

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON
WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Present: Councillors Khan (Chairman), Day, Peach, Arculus, Brown, Forbes, Okonkowski and J.R Fox

Also Present: Councillor Nigel North Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital.

Officers in Attendance: Adrian Chapman Assistant Director for Communities and Targeted Services
Sean Evans Housing Needs Manager
Belinda Child Head of Housing and Health Improvement
Mark Woolner Head of Community and Safety Services
Dania Castagliuolo Governance Officer

1. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Councillor John Fox was nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations and Councillor John Fox was named as Vice chairman for 2014/15.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Maqbool, Councillor Brown was substituting for Councillor Maqbool. Councillor Peach had advised the Chair that he would be late and therefore, submitted his apologies for item 6. Councillor Arculus substituted for Councillor Peach for item 6 only.

3. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Item 8. Homelessness Review and Draft Strategy 2013 – 2018

Councillor Khan declared that he was a landlord of property that he owned in Central Ward.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2014

The minutes of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 July 2014 were approved as an accurate record.

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

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman advised the Committee that he had received a request to move Item 8, Homelessness Review and Draft Strategy 2013 – 2018 to Item 7 on the agenda. The Committee were in agreement with this.

6. Portfolio Progress Report from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital to provide Members with a progress report in relation to matters relevant to this Committee.

The Council's Constitution set out the responsibilities of the Cabinet Member, describing them as being:

'Responsible for neighbourhood and community support including long term problem solving and operational community issues and in particular the following:

- Community Cohesion
- Community Safety
- Drugs Prevention
- Youth Offending Service
- Troubled Families'

All of these responsibilities fell under the remit of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee

Key issues discussed within the report were as follows:

- Community Capacity and Cohesion
- Community Safety and Drugs Prevention
- Connecting Families
- Youth Offending Service

Members were asked to scrutinise the progress made on the aspects of the Cabinet Member's portfolio relevant to the Committee by providing challenge where necessary and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support the continued delivery of priorities within that portfolio.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members queried whether urban parishing was being approached in an even handed manor and if parties involved were being advised of the advantages and the disadvantages. *The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital advised Members that urban communities were always encouraged to talk to Parish Councils to gain advice on advantages and disadvantages and Parish Councils were always willing to cooperate.*
- Members commented that there could be a risk of inequality if urban parishing was adopted. There could be an increase in taxation and only partial agreement of parishing from residents. *Members were informed that there was currently no cap on parishes at, this allowed parishes to spend money on what they felt was an issue within their community. There had been no complaints from residents in parished wards so far and only one query regarding the parish precept.*
- Members commented that there could be a risk of a small un-representable portion of an urban community that would like to parish, which would leave a majority of the community not in favour of parishing but with a level of taxation increase. *Members were advised that people were generally happy with parishing. A petition was required and a certain percentage of signatures were required before an area could be parished. It was important that communities understood what they were walking in to when agreeing to parish an area, as it would be difficult to un-parish an area.*
- Members commented that parishing had been a great success in within the city. Werrington had a Neighbourhood Council which did not impose any costs to residents.
- Members queried how they would convince residents that parishing was a good or bad idea. *Members were advised that it was not their job to convince but to give residents full information so they could make their decision. They could talk to Parish Councils who were happy to give*

them information or advice. A good incentive would be to advise them of what they could obtain from the precept.

- Members queried how Parish Councillors would fit in with ward Councillors in urban areas. *Members were advised that ward Councillors could also be Parish Councillors if they wished although, there was no obligation.*
- Members queried whether the new App 'My Peterborough' had been successful. *Members were advised that a meeting to discuss the success of the App was due to be held in the next week, although, so far it seemed that the App had been successful.*
- Members queried on page 15 of the report 5.3.6 with regards to Connecting Families and how this was measured. *The Head of Community and Safety Services informed Members that this was based on reported antisocial behaviour.*
- Members queried how Peterborough was performing with regard to the assessment criteria for the Connecting Families Programme. *The Assistant Director of Communities and Targeted Services advised the Commission that initially Peterborough was not performing well and was at the bottom of the league table, now it was middling the league table and was recently quoted at a national conference as being in the top fifteen performers.*
- Members commented that they were interested in the target of 450 troubled families and if there had been more families than this identified as troubled in Peterborough. *The Assistant Director of Communities and Targeted Services advised the Commission that the 450 troubled families were based on a set of metric formulas although, in Peterborough there had been more troubled families than this identified. Phase two had been announced by Central Government and an extension of five years on this programme had been granted. The figure at present was around 1000 troubled families.*
- *The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital commented that he was very proud of Peterborough's performance with regards to the Connecting Families Programme. To qualify families had to have three of the four criteria, stated on page 15 of the report, 5.3.5. Peterborough had already turned around 170 families and was moving in the right direction. This programme had made a real change for people.*
- Members queried whether the target of 450 troubled families would be the 450 families most in need. *The Assistant Director of Communities and Targeted Services advised the Commission that Communities had been working with an excess of families to turn 450 families around, making sure the families with the most prolific problems were picked. The families who needed help were picked from a list that was greater than 450.*
- Members referred to page 10, part 5.3.1 of the report and queried if there was a strategy in place for Asset Transfers and if there had been any success with it. *The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital informed the Commission that play centres were moving forward very successfully and he was happy to bring a full report on this to the Committee in future.*
- Members congratulated officers in their work with the Connecting Families Programme and commented that they thought it was a very good and helpful programme to help the people of Peterborough.
- Members were concerned that they often saw play parks vandalised and commented that the Council could do more to improve and update facilities.

ACTION AGREED

The Commissions noted the report.

7. Homelessness Review and Draft Strategy 2013 – 2018

At this point Councillor Peach arrived and acted as a Member of the Committee and Councillor Arculus left.

The Housing Needs Manager introduced the report to the Committee which provided an update on the work of the Housing Needs Service over the last twelve months, and presented the draft Homelessness Review and Strategy.

The Committee were asked to:

- Note and comment on the activity of the Housing Needs Service over the last year
- Review and comment on the information contained within the Homelessness Review
- Comment and agree on the broad strategic aims of the draft Homelessness Strategy and agree for the review and strategy to be taken forward to Cabinet.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members queried what action was taken to assure people who were homeless that the accommodation they were offered would be up to a reasonable standard. *The Head of Housing and Health Improvement informed Members that the Council carried out regular inspections to check that properties were up to standard before placing people in to them. The Housing Enforcement team was currently taking action against three landlords for bad conduct.*
- Members queried what impact the closure of Peterborough Streets had on the city. *The Housing Needs Manager advised Members that the closure of Peterborough Streets was a great loss to the Council who were currently in discussions with Crisis to try to continue the work previously carried out. The difficulty was that homeless individuals were reluctant to communicate with the local authority. Other voluntary sector partners had also been involved to try and pick up from Peterborough Streets. Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS), had agreed to become a Big Issue distribution point.*
- Members Commented that not having Peterborough Streets was concerning for the coming winter months. *Members were informed that Peterborough Streets did not provide accommodation, the task was contracted to a church. There was still a cold weather provision in place.*
- Members queried what effect immigration had on housing in Peterborough. *Members were advised that four years ago 70% of European Nationals were sleeping rough. Work had been carried out to tackle the issue. Good relations had been built with the Uk Border Agency (UKBA) and consulates to support individuals to get back home, if they refused to return home then the UKBA would send them back home. The work continued and there were less European National rough sleepers in the city. The demand on the housing register showed the percentage comparable to the latest Census data showed that 70 percent of people on the housing register were white British. Immigration had made a slight impact.*
- Members queried if under the Disabled Facilities Grant, disabled people could have an extra room for people staying with them short term. *Members were informed that this was not possible as the grant would always be available to adapt the existing property of the disabled person. There was only provision available on the basis of permanent need.*
- Members were very concerned that on page 75 of the report it stated that Mental Health Services were unable to access rough sleepers. *The Head of Housing and Health Improvement informed the Committee that there had been historical issues with this area, it needed to be addressed and it was currently being investigated.*
- Members were concerned that Peterborough was losing valuable services such as Peterborough Streets.
- Members queried how the Council worked with social landlords to identify the need for housing and how the Council ensured enough houses were being built. Members were advised that this fell within the planning department, who would request to know what types of accommodation was needed. It was going to take a considerable amount of time to accommodate all applicants on the housing register.
- Members referred to page 62 of the report and queried whether Cross Keys had achieved their aims stated in part 3.2.3 of the report. *The Head of Housing and Health Improvement advised the Committee that Cross Keys had completed the Decent Homes Programme one year before schedule.*
- Members queried whether number of new housing units built had improved. *Members were informed that this sat with the Director of Growth and Regeneration. The number of affordable housing built this year would significantly rely upon funding the Housing Associations could obtain through the Homes and Community Agency (HCA). 350 accommodation units had been built this year which was an improvement.*
- Members commented that there was an extremely high demand on two bedroom properties, due to the changes in the benefits system and queried whether there had been any

consideration on building more two bedroom properties. *The Housing Needs Manager advised the Committee that if the Planning Department came and asked advice on what type of units were to be built, they would be advised of the need for one and two bedroomed property.*

- Members requested information on the new Vista flats and what type of units these were going to be. *Members were informed that this was going to be a mixed development of affordable, sale and rented properties.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report.

8. Safer Peterborough Partnership Priority 2 – Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

The Head of Community and Safety Services introduced the report to the Committee, which included an overview of performance and activity by the Safer Peterborough Partnership and its constituent responsible and cooperating authorities in relation to priority 2 of the 2014 -17 Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan – Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour.

Priority 2 within the Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan contained two separate themes:

1. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour
2. Road Safety

Whilst the report, and in particular the appended performance report, evidenced performance and activity in relation to both themes, its main focus was on anti-social behaviour.

The Committee was asked to note the content of the report including the appended extract from the most recently available Safer Peterborough Partnership Board Performance Report.

The Committee was also asked in its capacity of statutory Crime and Disorder Committee as set out in section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and as detailed in part 3, section 4.2 of the Council Constitution, to apply appropriate scrutiny to the content of the report.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that they were still very concerned that Antisocial Behaviour was not being properly recorded. *The Head of Community and Safety Services advised the Committee that how antisocial behaviour was recorded was dependant on what type of activity was taking place. If antisocial behaviour was being reported through the 'My Peterborough' App then it would be recorded as a Quality of Life issue and appear in these statistics. Personal anti-social behaviour reports were recorded separately by the police and the local authority. Antisocial behaviour reported to the police which amounted to a recordable criminal offence was recorded as a crime and would show up in the crime statistics rather than the antisocial behaviour statistics. All antisocial behaviour reported was recorded.*
- Members were concerned that the antisocial behaviour figures which were produced from the police panel, did not reflect reality and queried if all antisocial behaviour reported to AMEY was being reported and included in the statistics. *Members were informed that AMEY reported antisocial behaviour through the Quality of Life reporting System.*
- Members referred to page 28 of the report and queried why, within the performance narratives, there was hardly any change in the level of reported antisocial behaviour. *Members were advised that the blue bars of the graph indicated the total number of reported antisocial behaviour incidents to the police and the local authority each month and fluctuated according to seasonal trends. The red line across the graph indicated that the level of antisocial behaviour reports as measured by a rolling 12 month rate was remaining static.*
- Members commented that it was impossible to get through to anyone to report antisocial behaviour at weekends, even the My Peterborough App stopped working leaving it impossible

for residents to report any antisocial behaviour, which then led them to give up reporting it. *Members were informed that delays in answering 101 were acknowledged and steps were being taken to address this. Members were further informed that officers were not aware of any other reported difficulties using the My Peterborough app at weekends but this would be investigated.*

- Members queried whether victim satisfaction was recorded. *Members were informed that victims were surveyed and tracked through the system, then measured and reported on.*
- Members commented that they would have preferred the report to have contained more historic data for them to make comparisons with.
- Members commented that the interagency relationship between the police and the Local Authority was good but not with the ward Councillors. Councillors needed to know what was happening in their wards. The issue was that there was no longer a local officer available. *Members were advised that the Inspector and Local Sergeants were the main contacts now. Police Community Support Officer needed to be used more efficiently.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that more historic data was presented at future meetings.

9. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the forthcoming month. 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 of Key Decisions.

10 Work Programme

Members considered the Commission's Work Programme for 2014/15 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

AGREED ACTION

Members noted the work programme and agreed for the following to be added to the Work Programme:

- Care and Repair Framework
- City Market

11. Date of the Next Meeting

The Chairman advised that the next date of the Meeting for Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee was due to be held on 15 October 2014.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.55pm

CHAIRMAN