

<b>CABINET</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 5</b>
<b>19 JANUARY 2015</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr David Seaton – Cabinet Member for Resources Cllr Marco Cereste - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning, Housing, Economic Development and Business Engagement Cllr Diane Lamb – Cabinet Advisor for Health	
Contact Officer(s):	Jonathan Lewis – Ad Education, Resources and Corporate Property Dr Henrietta Ewart – Director of Public Health	Tel. 01733 863912

**THE ERECTION OF BARRIERS AT NORTHMINSTER MULTI STOREY CAR PARK TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SUICIDE**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>FROM :</b> Cllr David Seaton – Cabinet Member for Resources	<b>Deadline date :</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> January 2015
<p>That Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the content of the Senior Coroner’s report dated 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014 titled “Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths” received by the Council (Appendix 1).</li> <li>2. Consider how the findings of the Senior Coroner’s Regulation 28 : Report to Prevent Future Deaths relate to the Council owned Multi Storey Car Park known as Northminster Car Park, Peterborough (Northminster MSCP).</li> <li>3. Note that the Council is aware that Peterborough has a higher suicide rate than the England average and is committed to taking action to address this through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Suicide Prevention Strategy and the Stop Suicide Pledge.</li> <li>4. Note that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Suicide Prevention Strategy Three Year Action Plan includes a recommendation to reduce the risk of suicide from multi-storey car parks through a multi-faceted approach including suicide awareness training for car park staff, signage to direct people to sources of support and promotion of the use of barriers to restrict access to jumping points.</li> <li>4. Consider the budget implications of undertaking the works set out in feasibility study to install infill panels and fencing on the upper car park deck, the budget implications and the proposed review processes to determine future decision making.</li> <li>5. Confirm that the Head of Corporate Property and Children’s Resources, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Cabinet Member Resources, will determine whether the works to install preventative measures on the Northminster MSCP are carried out in whole or part together with the decision making process and timetable associated with these options, subject to sufficient budget allocation.</li> <li>6. Approve an addition to the capital programme to include an unbudgeted provisional sum of £250,000 in the event that the Assistant Director – Education, Resources and Corporate Property in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources concludes that the intervention works are required and barriers and fencing are erected as set out in this report.</li> </ol>	

## **1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet from the Cabinet Member for Resources following the receipt of the coroner's Regulation 28 report dated 30 July 2014.

## **2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

- 2.1 The suicide rate in Peterborough has increased in recent years and for 2010-2012 is significantly above both the England and East of England rates. Consistent with national data, the most common method of suicide in Peterborough is by hanging. Other recorded methods include drowning, use of firearms, multiple injuries – including those sustained by jumping from a height, and drug overdose.
- 2.2 The Council is committed to reducing the rate of suicide in Peterborough and on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014, through the Health and Wellbeing Board, signed off the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Suicide Prevention Strategy and three year action plan. The 2014-17 Action Plan includes a specific recommendation to reduce the risk of suicide from multi-storey car parks. This advocates a multi-faceted approach including training in suicide awareness for car park staff, assessing risk of suicide at individual car parks, displaying posters at car parks to direct individuals to sources of support and promoting the use of barriers to restrict access to jumping spots.
- 2.3 The Council has also signed the STOP Suicide Pledge which is an organisational commitment to encouraging openness and honesty when life gets difficult, reaching out to others who are struggling and may be contemplating suicide and directing them to sources of help.
- 2.4 On 30 July 2014, the Coroner issued a Regulation 28 report in respect of a suicide by jumping from one of the Queensgate car parks. Under the Coroners' Regulations 2013, a coroner has both the power and a duty to raise concerns where the coroner considers that actions could be taken to prevent future deaths. A Regulation 28 report is addressed to the organisations the coroner believes can take action to prevent further deaths. Such organisations have a duty to respond to the Regulation 28 report giving details of action taken or proposed to be taken, with a timetable for action. Alternatively, the organisation(s) must explain why no action will be taken.
- 2.5 All Regulation 28 reports are copied to the Chief Coroner and included on a public website. Responses from named organisations are also made public on the website. In this case, the Regulation 28 report was addressed to Peterborough City Council and the Queensgate management company, since both of these organisations own and are responsible for multi-storey car parks in the city.
- 2.6 The death which occasioned the Regulation 28 report occurred in December 2014 from one of the Queensgate car parks. The coroner noted that there had been a number of suicides from city car parks dating back at least to 2006. The coroner was concerned that the design of the car parks was not effective in preventing access to jumping sites. The coroner had submitted a published evidence review (Cox et al, BMC Public Health, 2013, 13:214) which reported that barriers to prevent access to suicide hot spots were effective in averting suicides without a substitution effect.
- 2.7 The Public Health team have reviewed the paper submitted by the Coroner and confirm that it is methodologically sound. The paper included nine studies examining the effectiveness of restricting access to jumping sites (including bridges, cliffs and railway platforms) by use of barriers. All these studies showed that suicide rates at these sites fell when restriction measures were put in place and rose when they were removed. Eight of the studies looked for evidence that restricting access to means of suicide at one site might cause an increase in suicide by other means (including at alternative sites). No evidence for a substitution effect was found.

- 2.8 The review paper also looked for evidence of effectiveness of other interventions to reduce suicide at ‘hot spots’ – including encouraging help-seeking through placement of signs or telephones; increasing the likelihood of intervention by a third party (including camera surveillance and staff training); and encouraging responsible media reporting of suicide. The evidence for the effectiveness of these interventions was weaker although they were not shown to be ineffective and are worth further study.
- 2.9 The Public Health team checked the literature for any papers published subsequent to the systematic review but did not find any. The Public Health team therefore advise that the systematic review represents the best currently available evidence for the effectiveness of interventions to reduce suicides at jumping points.
- 2.10 Between 1 February 2012 and 30 September 2014 there were a total of 70 recorded threats and fatalities from Peterborough car parks (58 ‘threat only’, 9 fatalities and 3 serious injuries). Eight deaths occurred at the four Queensgate car parks and one at Northminster; 16 of the 58 threats occurred at Northminster (data provided by Safer Peterborough Partnership).
- 2.11 The Council understands that it was included within the report as it owns and manages the Northminster car park, which is a multi-storey car park in the city centre. The Council has no ownership or interest in the Queensgate car parks and therefore makes no comments in relation to those car parks. The Council understands that the Queensgate Management Company have agreed a programme of works to install barriers at the Queensgate car parks.
- 2.12 The Council has now formally responded to the Senior Coroner’s Report date 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014 setting out the Council’s response, details of which are covered in this report to Cabinet.
- 2.13 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.3 ‘to take a leading role in promoting the economic, environmental and social well-being of the area’.

### 3. **TIMESCALE**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	
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### 4. **PROPOSED RESPONSE TO CORONORS REPORT**

- 4.1 The Northminster Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP) is owned by Peterborough City Council and managed by the Council’s Parking Services Team. The Northminster MSCP forms part of a major city centre regeneration proposal set out in a report to Cabinet titled “Progressing Funding for Peterborough’s Future Growth”. This decision was made effective on the 13<sup>th</sup> December.
- 4.2 The Northminster MSCP consists of a ground floor with 6 floors of parking above. The car park has infill panels at ground and first floors but open sides above the parapets on the 5 upper floors. Following receipt of the Coroner’s report feasibility work has been carried out to look at options for providing infill panels at each level and fencing on the top deck, all with tamper resistant fittings.
- 4.3 Budget estimates have been prepared and the costs associated with this are significant, potentially up to £250,000 for the optimum solution of infill panels and fencing of the upper most deck. The exact cost will not be known until detailed surveys on matters such as structural integrity and fixing points are completed as well as programme for works determined together with the methods of working particularly as this is currently an operational and busy car park. At this level of expenditure the works will need to be formally tendered.

- 4.4 This is an unexpected cost to the public at a time when the Council is seeking to identify significant revenue savings, including reducing capital expenditure. As custodians of the public purse, the Council has to take a proportionate response to the level of expenditure.
- 4.5 A report taken to Cabinet on the 24 February 2014 identified key sites for regeneration and began the process of establishing a Joint Venture (“JV”) to regenerate key city centre assets. These plans were further refined in December. The Council are currently working up specific proposals to redevelop the car park with a private sector growth delivery partner. The scope of and timetable for redevelopment of the car park is as yet undetermined. Work required to determine this is about to commence and includes a detailed assessment of the remaining life of the building as an operational car park to inform a range of decisions. The assessment will include what investment is needed to maintain the car park in operation during the period until it is redeveloped including the technical solutions for discouraging suicides from the car park.
- 4.6 With these longer term plans in mind the Council takes a cautious approach taking into account:
- The likely limited future life of the car park
  - The risk and probability of future deaths
  - The cost of mitigation measures
  - Other mitigation measures which can be effected immediately
- 4.7 Given that at this stage the Council has not determined how the Northminster MSCP would be redeveloped and the timeframe for this and, therefore a point at which it would cease being a car park or close for redevelopment, to make an investment decision now would be premature.
- 4.8 If the decision were to continue to maintain and use this public car park for the longer term, which is unlikely, there would still need to be an assessment of the level of spend to prevent future deaths by suicide given that this car park has a low likelihood of suicide based upon recent history. The Council has to weigh up the likelihood of future harm against the level of public expenditure. It is a delicate balancing exercise to weigh one need against another and unfortunately cost is often a deciding factor in such matters.
- 4.9 The Council proposes to take such immediate mitigation measures as are available in line with the Suicide Prevention Strategy. These action are to place additional and more prominent signage directing people to sources of support at higher floors of the car park, lifts and lobby areas. The Council is also exploring how to make better use of the CCTV available at this site to identify any potential suicide risks. The CCTV control room is based on the top floor of the Northminster car park and is manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- 4.10 As regards the commitment of significant public expenditure on the erection of barriers, the Council proposes to monitor the situation to see if the erection of barriers at the Queensgate car parks results in an increase in suicides or suicide threats at the Northminster car park. The Queensgate barriers have yet to be erected. Once they are, the Council would propose to monitor the impact on suicide related behaviours at Northminster for six months before reviewing the decision on barriers. During this time we will seek to progress the development proposals for the site to provide a timetable for any redevelopment. If early redevelopment of the site is not to proceed we will reassess the need to erect barriers in the interim period.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Only internal Council officers at this stage including Director for Public Health, Head of Operations, Director of Growth and Regeneration, Head of Growth and Regeneration, Assistant Director Corporate Property and Children’s Resources and the Solicitor to the Council. This response is based upon the view of this group.

## 6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 6.1 Cabinet is made aware of the Council's proposals to deal with the matters raised in the Senior Coroner's Report included as Appendix 1 and the potential provision of funding if further actions are required.

## 7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Council is not required by the Senior Coroner to carry out suicide prevention works to the Northminster MSCP. However the Council takes very seriously the issues set out in that report and is considering a range of options including the erection of fencing and infill panels within the Northminster Car Park having regard to the operational life of the car park, redevelopment proposals and associated budget implications.

## 8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 **Option 1** - Do nothing. This is the least cost option but does not address the points made in the Senior Coroner's Recommendation.
- 8.2 **Option 2** – Monitor what impact the works at Queensgate Car Parks have in terms of on the numbers of suicides and suicide threat incidents at Northminster MSCP. For reasons set out in Section 4 of this Report this is the approach the Council is taking although making budgetary provision in the event that the ongoing review determines that the investment is to be made into the car park.
- 8.3 **Option 3** – Undertake interventions requiring significantly less investment such as additional signage and increased monitoring one site despite the evidence base for the effectiveness of these being weaker than for barriers. The situation would be reviewed once proposals for the medium to longer term future of the car park have been developed. The Council has already undertaken to implement these interventions.

## 9. IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposed decision to consider allocating budget, if required will have an impact on the Council's Budget.

## 10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

Senior Coroner's Report dated 30 July 2014. This needs a proper reference to ensure it could be found again subsequently. Should be: Senior Coroner for Peterborough, Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths, 30 July 2014.

BMC Public Health Research. This needs to be set out as a proper reference (no one could find this paper again from what you have put here). The reference should be: Cox Gr, Owen C, Robinson J et al, 'Interventions to reduce suicides at suicide hotspots: a systematic review', *BMC Public Health*, 2013, 13:214.

Cabinet Member Decision notice titled "Progressing Funding for Peterborough's Future Growth" December 2014.

Joint Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Suicide Prevention Strategy, 2014-17 (Signed off by Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board on 11 December 2014).

Joint Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Suicide Prevention Three Year Action Plan, 2014-17 (Signed off by Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board on 11 December 2014).

Information on the STOP Suicide Pledge is available at:

<http://www.stopsuicidepledge.org/pledge/> [accessed on 9 January 2015].

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