

MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 PM, ON
TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2023
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH

Committee Members Present: G Casey, J Fox, M Haseeb, K Knight, R Ray, N Sandford, M Rangzeb, J Allen (substitute) and Co-opted Member Parish Councillor Neil Boyce

Officers Present:

- Rob Hill, Acting Service Director, Communities
- Cecilie Booth, Executive Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer
- Rochelle Tapping, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
- Matt Oliver
- Ramin Shams, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Andy Coles, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Governance
- Oliver Warsop, Chief Inspector, Cambridgeshire Police

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mohammed Jamil and Parish Councillor Co-opted Member Neil Boyce.

Councillor Alison Jones was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Mohammed Jamil.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest.

43. MINUTES OF MEETING

The minutes of the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny held on Tuesday 10 January 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees held on Monday 23 January 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

44. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISION

No call ins were received.

45. Safer Peterborough Partnership Board Report

The Chief Inspector for Cambridgeshire Police, accompanied by the Acting Service Director for Communities and the Head of Think Communities, introduced the report, which provided an update on the activity of the Safer Partnership Board over the last 12 months. The report outlined the long-term strategic aims which were agreed upon in 2020/21. These strategic aims were prioritising high-harm and high-risk offenders, drug offenders, operation spotlight, street working and sexual exploitation.

The Chief Inspector for Cambridgeshire explained that the Safer Peterborough Partnership aimed to deliver safer communities set out in the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and help create safer communities. He advised Members that the Problem-Solving group dealt with emerging issues, including ASB problems.

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

- Members asked about the role and responsibilities of the City Centre Anti-Social Behaviour/Problem-Solving Officer and if the six temporary cameras would only be for City Centre or if they would be deployed to other parts of the city, including rural areas. The Acting Service Director for Communities advised Members that the Safer Street fund would help make the streets safer and help improve the night-time economy. Safer Street also funded the ASB Officers. The 6 Temporary CCTV cameras were for certain city areas where the police had identified them as high risk.
- Members asked if the number of police officers serving had increased in Peterborough since 2010. The Chief Inspector for Cambridgeshire advised Members that the number of police officers serving in Peterborough was in the region of 400 and that they were not on duty simultaneously.
- Members queried regarding youth disruption notices and asked that the youth crimes were increasing rapidly and what steps police had taken to address them. The Chief Inspector for Cambridgeshire advised that police had a series of operations looking at the issues related to youth crimes. There was an ongoing operation in Orton where police were looking into concerns that youth caused, in addition, police had engaged with their parents and through school educating youths. Officers were also directed to specific areas to patrol and take preventative and disruption work into those areas that police had identified as high risk for youth crimes.
- Members queried regarding the Safer Peterborough Partnership priorities and asked if there were enough resources for the priorities set by the Partnership. The Chief Inspector For Cambridgeshire advised Members that the Partnership agreed on priorities in 2020/21, the resources existed for these priorities, and the police had an ongoing commitment to these priorities.

The following recommendation was made by Councillor Sandford and seconded by Councillor Knight that the Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to consider the Safer Peterborough Partnership's strategic priorities once the Board set out the strategic priorities for 2023/24.

The Committee unanimously **AGREED** to the recommendation

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the progress of the work of the Safer Peterborough Partnership

46. Corporate Services Progress Report

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Governance introduced the report, which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the Cabinet Member portfolio. In addition, the report contained information regarding the budget for 2023/24 and medium-term financial strategy for 2023/26, the current position of SERCO, commercial, property and corporate governance.

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

- Members questioned the Council's position on overspending at the end of quarter three and asked if this was because of the unforeseeable changes. The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised Members that the forecast position for autumn was an overspend of 0.8m, an improvement on the £1m overspend report at the end of quarter 2. She explained that the services were different and demand-led, particularly Adults and Children Social Care, and the overspending was unavoidable.
- Members were advised that the grant which would pay for the purchase of Nursery Lane depot timed, and the Council was currently assessing options to do an in-depth review and ensure that the Council interest had been considered.
- Members queried regarding SERCO and asked if some services had returned to the Council and if there had been any loss of revenue in this process. The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised that the Council was in a long-term contract with SERCO with no break clause, currently negotiating with SERCO. The Council had taken procurement services back in-house. She explained that the SERCO contract was extended in 2018 for ten years.
- Members asked about the governance review and asked why a review was taking place. The Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer advised that the Constitutions and Ethics Committee recommended the review. She explained that reviewing the Council's governance Model, internal governance structure, and decision-making process would occur. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny along with Local Government Association would also support reviewing the scrutiny arrangements. The first stage would be to engage with the officers and later with the Members, which would include surveys and a number of workshops.
- Members asked that the Community Asset Transfer programme had taken

a very long time and if any progress was made. The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised that this was a priority on her list and expected that progress would be made in the next financial year.

The following recommendation was made by Councillor Sandford and seconded by Councillor Ray that the Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** that the Capital Programme be aligned to the Council's Corporate priorities, particularly its net zero commitments.

The Committee unanimously **AGREED** to the recommendation.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the progress outlined within the report, which covers the key service areas within Corporate services.

36. Licensing Schemes – Raising Housing Standards

The Acting Service Director for Regulatory Services introduced the report, which provided an update in relation to the Selective Licensing Scheme. The report outlined the approach being adopted to raise housing standards in the private rental sector. He explained that there were rented properties in the city which provided poor quality accommodation putting the welfare and health of those that lived in them at risk; the Council had a responsibility to take action intended to achieve that.

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

- Members raised concerns that the Selective Licensing Scheme only came to the scrutiny committee after it was approved by the Council late last year. Instead, this should have come to scrutiny first, followed by the Council. The Acting Director for Regulatory Services advised Members that the report was to update the committee on the progress made on the Selective Licensing Scheme. He explained that Council needed a system to administer a new scheme and would need firstly to resolve an existing contract with a service provider and secure the funding. The Council had initiated soft market testing for a third-party provider in early February.
- Members asked about the housing association, where tenants had problems with the repairs. The Acting Director for Regulatory Services advised that the Council worked closely with the housing associations to raise standards. There had been a considerable focus on dampness and mould. He explained that there had been a significant rise in the housing repairs reports and that the Council looked into each report.
- Members asked why there is a need for a third party to administer the Selective Licensing Scheme. The Acting Director for Regulatory Services advised that when the system was in-house, the Council had limited ability to check landlords; it distracted the team members' focus. However, third companies had a greater ability to do compliance checks, and the procurement process for this had already started; any further delay on this

would negatively impact standards.

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AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report and the current status of service development, to assist in evaluating progress in future reports to the committee.

10. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Senior Democratic Officer introduced the report, which included the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

CHAIR

Meeting began at 7:00 pm and ended at 7.39 pm