

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2023  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

**THE MAYOR – COUNCILLOR SANDFORD**

**Present:**

Councillors Ahmed, Jackie Allen, Steve Allen, Asif, Ayres, Barkham, Bi, Bisby, Andrew Bond, Sandra Bond, Casey, Cereste, Cole, Coles, Day, Dowson, Elsey, M Farooq, S Farooq, Fenner, Fitzgerald, Judy Fox, John Fox, Harper, Haseeb, Hemraj, Hiller, Hogg, Howard, Hussain, Iqbal, Jamil, A Jones, D Jones, Khan, Mahmood, Nawaz, Perkins, Qayyum, Ray, Sabir, Sainsbury, Sandford, Seager, Shaheed, Sharp, Simons, Skibsted, Stevenson, Strangward, Thulbourn, Trust, Tyler, Warren and Wiggin

**61. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Knight, Lane, Over, Rangzeb and Rush.

**62. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Dowson declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 12(5) (Motions on Notice), by virtue of the fact he had been a victim of nuclear testing.

**63. a) Minutes of the Exempt Meeting held on 31 August 2023**

The exempt minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 31 August 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

**b) Minutes of the Public Meeting held on 1 November 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 1 November 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the following amendments:

- i) That Councillor Elsey be removed from those Members in attendance at the 1 November 2023 meeting, since, Councillor Ray claimed, he was not present.
- ii) That, at Minute No.60(5) (Motion from Councillor Ray), where it referred to the motion being determined by means of a recorded vote, that said vote be published in the minutes since it had not already been done.
- iii) That, at Minute No.60(1) (Motion by Councillor Harper), where it stated that Councillor Hogg had referred to “Empower” at paragraph 11 thereto, that this be amended to read “NPower”.

- iv) That the spelling of Councillor Shaheed's surname be corrected at Page 27 to the agenda pack.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **64. Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor introduced his Announcement report, which outlined the recent civic events attended by the Mayoral Party. He then made the following additional announcements:

1. The Mayor highlighted the remembrance events, which this year were, he said, successful and well attended by the public. He said he had never seen Cathedral Square so crowded as it had been for the Christmas lights switch on, on 24 November. He said it was great when so many people came together to celebrate such important occasions. As part of his stated commitment to engage with and support local businesses, the Mayor said he had attended the Opportunity Peterborough (OP) Bondholder's Dinner in the Cathedral as well as an OP bondholder breakfast at Northminster House, where he put to it an offer to visit local businesses or invite them into the Mayor's Parlour.
2. The Mayor said that many successful mayoral fundraising events had already taken place and halfway through the mayoral year, the total raised for his charities was approximately £12,000, which, he said, also included a generous donation from Trust funds administered by Buckles Solicitors. There was, he said, a pause in events over the Christmas holiday but more events would commence in the New Year, culminating in a Mayor's Ball at the Holiday Inn Hotel on Saturday 18 May. He hoped that Councillors could set aside party differences and conflicts and support the events and the four worthwhile charitable causes.
3. The Mayor announced he had been working with Peterborough's Youth MP, Eva Woods, to produce a series of video clips to explain to young people the four key roles that the Mayor performed in the City. He said the first of these would be released on various social media platforms in the next few weeks.
4. During this Full Council meeting, the Mayor said that, whilst he was happy for there to be robust and challenging debate, he hoped that all Members would show respect to each other and for the values of the City Council. He requested that, when speaking, Members spoke through him, as Chair, and not directly to each other, to avoid any unnecessary confrontation.
5. The Mayor announced that at the end of this meeting, Christmas drinks and mince pies would be available in the Mayor's Parlour and that these had kindly been arranged by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Judy Fox. He hoped that all Councillors, officers and members of the public in attendance would accept his invitation to join him and the Deputy Mayor in the Parlour for refreshments and said that contributions would be invited to cover the costs, with any surplus going to his charities.

### **65. Leader's Announcements**

The Leader made a number of announcements on the following areas:

- Getting to grips with the opportunities that existed for the City and the Council.
- Fostering a closer working relationship between the Council and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, which at its meeting held last week had awarded Peterborough £200k to progress plans for a new electric bus depot.
- Plans to invest millions of pounds in Peterborough next year, which included £5m from the Strategic Growth Fund to help develop critical infrastructure for ARU Peterborough; £3m to upgrade the A1139 Fletton Parkway and £6.5m to commission an outline business case for the A60 Norwood Project, which would unlock almost 3,000 homes for development.
- More money for Peterborough for active travel schemes, road safety and bus stop infrastructure and projects to ensure that the City could deliver on its net zero goals.
- Also at that meeting, he had voted to support the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), which set out clearly how transport options that would meet everyone's needs in the coming years would be provided and would support Peterborough's ambitious growth agenda.
- Commentary by some activists in recent months about the updated LTCP opening the door for Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) or other schemes, which penalised motorists. He said that the Plan clearly stated that schemes such as this could only be introduced if approved and endorsed by this Council and was confident that he had sufficient backing to ensure that no such scheme would be introduced in Peterborough.
- There would be a groundbreaking event being held on Friday 8 December 2023 in the Green Technology Centre at Peterborough College (another project to have received funding from the Combined Authority) and it would be great to see the first stakes in the ground. The Centre would deliver an innovative curriculum to get students ready for careers such as sustainable construction and electric vehicle manufacturing.
- Establishment of an independent children's board to oversee and drive improvements to services provided by the Council and its partners. He was pleased to say that the Board had held its first productive meetings with stakeholders, which he had attended.
- Regular quarterly meeting with the Chief Executive, DCS and the Cabinet Member, which was dedicated to improving the services the Council offered to children and families and would continue to focus its time and effort in this area.
- He congratulated officers from the Council's Highways Team, which operated the School Streets' Scheme and had recently won a prestigious award for this initiative and best sustainable transport scheme.
- Peterborough had been nominated in the 2023 Energy Efficiency Awards for its work in helping residents save money on their utility bills. The awards were to be held in April 2024.

- At the end of November 2023, he had attended the Telegraph Business Awards – a fantastic event, which showcased the best businesses that were based in Peterborough – and it had been good to hear the success stories of those who had been nominated.
- Bondholder Breakfast, hosted by OP, that had included an off the record talk by the Bank of England and it had been great to hear how many businesses had attended the network to share their ideas and talents. The next Bondholder Breakfast was to be held on Friday 15 December and details were on the Council's website.
- He thanked everyone involved in the recent Christmas lights switch on in Peterborough and said it had been good to see so many people at the ice rink too. He highlighted that the festive markets would be open until Christmas.

Other Group Leaders responded to the Leader's announcements and raised the following points:

- A lot of what the Leader had mentioned had already been done under the previous administration.
- The Group Leaders' Meeting, which was confidential – information allegedly leaked re the swimming pool was not helpful. Like to thank all the other people who worked so hard.
- Good to see the Corporate Parenting Group committed to looking after the City's vulnerable children.
- Always a pleasure to see the City looking good for Christmas.
- Excellent work to secure closer working relationship with the combined authority, as well as great news on the City and on highways.
- Energy Efficiency Board – an excellent win.
- A hope that the Council could start to build a stronger relationship with the combined authority that provided really good opportunities for Peterborough.
- No road charging, which was good.
- Children's Services – opportunity to do root and branch overhaul and particularly around care leavers. Rebecca Pressland had done an excellent job setting up that scheme.
- Delighted with the £200k awarded to green bus station – congratulate administration for securing the funding (net zero carbon by 2030)
- School Streets Scheme – vital project and congratulations.

## **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

### **66. Questions from Members of the Public**

One question was received from a member of the public in respect of cultural, sporting and other outdoor activities.

The question and response are attached in **APPENDIX A** to these minutes and are available on the Council's website.

**67. Petitions**

**(a) Presented by Members of the Public**

There were no petitions presented by Members of the public at the meeting.

**(b) Presented by Members**

There were no petitions presented by Members at the meeting.

**68. Questions on Notice**

**(a) To the Mayor**

**(b) To the Leader or Member of the Cabinet**

**(c) To the Chair of any Committee of Sub-Committee**

Questions in relation to (a) to (d) were raised and taken as read in respect of the following:

1. Household Support Fund vouchers
2. Reopening of Regional Swimming Pool
3. Cost of funding capital projects and service capital debt
4. Management of the City Council's ongoing review of community venues
5. Increased school applications and home to school transport
6. Progress on the regulation of HMOs
7. Public health funding
8. Status of the Hampton community centres within the localities review.
9. Demolition of the hydrotherapy pool
10. Abandoned supermarket trolleys and their impact on the local environment.

There were no questions, on notice, to the Combined Authority Representatives.

The questions and responses are attached in **APPENDIX A** to these minutes and are available on the Council's website.

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS**

**69. Executive and Committee Recommendations to Council**

**69 (a) Audit Committee Recommendation - Treasury Management Mid-Year Report**

Council received a report from the Audit Committee in relation to the Treasury Management Mid-Year update.

Councillor Haseeb moved the recommendations within the report, which had been considered by the Audit Committee on 27 November 2023. He said that treasury management was an important function within the Council, that was often

overlooked, to ensure that the Council had enough money to meet its obligations.

He said the report set out how the Council had performed against prudential indicators, that had been set by CIPFA, and that the Council was performing well against all indicators.

Councillor D Jones seconded the recommendation and said he had nothing further to add to that already presented by Councillor Haseeb, but reserved his right to speak should the need arise.

A vote was taken on the recommendation and Council **RESOLVED** (unanimous with no Members indicating to vote against or abstain) to:

1. Review and consider the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) Mid-year position and performance against the Prudential Indicators.
2. Note the current forecast for the interest receivable and payable for the financial year 2023/23 as of 30 September 2023.

#### **69 (b) Licensing Committee Recommendation - Cumulative Impact Policy**

Council received a report from the Licensing Committee in relation to the Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP).

Councillor Ray moved the recommendation and said that, under the Licensing Act 2003, local authorities could adopt CIPs if there was evidence that it was likely that the granting of further premises licences and or club premises certificates in that area would be inconsistent with the Council's duty to promote the licensing objectives.

He said that the Council had first adopted a CIP for the Millfield New England area in 2013 and, since then, the policy had been subject to statutory consultation, revision and readoption. He went on to say that the CIP had recently been the subject of a statutory consultation between 7 September and 18 October 2023 and that all responses received, including those from Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Peterborough Safer Communities and Director of Public Health were in full support of retaining it.

Councillor Ray said that at the meeting of the Licensing Committee, held on 20 November 2023, it had received a report in relation to the CIP consultation and considered the information it received, including licensing statistics, evidence of alcohol-related incidents and crime and social behaviour and public health impact.

Councillor Ray said that details of partnership working initiatives aimed to improve the area for residents had also come forward. He said that the Licensing Committee therefore recommended that Council retain the CIP in its current format in relation to applications affected, those which requested off-sales, its boundary and to update and republish the CIP with the current evidence obtained during the consultation.

Councillor Wiggin seconded the recommendation and reserved his right to speak.

A vote was taken on the recommendation and Council **RESOLVED** (unanimous with no Members indicating to vote against or abstain) to retain the CIP in its current format in relation to applications for "off sales" and boundary, update and republish the CIA with the current evidence obtained during the consultation.

**69 (c) Cabinet Recommendation - Sales, Fees and Charges**

Council received a report from Cabinet in relation to Sales, Fees and Charges.

Councillor Howard moved the recommendation and said that this had come off the back of the financial challenge the Council still faced. The Council, he said, had made a lot of progress over the last 18 months but in future years would still have budget gaps.

Councillor Howard said that inflation remaining high was one of the key drivers for this, which affected the cost of providing services and it also caused the Council to re-examine the amount it charged for its own services. He said that Council officers had worked collaboratively with an external Local Government specialist to review all the Council's sales, fees and charges and that they had conducted a comprehensive review, which had been informed by benchmarking charges in comparison to other local authorities. He said that the individual proposals included changes to charges in parking services, waste services and crematorium and bereavement services. Councillor Howard said that these proposals had been considered by the Growth, Resources and Community Scrutiny Committee where there had been healthy debate but no suggested changes. He said that it had also been considered by the previous Administration, where an amendment had been agreed to reduce the increase proposed to second green waste bins with the increase in parking charges forecast to recover much of the reduced income, which had resulted from this amendment.

Councillor Howard said that he recognised that this was a difficult decision for the Council to make, however a vital one to ensure the Council covered the costs of its services and was able to set a balanced budget.

Councillor Elsey seconded the recommendation and reserved his right to speak.

Council debated the recommendation and the summary of the points raised by Members included:

- The proposal had been to increase the cost of providing a second green waste bin from £25 to £50, (which at that time, Cabinet had considered this to be excessive) then Cabinet agreed £25 to £30 from January 2024. Subsequently, in the schedule before Council, it stated that all green waste bins would be increasing from £50 to £55. There did not appear to have been a decision taken as to what the position would be, come April for that secondary bin and it was queried as to whether the secondary bin should remain at £30, should rise by 10% in line with others or whether this would increase to £55?

In response, Councillor Coles advised that, at that Cabinet meeting, it was agreed to mark up to £50, the second waste bin, which was the largest increase but felt that it was unfair, which was then subsequently reduced to a £5 increase and that the increase in parking charges would cover this shortfall. He said that when it came to the additional charges, these related to the initial garden waste bin and that variations in charges were not covered at that meeting.

- A question was raised concerning bulky waste collection charges rising from

£23 to £30 and whether this increase might cause an increase in fly-tipping and expensive collection of it.

As seconder of the recommendation, Councillor Elsey said that no administration wanted to see households being charged the same cost for both bins but, having just taken this over, said he would confirm what it was to be suggested and implemented and to address the apparent contradiction within the report.

Councillor Elsey said, with regard to the query around bulky waste, his experience suggested that people who were prepared to pay for bulky waste collection would continue to do so.

He said that those who had utilised this in the past would see this increase in price as a reasonable reflection and, in response to the additional point raised, there would be no material impact in respect of fly-tipping.

As mover of the recommendation Councillor Howard summed up and stated that he would sense check and double-check the report offline.

A vote was taken on the recommendation and Council **RESOLVED** (35 for, 20 against and 0 abstentions) to agree the increases in Fees and Charges as outlined in the report, except for the cost of the second Garden Waste bin, which was proposed to increase to £30 (from £25) rather than £50.

## **70. Questions on the Executive Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting**

Councillor Farooq introduced the report, which outlined the record of Executive decisions made since the last meeting.

Members asked questions on the following Executive Decisions.

### The Cycling and Walking Task and Finish Group

In response to a question from Councillor Ray asking what the Cabinet intended to do with the (12) recommendations arising from the meeting of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Elsey said that there was an exceptional amount of good work within the report, which was brought to Cabinet by the Task and Finish Group. He said that there was an agreement with the Task and Finish Group that almost all of its recommendations would be taken forward however, there had been issues around the naming of certain streets, which if the decision had been to approve the Plan then it would have set in stone matters such as the north and south cycle route being down Bridge Street and whilst he fully supported a connection between the north and south of the city, he did not feel there was sufficient information to make a decision as to whether Bridge Street was necessarily the right street for a dedicated cycle path, which was requested.

He said that, with the agreement of the Task and Finish Group, the Council was taking a holistic look at and he had asked members of the Task and Finish Group to continue their work and to work with the Council to look at solutions that best fitted what the Task and Finish Groups aims and objectives were and that the Council consider the hierarchy of transportation within the city, the first of which being pedestrians, followed by cyclists and that the Council needed to address it in this order.

In response to a question from Councillor Fitzgerald as to whether Councillor Elsey was serious about closing one lane at Crescent Bridge to take those recommendations



and endorsements forward, Councillor Elsy responded by saying that when Councillor Fitzgerald's Administration had put in a cycle lane over Crescent Bridge, the city was in lockdown. He said that what he had advised the Task and Finish Group was that the Council needed to have data, which would provide accurate traffic movements over Crescent Bridge now that the city was no longer in lockdown and that the Council needed to look at the impact of cyclists going over Crescent Bridge would have, as well as looking again at alternatives to ensure the best solutions for those who walked, cycled or drove in and around the city.

#### Localities Assets Review Update

In response to a question from Councillor Hogg in relation to a delegation to officers to authorise disposal of assets up to the value of £500k and having received subsequent correspondence to suggest a change of mind in that regard, Councillor Howard confirmed that the initial decision had changed since first made and that every such decision would now be presented to Cabinet in February and to Scrutiny prior to this in January for further discussion.

In response to a question from Councillor Cereste asking that the community did not suffer because of this review and in the hope that it was conducted soon, and the decisions shared as soon as these were available, Councillor Howard confirmed that the Council was talking with users and that he was visiting as many sites as he could, as were the Council's Communities and Properties Teams, and he believed that where the word "review" was used it could also lead to really good outcomes too and he hoped that some really good outcomes would come of the review when decisions came forward in January.

In response to a question from Councillor Fitzgerald as to whether the Cabinet Member agreed he had the power to stop this and whatever happened in the future was down to them and not anybody else, Councillor Howard said that Councillor Fitzgerald's Administration had had many months looking at this list, compared to the current Administration, which had had only four weeks to look at the same list, which was why it was taking time, was engaging with users and had the Communities and Properties Teams looking at every asset that was on the review list.

Councillor Fitzgerald raised as a point of accuracy that what Councillor Howard had said was simply not true. Councillor Fitzgerald said that it had gone through the Council's scrutiny processes, the Financial Sustainability Working Group and Group Leaders and said it was simply untrue that Councillor Howard had not seen this previously.

In response, Councillor Howard said the matter had been exempt to him until he became a member of the Cabinet.

#### Charging Residents and Developers for Replacement Bins

In response to a question from Councillor Cereste, as to whether it was cost-effective for the Council to charge for replacement bins, given that many were being stolen, and whether he would be willing to look at this again, Councillor Elsey said that the decision had been that of Councillor Simons and an assurance was given that this would be looked at again and this would be reported back to Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Elsy said he had not acted in a derisory fashion and that he had simply stated that it had not been a decision that he had taken so to suggest that he was trying to apportion blame was

ridiculous.

Councillor Hogg raised a point of personal explanation. He said that Councillor Fitzgerald had referenced him with regard to the FSWG. He said that this decision was taken in September 2022, and it was called in to FSWG because it was felt that this was unfair to some people on lower incomes. He said a variance was agreed at FSWG that certain residents on lower incomes would get bins replaced at half-price and this had been agreed in November 2022. Councillor Hogg said that the decision had not been made until October 2023 and that it had taken the previous administration almost a year to implement a simple change to a decision, which had already been made.

#### Appointment of Directors of Peterborough Culture, Heritage, Learning and Leisure (Subsidiary of Peterborough Limited)

In response to a question from Councillor Coles concerning officers' experience in terms of culture, heritage, learning, and leisure and was the Council asking its officers to undertake roles when they may not have the required expertise to do so, Councillor Farooq advised that the directors in this instance were statutory appointments for the Council to make from within the establishment. He said that where the Council had outside companies, it required expertise on these and hoped that they could add value to those particular organisations.

### **71. Questions on the Combined Authority Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting**

Members asked questions on the following Combined Authority decisions.

- Combined Authority Board, 30 November 2023

In response to a question from Councillor Fitzgerald where he (Councillor Fitzgerald) stated that Councillor Mohammed Farooq said in the paper that he had been happy to sign-up to their budget but did he realise he was putting a pressure on Peterborough and Cambridgeshire tax payers of 200%+ in a Mayoral precept, which would rocket from £12 per year, to £36 per year and did he think that was good for the people of Peterborough to support that, Councillor Farooq said that the precept proposed by the Mayor from the Combined Authority was from £13 to £36 and he had brought it to the Board meeting where Councillor Farooq had asked for the exact return on the £24 rise (e.g. exact routes on transport, what buses would be available). Councillor Farooq said that he had had a subsequent meeting on 5 December around buses and the benefits the people of Peterborough would get from this transport policy.

Councillor Farooq said that the Mayor of the Combined Authority's budget would be increasing from £3m to £11m and this would lay out a substantial infrastructure for public transport in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. He said that Strategy Meetings would take place on 10 December and a further meeting of the Board on 31 January 2024.

Councillor Ray raised a question in relation to Item 7 (Breach of Code of Conduct) where the papers stated that the Mayor had been found to have breached the Code of Conduct, the first complaint alleged there was a toxic culture within the Mayor's Office. The Independent Panel then upheld the complaint and confirmed the Mayor had breached the Code of Conduct. In light of this, why did Councillor Farooq simply agree to an apology as a consequence, not refuse to associate with the Mayor or demand that he resign?

In response, Councillor Farooq said that he felt it was not relevant for him to answer the question but what he did say was that the decision around the toxic culture referred to had been reviewed by a separate committee within the Combined Authority and Peterborough had had no authority in the matter one way or the other.

Councillor Fitzgerald raised a question as to whether Councillor Farooq had had a hand in personally securing all or any of the funding he had alluded to or would he agree that the funding had already been in place from the previous Administration and could he share with Council, details of any funding that had been secured by the Peterborough First Group?

In response, Councillor Farooq said that everyone was aware of the relationship previously had with the Combined Authority and how everything had stopped or was at a standstill. He said that he had attended a meeting with the Chief Executive on 8 November and the three distinct Capital Budget items were Transport (c.£41m); Levelling-up (£10m) and Unskilled and Education. He said that officers had had a subsequent meeting the following week and managed to secure these investments by the deadline of 20 November, which then went onto the MTFs. He said that these items had never been in the pipeline, previously nor were they listed in the future but, he said, had all been enabled during that short period of time.

Councillor Ray raised a question in relation to Item 11 (Scheme of Delegation) and referred to where the Board had delegated authority to its Chief Financial Officer to award contracts up to £1m – double what they could previously do - without the need of Board approval. He asked whether this was in the interests of transparency that the Peterborough First Group could cherish?

In response, Councillor Farooq advised that this had been a Combined Authority decision but that he could also advise that the Combined Authority had two subsequent boards, one, the Business Board, which these policies were considered by and secondly, the Investment Board, which was in the process of being formed and would speed up the investment and capital expenditure throughout the County.

## **COUNCIL BUSINESS**

### **72. Notices of Motion**

#### **72(1) Motion from Councillor Sandra Bond**

Councillor Sandra Bond moved her motion as listed in the report at Agenda Item 12 to the agenda. Councillor Bond said she was really pleased that the Motion was before full Council this evening and was sure that Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee would agree with her that Peterborough's care leavers were talented and had the potential to have a successful and full life. Therefore, she said, any support the Council could give, as corporate parents, to care leavers could only be beneficial to them.

Councillor Cole seconded the motion and spoke. She said that she and her Labour Party colleagues supported the motion and was pleased to see that it called for the establishment of a Working Group to look at a variety of measures to put in place for care leavers but would also like to see the Working Group think about issues regarding kinship carers, foster carers and every other parental responsibility involved.

Council debated the motion and a summary of the points raised by Members included:

- Introducing support to care leavers long before they reached 18 years of age.
  - Support to establishment of a working group to review the care leaver offer.
  - Pleased to see £1,500 financial support already in place to assist care leavers to set up a home.
  - A hope that the working group would look at what the future might look like for care leavers.
  - Council Tax exemptions to be considered further by the working group.\*
- Councillor Coles stated the issue of Council Tax exemption had been reviewed in the past and the challenge back to this particular working group was that the Council already had a bespoke approach to this and any care leaver who required that level of discount, did receive it. He said that whilst some Peterborough care leavers may move elsewhere, there was the issue of care leavers coming to Peterborough from outside of the city and how the Council identified them and whether or not they should qualify for the discount also.

The motion was declared **CARRIED** as follows:

Council notes that:

Peterborough City Council is a proud Corporate Parent and takes its responsibilities to support and protect vulnerable children and care leavers seriously. This requires cross-party political support.

Once children in care reach the age of 18, they are redesignated as care leavers until the age of 25. While being supported by Children and Young Peoples Services, care leavers are faced with a new set of potentially overwhelming responsibilities, often without the family support and wider network that most other young people can rely on. Although many care leavers work, study, or have access to benefits, as the cost of living has increased, so have their struggles to transition to adult life.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority, including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.

A recent review of our local (Peterborough) offer has highlighted that there is scope to improve and update our current offering. This may then include offerings such as:

- Negotiated preferential rates on utility costs.
- Discounted or free travel cards
- Help with fulfilling aspirations to attend further and higher education.
- Council tax exemption

These examples amongst others are outlined in the government publication - Keep on Caring 2016, the guidance issued by government in 2018 about implementing the local offer, and in both the first and second annual reports prepared for government by the national implementation advisor for care leavers.

Ofsted have also renewed its interest in outcomes for care leavers and this now focuses heavily in the ILACS inspection framework.

Council resolves to Formally agree to work on a cross party basis regarding improving outcomes for children, whilst discharging the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

Establish a cross party working group with elected members, officers, and care leavers to develop a revised and fully costed set of proposals in the form of a revised care leaver local offer that reflects our aspiration to be the best corporate parent we can be.

***Council stood adjourned until 8.10pm.***

**72(2) Motion from Councillor Mahmood**

Councillor Mahmood moved his motion as listed in the report at Agenda Item 12 to the agenda.

Councillor Mahmood said that avoidance of business rates cost Councils up and down the country £250m annually. He said a term referred to as "box-shifting" was used by commercial landlords whereby they placed empty boxes over a six weeks' period, which triggered the rates relief.

Councillor Mahmood said he was asking the Council to call on the Government and to lobby MPs to legislate against this as done by both the Welsh and Scottish Governments.

Councillor Hiller seconded the motion and urged Members to support Councillor Mahmood's motion since the LGA had estimated that Councils in England could save around £250m annually if this legal loophole, which enabled landlords to avoid business rates was closed. He reiterated that this practice was referred to as "box-shifting" by placing boxes in vacant commercial properties for repeated six-weeks periods, being a practice of contrived occupation of empty buildings in order to trigger a new term of business rates exemption for three or six months. He said that at the end of the rates-free period, boxes were put back in the space for another six weeks and the cycle continued. This, he said, was a tax-evasion practice that directly impacted upon local authorities.

Councillor Hiller said that this stamping down, as proposed by Councillor Mahmood, was stamping down on unethical business rates avoidances a necessary and relatively straightforward step for Councils, like Peterborough, in urgent need of financial control and critical services.

Councillor Hiller said that by the Council's support for Councillor Mahmood's motion, it would be taking a stand against business rates avoidance and working towards a more sustainable and ethical system, which benefitted the local community, charities and businesses.

**Procedural Motion, without Notice, from Councillor Ray**

Councillor Ray, seconded by Councillor Coles moved a procedural motion without notice to refer Councillor Mahmood's motion to the Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee to allow it to flesh out the proposal, provide a local view and some more information on this scheme of rates avoidance impacted Peterborough and some of the numbers particularly for this area and there was also an ongoing Government review into this and by sending this to committee, means the Council could take the results of the consultation into consideration when these were ready, to ensure that the Council had all of the facts to enable a proposal to go forward to Government.

Councillor Ray said that generally, his Group was supportive of the motion but wanted to make sure that all of the information was to hand and everything else that could be available to the committee ready, at the time the Council wished to make this move and then ask MPs to make representations on the Council's behalf.

Councillor Coles seconded the procedural motion, without notice and reserved his right to speak.

Councillors debated the procedural motion.

Councillor Sharp said whilst he supported the aims of the original motion, he also echoed what Councillor Ray had said and referring to the Government's consultation, he felt it already covered the point raised in the original motion, specifically in relation to clauses 2.22 and 2.13, and his concern with the original motion was that Council would tie itself up whilst the Government was already consulting and preparing, proposing and delivering upon exactly what the Council was asking for.

Councillor Cereste asked if box-shifting was happening in Peterborough and, if so, what was it costing the Council and would it be sensible to have a task force to look at mitigating what was going on in Peterborough and that this would be a sensible thing to do for the city.

Councillor Hogg said that the original motion was well-written and did not need tidying-up by a committee and would be looking for Members to vote against the procedural motion.

Councillor Wiggin said that, as Chair to the Scrutiny Committee, he had great concerns that this would not be debatable for some time due to the Work Programme of the Committee. He said that if Council was minded deferring it to the Committee, then additional resources would be required.

Councillor Jamil, as a Member on that Committee, said that the Committee had a lot of business currently and this was unlikely to be considered for at least another year unless more officers could be brought in, more meetings held or introduce new ways of doing things, this would not be considered for some time.

Councillor Fitzgerald said the original motion lacked detail in terms of how it related to Peterborough but sounded good, in principle, but asked why was the Scrutiny Committee's agenda too busy?

Councillor Jones said that one of the things the Labour Group was keen to do, was to make sure that any motion which came from his Group would be checked back upon in six to nine months' time. He said his Group would not let it rest and would be asking for updates and not bringing motions to be agreed and then sit on the shelf. He said the Council's policy was very much to be held to account for these motions and Members in turn would hold officers to account to bring the necessary level of detail and scrutiny to it. He said the procedural motion put was not required.

Councillor J Allen said that she too had received lobbying emails from various bodies that talked about business rates avoidance, specifically the box-shifting referred to. She said much more detail was required since there were many other ways of avoiding business rates and the motion should have expended how the Council wished to tackle the issue. She quoted "...as with all forms of tax avoidance, there are widely different views on what is acceptable and ethical..." Therefore, she said, it was preferable to

look at what Parliament intended rather than whether the Council should agree here at Peterborough. She said that the Council needed to do more work on this.

Councillor Iqbal said an amendment could have been brought forward, and engagement with officers could have gathered that information and said he was not in favour of the procedural motion put.

As seconder of the motion, Councillor Coles referred to what the consultation said and made reference to it as being "...to consult on specific measures to reform empty property relief, to address known avoidance schemes, to gather evidence on wider avoidance and evasion practices within business rates system and take views on whether billing authorities have sufficient powers and information to combat them and also to gather evidence on rogue rating agent behaviour and seek views on how the Government could address any problems..." Councillor Coles said that this was what the consultation aimed to do, and it was going to report eventually. Therefore, he said, an amendment could not be put when Members did not have the information about what the Government intended to do and the idea was to move this procedural motion until Members actually had the information from Central Government about what they propose, which sounded like a more broader approach than that, which the Council motion resolved, which was to lobby to do what the Welsh and Scottish Governments did, to advocate on regular and robust checks on the occupancy status and to lobby the MPs to legislate, which was what in fact what the consultation was going to do in due course. He said that the Council might find that it had very strong powers to provide what he wanted to see, which was that the NNDR rates for Peterborough were appropriate in order that the Council could fund services as this money came into the Council. He said he was asking Members to support the procedural motion since this was just too early. He acknowledged that the motion was very good as it stood but it didn't quite fit what the consultation proposed but in a few months' time, the Council would have a much stronger motion, which he would be very happy to accept. He appreciated there was business in scrutiny, which had to be considered but that this was a priority for the Council's benefit in the future and as soon as the information from Central Government was available, the Council would be in a much stronger footing.

Councillor Ray as mover of PM said it was an opportunity to try and strengthen the original motion. He said it was something that was affecting the Council but to help get a better understanding of the issue, and how big it might be for Peterborough and to strengthen the lobbying of Members of Parliament to achieve the right outcome for Peterborough.

On a vote being taken (21 For, 33 Against and 1 Abstention), the Procedural Motion was **NOT CARRIED**.

Council then debated the original motion and a summary of the points raised by Members included:

- The Motion was well-founded, but no-one appeared to want to know why or how box-shifting was occurring in Peterborough and at what cost.
- The Motion was too specific and procedural motion was put to ensure it fitted with Government guidelines.
- What would the Motion achieve over the next six-months while the information from Government was pending.

- A lack of staffing resources within Democratic Services and Scrutiny.

As mover of the motion Councillor Mahmood summed up and asked that the motion be supported and had nothing to add to the debate.

On a vote being taken (For 37, Against 1 and 17 Abstentions) on the motion, the motion was **CARRIED** as follows:

This Council notes:

- That business rates avoidance costs councils around £250 million annually (Local Government Association Survey, 2019).
- Repeated short-term periods of occupation was the method of avoidance most commonly identified. "Box shifting," a practice where landlords place boxes in vacant commercial properties for a six-week period to trigger a rates-free period, often repeated, results in local councils losing their empty rates income.
- That some landlords use basic objects such as a broadband box or an empty fish tank to initiate rates avoidance, which exacerbates the loss of income for councils.

This Council believes:

- That business rate avoidance undermines the integrity of our rates system and deprives the local community of funds that could be invested in local services and infrastructure.
- That current legislation may inadvertently allow these practices, and that reform is needed to ensure that rates accurately reflect property usage and occupancy.

This Council resolves:

- To lobby for the extension of the occupation period for rates exemption from six weeks to six months, following the example of the Welsh and Scottish governments, which have already introduced legislation to tackle this issue.
- To advocate for robust and regular checks on the occupancy status of commercial properties to ensure compliance with any reformed rates system.
- To Lobby Peterborough MP's to ask the Government to legislate against rates avoidance.

### **72(3) Motion from Councillor Iqbal**

Councillor Iqbal moved his motion as listed in the report at Agenda Item 12 to the agenda.

Councillor Iqbal said that this motion concerned the future of the city, listening to residents and standing up for what was right for Peterborough. He said that people were proud of its heritage and as a new town. He said that too much of the expansion infrastructure there were showing signs of a lack of investment and upkeep.



Councillor Iqbal said that the new town was founded on the values of a decent home, a good job and a great place to live. The parkways and road networks were vital, he said, to travel across Peterborough and were a key part of the design of our new town.

Councillor Iqbal said that road users had intimated that roads had become run down due to a lack of investment, which was needed as a growing city. He said the Motion was also about doing better politics and doing the best for the people of Peterborough rather than political gain.

Councillor Iqbal said the Motion aimed to build on the cross-party consensus expressed at the meeting of the Council in July, that road users charging would not work in the city. He said the Council did not need road user charging and it was not supported by the Council. He said the Council should protect funding for its road network, with improvements, to help drivers, other transport users, cyclists and pedestrians.

Councillor Iqbal said that the Motion also sought to get Peterborough the funding it required for highway maintenance and to improve the state of roads. He said that, across England, the number of potholes being fixed had fallen from 2.7m in 2015 to 1.4m in 2023 and that local highway maintenance budgets had been cut, along with local authority budgets, which had led to crumbling roads and potholes in some parts of the city.

Councillor Iqbal said that, in this region, local highways maintenance funding had fallen by 24% - a quarter in real terms – enough to fill-in 8.7m potholes. He said the Motion provided an opportunity to unite the Council in a matter all Members agreed upon and he commended it to Council.

Councillor Qayyum seconded the motion and asked all Members to support it. She said that the subject of any form of road user charging had been a topic of contention and political debate in the city for some time. She said the Council needed to put the minds of hard-working residents at ease that the Labour Group in Peterborough did not support the implementation of Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) or other road user charging in Peterborough.

Councillor Qayyum paid thanks to the Combined Authority Metro Mayor, Dr Nick Johnson, who had declared improvement in local transport bus routes in order to mitigate and serve the need of road user charging. She said that over the years, pothole funding had been cut by a quarter by the current government. The recent pledge made by the Government in this area, she said, statistically, did very little to compensate for the years of costs to the taxpayer to put into repairing roads after cuts took place, which left the Council with a pittance of funding to undertake permanent and long-lasting damage repair.

Council debated the motion and a summary of the points raised by Members included:

- To correct the mover of the Motion about the matter being politicised originally and that this was not true since it had been previously brought before Council in order that all Members could “get on the same page.”
- Legal advice was sought as to whether the Motion was competent given that it was very similar to a Motion, which had already been to Council over the past six months.

*In response to the point immediately above, the Council's Interim Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer, said that when looking at the Motion, which was considered in July, whilst it did cover the specific points in relation to types of road charging, the Motion, which was being considered today went far wider than that and also went beyond road charging and talked about highway budgets. She said that, on balance, she did not think it would be categorised as being substantially the same as the Motion, which had been discussed in July.*

- A point of accuracy was put forward to refute that this matter was first considered at the July meeting of the Council and that many Members had been defending false claims on road charging from Conservative Group leaflets for several elections now.
- The Conservative Motion in July had been fixated upon congestion charging, which a whole campaign based on conflating the issues which Cambridge faced and had nothing to do with Peterborough and there were no such issues. On the contrary, Peterborough wanted and needed to bring people, businesses and investment into the city as well as bidding for its fair share of local highways, maintenance budgets, including, for lobbying for funding for roads.
- Would like to know whether it was no longer Liberal Democrat or Green Party policy not to introduce to introduce ULEZ charging.
- Talk about 15/20-minute cities and congestion/ULEZ charging. The Conservative Group was against all forms of congestion charging or punitive measures on motorists etc.
- Where did road tax stand in relation to the Motion opposing any road user charging schemes in Peterborough?

*In response to the point immediately above, the Council's Interim Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer said that road tax was not a consideration in terms of the motion, which referred to any additional charges.*

- Creating panic and scaremongering amongst residents, when there did not need to be. The Green Party agreed there should be investment in public transport, cycling and pedestrian routes and investment in active travel. Also, Peterborough City Council had the power of veto on highways-related decisions and that Peterborough City Council could decide whether to introduce a charging scheme.
- Most major car manufacturers are claiming they would quit the hybrid, electric car market since sustainable travel was no longer viable or sustainable at present and was passing the costs onto the consumer.
- In respect of the resolution around the Motion, aware there are challenges around roads maintenance and the amount of money it would cost. Asked that the mover of the Motion be clear that he was asking for money from Central Government or the Combined Authority, and not asking for local budgets to be impacted.
- A point of accuracy was put, which stated that the Conservative Party had brought in congestion and ULEZ charges in London and not by the Labour Party.

- A point of accuracy was put that the TCP did not tie the Council's hands with regard to ULEZ or congestion charges in Peterborough and the Plan stated that Peterborough was in charge of its own destiny; it had a veto and any policy or bill passed would be through this Council Chamber.

As mover of the motion Councillor Iqbal summed up and responded to specific points raised by Members during the debate.

The motion was **CARRIED** as follows:

Council notes:

- That the parkways and road systems in Peterborough are vital to enable flexible travel across the city.
- The new town principle was to provide good public services, allowing residents to easily access local amenities or travel to other parts of the city. There was cross party consensus at the Full Council meeting in July 2023, when discussing ultra-low emissions and congestion zones, that charging road users would not work in the city.
- Peterborough City Council have the power of veto on highways related decisions. Therefore, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Mayor does not have power to impose congestion charging or ultra-low emissions schemes on Peterborough.
- It is for Peterborough City Council, as the transport authority, to decide whether to introduce a charging scheme.
- Total local highways funding in the East of England fell by a quarter in real terms between 2020/21 and 2023/24.

Council believes:

- We should ensure adequate funding is provided for our road network to be maintained to a safe standard with improvements to help drivers, public transport users, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- Government cuts to local highways maintenance budgets have adversely affected the condition of roads.

Council resolves to:

- Oppose any road user charging schemes in Peterborough.
- Campaign for the restoration of local highways maintenance budgets to improve their condition in Peterborough, including the Leader of the Council lobbying the government for fairer funding for road maintenance.

#### **72(4) Motion from Councillor Hemraj**

Councillor Hemraj moved her motion as listed in the report at Agenda Item 12 to the agenda.

Councillor Hemraj said that this Motion was about recommending allergy policies in schools. She said every child had the right to be and feel safe in a school environment with parents also feeling reassured their child's school was a safe place for them.

She said that allergic disease was the most common chronic condition among children, which affected 7.0 to 8.0% of children worldwide or about two children in an average-sized classroom of 25 children. 18% of food allergy reactions and 25% of first-time anaphylactic reactions occurred at school. She said it was also one of the most serious.

Councillor Hemraj said that some schools had already done this. This motion, she said, was asking schools that had not already done so, to adopt the Schools' Allergy Code, which was clear guidance for schools to follow to better protect and safeguard children with allergies. Councillor Hemraj said that schools could get more information on how they could do this by going to the Benedict Blythe Foundation website, where the guidance could be found.

Councillor Hemraj thanked Helen Blythe, who lost her little boy, Benedict, following his collapse in school, which had resulted in his death from anaphylaxis, for all her hard work in bringing this to the attention of policymakers in local government and Government level to ensure that all school had policies in place to protect children with allergies. She said that, in memory of Helen's beautiful little boy, she asked that Members support the Motion.

Councillor J Allen seconded the motion and spoke on it. She hoped that, in Benedict's memory, all schools in Peterborough and beyond, would take advice to put into practice an allergy policy. She said that every member of the school community should understand allergy and their responsibilities for reducing risks from pupils to parents and staff.

Councillor Allen said it was the responsibility of everyone. Alicia Kearns, MP for Rutland and Melton had said in Parliament that voluntary advice should be replaced with mandatory regulations and Councils should require every school to implement and maintain an allergy policy. She said that, in addition, the Council should require every one of its schools to work with pupils, parents or guardians to create individual risk assessments for pupils with allergies.

Councillor Allen asked if any Member, or Council employee, who sat as a trustee or parent-governor on a multi-academy trust to table an agenda to implement a mandatory allergy policy and risk assessment. She said that the Youth Council could also be engaged to take this as a pupil conversation in schools and ensure that the allergy policy was developed.

Council debated the motion and a summary of the points raised by Members included:

- Things had improved in schools with regard to managing allergies but previously had not been given the recognition or importance and implementing an allergy policy in schools should be supported.
- Cross-party support for the motion was welcomed.
- Earlier in the month, the Education Minister had encouraged that schools adopt the Code and that Members be reassured that it had the support from those in the highest authority in the land.

The motion was **CARRIED** as follows:

This motion asks that the Council should recommend to Peterborough Schools that they should consider adopting the Schools Allergy Code outlined in the Motion to increase the safety and inclusion in Peterborough schools for children with allergies.

### **72(5) Motion from Councillor Cole**

Councillor Cole moved her motion as listed in the report at Agenda Item 12 to the agenda.

Councillor Cole said that Peterborough had a proud history of residents putting their country before themselves and belonging to the armed forces.

Councillor Cole said that the participants of the testing program were 'lab rats' or 'guinea pigs.' These men were used in experiments to test the effects of nuclear warfare, with no regard for the indigenous people, their lands or their lives. She said that veterans, indigenous people, scientists and civilians had all died as a consequence of the tests; yet their stories remained unheard by the general population of the world and that an apology to these men was long overdue.

Councillor Cole said that most veterans and direct family members were getting a complete refusal from the Ministry of Defence when requesting their full medical records and the records they had received often had large sections of their records blacked out or redacted. She said that some of the medical records had information that had been falsified and imagine medical professionals trying to diagnose someone's medical problems or design a plan of treatment without knowing their full medical history. She went on to say that these veterans and their families urgently needed access to their full medical history, including what they had been exposed to or results of blood and urine tests that had been taken during the testing program.

Councillor J Fox seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Council debated the motion and a summary of the points raised by Members included:

- Numerous affected by nuclear testing across the world.
- No mention of the casualties in the USSR when weapon-testing began.
- German atomic scientists atmospheric testing – no mention of this also or others or premature deaths linked to cancer.
- At best, the Motion was naïve – at worst, disingenuous.
- Reference to RAF serviceman and the appalling way in which medals had been delivered. One had received his under a mat but would have it formally presented to him following a talk by him in the city this weekend.

Councillor Fox, as seconder of the motion, said that Peterborough City Council had signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2013, which was a promise by this nation ensuring that those who served or had served in the armed forces, and their families, were treated with fairness and respect within their communities. He said he was concerned that veterans, and their families, who served during atomic bomb tests should be treated with fairness and respect, which they and their families deserved.

Councillor Fox said that the Motion put forward was strong, concise and to the point and he congratulated Councillor Cole on her dogged determination and heartfelt concerns by bringing this Motion not only to the Council but, if all went well, to the present government to ask for more positive action.

On a vote being taken (46 For, 2 Against and 7 Abstentions), the Motion was **CARRIED** as follows:

Peterborough City Council therefore **RESOLVES** to:

- Recommend that the Council Leader write a letter to Minister for Veterans and the Shadow Veterans minister, lobbying the Government for a full apology to the veterans of British Nuclear Testing, acknowledging these men were used as test subjects in order to understand the effects of nuclear warfare.
- Recommend that the Council Leader and Group Leaders write a jointly signed letter to the Minister for Defence demanding full access to medical records without the need to sue the Government for the British Nuclear Veterans' medical history.
- Ask Education Officers to signpost schools and colleges to information about British Nuclear Testing and worldwide Test experiments and work with a range of organisations who can direct schools to a range of resources and firsthand accounts of what veterans and family members have experienced as a result of the testing. (One such resource is [www.labratsacademy.online](http://www.labratsacademy.online)).
- Recommend that on the anniversary of the first British Nuclear Test (Operation Hurricane), which was detonated off the Montebello Islands, Australia on the 3rd of October 1952, the Town Hall and other public buildings in Peterborough be lit up in Yellow to thank and commemorate the veterans of British Nuclear Testing in recognition of all they have and continue to suffer as a consequence of the testing that took place.

## **72(6) Motion from Councillor Stevenson**

Councillor Stevenson withdrew her motion as listed in the report at Agenda Item 12 to the agenda.

## **73. Reports to Council**

### **73(a) Amendments to Shareholder Cabinet Committee Terms of Reference**

Council received a report, which sought approval of the amended Shareholder Cabinet Committee Terms of Reference, to make the Committee cross-party and to enable greater oversight from Members across the Council of the Council's commercial entities.

Councillor Howard moved the recommendation and said that the report was seeking minor amendments to Terms of Reference of the Shareholder Cabinet Committee, to enable the inclusion of non-Cabinet Members as part of the Cabinet Committee membership to allow greater cross-party oversight. He said that this particular

Committee had come under the interest of the Improvement Panel and he hoped that these measures would reassure it and allow more robust challenge in the Group. He said the non-Cabinet Members appointed would be non-voting Members.

Councillor M Farooq seconded the recommendation and reserved his right to speak.

**RESOLVED** that the amended Terms of Reference for the Shareholder Cabinet Committee, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

### **73(b) Report of the Peterborough City Council Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel**

Council received a report, which provided the Panel's fourth six monthly review of the work of the Council against the previously agreed Improvement Plan and the recommendations of the independent reports commissioned by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Standing Order 16.11 be suspended during consideration of items 13(b) and 13(c) to allow both the Chief Executive (CE) and the Chair of the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel (IIAP) to address Full Council.

Councillor S Allen highlighted a typographical error at page 108 to the report, which stated that "Blue Sky (the energy trading company including solar panels) remains active....", and that this should read "inactive."

The Mayor then invited questions to the Chair of the Panel (who was in attendance) and or the Council's Chief Executive and a summary of the points made and responses received included:

- Page 104 S2.2 – In response to a question as to how likely statutory intervention was and what were the contributory factors to this, the IIAP said that from a pragmatic sense insofar as what statutory intervention could mean for Peterborough, she said it was not at risk of further statutory intervention at this time. She said that very good progress had been made over recent years and features of that progress were down to colligative cross-party working and the strengthening of the Council's governance and management structures and that the risk of further statutory intervention above that currently (which was the lowest level of intervention) was extremely low.
- Page 104 S3.3 – In response to a question around Theme 1 – Financial Sustainability, where it talked about savings, transformation plans, accountabilities and priorities and the "turning off" of core and can't afford "things" and what was meant by core and could not afford, the IIAP said that Paragraph 3.3 referred back to Council what it had agreed in December 2021 as the core themes within its own Improvement Plan and what the Council was saying was that it would examine its current activities, which included deep dives into those activities, in order to be able to identify, in the Council's view, what was core. She said that the Council now had its Portfolio Boards that examined how the Council currently operated, how it could work in a more modernised or more streamlined way where those opportunities were to change how things were done currently. She said it was a reflection back of the Council's own ambition in being able to identify what those things were. She confirmed that it was solely for the Council to determine what was core to the city and what could no longer be afforded.

- Page 105 S4.1.2 – In response to a question around greater clarity required on both the likely costs and outcomes from the transformation workstreams identified in the MTFS paper, and whether the CIIAP had had any further clarity on this since the report had been published and what type of things did she mean when asking for further clarification, the CIIAP said that this was a relatively broad point in relation to progress on the transformation boards and that the workstreams arose out of the work of those boards. She said the point about the likely costs was about the investment that was needed into the work that would be required to change ways of working and to transform some of the ways that services and departments worked. She talked about investment, which may be required in IT or changes in working practices and that the reasons why the cost was not identified in the MTFS was because of some of the practical issues having not yet been fully identified and fully costed to allow them to be included within the MTFS and, in terms of the outcomes as to what would change and how, and had quantified what benefits would come from it, this could not be included within the MTFS either. She said this was about the continuing work of the transformation boards reporting into the Council via the Financial Sustainability Working Group, to identify and seek approval to the investment required to make the changes and that those investment decisions would be taken when there was confidence about the levels of savings, which might come out of that.
- Page 104 S3.3 – In response to a question around Theme 3 – Governance and Culture, as to what advice the Panel would give to the new Administration in terms of the immediate priority to ensure the confidence and stability shown so far by the majority of the Chamber to see the Council through to May 2024 and what were the elephant traps, as a Council, it needed to avoid, the CIIAP said that to answer the question, she would refer Members to the conclusion within the report and said that Council had made significant strides within regard to its budget management and financial planning but that more still needed to be done.

She said there was still too much reliance in relation to not actually making some of the changes, which were required to be made to be able to realise the savings and the Council tended to fall back either on mitigation or the use of reserves and the ability to do so lessened as reserves reduced. The CIIAP said that all the progress made had been commendable but that the challenges remained and the collaborative approach that the Council had demonstrated over the past two years had, she thought been a very specific feature of Peterborough's success.

The CIIAP said that the pitfalls would come from not continuing and not keeping the pace up on the improvements from an officer perspective in relation to the improvements that they had made in governance structures, and across departments to address the issues identified across the four themes and four transformation boards. She said that the political risk was very clearly in respect of the fact the Council had not acted in an oppositional way at all, across an authority, which had no overall control over the course of the last two years and that it would be detrimental to the Council to fall into the trap of doing this, not so much in relation to the current situation and the minority Administration but more the challenges moving forward into 2024 and the general election, which may fall during that year.



- Councillor Farooq said that his new Administration would offer the Panel political stability and transparency to carry on this work and to see through the delivery element of it. He said the Administration agreed with the Panel in respect of arms-length companies and that changes had been made to the Cabinet Committee and the Council wanted to check what value these added to residents' services and best value principles and whether those companies needed to be enhanced or whether an exit strategy was required.
- Councillor Fitzgerald said that the Panel had come into existence voluntarily and he was pleased to hear the CIIAP say that the past two years had seen good progress made.
- In response to a question as to whether the Panel felt that political instability had increased as a result of the recent change of Administration, the CIIAP said that at Page 1 to the report, it stated that the smaller size of the Administration did increase what was already a high degree of uncertainty about decision-making in the Council Chamber and that this had been reported by the Panel, in its third report that this risk existed.

She said that the Panel would continue to observe to see whether the collaborative approach, which had existed continued to do so and that the Panel had seen that up until now that it had, however the highly unusual position of having a group of 11 being the administration in a Council of 60 Members was a unique position and it fell to the Council and to each individual Councillor to take responsibility for their role in running the City Council.

Councillor Farooq – point of accuracy – it was not one person's request to ask her to stay on but a decision by all Members.

In response, the CIIAP said that the key point in relation to the Panel continuing was that the Council had not taken that decision yet and there had been discussions in relation to the fact that the Panel did not think that it would be the right time to make its final report in December when there was still uncertainty over the budget decisions the Council had to take in February.

She said that in relation to the work had done with Members, Officers and, more recently, Group Leaders, had helped to support the Panel's view that the way that Members all worked together and pulled together was incredibly important for Peterborough and if it did not hold together in that continuing way, then the progress could be slowed because the Panel had already commented on the amount of senior officer time had been taken up by the politics and the Panel did not want to see this as a detriment of the pace of the improvements being made.

The Chief Executive spoke on a point of context in relation to what Councillor Jones had said earlier. The Chief Executive said that he had seen the survey today and that there was a number of challenging issues being faced by local authorities and that Peterborough was now "in the middle of the pack now" as opposed to bottom, two years ago and it was commendable that the Council had come such a long way thanks to collaborative working. He added that the three themes had been agreed by full Council two years ago and that all had been addressed. The Chief Executive said he totally supported the work of the Panel and discussion around extending this had been very constructive. He said that the nature of the Panel might change and because of the budget

issues coming up, it would still be watching very carefully, getting the budget over the line at Council in February.

The Chief Executive said that, in respect of transformation, the first two years had been hard work to put the basics in place and the Council was entering the next phase and asking what did transformation look like/what was the core purpose of Peterborough City Council? He said that this was the message the Panel was giving to the Council, to keep going with the work but the Council faced many challenges.

- Page 105 S4.1.3 – In response to a question around Capital Spend in that once its assets had been disposed of the Council would be unable to reacquire these, where would future funding come from as it was unlikely to be met by Central Government, the CIIAP said that Members had to look at the previous paragraph in the report to look at this matter in context. She said the Council was seeking to avoid borrowing costs and further borrowing. She added that the Council would have to source external funding or have an asset disposal programme. She said it was a fact that once a local authority sold off an asset, it was gone, but what a Council was seeking to do via its asset disposal programme was to sell off assets that were no longer required in order to be able to invest that money in the transformation of the Council for the future.

The CIIAP acknowledged that it was a very difficult balancing act for Peterborough, as a Council but the Council was very limited in terms of moving forward since it wanted to avoid further borrowing and would therefore need to consider sale of assets or ways of maximising income to the Council.

- A Member commented that a lot of the work had been done by the Council's hard-working officers in terms of transforming the Council and the approach to the Council's Budget, which was root and branch and how it could work better had been inspirational.

In response to a question put by the same Member as to how the CIIAP had viewed this evening's proceedings and what her initial response had been, she said that she echoed the sentiments of recognising the hard work of staff and the work carried out by them and the Council's Chief Executive and in terms of conducting meetings of the Council, she said that the behaviour of Members had been exemplary compared to many other local authorities.

- A Member commented on looking back two years earlier when the behaviour was quite toxic and how the Budget was agreed then by a casting vote and that the argument then was about toxicity in the Chamber, and not amongst officers. He said that the then Leader, Councillor Fitzgerald, should take a lot of credit for changing that culture to one Member opposing the budget last year. He said the Council in terms of political leadership and behaviour of Members in the Council Chamber had come a long way.

In response, the CIIAP said that the last two years had been difficult and that the responsibility and credit for all of the changes across the whole Council but undoubtedly it had been the case that Councillor Fitzgerald had brought about a new collegiate approach to the improvement process and one of the defining features was the Financial Sustainability Working Group and working with Group Leaders making the information that was available to the Panel, available to the FSWG to ensure that everything was being looked at in an

open, honest and accountable way. This she said had come about when Councillor Fitzgerald had been Leader of the Council.

The CIAP said that now, there were signs of real respect and listening to the advice of the Council's Statutory Officers and it was a step change arising from individuals getting it in relation to their responsibilities and what they had to bring to that change agenda.

On the proposition of the Mayor, seconded by Councillor M Farooq, it was **RESOLVED** that:

1. Having considered the contents of the fourth report of the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel, included at Appendix 1 to the report, that this be noted.
2. A fifth report from the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel be received at the Council meeting on 20th March 2024.
3. Cabinet be asked to consider this report and respond with the action it wishes to take.
4. The Growth, Resources, and Communities Scrutiny Committee be asked to review this report, the Cabinet's response to it and the progress being made with the delivery of the Improvement Plan.

### **73(c) Peterborough City Council Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel Extension and Renewed Terms of Reference**

Council received a report, which sought approval to extend the work of the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel (the Panel) for a further year and to approve the amended Terms of Reference.

On the proposition by Councillor M Farooq, seconded by Councillor Howard, it was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The extension of the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel for an additional 12 months until December 2024, be approved.
2. The amended Terms of Reference for the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

### **73(d) Revision to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board Terms of Reference**

Council received a report, which presented new terms of reference for the new joint Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Well-being Board and Integrated Care Partnership.

On the proposition by Councillor S Farooq, seconded by Councillor Elsey, it was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Terms of Reference, as set out in Appendix A, for inclusion in the Constitution, be approved.
2. The Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any other minor or consequential amendments to the Constitution necessary for, or incidental to, the implementation of these proposals.

The Mayor  
6.00pm to 10.05pm  
6 December 2023