

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING  
HELD AT 9:00AM, ON  
MONDAY 13 JULY 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, Councillor Bashir.

**9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**11. MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 22 JUNE 2020**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 June 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record with the following amendments:

Item 4. PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCILS RESPONSE TO COVID-19

1. The item “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” should read between 24 and 48 hours.
2. The item “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” should read 90 day transition period.
3. Councillor Holdich confirmed he had advised members at the meeting that it was currently too early to make any comment about when (*Vivacity*) services would be reopened.

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

1. The item “The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that as part of this scheme the Government had award funding for businesses, which had been allocated to small business, market traders, bed and breakfasts and charities, who had applied for the scheme” should read which was in the process of being allocated.

**STRATEGIC DECISIONS**

**12. 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 the report was to update the Cabinet on the Council's response to the current Coronavirus pandemic, the progress made on assessing the financial, service and community impacts, and the Council's initial approach to recovery.

The Chief Executive introduced the report and explained this was a comprehensive report, covering several different areas and highlighted the main contents and changes to the Covid guidelines. The city centre re-opening had been very successful and the recovery framework was still developing, plans for which would be made available going forward.

The Director for Public Health addressed the committee and summarised the work currently ongoing. She advised that cases were being monitored daily via the surveillance cell. Over the previous four days prior to the meeting there had been a small upturn in cases however the trend continued downwards when compared with the figures for April/May. The Pillar Two test results for Peterborough were higher than the national average and the situation was being closely monitored.

Members were advised of the proactive steps being taken to reduce the number of people becoming infected and a more specific local prevention campaign, called Keep Caring had been launched. Cabinet Members would be provided with details after the meeting and were encouraged to broadcast the contents. Training was underway to take the key public health messages into the community and local groups would be encouraged to help overcome barriers to testing and self-isolating.

Locations where outbreaks occurred were being targeted with more detailed information which was distributed door to door, via social media and faith and community group leaders in appropriate languages. Access to testing facilities was being improved to help prevent the further spread of infection.

The age structure of a population would influence any cause of death statistics and to compare two different locations, mathematical adjustments were required to consider the age of the population where specific age groups were more at risk than others to a specific threat. It was known that Covid deaths were strongly related to age and the risk of death was higher within an aging population, therefore the figures had been adjusted to take this into account.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- Targeted prevention had commenced at an early stage and Peterborough was one of the first places to translate key lockdown messages into other languages on video blogs with the help of community leaders. Throughout the crisis, messages were targeted to the full diversity of Peterborough's population and work had continued through community leaders, communications and cohesion teams.
- Identified risk factors associated with Covid 19 included areas with social and economic issues. This included crowded housing, language differences and employment where social distancing was difficult. The Rapid Response Team, a multi-agency group which included representatives from across the council, environmental health, communications and the police, had worked within Millfield and New England, targeting business and take-aways as the re-opening emerged and would continue to engage with that community to ensure the health messages were clear.

- Messages would continue to be reinforced and it would be necessary to find different ways of retaining people's attention and conveying information.
- Service providers to vulnerable groups would follow appropriate advice and work in ways that kept people safe across the council services.
- Cycling and pedestrian measures have included the reallocating of road space to assist with safe social distancing as part of the city centre re-opening. Measures had been implemented in Broadway, Cattle Market Road and Crescent Bridge and traffic flows would continue to be monitored. Pop up cycle lanes would follow in parts of Broadway and City Road. Consultations were progressing with traders in Cowgate, King Street and Cross Street on proposals for that area.
- Tranche Two funding guidance recently received would release approximately £600,000 of funding. A strong set of proposals including the delivery of the Tranche One proposal would be submitted to attempt to secure the maximum funding. Submissions needed to be presented by 7 August 2020 and proposals implemented within this financial year.
- The Council was focusing on children returning to full time education. Within schools, children would be working collectively in bubbles to protect both the children and staff and the same methodology would be followed regarding transport to restrict the contact children and staff had with each other. This would mean different modes of school transport may be required, ideas included asking parents to take their children to and from school and both parents and children would be encouraged to walk or cycle. More guidance was expected from the Department for Education (DfE) together with more funding.
- Covid cases identified in the Millfield area of Peterborough were not considered a "targeted outbreak" as the cases identified were not specifically restricted to one building or organisation.
- Test and trace data was received daily on identified cases and the number of contacts from those cases. More granular information rather than just postcode data would be helpful to give a fuller understanding of the local situation.
- The council were in contact with the Public Health England (PHE) regional team who would ask the council if they needed help contact contacts of a positive test case and the council could assist through the environmental health team and community groups.
- More up to date information was anticipated on footfalls to the city centre following the re-opening after the 4 July 2020. It was currently not clear which sectors of the business would continue to be viable.

Cabinet Members expressed concerns and comments regarding the following issues:

- Members expressed a wish to see an increase in the pedestrian and cycle access into the city.
- Members expressed concern that the Combined Authority Strategic Bus Group was encouraging the use of buses again whilst the guidance around school transport in this report advised that the use of public transport by pupils, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- Members were also concerned that creating car free zones around schools which the council were encouraging would be a challenge unless pupils were encouraged cycle.
- Members felt that the eyes of the country were currently focused on Peterborough and the situation needed to be taken seriously. The situation could tip in either direction and whilst visitors to the city were being encouraged the public health message must be maintained as the virus had

not gone away. Members felt more localised testing was required within certain postcode areas.

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 information would not be available to the public and Cabinet Members would not be able to question officers or debate relevant matters in relation to the Council's Covid-19 response in a transparent manner.

### **ACTION**

The Director for Public Health agreed to circulate a copy of the local prevention campaign Keep Caring to Cabinet Members.

## **13. BUDGET SETTING PROCESS**

The Cabinet received a report on adopting a revised budget process for 2021/22.

The purpose of this report was to update the Budget Policy Framework Procedure Rules as set out in part 4, section 6 of the Councils Constitution by adopting a permanent change to the Budget Policy Framework which would enable budget proposals to be developed into business cases, scrutinised and implemented throughout the financial period to ensure the Council could maximise the financial benefits as quickly as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that the proposal adjusted the Council's Budget Policy Framework Procedure Rules from a rolling budget approach to that of two distinct phases, one for consultation in the Autumn and another in the Spring. He explained the proposal should have been presented to the Constitution and Ethics Committee in March and then presented to Council however, as this meeting had not taken place, this report was being presented through Cabinet to ensure it could be presented to the next meeting of the Full Council.

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

- The report was considered necessary as the constitution stated there would be a rolling budget with three budget setting processes per year which would not be possible this year, mainly due to uncertainty around the impact of Covid on the Council's budgets. Full Council would be required to agree the change to the constitution for this to be implemented.
- The finance review process conducted last year had recommended that the budget process returned to a two-tier system as the overhead and number of meetings required to have a three-tier system was an overburden on Council resources.
- The proposed change would be implemented for the next financial year 2021/2022.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the updated Budget Policy Framework Procedure Rules, as outlined in Appendix A and recommended the procedure to Council for approval.

### **REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

To ensure a robust approach and deliverable plans were approved in order to achieve a financial sustainability budget for the Council.

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

No other options had been considered. The Council had previously adopted a different rolling budget approach to the budget setting process which was adopted within the Budget Policy Framework Procedure Rules and implemented for the 2019/20 process. However as outlined within this report the Council moved to an extraordinary approach to the budget setting process for 2020/21. This approach was revised mid-year (approved in July 2019), and this report proposed to incorporate the change within the Constitution.

## **14. BUDGET CONTROL REPORT APRIL 2020**

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

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

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that reports presented to the Cabinet previously setting out the implications of Covid were being tracked internally on a weekly basis and regular updates were sent to the Gold Group and local MPs by all councils in Cambridgeshire.

At the end of June, the total Covid pressures were £30.8million taken against £11million funding provided directly by the government and a further £5.7million leaving a forecast Covid pressure of £14.1million. The updated projection across all budgets showed a net position at the end of May was £6.3million, an increase of £0.4million from April despite increased Covid pressures throughout the month of £2.6million, indicating that performance was improving and some departments were not actually spending as much due to the Covid crisis. The demand for extra costs and savings could change quickly as the economy and demand for services evolved and there would need to be continuous review, analysis and re-prioritising to be able to deliver the best impacts from finite resources.

There would also be issues when approaching the 2021/2022 budget due to the additional costs and demands of Covid, the ongoing government funding uncertainty and the tax take. The Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement would take place in late Autumn, providing all Local Authorities with additional challenges when producing budget plans for 2021/22 and future years.

Covid reports were now mostly operational and the focus of Cabinet needed to move towards the strategic priorities, recovery plans and the budget.

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

- The Council were expecting to receive funding from the recently announced Three Tranche Funding. The government had announced that £500million would be given to councils based on the area costs adjustment and population deprivation and it was hoped the actual sum would be announced shortly however this was unlikely to exceed a couple of million pounds.
- The re-imbursement of up to 75% of lost income needed to be considered as it was anticipated that the actual amounts received may be less than expected.
- The government had suggested that council tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) be smoothed over a three-year period, however this would have a significant impact on budgets creating approximately £4-5million revenue pressure per year for the three years.
- The overspend in new terms was £6million which would include the vast majority of the Council's usable reserves.
- Over 100 councils had reported not having any reserves to put towards Covid.
- If the Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement was not out until the end of December, as happened last year, there would be very little time for future planning.
- Like most councils, Peterborough would need intervention from the government to remain sustainable.
- Key risks included increased demand for services as a result of the economic pandemic and how long it continued, uncertainty over government funding, the solution to tax, unemployment and supporting certain business sectors over the next financial year. Revenues could be reduced from investments in office accommodation as a result of decisions for more people to work from home and a reduced demand for office space.
- Consideration would be given to utilising offices and property more effectively.
- Service requirements would need to be re-assessed going forward
- It was anticipated there would be a rise in referrals to Children's Social Care, particularly when children return to school and which may present difficulties for some children. .
- The Covid crisis had presented challenges within family relationships and there had been an increase in domestic abuse.
- There would be a latent demand for Adult Services as some residents had not accessed the health and social services they would have previously because of the lockdown. As the lockdown released, those people could need enhanced support to that usually given as a result of not accessing their usual services over a period of time
- Community carers were reporting tiredness and needed more support as the effects of looking after their families and the community become evident.
- Councils needed to be given time to deal with the current financial position with possibly a three- or four-year recovery period. Suggestions put forward to government included payment holidays for repayments of capital amounts and a pension contribution holiday (as the pension fund was almost fully funded). Such measures would provide a substantial contribution to the recovery process.
- It was inevitable that the global pandemic would affect the national economy however to what degree was largely unknown at this time.

Other comments made by members included:

- That the colour coding used within the report could be improved.

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

1. The Budgetary Control position for 2020/21 as at May 2020 was a forecast overspend of £6.3m against budget. This included the current estimated impact of COVID-19 and the additional COVID-19 Response funding.
2. Included in this was forecast overspend is £30.8m 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 had been made available and allocated to the business community due to COVID-19, as outlined in section 4.
5. The approach to the 2021/22 MTFS as set out in section 4.
6. The key variance analysis and explanations were contained in Appendix A.
7. The Councils reserves position, as outlined within Appendix A.

#### **REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

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

#### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

None provided.

Chairman  
9.00am to 10.15am  
13 July 2020