

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7PM, ON
TUESDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2021
ENGINE SHED, SAND MARTIN HOUSE**

Committee Members Present: Councillors G. Casey. (Chair), J. Allen, C. Fenner, J. Fox, M. Haseeb, A. Iqbal, K. Knight, O. Sainsbury (Vice Chair), N. Sandford, B. Tyler and I. Yasin
Co-opted Member Parish Councillor Neil Boyce

Officers Present: Adrian Chapman – Service Director, Communities and Partnerships
Michael Kelleher – Assistant Director, Housing
Jo Bezant – Housing Enforcement Manager
Rob Hill – Assistant Director, Community Safety
Matt Oliver – Head of Think Communities
David Beauchamp – Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Councillor John Howard – Cabinet Advisor for Housing, Culture and Communities
Supt. Kate Anderson – Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Dr. Pat Carrington - Executive Principle, Peterborough City College.

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest or whipping declarations were received.

25. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 September 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

26. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

There were no requests for call in to consider.

27. SELECTIVE LICENSING CONSULTATION

The report was presented by the Assistant Director, Housing accompanied by the Housing Enforcement Manager. The report invited members to comment and scrutinise on the proposals for the new Selective Licensing Scheme as part of the public consultation.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The 16-week gap between the expiry of the old scheme and the commencement of the new one was not typical. This had occurred because the Secretary of State was minded to approve applications at the start of each financial year. Officers would continue to monitor performance despite the lack of enforcement work during this gap. The Council had achieved the strongest ever relationship with landlords and no dip in quality was expected during this time.
- Council tax information and intelligence from landlords were used to identify new and rogue landlords.
- 35.6% of properties in the areas proposed for selective licensing were in the private rented sector compared with 25.3% across the whole City. These rates were significantly above the levels required for an application to be made. Local, rather than national, averages, were employed and only areas with private rented housing rates above 25% were considered for selective licensing.
- The number of recorded privately rented properties in the previous selective licensing area had increased from 6,200 to 8,000. This was caused by selective licensing, new building conversions and newly registered units (e.g. flats above shops).
- The consultation area for the new scheme was wider than the proposed selective licensing area itself, with 89,000 properties being consulted with and all landlords being engaged. The criteria were the same as the previous scheme. The areas picked were those that met 5 or 6 criteria and this targeted approach was favoured by the Secretary of State. Work still took place to identify Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the City, not just those in areas with Selective Licensing.
- Members requested that the Democratic Services Officer adds an agenda item to the Work Programme on the scrutiny of social housing providers for discussion at the Group Representatives Meeting.
- Members requested that the Democratic Services officer adds a pending agenda item to the Work Programme allowing scrutiny of the final Selective Licensing Policy upon conclusion of the consultation.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Review and scrutinises the proposals for the new Selective Licensing Scheme as part of the public consultation.
2. Comment and respond to the public consultation on the Scheme as it sees fit prior to consideration by Cabinet and/or the relevant Cabinet Member
3. Request that the Democratic Services Officer adds an agenda item to the Work Programme on the scrutiny of social housing providers for discussion at the Group Representatives Meeting.
4. Request that the Democratic Services officer adds a pending agenda item to the Work Programme for scrutiny of the final Selective Licensing Policy upon conclusion of the consultation.

28. CITY MARKET RELOCATION

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Advisor for Housing Culture and Communities accompanied by the Assistant Director, Community Safety. The report gave the Committee an opportunity to scrutinise the plans for the proposed relocation of the City Market.

Cllr Sandford joined the meeting at 7.21pm.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members raised concerns about positioning market stalls under trees unless there was regular cleaning. Officers responded that there was actually an open area that was not clearly shown in the illustration. The proposed location was a popular area of the City. Other members commented that trees were an important part of addressing the climate emergency and would help to provide a pleasant location.
- The area outside the Cathedral was discounted from consideration as it was used to host events.
- The civic area in front of the Town Hall would not be used for the market. The block paved area would be used.
- Members asked how waste from market stalls would be collected and if this would be the responsibility of the Council or the stallholder. Officers responded that the existing process would continue and officers would circulate details of this to Committee Members.
- There would be opportunities to expand the market beyond the fixed units using pop up stands.
- Members praised the prominent location of the new market.
- Discussions were underway with traders regarding opening hours, including the possibility of opening for more than 5 days a week and in the evenings.
- Other areas considered for the market and rejected included Rivergate, Long Causeway and Wellington Street.
- Members asked if consideration had been given to encouraging people into the City Centre via events, which would then drive custom at the market, how plans for the University would be integrated with the Market and what the opinion of market traders was regarding these ideas. Officers responded that these points justified the choice of location by integrating activities in the City Centre. There was a requirement to offer a statutory market but there was scope for it to include other aspects such as culture.

Cllr Haseeb joined the meeting at 7.30pm

- Some traders would not transfer to the new market due to outstanding debts.
- A full procurement exercise would be undertaken for the market. The Northminster Scheme would generate income to pay for it. The final cost was not yet known.
- Members felt the proposals were positive for the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to endorse plans to reinvigorate a new market offer for the City.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to

1. Note and comment upon the proposed relocation of the City Market to Bridge Street, Peterborough.
2. Request that the Assistant Director, Community Safety informs the Committee who took responsibility for clearing litter generated by market stalls.

The report was introduced by the Executive Principle, Peterborough City College, which gave an update on the Council's Adult and Community Learning College over the past 18 months and shared its priorities for the forthcoming academic year.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members commented on the importance of adult learning following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Providing a supportive community environment and representing a cross section of the City was an important part of the of the City College's work.
- The City College used to be a 'Life in the U.K.' test centre but this changed when the model for the tests was revised. A centre could not both offer training for the tests and the tests themselves. English Lessons were offered that included information contained in the tests.
- Work was underway in collaboration with Public Health colleagues to encourage people to register with their G.P. during free English classes to help reduce the pressure on A&E.
- Members asked if there were plans for the City College to help expand access to the new university. Officers responded that their work was aimed at helping young people at a lower level of attainment access further education. A key goal of the College's application to deliver 'T Levels' was to provide opportunities for students to access higher education. Staff were working collaboratively to promote links between the College and University.
- Members asked for information on the links between the college and local businesses. Officers responded that they worked with employers. Conversations with them regarding T Levels would start taking place in April 2022 as the College would not be delivering until 2023. The T Levels would help to address the future skills gap and the College would work with businesses and parents to promote them.
- Members commented that convincing parents of the value of new qualifications was often challenging and asked how this would be done. Officers responded that employer-led higher level apprenticeships would be offered as an alternative to the traditional A level and University route, which was very well established. This alternative would be promoted in collaboration with Opportunity Peterborough.
- Members requested that the Executive Principle, City College Peterborough, liaises with the Combined Authority regarding finding a solution to the lack of construction courses available in Peterborough.
- Members asked if schools would support students to study T Levels. Officers responded that although schools had to abide by the 'Gatsby Principles' of offering independent advice, this was not always done in practice. There appeared to be a lack of understanding of the new qualification among schools as none had taken them on. The qualification would be suited to being delivered from a business building, not a school or college. Young people needed to be allowed to make an informed decision.
- The City College worked with Family Voice and collaborated with the Executive Director, People and Communities on the Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) offer. Awareness of this work was growing. The college had reached its contractual capacity and was aiming to attract future government funding.
- Members commented that finding skills that enabled people to flourish was an important part of SEND work.
- Members requested that the Democratic Services Officers adds a recurring annual report from City College Peterborough to the Committee's work programme.
- Members requested that the Executive Principle, City College Peterborough organises a visit to the College for committee members.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note and scrutinise the content of the report and the history and progress to date of City College Peterborough and its priorities for the forthcoming academic year.
2. Request that the Executive Principle, City College Peterborough liaises with the Combined Authority regarding finding a solution to the lack of construction courses available in Peterborough.
3. Request that the Democratic Services Officers adds a recurring annual report from City College Peterborough to the Committee's work programme.
4. Request that the Executive Principle, City College Peterborough organises a visit to the College for committee members.

30. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – SAFER PETERBOROUGH PARTNERSHIP BOARD REPORT

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Advisor for Housing, Culture and Communities accompanied by Supt. Anderson, the Head of Think Communities and the Assistant Director, Community Safety. The report informed members of the key activity of the Safer Peterborough Partnership (SPP) Board over the last 6 months. A section was included also to update on the work undertaken in response to a recent motion requesting focus on knife crime.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members praised the work of the SPP.
- The key board members of the SPP from the Council were Rob Hill, Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Adrian Chapman and representatives from Adult Social Care. There were also occasional representatives from the domestic violence board.
- The SPP's use of a young people's standing group was praised by members.
- Members asked what targets were in place to continue progress on tackling knife crime. Officers responded that the police reviewed issues impacting local communities every two weeks, which provided the opportunity for extra resources to be drafted in from elsewhere if needed. The police also provided reports to SPP.
- The Council and the Police worked well together although it had been noted that progress was needed on some areas outside of the priorities.
- The SPP was working with the Youth Council to develop the Young People's Problem Solving Group, which would be engaged with when issues relating to young people emerged. A more detailed update would be provided in the end of year report.
- Members suggested that the Board should meet in public to enable input from residents. Officers responded that the wider Delivery Group liaised with diverse forums, e.g. the Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS), albeit not individual residents. The partnership did engage with residents when it was necessary to do so for a particular issue. A social media campaign was under development.
- Members of the public were encouraged to use 999, 101 and online reporting to report crime. Crimestoppers could be used if anonymity was required and it was noted that this was often a concern when reporting knife crime.

- Members commented that there would be benefits to providing feedback to the public on their reports even if it was not necessary to do so. Officers responded that the police response to a reported crime might not always be obvious, e.g. plain clothed work.
- The Police could not make a guarantee to a resident reporting to a crime that a plain clothed response would be provided but anonymous reports could be made on the police website.
- Members requested that the Head of Think Communities promotes to residents, via the Community Champions, the fact they can report crimes anonymously on the Police website. Officers agreed to this request and stated that communications work was a priority.
- Members suggested that some 101 and live chat reports were not being logged by the Police, resulting in the Police responding that there had been no reports of a given issue when the Council reported it to them. Officers responded that the audit trail on online forms should ensure everything was logged. Information reported was often useful even if it did not warrant the dispatch of officers and it represented the voice of people on the ground.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the mid-year progress of the work of the Safer Peterborough Partnership
2. Note the ongoing work in response to the recent motion to address Knife Crime
3. Comment and scrutinise the activity of the Safer Peterborough Partnership
4. Request that the Head of Think Communities promotes to residents, via the Community Champions, the fact they can report crimes anonymously on the Police website.

31. REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO EXAMINE BARRIERS TO EQUALITY AND ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY BAME COMMUNITIES IN ACCESSING COUNCIL SERVICES

The report was introduced by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Cllr Yasin accompanied by the Service Director, Communities and Partnerships. The report enabled the Committee to review and consider endorsing the work of the Task and Finish Group and make any further recommendations.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members praised the quality of the Task and Finish Group's work.
- Members asked why the Task and Finish Group was being replaced with a Cabinet Working Group. Officers responded that the move had been uncontroversial at the Task and Finish Group meeting. There would be a level of stability from having a more permanent group. The Scrutiny Committee would still be responsible for overseeing the work of the working group.
- Members expressed concerns that Cabinet Working Groups were increasingly taking over from Task and Finish Groups and stated that the latter did not necessarily need to be temporary. It was suggested that the Constitution and Ethics Committee needed to review this issue.
- Members requested that the Director, Customer and Digital Services suggest to

the Local Government Association (LGA) that they amend the wording of the following criteria from the Equality Framework (page 155 of the reports pack) - Understanding and Working with your communities - Fostering good community relations:

"Members play a role in monitoring community relations and reporting intelligence"

Members felt this wording was unhelpful and might imply that they should spy on residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend that the newly formed Cabinet Working Group adopt the LGA assessment and action plan as the basis of their work plan.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the work that the Task and Finish group has undertaken in assessing the council's current position on equality, diversity and inclusion using the Local Government Association Framework.
2. Review the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan and provide any further recommendations that the council can take.
3. Formally close the Task and Finish Group
4. Request that the Director, Customer and Digital Services suggest to the Local Government Association (LGA) that they amend the wording of the following criteria from the Equality Framework (page 155 of the reports pack) - Understanding and Working with your communities - Fostering good community relations:
"Members play a role in monitoring community relations and reporting intelligence"
Members felt this wording was unhelpful and might imply that they should spy on residents.

32. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which enabled the committee to monitor and track the progress of recommendations made to the Executive or Officers at previous meetings.

There were no further comments by members.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the responses from Cabinet Members and Officers to recommendations made at previous meetings as attached in Appendix 1 to the report.

33. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Chairman introduced the report which invited members to consider the most recent version of the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and identify any relevant items for inclusion within the Committee's work programme or to request further information.

There were no further comments by members.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to consider the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

34. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the item which gave members the opportunity to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21 and discuss possible items for inclusion.

There were no further comments by members.

35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17 November 2021 – Joint Scrutiny of the Budget
4 January 2022 – Communities Scrutiny Committee

CHAIRMAN

7pm – 8.39pm