

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON
MONDAY 12 JANUARY 2009 AT THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM - TOWN HALL**

Present: Councillors J Holdich (Chairman), J Goodwin, M Fazal, S Lane,
Y Lowndes, N North, N Sandford, M Todd and C Day

Also Present: Maggie Kirkbride, Parent Governor
Richard Astle, Greater Peterborough Partnership

Officers Present: Sue Bennett, Financial Planning & Business Manager
John Blair, Head of Strategic Finance and Performance Improvement
Andrew Edwards, Head of Strategic Property
Nigel Green, Head of ICT
John Harrison, Executive Director - Strategic Resources
Jo Proud, Strategic Improvement Manager
Louise Tyers, Performance Scrutiny Manager
Margaret Welton, Principal Lawyer - Contracts and Procurement
Alex Daynes, Cabinet Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Seaton and Walsh.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Maggie Kirkbride declared an interest for item 7 as a Parent Governor of Voyager School.
Councillor Lowndes declared an interest as a Governor of Voyager School.

Councillors Holdich and Sandford declared an interest in item 8 as they sat on the GPP
Executive Board and GPP Board respectively.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held 10 November 2008

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 November 2008 were approved as a correct record.

**4. Consideration of the Cabinet Agenda for 24 November and 15 December 2008 and Call
In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions**

There were no call-in requests.

5. Budget 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2011/12

The Committee received a report outlining the proposed budget for 2009/10 and the Medium
Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2011/12 on which the Scrutiny Committee had been
invited to make comment. The purpose of this report was to review aspects of the proposals
relevant to the functions and remit of this Committee. The Committee was asked to
comment on the draft budget 2009/10 and medium term financial plan to 2011/12 in so far as
it related to the remit of the Committee.

The Executive Director - Strategic Resources highlighted issues from the MTFs including rises in Council Tax rates, effects of efficiency savings and the fees and charges that contributed to the income of the Council.

Observations and questions were raised and responses given including:

- A 2.1% increase on spending per school pupil is guaranteed. Some schools might receive more funding than this and therefore a 5.1% rise overall in education spending would be seen.
- Funding from central government will ensure 2 years worth of free swimming for children and elderly people.
- Meetings were to take place within the Local Government Association to lobby government over the level of funding for the concessionary bus pass scheme.
- The department responsible for bus shelter repairs could afford a one off funding cut for one year but this would not be sustained in the long term.
- Community Leadership Funds should be used in priority cases where Council departments could not carry out the work or would take a long time to begin the work.
- The reduction of 400 staff is possible due to more efficient working within Council departments. The 400 staff reduction need is due to the combination of efficiency savings and budgetary requirements.
- A consultation will take place concerning the Council Tax rise of 2.5%.
- Some aspects of Phase 3 have already begun in preparation for a 1 April 2009 start.
- Delivery of Adult Social Care services will not be affected as efficiency savings enable a reduction in budget.
- The future opening hours of the Jack Hunt swimming pool are not known. This information will be brought back to the Committee.
- A definition of the budget area concerning School Crossing Wardens, "Service to be examined in 2009/10 to see if this can be delivered in a different way", will be reported back to the Committee.

Members of the Committee expressed concern at the level of funding proposed for the Council's scrutiny function at a time when more work was being directed to that section. Members recommended that comments went to Cabinet to advise of this concern and that more resources were allocated to the scrutiny function.

ACTION AGREED:

To request that Cabinet review the level of funding for Scrutiny function.

6. ICT Managed Service

The Committee received a report on the progress made in reviewing service delivery options for the ICT service in line with the options set out in the budget and medium term financial plan policy framework over the last two years. The report was submitted following a previous request from a member of the Committee for this information. Members were requested to note the report.

Councillor Sandford received advice from the legal representative regarding the use of the information that he had received concerning this item. Councillor Sandford was advised that he could use the information, in the form of a letter, to formulate questions but could not quote directly from the letter.

The Committee was advised that following investigations by council officers, a managed service was deemed to provide best value for money and efficiency for the ICT service. Three contractors were still in negotiations with the Council and it was estimated that a supplier would be chosen by May 2009.

Observations and questions were raised and responses given including:

- Not all contractors who tendered could envisage making a profit on providing the service and therefore these contractors withdrew from negotiations.
- Many of the contractors could have also provided further services to the council if required.
- The three remaining contractors could all provide an improved service for less cost.
- Efficiency savings have already been made within ICT and it is expected that a further 10% would be saved through the managed service.
- All contractors tendered with the instruction that services were not to go offshore. However, if the needs of the Council changed - such as 24 hour phone cover - some services could be located offshore.
- Benchmarking work has been carried out and savings of up to 20% have been seen in Councils with a managed ICT service.

ACTION AGREED:

To note the report.

7. Safe Access to the Voyager School

A report was submitted following a request by the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 29 September 2008 for a progress report on the implementation of previous recommendations of the Committee requesting a review of the access routes for pupils attending the Voyager School. Members of the Committee were asked to consider and comment on the progress of the recommendations made at the meeting on 7 March 2007.

The Chairman of the Committee recommended that the Performance Scrutiny Manager arrange to meet with the relevant Officers to move the review work forward.

The Committee raised concerns it had about the absence of a review and the implications that this could have upon the safety of children accessing the school. Members advised that as the review was requested by the Committee it was not for Officers to determine not to carry out a review. Members further discussed the range of works that might need to be carried out following a review.

ACTION AGREED:

- 1) To request the Performance Scrutiny Manager meet with officers to move forward with the review.
- 2) The Performance Scrutiny Manager report back with the name of the Section that carries out street lighting inspections.

8. Performance Monitoring 2008/09 - Quarter 2

The Director of the Greater Peterborough Partnership (GPP) addressed members of the Committee to advise on developments within the GPP and also to update the Committee on issues relating to the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Observations and questions were raised and responses given including:

- It is the policy of the Community Strategy and LAA to provide a range of different housing types for Peterborough.
- Developers are submitting applications for fewer large houses which is a national trend.
- The growth agenda for the city is still aspired to.

Members discussed issues concerning the numbers of houses that were planned to be built in the Peterborough area.

A report was submitted to the Committee to provide Members with information on the performance of the council between 1 July and 30 September 2008. Members were requested to note the report and identify any areas of concern they may wish to examine in greater depth.

The Strategic Improvement Manager updated the Committee on the quarter 2 (up to the end of September 2008) performance figures and how they compared, so far, to the expected quarter 3 reports. Members were advised that the figures had not seen a great change but were progressing satisfactorily. The Committee was advised that of all of the Local Authorities in Peterborough's benchmarking group, Peterborough was the only authority to fully understand the 189 indicators that had been set and how they could be delivered. The Committee was further advised that a Play survey, accounting for 20 of the indicators, would be published soon.

Members were advised that the scrutiny function within the council was being assessed to see how to better monitor and challenge the LAA targets more effectively. Committee members were advised that this work would seek to involve Councillors where possible.

ACTION AGREED:

To note the report.

9. 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.

The Performance Scrutiny Manager advised that a refreshed LAA would be submitted to the Committee in February.

ACTION AGREED:

To note the report.

10. Agenda Plan 2008-09

The Committee noted the current work programme.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting to be Monday 16 February 2009, 7pm.

The meeting began at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN