

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH ON 11 FEBRUARY 2009**

Present: Councillors Over (Chairman), D Day, S Dalton, S Day, and J R Fox

Officers in attendance: Adrian Chapman, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Kevin Tighe, Head of Cultural Services
Christine Graham, Community Safety Manager
Heather Walton, Library and Customer Services Manager
Ralph Middlebrook, Supporting People Manager
Carrie Denness, Principal Solicitor
Paulina Ford, Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer
Gemma George, Governance Support Officer

Also in attendance: Councillor Murphy
Councillor Lee
Councillor Benton

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Allen.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held 20 January 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2009 were approved as a correct record.

4. Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan

The Panel received a report which detailed the revised Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan for 2009/2010. The purpose of the report was to seek approval from the Panel and a recommendation of approval to Cabinet.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, required that a Community Safety Partnership was formed, bringing together agencies who were responsible for crime and disorder in the local area. The Act specified that responsible authorities were Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, NHS Peterborough, Cambridgeshire Fire Authority and Cambridgeshire Police Authority. The responsible authorities invited other agencies who were able to contribute to the work (to co-operate) and these were Cambridgeshire Probation Service and Cross Keys Homes. Other agencies, particularly from the voluntary and community sector were also invited (to participate) in the work of the Partnership. These were Peterborough and Fenland Mind and the Peterborough Racial Equality Council.

The Safer Peterborough Partnership was one of the partnerships that formed the Greater Peterborough Partnership, and it overlooked the outcomes of the Making Peterborough Safer block of the Local Area Agreement. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, placed a legal responsibility on designated authorities to consider the community safety implications of their actions.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, revised by the Police and Justice Act 2006 required that the Community Safety Partnership published a three year Partnership Plan in April 2008 which was then reviewed and updated annually.

The priorities within the Partnership Plan were agreed following a Strategic Assessment which considered the performance in the previous twelve months and took into account the concerns of the public. The priorities set out in the Plan were:

- Serious acquisitive crime;
- Anti social behaviour;
- Domestic abuse;
- Violent crime;
- Sexual offences; and
- Road safety

The Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan covered all the priorities of the Partnership for the following three years. Indicators, both national and local, had been selected to effectively reflect the improvements planned. Some of the indicators had also been included with the Local Area Agreement.

Members were invited to consider and comment on the report and the following issues were raised:

- A query was raised regarding the proposed reductions in serious acquisitive crime and anti social behaviour. How exactly were these reductions going to be achieved. Members were advised that in order for issues relating to anti social behaviour to be dealt with as soon as possible, members of the public would be able to report such events directly on to the new Safer Peterborough Partnership website, which was due for launch in March 2009. Members were further advised that behind each of the six highlighted priorities there was a comprehensive action plan.
- Members expressed concern regarding the lack of facilities for young people, especially in the Werrington area and highlighted that this factor could lead to an increase in anti social behaviour. Members were assured that work was to be embarked upon to address this predicament. Neighbourhood management would look at what communities were lacking and what they needed. Work would be undertaken alongside children's services and money was to be provided from the home office for a youth crime initiative.
- A query was raised regarding section 6.3 of the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan, which highlighted the roll out of Neighbourhood Action Groups and their overall involvement. Members questioned whether the fact that the groups would not be made up of any elected members would have a negative effect on the focus of the meetings. Members were assured that training would be available for community groups to improve responses to neighbourhood issues. Also work would be conducted with the police in order to find the most appropriate people to sit on the groups.
- Members further questioned the roles of the Parish Councillors. Members were advised that Parish Councillors would sit on the Neighbourhood Panels. Discussions had been held and Parish Councillors were looking to provide their full support to the Neighbourhood Action Groups.
- A query was raised regarding section 6.4 of the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan, which highlighted the considerations surrounding effective engagement with victims and perpetrators. Members highlighted that the amount of information available to victims of crime should be broader and more easily accessible, including dates and outcomes of court cases. Members were informed that this point was due to be addressed. A new role, Neighbourhood Crime Justice Coordinator, had been created which would progress effective engagement forward.

- Members requested that a further report be brought back to the Community Development Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the information that was available to victims after a crime had been perpetrated against them. Members were advised that a report detailing this information would be brought back to a future meeting of the Panel.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel:

- (1) approved the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan; and
- (2) recommended the approval of the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan to Cabinet.

5. Peterborough Supporting People Annual Plan

The Panel received a report which highlighted the Peterborough Supporting People Annual Plan.

The Supporting People programme commenced in April 2003 and was a government funded initiative, which offered housing related support to help vulnerable people live independently in the community.

Peterborough City Council, who were deemed the 'Administering Authority' for the grant, and the Supporting People Team were situated within the Programme Delivery section of Strategic Growth and Development.

The Supporting People grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government for the year 2008/2009 was £4,930,000. The Department for Communities and Local Government had announced that the programme grant for 2009/2010 would be paid to Peterborough City Council as a un-ring fenced grant, with the level of the grant provided to the programme having been set by Peterborough City Council.

The Supporting People programme in Peterborough was overseen by a Commissioning Body. The membership of the body consisted of:

- The Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and Economic Development;
- The Head of Strategic Growth and Development – Peterborough City Council;
- The Director of Adult Social Care and Performance – Joint Peterborough City Council and Primary Care Trust post who represented both Health and Adult Social Care; and
- The Assistant Chief Probation Officer – Cambridgeshire Probation Service

The Supporting People five year Strategy was approved by the Commissioning Body in February 2005, and also by Policy and Overview Committees and Cabinet. It was published on 31st March 2005. The document set out the programmes aims, objectives and strategic priorities for the period of the Strategy.

The Strategy was reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its continued relevance and the reviews took the form of an Annual Plan. As 2009/2010 was the last year of the five year Strategy, the Annual Plan presented to the Panel reviewed both the achievement of objectives outlined within the original Strategy and also those set out for the coming year

Councillor Murphy and Councillor Benton were invited to the table to speak. Concerns were raised regarding a residence, marked for closure, located in Fletton Ward which housed several people with learning disabilities. The residents were to be re-homed in flats and were very distressed at having to be moved and separated from one another.

The support they offered each other was beyond comparison and the new accommodation which had been proposed was questionable.

Officers acknowledged the concerns expressed and advised that a meeting would be arranged with Members to discuss the matter further.

The Panel was advised that a follow up report, highlighting the intentions on the situation once discussions had taken place, would be brought back to a future meeting of the Community Development Scrutiny Panel.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel noted the report.

6. Implementing the Library Strategy

The Panel received a report which highlighted the key issues surrounding the implementation of the draft Library Strategy, in particular the proposed new opening hours and the subsequent restructuring of the Library Service.

The draft Library Strategy which was presented to the Panel on the 17th September 2008, outlined some of the challenges which faced the Library Service, including:

- Achieving the right level of resources, services and facilities;
- Having flexibility to respond to and lead on community expectations and need in the city's growth agenda;
- The development of effective and efficient skilled staff, leadership and management;
- The embedding of ongoing improvement;
- Ensuring recognition of the vital importance of public libraries to personal, family and community development, and how they contribute to the priorities of the city.

There were a number of proposed changes which emerged from the challenges highlighted, including:

- Changes to the skills base of staff;
- Changes to the staff structure;
- Changes to the opening hours; and
- Changes to the systems to support the service.

The Panel received a proposed staff structure diagram and a list of proposed opening times document for consideration. Members were advised that there would be significant financial implications attached to the Strategy, and part of the proposals to cover these costs would be to reduce the opening hours.

Members were invited to consider and comment on the report and the following issues were raised:

- Members sought clarity on the reasons behind the proposed decrease in Saturday opening hours, as highlighted in the proposed opening times document, were the proposals merely for financial gain. Members were assured that financial reasons were the secondary driver, the primary driver being the amount of people using the service and the overall demand. A survey had been conducted and the overall amount of customers using libraries regularly on Saturdays had decreased significantly. It was however further highlighted to Members that the proposed opening times could be amended if ideas were to be suggested.

- Members questioned what the overall savings would be if the reduced opening hours and proposed staff re-structure were implemented. Members were advised that the savings would total around £240,000 with a 5% leeway.
- Members queried the types of customers who frequented libraries around lunchtimes and on Saturdays. Members were advised that various types of customers used the libraries around these times, but as a general rule computer usage had dropped and book loans had increased.
- Members further questioned the reasoning behind the proposed opening times of the libraries on Saturdays. Members were informed that surveys had shown that most people frequented libraries between the hours of 10.30am and 4.00pm, whereas shops were mostly frequented between the hours of 11.00am and 4.00pm.
- Members sought clarity on the nature of the electronic resources available to library goers. Members were informed that computers were installed and the website received over 250,000 hits a year on average. Wi-Fi was also available in the Central Library so customers could access the web without having to actually enter the building.
- Members queried whether the internet access was provided free for customers. Members were advised that currently internet access was free, but possible charges may be implemented in the future.
- Members expressed further concern regarding the decrease in opening hours. Members were assured that there would always be a library open somewhere across Peterborough during core hours.
- Members questioned why the Central Library opening hours had been cut down at the end of the day. Members were advised that the hours had been cut down at the end of the day because the building was shared with other partners and a separate entrance could not be utilised.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel noted the report.

7. Culture and Leisure Trust

The Panel received a report which had been requested by the Portfolio Holder for Community Services. The report introduced key issues relating to the formation of a Cultural Services Trust.

In 2005 a Best Value Review of Culture and Recreation Services concluded that there was a case for the setting up of a trust. Many local authorities had already transferred leisure and/or cultural services to a trust and there were over 120 active trusts in operation at the time.

The key question which had to be addressed was which of the Council's services were best suited to being managed by a trust. In addressing this point, four key issues were highlighted, including:

- The delivery of improved services;
- Management issues relating to trusts;
- Financial performance; and
- Links to other key Council cultural projects.

There was evidence to suggest that trusts improved Comprehensive Performance Assessments scores for Councils through the achievement of social targets. The improvement in these scores was a strong argument for the success of trusts. The Audit Commission noted in its report 'Public Sport and Recreation Services' that trusts were performing at the same level as local authority in-house teams, but at a significant reduced cost. The report further noted that the worst performing authorities

were those which had adopted the 'mixed economy model' with both in-house and private sector management. Peterborough City Council currently had this approach. It was highlighted that if Peterborough City Council were to move away from this model, participation rates could improve and costs could reduce.

Many trusts sought charitable status and charities were entitled to mandatory rate relief of 80% from national non-domestic rates (NNDR) and could apply for discretionary relief for the remaining 20%. Trusts which operated sports facilities were exempt from VAT on entrance fees for sporting activities and there were a number of 'VAT breaks' for voluntary bodies generally.

The total net effect for all services, should they be provided through a trust, was likely to be around £228,000 more cost effective.

There were several facilities highlighted for transferral into a trust, including:

- Libraries;
- Sports facilities;
- Museum;
- Crematorium;
- Cemeteries; and
- Key Theatre

Members were asked to note that tourism services had not been included in the list as their primary function was to drive economic development which was unlikely to attract charitable status.

Members were further informed that a paper would be presented to Cabinet which would seek agreement to a plan of action to establish a trust and noting which elements of the Council's cultural services should be delivered through such a mechanism.

The Panel was invited to consider and comment on the report and the following issues were raised:

- Members queried that if a facility went into a trust who would benefit from the profits made, if any were made at all. Members were advised that many trusts ran at a deficit, and if a profit was made the surplus could be ring-fenced for that particular service. Furthermore, the amount of money sent via the Council could be reviewed and amended accordingly.
- Members expressed concern at the prospect of the Crematorium going into a trust. The crematorium had a good reputation, made money and should have been held in high regard. Members were advised that there was a strong synergy between crematoriums and cemeteries so ideally they should be kept together. Members were further advised that putting a facility into a trust was not about pushing services away, but about putting the public first.
- Members questioned what would happen if a building needed repair, whose responsibility would it be to ensure the work was completed. Members were advised that the Council would maintain the asset, and would therefore be responsible for areas such as the roof, but painting and general maintenance would fall to the trust. All of the buildings would be leased and therefore would return to the Council in the future.
- Members queried the process if the trust were to make a loss on the facility and could the facility be pulled back if this were to occur. Members were informed that the Council would need to work in partnership with the trust to ensure this did not happen. The trust would also have Members of the Council sitting on its Board, but in minority. A business plan would have to be produced and the Council would work with the trust to support, in an arms length way, the

delivery of the service. Also if services failed significantly 'the cheque' provided from the Council could be reviewed the following year.

- Members sought clarity on whether the museum was already in a trust. Members were informed that the museums building and some of its contents were in a trust.
- Members questioned who the staff would be employed by. Members were advised that the staff would be employed by the trust.

Councillor Lee was invited to the table to speak. It was highlighted to the Panel that the crematorium moving into a trust would be a positive step and would ultimately save a lot of money. The crematorium provided an excellent service to its customers and this was viewed as being extremely important. Members of Peterborough City Council would sit on the Board and would ensure the continuation of excellent customer service. Overall the move of the crematorium into a trust was considered to be advantageous.

- Members sought clarification on whether the Key Theatre and the Wirrina had previously been in a trust. Members were advised that this information would be found out and provided to the Panel at a later date.
- Members queried what would happen with the Lido. Members were informed that the fabric of the Lido would be retained by the Council and the service would be provided by the trust.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel noted the report.

7. Feedback and Update Report

The Panel received a report which provided feedback on items considered or questions asked at previous meetings of the Community Development Scrutiny Panel.

During the Panel's consideration of the Budget 2009/2010 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2011/2012 at its meeting held on 20 January 2009, further information was requested on numerous items, including:

- Information on bottom line costs for pools and libraries;
- Information on proposed options for the Tourist Information Centre; and
- Information regarding the possibility of providing a one sheet budget overview for each Ward Councillor.

The Panel considered the report and no further issues were raised.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel noted the report.

9. Forward Plan – 1 February 2009 to 31 May 2009

The latest version of the Forward Plan was presented to the Panel for consideration.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel noted the Forward Plan.

10. Agenda Plan 2008-2009

The Panel received the latest version of the Agenda Plan for consideration.

ACTION AGREED:

The Panel noted the Agenda Plan.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 25 March 2009.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.10pm.

CHAIRMAN