

## FULL COUNCIL 4 DECEMBER 2013

## QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS

Questions were received under the following categories:

<b><u>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TIME</u></b>	
<b>7. <u>Questions with notice by members of the public</u></b>	
1.	<p><b>Question from Emma Majewicz</b></p> <p>To Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member please give details on how much it costs each children's centre in Peterborough to run per annum and explain why these figures have not been included in the formal consultation paper: New Vision for Early Years Services Including Children's Centres in Peterborough?</p> <p><b>Councillor Scott responded:</b></p> <p>With three of the contracts that were awarded, they were not awarded for individual children's centres, they were introduced for more than one and it was up to Barnardos or Spurgeons how they chose to deliver the contract and to use the money providing they achieved the outcomes identified in the contract. But I can tell you what those sums of money are for the delivery of children's centres in:</p> <p>Central and East Locality, service delivered by Barnardos, total cost is £1,100,863.00 and for delivery in the south, the contract was awarded to Spurgeons and the contract was for £600,000.00 and for delivery in the north western rural locality the cost of the contract was £673,735.00. Additionally there are three other children's centres not included in that, the first is the Werrington Children's Centre and the contract is for £87,362.00, the Wittering Children's Centre £57,500.00 and the Caverstede Children's Centre £145,600.00.</p> <p><b>Mrs Brennan asked the following supplementary question:</b></p> <p>With regard to that, we need a more clear breakdown of costs, because you've been asking the public to propose alternatives, if you were to go in with proposals with just one blank figure like that, with no breakdown on the consultation papers that you have, the banks would just probably throw it out, so if you could regard to the alternatives as well, there is no way that the public in this timeframe could actually come up with any alternatives for that.</p> <p><b>Councillor Scott responded:</b></p> <p>These were whole contracts for the delivery of a service in more than one children's centre. I hear what you are saying, it's not that I don't, I don't know if I can supply you with that further information. I can supply you with the facts that I've got, I will consult with my officers again and write to you if we can give you any supplementary information.</p>
2.	<p><b>Question from Emma Majewicz</b></p> <p>To Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>Please will the Cabinet Member explain what impact the public will have on the</p>

proposals and would it be considered not to close down 6 children's centres due to strong public opposition?

**Councillor Scott responded:**

We've already been influenced by the public consultation and we have had six public meetings and I know that more private meetings are going on in the children's centres as well and with other groups of people involved in children's work. There have at some times been some interesting and sometimes innovative things said to us and we are looking at all the suggestions that are being made to us and they may well have an influence on the decision that we make, indeed I don't expect the proposal as it currently stands will be the proposal that goes to Cabinet in January. It doesn't alter the broad outline of the fact that there are many different influences on us in the decision making process and we have to listen to all the people that are responding and not just one group.

**Mrs Angela Brennan asked the following supplementary question:**

We are very pleased that you are taking on these comments as well, are the Council aware of what the comments were and how strong the opposition is, because if a Council cannot take its peoples view and the public's vote, because it's the public and taxpayers money that's going into these, how can you pass that proposal?

**Councillor Scott responded:**

There are a number of things that I would like to say to you in response to that. The first is, I think you have possibly heard me say this before, that the Council at the annual finance meeting has to present a balanced budget and I, along with all other members of the Council, have to take that into account. As well as my suggestion which I've made several times now that people should contact me directly as well as responding to the consultation I think the other thing that individuals can do is at least copy in their responses to their own ward councillors, that's the one thing they should do, because if ward councillors are not hearing from people then they won't take on board how strong either for or against the proposals the public's views are.

**8. Questions with notice by Members relating to ward matters To the Cabinet Members and to Committee Chairmen**

**1. Question from Councillor Sandford**

To Councillor Scott Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Could the Cabinet Member for Children's Services explain why, when the Caverstede Early Learning Centre has consistently been rated as providing excellent education and support for children, it has been earmarked for partial closure in the current consultation on the future of children's centres being carried out by her department?

**Councillor Scott responded:**

The Formal Consultation Paper: New Vision for Early Years Services including Children's Centres in Peterborough, outlines the methodology and criteria for determining the proposed delivery of the children's centre services, including the introduction of super centre hubs and outreach venues. The decision is based around the levels of deprivation in the city, and focuses provision in those areas that demonstrate the highest needs, based on these deprivation levels. Whilst Walton ward does experience some levels of deprivation, it is not in one of the most disadvantaged areas in Peterborough.

However, we recognise, as I'm sure that everybody who is involved with children's centres in the city, the importance of the quality and the work that Caverstede delivers. It

	<p>delivers, as we know from every Ofsted report, an outstanding service, and therefore the proposal is to ensure that the skills of Caverstede are recognised and that they would continue to deliver services for children with complex needs. And if the plans around Caverstede were to be implemented, the service would be available to those children with a high level of need across the city.</p> <p><b>Councillor Sandford asked the following supplementary question:</b></p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member recognise that although Caverstede is going to continue to provide a service to certain groups of children, the removal of it as a general children's centre is going to mean that parents are going to have to travel to considerable distances to access the services of a children's centre. My understanding is that the nearest super hub would be at Honeyhill Centre, so there seems to be an assumption that all parents have cars and can just drive there, but would she recognise that this administration as well as cutting children's services has also cut public transport, would she recognise that this could impose great hardship on people who would normally access this particular centre?</p> <p><b>Councillor Scott responded:</b></p> <p>Difficult decisions sometimes have to be made and these are very difficult decisions. We have heard on more than one occasion during the public consultation about the public transport links and we are going to be looking at that following the consultation.</p>
2.	<p><b>Question from Councillor Murphy</b></p> <p>To Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources</p> <p>To the Cabinet Member for Resources. Are the solar panels installed on the "Freemans building" generating electricity yet as no significant monies have been received by the council and can he let me know who the companies, contractors and sub-contractors are who were involved in the project installation and those that are involved in other aspects concerning this project?</p> <p><b>Councillor Seaton responded:</b></p> <p>The Council has made numerous public statements on this issue, but I am happy to repeat them for the benefit of Councillor Murphy. The solar panels on the former Freemans building are generating electricity. The Council continues to discuss with OFGEM the appropriate accreditation to receive the FIT income from this generation.</p> <p>The Council contracted Enterprise to undertake the works, who in turn utilised Applied Sustainable Energy for the installation. The Council was supported in the project by Davis Langdon, Deloitte and Pinsent Masons, who continue to support the Council in its discussions with OFGEM.</p> <p><b>Councillor Murphy asked the following supplementary question:</b></p> <p>Did the Cabinet Member anticipate the Council getting a penny from this investment this year at all?</p> <p><b>Councillor Seaton responded:</b></p> <p>I doubt that in 2013, this year, that we would get any money from that particular issue.</p>
3.	<p><b>Question from Councillor Arculus</b></p> <p>To Councillor Holdich, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University</p> <p>With the recent news that the PDH site has been sold it is to be hoped that the Hospital</p>

site in West Ward is now due for welcome regeneration. Can the Cabinet Member for education please provide us with his strategic view on the future for schools in the area (with particular focus on new schools to be located on the PDH site); and, the projected timescale for the implementation of these improvements?

**Councillor Holdich responded:**

I am sure that we are all pleased to learn that the PDH site has been sold and we can start work with the developer around our proposals to relocate and expand West Town Primary School on the site. We are hoping to open the school by September 2015 and we have a successful bid for government funding for the majority of the cost. It is an exciting scheme which will incorporate the Hospitals Memorial Wing and will provide an additional 330 places which are well needed in the area. We are currently reviewing the demographic needs of both primary and secondary in the area and across the city and expect to release our updated school organisation plan in the spring. I am also pleased to say that the government have appointed Kier Eastern to build the school who have a very good reputation of building schools in this city.

**Councillor Arculus did not have a supplementary question.**

**4. Question from Councillor Davidson**

To Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm why street lighting on Gunthorpe Road has a number of new white led lights but a number of the older amber lights are still in place and can he tell me when the lights on Fulbridge Road Werrington will be changed to the new lighting?

**Councillor Cereste responded:**

The Council is investing funding through the Medium Term Financial Strategy to upgrade the street lighting all across Peterborough. The street lighting replacement programme is underway in the city to replace the aging columns, and we are approaching the end of that programme. Many of the columns are reaching the end of their design life and it is important that we complete the work that we have started. We wish to install Light Emitting Diodes (LED) lanterns, they will save energy and will last much much longer. They are far superior to the old orange lighting and of course we will get a better life from them and make greater savings. The savings will make quite a difference to the Council's energy bills.

The lighting on Gunthorpe Road was due to be completed by Volker Highways prior to the commencement of the new highways contract on the 1 October 2013.

Unfortunately they came across difficulties and their works were not completed and the road was left incomplete. The difficulties included specialised electrical works whereby an order has had to be placed with UK Power Network (UKPN) to complete the necessary connections. The delays in completing this work has been due firstly by a delay in us receiving relevant installation certificates from our previous contractor and secondly, by us awaiting for UKPN to designate a time in their work program, for which we have no control over. UKPN has supplied us with an expected start date which is the week commencing the 2 December 2013. The work will include the remaining non illuminated white lights being connected to the electrical supply and the removal of the old columns which have the orange lighting.

Fulbridge Road has not yet been identified for any upgrade programme as the columns and lanterns are in a good state of repair. Streets for the lantern upgrades are identified throughout the information we have regarding our assets and stored on our asset data base. If anyone would like this information we can provide it for them, it is updated

	<p>through our structural and electrical testing regime. Based on this information we hold, we prioritise street lighting replacements where they are most needed.</p> <p><b>Councillor Davidson was not in attendance to ask a supplementary question.</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Question from Councillor Thulbourn</b></p> <p>To Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement</p> <p>Could the leader tell my constituents why they have no say or any input into the ability of Tesco's to open a store with all its ramifications and impose themselves on the Oundle Road community?</p> <p><b>Councillor Cereste may have responded:</b></p> <p>Under national planning law, some developments including some changes of use of land and buildings can take place without the need for planning permission to be applied for. An example of this is the change of use from a public house to a shop. As planning permission is not needed for the change of use of the building there has been no planning application to consult the local community on. Whilst planning permission is needed for any changes to the shop front, advertising and for any external plant, these proposals must be considered in the context of their appearance and noise impact respectively and not with regard to the issue of the change of use of the building to a shop.</p>
9.	<p><b><u>Questions with notice by Members to Council representatives of the Fire Authority and Police and Crime Panel</u></b></p>
	<p><b>None received.</b></p>

## EXECUTIVE BUSINESS TIME

### 11. Questions with Notice to the Leader and Members of the Executive

#### 1. **Question from Councillor Shearman**

To Councillor Elsey, Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Waste Management

In recent years we have been informed that the collection of brown bin waste is suspended over the Christmas and New Year period to take account of the additional waste materials generated at this time. However this year many residents will be without brown bin collections for over three months. Will the Cabinet Member acknowledge the problems this is causing for many gardeners in the so called Environment Capital of the UK, and also acknowledge that this decision has nothing to do with the collection of additional black bin waste but is merely a cost-cutting exercise?

#### **Councillor Elsey responded:**

The decision to suspend the brown bin service for three months was taken due to the evidence from previous years that there is very little participation in this service over this period. The tonnage drops from around 1600 tonnes to 400 tonnes with very few households putting the brown bin out. Running a fortnightly service to 62,000 properties as at present means that any environmental benefits of the service are outweighed by having trucks running around the city emitting CO2 and yet collecting very little green waste. Residents who have garden waste to dispose of are able to use the free Household Recycling Centre at Dogsthorpe which is open throughout the winter every day from 8.00am to 4.00pm, being closed only for Christmas, Boxing and New Year's Day. In addition, the Council will be providing skips at several Garden Centres across the City for Christmas tree recycling.

In addition to that, the question relating to 'was this just a cost cutting exercise'? I believe most Councillors will now be in receipt of an email I sent earlier re-instating the brown bin service for two weeks to give allowance for the fact that we've had an extremely late fall of leaves this year and that there is a significant amount of brown bin waste to be collected, so the service will be reinstated as of next Monday for two weeks so every household will get one further collection this year prior to the service stopping until February.

#### **Councillor Shearman asked the following supplementary question:**

You referred to your email that we got earlier today, there was an implication in that email that residents had all been informed of the brown bin collection dates some while ago, that was the implication, yet in an email I've got here from Anne Nicole at Enterprise it makes it clear that that decision was made before the first email went out to Councillors, where we had the Hungry Harry PDF which stated that the service would be suspended in December and January, I then get an email from her when I queried that on the 26 November and she said it's only within the previous few days that the Council have instructed us to extend that into February. Perhaps I misread your email, but they are the facts. The other thing that I think Councillor Thacker has already alluded to or referred to, is that it's only those people whose collection dates are going to be changed, as I understand it, have had the bin hangers, so therefore those people will not know about the changes in the brown bin collection. I had reason to complain last year on behalf of Dogsthorpe residents and I got an apology from you and assurance that this would never happen again and here we are twelve months later and we've got a similar mess. But my question Madam Mayor, and thank you for letting me make that point, my question is have you considered any alternatives to your decision and is one of those alternatives an

imposition of a charge for members of the public per year to have their brown bins emptied? Would you give a categorical assurance that that is not going to happen in the year 2013/2014?

**Councillor Elsey responded:**

I'll provide a response but just want it noted that that was nothing to do with the original question.

The yearly bin calendars went out in April and every household in Peterborough received a calendar in April which had the bin collections on it.

Christmas bin hangers have been delivered to areas, as Councillor Shearman alluded to, where the service is going to be changed as a result of the Christmas holidays. In addition to that, Enterprise Peterborough have had on their website for three months advertising the changes to the service, they have also advertised it on the Peterborough Telegraph website and they've also published it on the Peterborough City Council website. They also prepared a story for the Peterborough Telegraph that spoke in some detail about the brown bin suspension and the residual waste changes over the Christmas period however the PT chose only to publish this story on residual waste.

With regard to the question which wasn't related and is therefore not supplementary, all I can say is, as my colleague Councillor Scott alluded to, we are in a position of unprecedented austerity as a result of Councillor Shearman's last government who left us in this predicament, however as a result of that there are no sacred cows and as an authority and as an administration we are having to make some very difficult choices, as a result of that there is nothing which we are not prepared to look at to make sure that the services that we provide to Peterborough with the restraints we've got on our budget are of the highest standard and the best that we can possibly achieve. So the answer to the question is that there is nothing that we are not considering as a result of the pressures that we are now working under.

**2. Question from Councillor Davidson**

To Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement

Could the Cabinet Member tell me what is being done to prevent continual loss of our urban green space to development? Green space has a variety of benefits including allowing functions and events to be held, landscape, wildlife and cultural benefits etc. and once it has been lost it is very difficult to get it back.

**Councillor Cereste responded:**

I certainly agree that it is important to keep valuable areas of green space in our city and villages so that Peterborough remains an attractive place for everybody. We have some wonderful green spaces and a very high ratio of open space per person compared with most other cities.

The main tool we have available to prevent the loss of valuable spaces is through our decisions on planning applications. We have a very clear policy in our Peterborough Core Strategy which says that we will not grant planning permission for a development that would result in the loss of existing open space, other than in exceptional circumstances, and we can rely on that if it's necessary to refuse a planning application.

And when we do allow some green space to be lost, perhaps because it's poorly located or too small to be of any value, we get the developer to fund or provide something better as compensation.

**Councillor Davidson was not in attendance to ask a supplementary question.**

<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Murphy</b></p> <p>To Councillor Scott Cabinet Member for Children’s Services</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member give details of the policy for outreach services and actual outreach services provided to children and their parents and guardians following the recent closure of the large significantly staffed Sure Start centre - the Veranda - and can she kindly provide details of the consultation process that was undertaken in line with section 5D of the childcare Act 2006?</p> <p><b>Councillor Scott responded:</b></p> <p>The outreach provision will be through home visiting as well as through the delivery of programmes of support in other community facilities. This may include school sites and community centres.</p> <p>The consultation regarding the Veranda was undertaken as part of the “Gladstone Vision”, a vision for the capital investment providing regeneration, with improved integrated services for Children, Families and the Community. Public consultation was held, and I understand there was good involvement, with key stakeholders including the local schools, service providers and parents. A consultation event was held on 30 April 2013 and the event outlined plans for the whole area, including the relocation of children’s centre services. Members of the public, ward councillors and community organisations were invited to the event and I understand that the ward councillors were fully involved in the consultation process.</p> <p><b>Councillor Murphy asked the following supplementary question:</b></p> <p>Where have the health visitors gone and the clinics gone and how are they being done by outreach? And was the public consultation in line with Section 5D of the Children Care Act, the consultation you talked about was completely different and not to do with children centre provision specifically in the area.</p> <p><b>Councillor Scott responded:</b></p> <p>The first part of the question I will have to respond to him in writing about health visitors, as far as I understand the process that was undertaken for the consultation was the appropriate consultation, I will consult with officers after the meeting and if I need to I will write to Councillor Murphy after that.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Davidson</b></p> <p>To Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement</p> <p>What measures are in place, to help families who are struggling following removal of the spare room subsidy (otherwise known as "bedroom tax")? A new survey shows how many East of England families are really being hit by this and Peterborough has been identified by being one of the hardest hit.</p> <p>To be precise, almost 34,000 East of England families were hit by this change in August according to new data released by the Government and analysed by the National Housing Federation [NHF] – the first survey to show actual numbers affected by the controversial policy.</p> <p>East of England families affected lost more money per week than any other region in England outside London and the South East, with an average reduction in housing benefit of £829 per year.</p>



28,071 families were under-occupying by one bedroom and 5,551 were under-occupying by two or more. Norwich was hardest hit, with 2,908 families affected, almost double the number seen in any other Eastern local authority. Basildon came in second, with 1,630 affected families, while Peterborough came third with 1,504.

What measures has the Council put in place to support these Peterborough families?

**Councillor Cereste responded:**

The Council is working hard to assist those households who are affected by the introduction of the 'spare room subsidy'.

We have amended the housing allocations policy to give band 1 priority (the highest priority) to those who are assessed as being under occupying housing association properties, which gives them a greater chance of being successful in moving to more suitably sized, affordable accommodation. Since this change, 70 households have been successful in downsizing to a property where they are no longer affected by the spare room subsidy.

In partnership with our housing associations, we have organised a 'swap shop' event where housing association tenants who are overcrowded and under occupied were able to meet and be matched with other tenants who may have a suitable property that they can exchange with to solve both their housing issues. This well-attended event took place in October 2013 and 71 Households attended and expressed interest in exchanging their properties, with one potential swap being identified at the event. The housing associations are now working with the data collected at the event to identify other matches and facilitate other potential exchanges and we are planning another event for the New Year, which we are hopeful will attract even more interest.

We are making use of the increased allocation from the government of the Discretionary Housing Payments fund to assist some of the households who are affected by the reduction in housing benefit as a result of the 'spare room subsidy' by topping up their rent or assisting them with up-front fees to move to alternative suitable accommodation in the private sector. We also continue to offer our Rent Deposit Scheme to help people move into more appropriate accommodation.

Since April we have assisted 258 households who were threatened with homelessness to move to alternative private sector accommodation by assisting them with the up-front costs to secure a tenancy by making a discretionary housing payment or through the rent deposit scheme.

The Council is also continuing to lead the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme which offers practical emergency help and support alongside longer term debt and other advice to help people in crisis.

**Councillor Davidson was not in attendance to ask a supplementary question.**

5. **Question from Councillor Murphy**

To Councillor Scott Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Concerning the future of Children's Centres, was the need to take account of the call in process considered or overlooked when cabinet agreed the consultation time table and in the planning of meeting dates for consultations?

**Councillor Scott responded:**

The need to take into account the possibility of call in was considered; we did not print the consultation papers until after the call in date, however we did provisionally book venues for the public consultation, we did this because we wanted to give the public an

	<p>opportunity to have their say as soon as possible after publication of the Cabinet papers.</p> <p><b>Councillor Murphy asked the following supplementary question:</b></p> <p>Following the breathtakingly short period of less than two days if there had been a call-in to when the first consultation was taking place and the discussions on this matter, vis-a-vis the Constitution last night, could some further work be undertaken just to make sure we've got this right legally.</p> <p><b>Councillor Scott responded:</b></p> <p>The answer to the question is yes.</p>
6.	<p><b>Question from Councillor Thulbourn</b></p> <p>To Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement</p> <p>In light of recent events, does the leader feel the MP for Peterborough is having a detrimental effect on inward investment in to our city with respect to how he conducts his business?</p> <p><b>Councillor Cereste responded:</b></p> <p>The MP for Peterborough is entitled to his views and I am sure that he shares my commitment to furthering the economic prosperity of our city. The pace of inward investment is increasing and we can be proud of what we have achieved so far and what we will continue to achieve in the near future. We are well ahead of the national growth curve and this city is growing far faster than any other city outside of London. In the last few weeks we have heard a number of major announcements which clearly demonstrate that businesses want to invest in our city and want to come and live here. Exciting new plans for a major mixed use development in North Westgate which is actually deliverable, a bigger and better Waitrose in the Station Quarter, the sale of the former Peterborough District Hospital site for housing and a much needed new primary school, and the opening of more new restaurants and cafes in the city centre. Coupled with our own recently announced investment in public realm improvements to Bourges Boulevard and Long Causeway and many other proposals that we are negotiating I am confident that Peterborough is well and truly open for business.</p> <p><b>Councillor Thulbourn asked the following supplementary question:</b></p> <p>There is obviously an issue going on here and the MPs, specifically the MP this side of the river, they do have a role to play within inward investment and there is soundings that there are issues around that. It just seems that this breakdown is starting to affect, and will affect this city so I'm looking for a solution to this. In the next 18 months we need a solution, we can't continue with this tea party extremist type politics in Peterborough and the last spat, I'm on his side about the solar farms, but I don't agree with how he went about it and we've got to do something about it. As a Council we are entitled to have support from our MPs don't you agree?</p> <p><b>Councillor Cereste responded:</b></p> <p>I do agree.</p>
7.	<p><b>Question from Councillor Sandford</b></p> <p>To Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement</p> <p>Some time ago a motion was passed at Full Council calling for an investigation to be</p>

carried out into the feasibility of broadcasting the proceedings of full council meetings over the internet. Could the leader of the council report back on what progress, if any, has been made with this investigation?

**Councillor Cereste responded:**

We have looked at a number of suppliers who could provide us with the necessary equipment to introduce webcasting to this council chamber and initial estimated costs are within the region of £30,000.

I still believe we need to ensure we are making the most of the digital age and give our residents, businesses and other interested parties the opportunity to engage with us through various channels as well as attending council meetings in person.

So we are considering webcasting as part of the council's overall digital strategy and will keep the Council informed on the progress we make.

**Councillor Sandford asked the following supplementary question:**

I partly welcome the reply that the Leader has given, but would he recognise that it's been some time since this motion was passed at Full Council, it's certainly more than one year and possibly even two years. Would he recognise that that for quite a small cost, because in the context of the Council £30,000 is quite a small cost, we could get great benefits in terms of increasing our openness and the accountability that we have and would he also recognise that even quite small local authorities, for example I understand that South Kesteven actually broadcast their meetings, would he give some indication of when these investigations that he's carrying out are going to reach some sort of conclusion.

**Councillor Cereste responded:**

I happened to agree with you Councillor Sandford and we are working on our digital strategy, it is something that we are literally working on as we speak. I think that we all need to move into the digital age and we will come forward with some ideas. I anticipate that it won't be very long.

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