

MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES' SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON
THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2023
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH

Committee Members Present: Councillors Iqbal (Chair), Asif, M Farooq, J R Fox, Knight, Perkins, Sharp, Thulbourn, Qayyum, Warren and Wiggan and Independent Co-opted Members Parish Councillors Ormston and Young.

Officers Present: Rob Hill, Service Director: Housing and Communities
Charlotte Cameron, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Emma Riding, Service Director - Financial Management & Deputy S151 Officer
Adam Payton, Operations Manager - City Centre
Amy Nebel, Senior Waste and Recycling Officer
Mandy Pullen, Assistant Director HR and Development
Simon Lewis, Service Director Commercial, Property and Asset Management
Felicity Paddick, Head of Estates
Matt Gladstone, Chief Executive
Adesuwa Omoregie, Interim Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Others Present: Councillor Coles, Cabinet Member Legal, Finance and Corporate Services
Councillor Sandford, Mayor of Peterborough
Councillor Hogg, Group Leader Liberal Democrats

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jamil and Fenner. Councillors Qayyum and Perkins were in attendance as substitute.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations received.

15. MINUTES OF GROWTH RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 JULY 2023

The minutes of the Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 18 July 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

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

No call ins were received.

17. 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.

18. LOCALITY ASSET REVIEW

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Locality Asset Review which sets out the principles and findings of the Localities review of Council property including community buildings, leisure facilities and libraries. It also includes a proposed draft Community Asset Transfer Policy which will support the implementation of the Locality Asset Review.

- A point of order was raised by the Mayor of Peterborough before Officers were called on to introduce the report.
- It was stressed that the document be made available to members of the public and the rationale behind this was relayed to Members of the Committee.
- Furthermore, the procedures in respect to exempt and confidential reports were queried, and it was emphasized that the Committee's approval for the exemption be sought.
- In terms of the mayor's query with respect to the missing recommendation, Members were advised that the justification for the exemption had been noted on the front sheet of the agenda pack and that the reasons for the exemption had been highlighted on the council's website under restricted enclosure 12.
- It was noted that discussions regarding the exemption had taken place during the pre-meet where some Members of the Committee agreed to defer the item to an extraordinary meeting on the basis that it be made public.
- It was advised that a deferral would enable officers to draft and present a public report.
- A vote on the deferral was instructed.
- Members were reminded that votes in favour of the exemption would permit discussions to continue whereas votes against the exemption would result in the item being deferred.
- It was recommended that the item be deferred on the basis that the public be involved at the very offset and once the document is made public, it be presented to the Committee.
- The mayor drew the Committee's attention to the 5 council values and reference was made to value 1 - transparency and value 2 - respectful and the reasoning for the deferral on the basis of these principles was relayed to members of the Committee.
- It was emphasized that the arguments in favour of the report being made public were pertaining to openness and transparency.
- Reference was made to the Council Policy set out in 1999 which encouraged

- officers to limit the amount of exempt information.
- However, it was noted that no decisions had been made and that the consultation was ongoing. Thus, at this instance it was not appropriate to publicise the information.
 - Members were advised that there was a possibility of the Cabinet meeting being deferred should the Committee wish to bring a public report.
 - It was stressed that the issue be handled with delicacy and engagement with stakeholders be undertaken.
 - The importance of openness, transparency and the correct timing was emphasised.
 - In conclusion, Members were advised that the forthcoming report would primarily be open and any private information would have an explanation attached to it.

The following recommendation was proposed by Councillor Farooq and seconded by Councillor Wiggin, that Item 12. Locality Asset Review – Update be deferred to allow Officers to revisit EXEMPT Appendix 1 – Locality Asset Review Summary and provide a public version of the appendix, with explanations provided if any information was to remain EXEMPT.

The Committee voted on the recommendation, with 6 voting FOR, 5 voting AGAINST and 1 ABSTENTION. Therefore, the recommendation was CARRIED.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to

1. Notes the Locality Asset Review Executive Summary and Draft Recommendations contained in the exempt annex (Appendix 1) and makes any comments prior to submission to Cabinet in October.
2. Agrees that Estates and Finance dispose of those locality assets highlighted in the report as being suitable as surplus to requirements and for repurposing up to a maximum disposal price of £500,000, where any proposed sale of an asset in excess of £500,000 will be brought back to Cabinet for specific approval to dispose on a case-by-case basis.
3. Notes that Directors will revert back to Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee in November with further details of the proposed Locality Asset Review recommendations and timings following further consultation.
4. Notes the Draft Community Asset Transfer Policy contained in Appendix 2 and make any comments prior to submission to Cabinet for approval in October.

RECOMMENDATION

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee recommended that Item 12. Locality Asset Review – Update be deferred to allow Officers to revisit EXEMPT Appendix 1 – Locality Asset Review Summary and provide a public version of the appendix, with explanations provided if any information was to remain EXEMPT.

19. UPDATE ON PEOPLE AND CULTURE PROGRAMME

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the People and Culture Programme as the Committee had previously

identified risks and issues relating to the Council's workforce and is seeking assurance that these matters are being appropriately addressed in a structured and strategic manner, with a clear plan for delivery and measurement.

The Assistant Director HR and Development introduced the report and key points raised included:

- The purpose of the report was outlined.
- Assurances on the people within the Culture Programme and how these came about were provided.
- The success of the Programme was attributed to leadership, people and getting the basics right.
- It was noted that 4 corporate portfolios had been established and reference was made to the developing a Sustainable Future City Council Portfolio which encompasses how the Programme works, serves, and enables.
- Within this portfolio along with subject matter expertise, it was advised that the People and Culture Programme had been developed.
- The 9, themed key projects were noted, and reference was made to 4.1, paragraph 3 of the report.
- The Programme of work was highlighted. It was advised that this was set to complete within 18-24 months.
- The Committee were advised that the Programme had been approved by a number of different stakeholders including the corporate leadership team and the Improvement Panel.
- Reference was made to the right narrative for a workforce plan moving forward and its purpose including priority actions were outlined.
- Members were advised that values and behaviours were at the forefront of the Culture Programme.
- The Committee's attention was drawn to the key employee engagement survey, the first survey after many years which sought to reshape the Programme should the output require.
- Members were updated on the Programme's forthcoming plans including the proposed structural changes to the learning curriculum and career paths.
- The importance of evaluation and adapting in accordance was emphasised.
- It was noted that the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of HR had been redesigned to demonstrate the progress in the key areas of the People and Culture Programme of Work.

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

- In terms of the frequency of the consultancy with staff in respect to the employee engagement survey, it was confirmed that consultancy would be undertaken on a frequent basis.
- With respect to the timescales given to the management team to action changes, the work in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA) was noted.
- Members were further advised that the management team would be invited to evaluate the output and moving forward, the output would determine the needs of the Programme.
- Moreover, the importance of an evidence-based approach was emphasised.
- Further clarification on the frequency of the employee engagement survey was sought, it was confirmed that the survey would be repeated on an annual basis.
- In response to the Member's query on the anonymity of responses, it was confirmed that the identity of recipients would be concealed.

- The importance of tackling the skills gap across the city was noted.
- A query on the redesign of the KPI's was raised. It was noted that KPI's were wide and encompassing and that some would be filtered into the corporate KPI's to enable them to sit at a corporate leadership team level.
- It was confirmed that KPI's were not service led.
- From a corporate perspective, it was noted that a lot of work had been undertaken within this area to redesign and restructure corporate services. The importance of redesign over restructure was emphasised and it was confirmed that both HR and Finance had fully recruited.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the content of the Peterborough City Council's People & Culture Programme and note the progress being made to deliver the desired outcomes.

20. SALES, FEES AND CHARGES REVIEW

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the activity being undertaken as part of the comprehensive review of Sales Fees and Charges and proposes some increases for immediate implementation.

The Service Director- Financial Management & Deputy s151 Officer introduced the report and key points raised included:

- Members were advised that a £5.1 million financial gap had been predicted for the forthcoming year which was set to rise by £10 million by 2026/2027.
- Consequently, it was noted that the team were developing its budget and exploring different demands.
- It was confirmed that the Council was experiencing significant levels of financial challenges.
- Members were assured that every option was being considered to help the Council bridge the financial gap for the future.
- The collaborative work with the Lion Partnership was outlined.
- An error within the report was identified on table one, item 4, page 33. Members were advised that Residents Parking Permits – 2nd and 3rd Permits and Visitor Permits (annual) were set to increase to £70 and not £64.

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

- A query was raised on the proposed 47% increase to the second brown bin waste collections, with one Member querying the substantial increase and whether the service area had considered incremental changes.
- The Committee were advised that current subscription fees did not cover service costs, thus the proposed changes were essential.
- Furthermore, Members were assured that the service area did not profit from such charges.
- In terms of the Member's query on sensitivity analysis around cost and whether any modelling had been undertaken, it was anticipated that the service area would lose subscribers and the Committee were advised that these were detailed within the report.
- Reference was made to the benchmarking exercise which had highlighted that

the service charges were lower and not in line with statistical neighbours.

- With respect to the loss of subscribers, Members were advised that it was difficult to predict behaviours due to the variations in demographics but overall, a reduction was anticipated.
- In terms of the loss per round, the Officer was unable to provide a conclusive response due to the seasonal variations.
- However, the Committee were assured that the issue would be kept under review.
- With respect to the 30% increase to bulky waste collections, its impact and how this was being justified to members of the public, it was noted that the increase had been proposed to cover service costs and that in comparison to other councils, existing costs were reasonable.
- Clarification on the research with respect to bulky waste collections was sought.
- It was confirmed that research was based on data held by the City Council and fly tipping occurrences.
- In terms of the bulky waste collection fee, the error within the report was noted and it was confirmed that the fees were set to increase from £23.50 to £30 for 5 items and not £23.00.
- Further clarification on the bulky waste collection fee increase was sought, with one Member querying whether the decision to use electrical vehicles came into play.
- In response, it was advised that a number of different pressures had contributed to the proposed changes.
- Members raised concerns on the increasing number of fly tipping incidents and the statistics on the illegal dumping of waste were queried.
- Furthermore, it was stressed that the statistics did not reflect the increasing number of cases.
- With respect to the statistics, it was confirmed that these were based on the number of reported incidents. Members were further advised that a briefing note would be drawn up on previous statistics.
- In terms of the concerns that were raised, Members were advised of the variations and particular hotspots.
- With resident parking permits set to increase from £44 to £64 and concerns regarding the quality of service, it was requested that enforcement officers patrol the streets, evidence be drawn and brought back to the Committee to offer residents some form of reassurance.
- The Member's concerns were acknowledged, and it was confirmed that a briefing note on statistics, visits and penalties would be drawn up for the Committee.
- However, the Committee were advised that the approach was based on demand and that the permit scheme itself was the deterrent.
- It was re-emphasised that the scheme was based on the level of compliance and not monetary gain.
- A further query on bulky waste collections was raised, with one Member requesting comparative data from authorities with a similar demographics and the impact of fly tipping. The Member also queried the yearly cost of its collection.
- In response to the comparative data query, the Committee were advised that this was difficult to obtain due to the number of factors which came into play. However, in comparison to other authorities, it was noted that Peterborough City Council ranked high.
- With respect to the Member's second query, it was confirmed that a briefing note on the cost of collection and disposal would be provided.
- On the proposal to increase the cost of resident parking permits, the lack of national legislation and the stiff competition for such permits, it was suggested

that permits be rolled out for the whole of Peterborough as opposed to increasing prices.

- In response, the purpose of the scheme was outlined, and it was advised that that the entire city would not benefit from such an extension due to the lack of demand, especially in rural areas.
- However, variations were noted in the East Ward and the Member's concerns with respect to the issues residents were experiencing at a local church were recognized.
- Furthermore, attention was drawn to the parking permit schemes.
- It was noted that these could be implemented upon the request of residents.
- With respect to the success rate of Fixed Penalty Notices, Members were advised that the success rate for fly tipping offences stood at 50%.
- Clarification on planning applications and the implications of reinstating and charging for pre-application advice on page 37 of the report was sought.
- It was advised that less officer resource was required as additional support would be offered at the initial stage.
- Moreover, it was hoped that the additional income would help to resolve the department's recruitment issues.
- The Committee queried whether benchmarking and deprivation had been considered when the directorate sought to increase the fees for residents parking permits.
- It was confirmed that deprivation had not been considered when proposing to increase parking permit charges.
- However similar sized cities such as Cambridgeshire and Debry were considered.
- In terms of the legal implications on page 39 of the report and the reference to 'powers to make a profit', it was confirmed that profit from waste collections was not anticipated.
- Assurance on enforcement services was sought. In response, the Committee were advised that enforcement officers were set to increase from 13 to 16. It was hoped that this measure would resolve the parking issues and alleviate the concerns pertaining to additional charges.
- A query on the individual parking sessions was raised.
- In response, it was noted that the price increase did not apply to such sessions to keep them available for genuine users such as residents with less frequent visitors.
- Furthermore, it was noted that the increase ought to apply to align with the car parking charge increase.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to review the proposed sales, fees and charges changes and make comments or suggestions to recommend to Cabinet before being referred for approval to Full Council.

The Committee also requested that:

1. A briefing note on the studies referred to in the report that concluded there was no link between bulky waste charges and fly-tipping rates.
2. A briefing note on the costs of collecting and disposing of fly-tipping in a municipal year.

21. THIRD REPORT OF THE PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL INDEPENDENT

IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE PANEL

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the third report of the Peterborough City Council Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel report.

The Chief Executive accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Legal, Finance and Corporate Services introduced the report and key points raised included:

- It was anticipated that a fourth report of the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel would follow.
- It was confirmed that good progress had been made especially with respect to revenue spend.
- Attention was drawn to the budgetary challenges and issues with respect to capital funding.
- In terms of training and development, it was advised that group leaders were allocated a member peer to support them personally and to help the Council drive forward the development and delivery of their Improvement Plan.
- It was noted that the financial climate was tough.
- Members were advised that financial challenges may worsen in the coming months.

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

- In terms of 4.3.3 of the report - electoral arrangements, it was noted that initial discussions in relation to the move to 'all out' elections had taken place with group leaders.
- It was acknowledged that further discussions and consultation was required.
- With respect to the 2026 boundary review, it was advised that further discussions were required.

AGREED ACTIONS

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

1. Considers the third report of the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel and agrees to the action to be taken as a result and progress being made with delivery of the Improvement Plan.
2. Respond with the action it wishes to take, including on the following issues:
 - Completing the audit and sign off of all outstanding annual accounts in this financial year,
 - Planning for the permanent recruitment to the S151 role,
 - Continuing to invest in the work of the Portfolio Boards,
 - Considering the approach to the disposal of assets,
 - Developing and approving a Commercial Strategy to strengthen the work of the Shareholder Committee and align with best practice, Completing an Asset Management Plan and a Corporate Landlord approach,
 - Considering replacement of the building compliance IT system,
 - Reconsidering the proposal to move to all out elections,
 - Facilitating handover between the outgoing and incoming Audit Committee

chairs.

22. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior 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.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and 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.

23. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which looked at the work programme for the municipal year 2023-2024 to determine the Committees priorities. Members were invited to make comments and suggestions.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the Work Programme for 2023/2024 and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee was noted as being the 14 November 2023.

CHAIR

Meeting began at 7:00pm and ended at

8.39pm