

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL
COMMUNITIES HELD AT THE BOURGES / VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL
ON 19 MARCH 2012**

Present: Councillors D Over (Chair), D Sanders, D Harrington, N Sandford and E Murphy

Also Present: Alex Hall - Peterborough Youth Council
Jordan Heather – Peterborough Youth Council
Stuart Wainright - Head Teacher of Barnack Primary School

Officers Present: Peter Heath-Brown, Planning Policy Manager
Jonathan Lewis, Assistant Director Education & Resources
Leonie McCarthy, Social Inclusion Manager
Julie Rivett, Neighbourhood Manager, North and West
Gary Goose, Community Safety Strategic Manager
Karen S Dunleavy, Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nawaz and Shaheed.

2. Declaration of Interest

Item 5 - Update on New Planning issues and Item 6 - Community Action Plans

Councillor Murphy declared a personal interest in his work with community involvement.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 January 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2012, were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Education Attainment in Rural Areas

The Commission received a presentation from the Assistant Director for Education and Resources regarding attainment for schools in rural areas. Members were also advised that the report contained a wider overview of comparisons for all schools in Peterborough.

Key points within the presentation included:

- Birth rates in rural area;
- Education standards within rural areas had met Governments expectations;
- Any areas of concerns in schools performance would involve intervention from Peterborough City Council;
- Progress of success to ensure a child leaves school with the Government education standards;
- Overall education standards in rural primary schools within the Ofsted inspections had scored high;
- Secondary Education standards had achieved a high attainment level;

- Early years and Childcare provision in rural areas had also scored a good offset grading;
- Concentration over providing education for Eye, where the population was increasing;
- Rebuild at Newborough, John Clare; and
- Tracking development of schools.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members raised a question regarding what the maximum capacity for pupil intake for Arthur Mellows was and whether it was at a critical level? *The Assistant Director Education & Resources advised that the capacity level for schools was varied. Members were also advised that places for children moving into the area from the City would not be reserved.*
- Members raised concerns over the extra housing provision identified for Eye village within the City Council's Housing Strategy, and sought clarification over why the Council had not increased the capacity levels at Arthur Mellows Village College in order to meet the education needs of children in rural areas? *The Assistant Director Education & Resources advised Members that the Education department were aware of the development plans for Eye and would continue to communicate the Council's position for education needs in rural areas. Members were also advised that the use of S106 money was being utilised in rural areas in order to expand existing schools. In addition Members were advised that school places would be allocated to rural children in City schools, if the rural schools capacity was at the maximum limit.*
- Members commented that school places needed to be maintained for the rural areas. *Members were informed that currently the Council were fortunate to provide spaces so far and was mindful about development pressures. Members were also advised that, rural schools in Norfolk had recently been forced to close due to the lack of student intake.*
- Members raised a question regarding free school meals for vulnerable children from deprived areas and what impact the pupil premium had on school funding? *Members were advised that there had been a number of pupil premium funding applications and each premium allocated was for £600 per child identified as vulnerable. Members were also advised that the funding was not ring fenced and that schools would decide how to spend it. Members were also advised that there was a pupil premium allocation of £250 per child, for forces children moving into the area.*
- The Head of Barnack Primary School advised Members that Ipads had been introduced to the school through the pupil premium funding, for vulnerable children.
- Members raised a question over the attainment figures for schools that had been closed in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire compared to Peterborough? *The Assistant Director Education & Resources would provide information separately to the Commission.*
- Members sought clarification over what the priority was for the allocation of school places to accommodate Lincolnshire children over Eye children for Arthur Mellows School? *Members were advised that the admissions criteria for school spaces were allocated on a catchment area criteria and special educational needs basis.*
- Members sought clarification over the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and what impact the changes had on vulnerable students? *Members were informed that EMA was a flat rate allowance, which had been replaced by a bursary scheme for post 16 year old children in education. Members were also advised that the bursary scheme was in its embryonic stage and that time would tell on how students would be affected by the changes.*
- Members sought clarification over the Rural West Children's Centre and whether there was any provision to provide places for children living outside the main area? *Members were informed that any child was entitled to a placement at any Children's Centre in the rural area; however, parents would be responsible for meeting the travel needs of their child. Members were also advised that an exercise was being conducted to change the focus on Children's Centres in order to engage with the very hard to reach communities.*

- Members raised a question about what advertising was being conducted to promote the provision of free school meals? *Members were advised that advertising had taken place through local media, Job Centre Plus and other organisations in order to encourage parents to sign up to the service.*
- Members sought clarification over what methodology was adopted to ascertain how many extra classrooms would be required for future education provision in areas of the City with housing development? *Members were advised that modelling was conducted around census data to make provisions for the short and long term educational needs of Peterborough.* The use of S106 money to develop or extend schools was dependent on the number of houses being placed in the area of development.
- Members raised a question regarding the financial benefits of providing school places for children living outside of the Peterborough area? *Members were informed that the funding received from other Local Authorities due to the out of catchment placements, which had provided extra classrooms, had kept those schools receiving the funding viable.*
- Members sought clarification over the rural primary schools performance indicator results and requested further information on what indicators were used and what method of marking was conducted for level four tests? *Members were informed that level four exams included a range of disciplines that children would be tested on. Members were also advised that level four exams were externally marked, unlike the level one and two tests which were marked by teachers.*
- Members sought clarification over whether charges had been recently introduced for the use of Children's Centres in rural areas? *Members were informed that the only charges in place were for other activities provided outside of the normal Children's Centre sessions. Members were also advised that there would be no charge for a child's placement at a Children's Centre.*
- Members sought clarification over the recent call in, on the procurement exercise to introduce a third party provider of Children's Centre Services and whether there was an impact for rural areas? *Members were advised that the procurement exercise had included Children's Centres in rural areas.*
- Members sought comments regarding the impact on schools providing Community Education? *Members were advised that providing Community Education had provided a positive impact.*

The Commission received a presentation from the Head Teacher of Barnack CofE Primary School which included the plan introduced to improve the Ofsted results from good to outstanding at the school.

Key points within the presentation included:

- Using an Olympic analogy to drive improvements;
- Provision of staff training;
- Revision of the schools' values and ethos;
- Focusing on improving core curriculum subjects;
- Teachers helping each other;
- Rewards systems;
- Introduction of new clubs;
- Improvements on safeguarding;
- Children feeling proud to attend school;
- Learning conferences which involved one to one sessions for all children;
- Improvements to the school building and school grounds;
- Creative curriculum focusing on key skills;
- Involvement from neighbouring schools; and
- Work to maintain the current Ofsted standards and the challenges involved.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members sought clarification over whether a Church of England status for schools provided a positive impact for children? *The Head Teacher of Barnack CofE Primary School advised Members that there was a positive impact due to values, ethos and the children embracing these; however, schools would not necessarily need to be church run schools.*
- Members sought clarification over the low attainment figures for Barnack CofE Primary School, which had been highlighted within the report? *The Head Teacher of Barnack CofE Primary School advised Members that the low figures were due to children moving into year two, or were from other schools.*
- Members commented that Barnack CofE Primary School's improvement success should be shared with other schools in Peterborough.

ACTION AGREED

It was agreed that the Assistant Director Education & Resources:

1. Would arrange for a report to be brought back to the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities to outline the work being carried out to promote the services provided by Children's Centres; and
2. Provide comparison figures on performance in Peterborough schools against neighbouring authority schools of a similar size.

5. Update on New Planning issues

Councillor Sanders left the meeting at this point.

The Commission received a presentation from the Planning Policy Manager, which included information regarding the Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Key points within the presentation included:

- Reasons for updating the SCI, which was due to new legislation being introduced through the Localism Act;
- Contents of the updated SCI;
- Pre-application consultation;
- Neighbourhood Planning – Allowing communities to formulate their own views about what new houses, businesses and shops should look like and where they should go for the future;
- New planning process that was expected to be introduced from 6 April 2012;
- Process was to be initiated by Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums;
- A body to be in place to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, which would not be initiated by the Local Authority;
- Council's role was to ensure that there was no conflict;
- A Neighbourhood Plan would have to be agreed by at least 50% of the people voting in a referendum;
- The Council's responsibility to monitor and ensure that all legislation was being met;
- Statement of Community Involvement was to be considered at a Cabinet meeting due to be held on 26 March 2012;
- Following consideration and consultation, the final version of the Statement of Community Involvement would be presented to Cabinet for adoption in Autumn 2012;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was intended to replace all planning policy.

- The NPPF final version was expected to be published around the time of the Government's budget announcements; and
- The Council's recent adoption of the Housing Strategy was intended to aid the process.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members sought clarification over whether the changes would be introduced for the planning of a development of over two hundred houses? *The Planning Policy Manager advised Members that the Council was awaiting information from the Government on what the levels would be.*
- Members were advised that it was up to Neighbourhood Planning to decide what should be included in the Community Plans?
- Members commented that in terms of development for rural areas, two hundred houses were thought to be a considerable number and whether the amount of consultation should be taken into account when considering a planning application? *Members were advised that the Council would encourage consultation, which was advisory. Members were also advised that the more consultation conducted by developers, the higher their chance was of being granted planning permission, provided they revised their scheme in response to public comments.*
- Members sought clarification over what support would be provided to Community Groups for the process of Neighbourhood Planning and whether there would be a Scrutiny function? *Members were advised that Parish Councils were in a better position to start the new process. Members were also advised that further guidance was awaited from the Government; however, there was an understanding on how the planning process was going to work for all communities.*
- Members sought clarification over whether verbal comments would be presented to Cabinet on 26 March 2012? *The Planning Policy Manager advised Members that comments from all Scrutiny Committees and Commissions would be presented to Cabinet.*

RECOMMENDATION

The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities recommend that Cabinet:

- (i) Maintain the current resources available in order to aid both Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums to undertake the role of preparing Neighbourhood Plans; and
- (ii) Consider increasing resources in order to provide further support to both Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums to undertake the role of Neighbourhood Planning; and
- (iii) Take note of comments made by the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities which were:
 - Although the Government might set national thresholds for the size of developments that would be subject to the requirement for pre-application consultation (for example, only those proposals for development of two hundred or more dwellings), it was often much smaller developments that would cause controversy or problems, particularly in villages. Therefore, the Council should encourage developers to undertake pre-application consultation on proposals for much smaller schemes; and
 - The Council should make particular efforts to encourage Neighbourhood Groups in non-parish areas in order for them to become set up as Neighbourhood Forums and to undertake Neighbourhood Planning.

Members of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities voted 3 in favour of the recommendation and 1 abstention.

ACTION AGREED

It was agreed that the Planning Policy Manager would raise the comments and recommendation made by the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities regarding the Draft Statement of Community Involvement at the Cabinet meeting due to be held on 26 March 2012.

6. Community Action Plans

The Commission received a presentation from the Community Safety Strategic Manager, which included information regarding the Community Action Plan (CAPs) and outlined the purpose of the plans.

Key points within the presentation included:

- Neighbourhood profile and the make up of what community demographics included;
- Comparisons across wards;
- What Committees and Panels were being conducted currently in ward areas;
- What community priorities were;
- Instruction sheets on developing the structure of a plan;
- Acknowledgement of all Groups, Members and Community Groups that had become involved in developing the CAPs;
- Activities that had been carried out to produce the CAPs; and
- Using the Strategic Delivery Plan to develop CAPs;

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members sought clarification on how each of the villages' individual needs would be included in the CAPs and what the process would be? *The Neighbourhood Manager for North and West advised Members that every Parish Council would be engaged and that each Local Plan or Vision Statement would feed into the CAPs. Members were also advised that the Strategic Priorities would be captured for each rural area.*
- Members commented that profiling and statistics was referred to within the report; however, there was no mention of an action plan on how these would be achieved. Members also commented that it would be beneficial to include some targets or standards into the CAPs and that they should be more strategic with a higher level of input from a lead Member. *The Neighbourhood Manager for North and West advised Members that the Single Delivery Plan provided guidance for the Neighbourhood Committees in order for them to agree the targets and baselines to be set. Members were also advised that the report included a spine diagram which outlined what social factors existed for communities, which would also build a base for developing targets.*
- Members also commented that plans should be made to brief new members on the CAPs process at their induction following the Local Elections.
- Members commented on the involvement of Neighbourhood Committees and the allocation of S106 money. *Members were advised that one of the key roles of the Neighbourhood Management Team was to ensure that S106 money was used in the wider City area that had a strategic link. Members were also advised that priorities identified within the CAPs should drive the allocation of S106 money.*

ACTION AGREED

It was agreed that the Neighbourhood Manager for North and West would send an email to Parish Council's and Parish Chairs outlining what the main priorities should be within Community Action Plans in order to direct the allocation of S106 money.

7. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The latest version of the Forward Plan, showing details of the key decisions that the Leader of the Council believed the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would be making over the next four months, was received.

No items were identified to be brought back to the next meeting

CHAIRMAN
7.00pm - 9.20 pm

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