

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE  
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH  
ON  
25 JULY 2012**

**Present:** Councillors Peach (Chairman), Day (Vice Chairman), Kreling, Nawaz, Johnson, Forbes, JR Fox

**Also Present:** Ansar Ali Police Authority Representative  
Councillor Todd  
Paul Froggitt Vice Chairman of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Association of Local Councils

**Officers in Attendance:** Heather Darwin Business Transformation Manager  
Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhood Services  
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer  
Dania Castagliuolo Governance Officer

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Shearman and Paul Phillipson.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

Ansar Ali declared that he was a possible candidate for the Police and Crime Commissioners elections.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2012**

The minutes of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 June 2012 were approved as an accurate record.

**4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions**

There were no requests for Call-in to consider

**5. The Community Engagement Strategy**

The report provided the Committee with an overview of the Community Engagement Strategy following a request made by the Committee at a meeting on 7 March 2012 and following a recent consultation regarding the improvements in the Bridge Street area of the City.

The Community Engagement Strategy had been developed to replace the current consultation strategy. The strategy set out the way in which local people would become involved in appropriate and relevant ways in order to ensure their views and opinions were taken in to account when identifying and assessing priorities, identifying solutions to problems and redesigning services.

The benefits of effective community engagement were reported as follows:

- To give local people the opportunity to influence and shape local services

- Generate feedback about local services
- Allow the City Council and Greater Peterborough Partnership to understand the needs of the local community and adapt services to meet those needs

The strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee were requested to endorse the Community Engagement Strategy prior to its referral to Cabinet.

Comments and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members queried who the Community Engagement Strategy belonged to as it talked about being shared with other groups. *The Business Transformation Manager informed members that the strategy belonged to the Council and was intended to be as broad as possible.*
- Members suggested that the Council should be using groups with expertise in the city such as the Disability Forum instead of expensive consultants who do not have the same life experience.
- Members were concerned that the public were not being listened to during consultations. *The Business Transformation Manager informed the Committee that before a consultation took place they would take into account any risks and make sure the right questions were included to help the public understand those risks.*
- Members queried if there had been any engagement with the voluntary sector and were there any plans for engagement. *The Business Transformation Manager noted this point and added that these groups would be very useful to engage with in future.*
- Members informed that they would like to see progress within this strategy and requested that measures were developed to look at future improvement.
- Members queried on how local people would be given opportunities to voice their opinion when they were not being listened to. *The Business Transformation Manager advised members that the key area was to ensure local people received feedback so they were clear that their input was useful.*
- Members queried what happened to all of the petitions that were presented at full Council. *The Business Transformation Manager advised members that the petitions were referred to the relevant departments to be dealt with.*
- A member informed the Committee that they had submitted a petition at full council and received a full reply from the head of the relevant department. It had then been presented to cabinet and the outcome had been satisfactory.
- The Youth Councillor commented that residents and community groups were included in the objectives of the Community Engagement Strategy but there was no mention of young people and this could be something to consider. *The Business Transformation Manager informed Members that she was interested in ensuring that all groups were included in the strategy and would make sure youth groups were consulted in future.*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee recommends that the following be included in the Community Engagement Strategy:

- 1) Engagement and consultation with disability groups
- 2) Engagement and consultation with the Youth Council

## **6. The Roles and Functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel for Cambridgeshire**

The report provided the Committee with information regarding changes in Police Governance leading up to the election of a Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the formation of a Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel.

The Committee was asked to note the significant changes in police governance arrangements and consider their impact on the Committee's statutory function as Peterborough's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee. Such considerations should include how best to achieve synergy between the work of the committee and the work of the new Police and Crime Panel.

Comments and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members suggested that Peterborough should have a member of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee on the Police and Crime Panel as the work would be part of what the committee already dealt with.
- Members were concerned that all members of the Police and Crime Panel were members of political parties they suggested some panel members should be independent from politics. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed the Committee that the process was a clear appointment process and it was necessary that it was an executive decision.*
- Members queried whether the same conservative members would be on the panel when the commissioner took office on 22 November. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed the Committee that the Councillors on the panel were Councillors Eley and Walsh for the Conservatives and Councillor Khan for Labour.*
- Members queried whether the successful candidate for the Police and Crime Commissioner would sit on the Panel. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services advised the Committee that this would not be possible as the Panel would have to scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner.*

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee recommends that Peterborough has a member of the Strong and Supportive Scrutiny Committee on the Police and Crime Panel.

## **7. Final Report of the Neighbourhood Committee Review Implementation Task and Finish Group**

The Committee were presented with a final report from the Task and Finish Group which had been established to monitor the implementation of recommendations made as part of the review of Neighbourhood Committees in 2011.

Comments and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that it seemed that members of public only turned up to Neighbourhood Committee meetings if there was a particularly contentious issue on the agenda therefore this could be used as a strategy to get the public to attend more regularly. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services advised the committee that part of the strategy was to add some contentious items to the agendas of the Neighbourhood Committee meetings and also to ensure better advertising of the meetings. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and the New Head of Communications had already had discussions concerning advertising.*
- The Vice Chairman of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils commented that the Local Council Association was opposed to Neighbourhood Committee meetings as they were of the opinion that they duplicated the work of Parish Councils. He addressed the report and commented that:
  - ❖ Part 2 (ii) of the report stated 'For the committee to consider the recommendations made in section 5.1 of this report'
  - ❖ Part 2 (iv) of the report stated 'For the committee to receive an annual report on the performance of Neighbourhood Committees'

There was no report on Neighbourhood Committees and no analysis on the attendance, money spent and no background information which he considered the committee should have had when considering the recommendations. He also commented that the Parish Councils were sent a questionnaire and a covering letter indicating that feedback would be included in the final report though this was not included in the final report. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the report was not about the future of Neighbourhood Committees but about signing off the recommendations. He agreed that there was a lot of work to be done on the relationship between Neighbourhood Committees and Parish Councils. There was a Parish Council event taking place in the autumn which would be led by the Cabinet member for Community Cohesion and Safety which would be a good start to building this relationship. The Head of Neighbourhood Services advised that the Neighbourhood Committee Review Implementation Task and Finish Group had considered all responses from questionnaires returned before making the recommendations.*

- Councillor Todd informed the committee that the main aim was to get members of the public to attend Neighbourhood Committee meetings and voice their opinions.
- The Police Authority Representative suggested that Neighbourhood Committees worked with Parish Councils to attract members of public to the Neighbourhood Committee meetings as there was no evidence in previous reports that the Parish Council network had been utilised over the past two years.
- Members were concerned that if they were going to agree to listen to the public then they should be acting on what they say. In previous Neighbourhood Committee meetings it would appear that they had not been listened to. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services commented on three areas:*
  1. *If ten members of public attended Neighbourhood Committee meetings then the network effect would be successful*
  2. *One of the recommendations was to move away from slide presentations of information as this was not attracting members of public to the meetings. The subjects needed to be more interesting.*
  3. *It should be remembered that Neighbourhood Committees were a constitutional requirement.*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Committee noted the report
2. The Committee recommends that the following recommendations made in section 5.1 of the report are agreed and monitored:
  - (i) To move away from general presentations at meetings that do not allow for interaction debate and challenge
  - (ii) Ensure that the agenda items are in the main, to enable decision making rather than for information only
  - (iii) Adopt a Scrutiny-style approach to key agenda items, where council officers and staff from partner organisations are called to provide evidence, information and advice to Neighbourhood Committee members and to present on key issues affecting the neighbourhood in a more appropriate manner
  - (iv) Produce a communications and PR strategy that includes a detailed calendar of communications and PR activity that:
    - Supports the overall objectives of Neighbourhood Committees
    - Promotes each Neighbourhood Committee in each area in advance of the meeting
    - Publicises the outcomes from each Neighbourhood Committee after each meeting
  - (v) Organise and run an annual Peterborough Peterborough-wide Neighbourhoods conference at which:

- The overall performance and progress made in the previous year is highlighted and discussed
  - Any barriers, issues and opportunities arising from the previous year are highlighted and discussed
  - Overall strategic and operational principles for the forthcoming year are identified, discussed and agreed
- (vi) Alongside the Community Action Plans agree a performance plan for the year for each Neighbourhood Committee that sets out required performance across multiple domains (e.g. litter picks, grass cuts, meters of footpath replaced, £25k spend deadlines etc), and then monitor its performance at the monthly Neighbourhood Management meetings and the quarterly Neighbourhood Committee meetings. Performance data should be shared visually at each Neighbourhood Committee meeting.
- (vii) Ensure that all Council Departmental Business Plans include commitments about how services will engage with and be shaped by Neighbourhood Committees and their Community Action Plans

3. The Committee recommends that the Neighbourhood Committee Implementation Task and Finish group be disbanded as the work of the group is now concluded
4. The Committee recommends that an annual report be presented at the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee on the performance of Neighbourhood Committees.

## 8. Forward Plan

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and agreed that there were no items for further consideration.

## 9. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2012/13 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

### **ACTION AGREED**

To confirm the work programme for 2012/13.

## 10. Date of Next Meeting

12 September 2012

*The meeting began at 7.00 and ended at 8.00 pm*

CHAIRMAN

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