment and spending in a way that had ensured that the transition into Covid-19 arrangements had been seamless.
- Members were advised that there was room for improvement in relation to the management of outstanding debt and that a long term goal for the Council would be to try to ensure more payments upfront.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the final outturn position for 2019/20 (subject to finalisation of the statutory Statement of Accounts) of a £0.096m underspend on the Council's revenue budget;
2. Note the reserves position outlined in section 6 and Appendix B, which includes a contribution to the capacity building reserve of £0.096m, as a result of underspend in the revenue outturn report details contained in Appendix A;
3. Note the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position, as outlined within section 5 and Appendix E;
4. Note the outturn spending of £64.3m in the Council's capital programme in 2019/20 outlined in section 7;
5. Note the performance against the prudential indicators outlined in Appendix C;
6. Note the performance on the payment of creditors, collection performance for debtors, local taxation and benefit overpayments outlined in Appendix D.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This monitoring report formed part of the 2019/20 closure of accounts and decision-making framework culminating in the production of the Statement of Accounts and informed Cabinet of the final position.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None required.

7. SUSPENSION OF AFFIXING COUNCIL SEAL TO LEGAL DOCUMENTATION

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the suspension of affixing the Council seal to legal documentation,

The purpose of this report was to for Cabinet note the decision taken by the Chief Executive under Part 4, Section 4.6.1 of the constitution, which permits the Chief Executive to undertake emergency action.

The Corporate Director of Law and Governance introduced the report and advised that the constitution required Cabinet to be notified when the emergency decision making powers of the Chief Executive were used, in this case to relax the requirements around affixing the Council seal to legal documentation.

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

- It was considered that the suspension would affect 15 to 20 documents per month.
- At the current time the Legal Team were rotating attending the office one a week to seal documents not covered by this decision.
- It was noted that the decision allowed for agreements to be implemented more quickly, and saved money on printing and postage.
- Cabinet were advised that sufficient security processes were in place to ensure that the revised process was not compromised.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the decision taken by the Chief Executive under Part 4, Section 4.6.1 of the constitution as set out in this report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To ensure that the Council's resources were used in an effective and efficient manner, together with maintaining the health and safety of employees in relation to the current circumstances relating to COVID-19.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not to note the amendment – This was discounted on the basis of the practical difficulties that may occur following government requirement for officers to work from home.

8. BUDGET CONTROL REPORT APRIL 2020

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Peterborough City Council Budget Control Report for April 2020.

The purpose of this report was to provide Cabinet with the forecast for 2020/21 as at April 2020 budgetary control position.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that the update net overspend on the budget was £5.9million. Due to the Covid-19 crisis a large amount of expenditure was delayed, with a £1.4million positive movement. The financial impact of the pandemic would become more clear in time. It was considered that transformation work needed to continue and that further Government lobbying was needed in relation to Covid-19 in order to bridge the budget gap. Of particular concern was the collection of council tax and business rates.

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

- Members were advised that officers were regularly updating the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government on the Council's financial position. If additional funding was not received, then the balance of the Covid-19 spending would need to be funded from reserves.

- It was noted that some of the Council's capital work had stopped because of social distancing requirements, though these had now resumed.
- A number of acquisitions and disposals were still pending, including the London Road stadium, which was dependent on the football season.
- It was advised that while demand on certain services had increased due to the pandemic, full funding for these had not been received. New ways of working and the associated costs were being addressed.
- It was further noted that the impact of Brexit at the end of the year was still not certain.
- Members considered the work currently undertaken in lobbying Government and noted that both MP's were lobbying as part of a larger group.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note:

1. The Budgetary Control position for 2020/21 as at April 2020 is a forecast overspend of £5.877m against budget. This includes the current estimated impact of COVID-19 and the additional COVID-19 Response funding;
2. Included in this is forecast overspend is £18.3m of additional pressure due to COVID-19, as reported to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, within the monthly returns, as outlined in section 4.
3. The reduction in collection rates in respect of Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates, in comparison to the levels achieved in 2019/20, as outlined in section 4;
4. The additional funding that has been made available and allocated to the business community due to COVID-19, as outlined in section 4;
5. The requirement to continue to lobby for additional funding to minimise the effects of COVID19 on Peterborough, as outlined in section 4;
6. The financial and HR controls the Council is continuing to operate, as outlined in section 4;
7. The key variance analysis and explanations are contained in Appendix A.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To provide Cabinet with the forecast for 2020/21 as at April 2020 budgetary control position.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None provided.

Chairman
9.00am to 10.40am
22 June 2020