



**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND
COMMISSIONS
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER- TOWN HALL
ON 10 FEBRUARY 2016**

- Present:** Councillors N Sandford (Chairman), K Aitken, C Ash, L Ayres, R Bisby, R Brown, C Harper, A Iqbal, D Over, J Peach, B Rush, S Scott, C Ash, R Ferris, L Forbes, D Fower, JA Fox, JR Fox, F Fox, D Harrington, N Khan, G Nawaz, J Davidson, S Martin, J Okonkowski, B Saltmarsh, J Whitby, J Yonga
- Also Present:** Co-opted Member for Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities: Jo Dobson,
Councillor Holdich, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University, and Communications
Councillor Fitzgerald, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Integrated Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor North, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital
Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources
Councillor Elsey, Cabinet Member for Digital, Waste and Street Scene
Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development
Councillor Coles, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Serluca, Cabinet Member for City Centre Management, Culture & Tourism
- Officers Present:** Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive
John Harrison, Corporate Director of Resources
Kim Sawyer, Director of Governance
Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Corporate Director of People and Communities
Simon Machen, Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration
Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health
Steven Pilsworth, Service Director, Financial Services
Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer

The Chair welcomed everyone present and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for all Members of each Scrutiny Committee and Commission to scrutinise Phase 2 of the 2016/17 Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26 as part of the formal consultation process before being presented to Cabinet on 29 February 2016 and Full Council on 9 March 2016.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Sanders, Shaheed, Jamil, and Murphy. Councillors Nawaz and Davidson were in attendance as substitutes for Councillors Sanders and Shaheed. The following co-opted members also sent apologies: Alistair Kingsley, Miranda Robinson, Andrew Read, Stuart Francis, Henry Clark, Keith Lievesley

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Stokes, Acting Cabinet Adviser for Children's Safeguarding, Councillor Casey, Cabinet Advisor to the Cabinet Member for City Centre Management, Culture and Tourism (Culture and Recreation) and Councillor Lamb, Cabinet Member for Public Health.

Apologies were also received from David Whiles, Representative from Healthwatch.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

No declarations of interest or whipping declarations were received.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 26 November 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Budget 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2025/26

Members were given an overview of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget by the Cabinet Member for Resources. The following key points were highlighted:

- Overview:
 - No reduction to services – in either phase 1 or 2
 - Investment in key services for residents
 - Proposed 2 per cent council tax rise
 - Proposed 2 per cent Adult Social Care Levy
 - Balanced budget for 2016/17
 - Budget deficit for 2017/18 currently expected to be £5.3m
- Achievements in Peterborough and better value
- Financial challenge 2016/2017
- Investments
- Approach to savings
- Council Tax – extra 2% for Adult Social Care
- Council Tax – 4% for residents
- Next steps

Each section of the budget was then taken in order according to how it was presented in the Budget Book. Each section was introduced by the relevant Corporate Director before Cabinet Members took questions from the Committee.

Questions and observations were made around the following areas:

Item	Section of the Budget	Questions / Comment	Response from relevant Cabinet Member / Corporate Director
4.	Introduction of the Budget and Overall Budget Position including Report of the Chief Officer, Revenue Outturn Forecast and Budget Proposals, Key Figures & Cash Limits and Council Tax.	Adult Social Care Levy of 2%. It does not specify within the budget papers what this money will be spent on. Which aspects of Adult Social Care will the money be spent on.	The specific details are yet to be identified but the spend on Adult Social Care will increase by £1.2m in 2016/17. The specifics of the calculation are still to be released by the government.
		Members were pleased to see the extra £100K being spent on public transport and congratulated the Cabinet Member on this increase.	
		How would the council sell the increase of a 4% council tax increase to the general public?	It was important to highlight the number of investments being made in the city and note that it was only the second increase in council tax in over six years. It therefore averaged out at approximately 1% a year. Peterborough also had the lowest council tax in Cambridgeshire. The council tax increase may have to be 1.99% to avoid the referendum limit of 2%. The regulations regarding this had however not been announced yet.
		Members noted that the government had recently announced some generous settlements to some authorities and they were therefore getting a better deal. Would this apply to this authority?	The final grant settlement announced yesterday showed a loss of £4K to our authority between the preliminary and the final grant settlement. More money had however been found for some county councils and rural authorities.
		Would it be better to raise the council tax by 4% so that the money could be spent on any service area not just Adult Social Care.	It could not be raised to 4% as there would have to be a referendum.

Item	Section of the Budget	Questions / Comment	Response from relevant Cabinet Member / Corporate Director
	<p>Members commented on the fact that 87% of the schools within the authority were rated as good or better but this did not give a true reflection of the reality. It was understood that the new Head of Education would be pushing to improve attainment levels. Would this have an impact on the budget?</p> <p>Had any work been done on securing a valuation of the registration of the Mayors Car?</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University and Communications informed Members that it was his ambition to drive educational attainment up. Schools were improving but it would take time to see this come through in the examination results. There should not be any implications on the budget.</p> <p>A valuation of the registration of the Mayors car was undertaken a few years ago. This information would be provided. There were no proposals in the budget to do anything in relation to the registration of the Mayors car at present.</p>	
<p>The Committee noted the presentation made by the Cabinet Member for Resources.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>The Director of Governance to provide information regarding the valuation of the Mayors Car registration plate.</p>			
5.	<p>People and Communities Schedule G, Appendix 2 (Pages 169 - 174)</p>	<p>Page 171, St Georges Community Hydrotherapy Pool. Members were pleased to see that financial support would continue until 2018/19 but noted that the building would require significant investment given its current condition. The council could not do this on its own and were therefore seeking additional investment from partner organisations council. Members sought assurance that this additional investment was being vigorously sought and the pool would not be allowed to close.</p>	<p>It was an important asset and discussions were ongoing with other partner organisations like health and to try and get the costs down.</p>

Item	Section of the Budget	Questions / Comment	Response from relevant Cabinet Member / Corporate Director
		Should provision be made in the capital programme for the investment in the St Georges's hydrotherapy pool?	The council was working with St Georges to bring additional funding in from other areas. There is no additional funding in the capital programme to provide capital investment in the big works required.
		Members commented that the government were looking to cut the schools support grant. The suggestion was that the local authority will no longer be responsible for admissions or school improvement. If this is the case will this have budget implications and will this mean losing staff from this area of work.	There will be a consultation in regard to the changes the government want to make regarding the responsibilities the local authorities will have going forward. It was the belief that the local authority would continue to have a quality assurance role and therefore staff would be retained. It is not anticipated that there would be any budgetary implications.
		Page 173, Clare Lodge – additional income through expansion. Could the capacity at Clare Lodge be increased without the need for any investment?	The investment was coming from the Department for Education and therefore no investment was required from the council.
		Operation Can do Board. There is no mention of funding for the Can do Board and the work it is leading on. Will funding come out of existing resources.	Yes.
		St Georges Hydrotherapy pool. The question of the continuation of the hydrotherapy pool continues to be raised each year. Was this therefore a good investment to fund something that was in such poor condition?	The Cabinet Member for Integrated Adult Social Care and Health informed Members that it was not the responsibility of the council to run the hydrotherapy pool; it was a health care responsibility. However the council recognised the importance of the pool and need for it and therefore have assisted in keeping it going.
The Committee noted this section of the budget.			

Item	Section of the Budget	Questions / Comment	Response from relevant Cabinet Member / Corporate Director
6.	Resources including Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships Schedule G, Appendix 3 (Pages 175 – 185)	Members thanked Cabinet for listening to ward councillors and reinstating the Spring Clean and noted the increased cleansing of the city centre.	The Cabinet Member of Digital, Waste and Street Scene advised that city centre cleansing was being increased due to the increase in volume of people and therefore producing more volume of rubbish. The Spring Clean will target all wards.
			The Cabinet Member for Resources commented that all councillors had a representative on the Budget Working Group and if councillors felt that there should be more investment in a particular service area they should inform their representative to feed into the working group.
		Page 178. What is the budget for the Christmas decorations?	The budget for Christmas decorations is £110,000 per year and this had been reduced down to £80,000 per year.
		<p>Green Flag Status. Does the Council have any say with the Environment Agency regarding the introduction of fishing at Cuckoos Hollow and possibly being rolled out to Ferry Meadows. By doing this it would incorporate a revenue income into the council.</p> <p>A member commented that this had been discussed at Werrington Neighbourhood Council and the outcome was that fishing was not wanted at Cuckoos Hollow.</p> <p>Members requested that the Cabinet Member for Resources approach the Environment Agency to discuss the possibility of the council receiving</p>	<p>The council would need to own the lake to receive an income from rod licences. Any income from rod licences would go to the Environment Agency. Fishing can be a profitable business. A business called Embryo Angling Habitats had been set up and were looking at leasing at least one lake in the city. There were several lakes in the city that were not being looked after and discussions were being held with Embryo Angling Habitats to see if they could clean up some of the lakes.</p>

Item	Section of the Budget	Questions / Comment	Response from relevant Cabinet Member / Corporate Director
		revenue from rod licences for lakes that they may be responsible for.	
		Members were particularly pleased to note that the city-wide deep Spring Clean programme had been reintroduced and requested that if possible it be brought forward to start before the new financial year. This would ensure that the city looked cleaner going into the Spring season.	<p>Members were informed of the process. Amey know that they have the contract for the Spring Clean and that they would be receiving the money however the money could not be released until the budget had been confirmed on 9 March at Full Council. If all Members would like the Spring Clean to start earlier then the Chairman in his capacity of Chair of Chairs would have the facility to waive this and use his power of urgency.</p> <p>The Chairman responded that he would need to be advised by the Director of Governance to see if the special urgency provision could be applied.</p>
		<p>The Chairman asked the committee if they were all in agreement with the recommendation from Councillor Peach to request Cabinet to consider instructing Amey to start the Spring Clean prior to the budget being confirmed on 9 March at Full Council.</p> <p>The recommendation was unanimously agreed.</p>	
		Green Flags. It was the hope of the council to get more green flags. Perhaps some of the £20K could be put aside to encourage more areas to get a green flag status.	The current investment was needed for the work to be done on the existing sites to ensure they retained the green flag status

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		Members sought clarification on who Metal Culture were accountable to. Was the money that they were being granted for the benefit of arts from within the council directed by Vivacity or were they an independent body which supported arts and culture for the city.	Metal Culture were independent of Vivacity and as part of the grant the council have a contract with them for a series of outcomes for the city and are accountable to the council. They were also heavily funded by the Arts Council and this brought in approximately £1.5M to the city which enabled them to put on cultural events.
		Members commented that Metal Culture had done some great work by bringing cultural events to the city.	
		7.14pm Councillor Saltmarsh and Councillor Shearman left the meeting.	
The Committee noted this section of the budget and made the following recommendation to Cabinet.			
RECOMMENDATION			
That consideration be given to instructing Amey to start the Spring Clean prior to the budget being confirmed on 9 March at Full Council. The Director of Governance to advise Councillor Sandford, in his capacity as Chair of Chairs if special urgency provision can be applied to allow the Spring Clean to commence prior to the budget being confirmed.			
ACTION			
That the Cabinet Member for Resources approaches the Environment Agency to discuss possible revenue from rod licences for fishing at lakes that the council may be responsible for or have an interest in.			
7.	Growth and Regeneration Schedule G, Appendix 4 (Pages 186 - 191)	Members were pleased to note the investment in Northminster car park. Members sought clarification as to why the description of safety measures differed from those in place at Queensgate car park.	The additional security measures to the top of the Queensgate car park were not the most attractive addition to the cityscape. The upper deck of the Northminster car park was not as frequently used and would therefore have a gated entrance to be used by staff only. The next two car parking decks would have

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			<p>a mesh fitted for safety. The council were working closely with the disability forum on this project.</p> <p>The budget needed to be confirmed first before going ahead with the housing joint venture. Legal and due diligence had already been completed with regard to the model and it was anticipated that it would commence during the summer / autumn period.</p> <p>The council remained fully committed to meeting its affordable housing needs and the new Housing Joint Venture company would assist in achieving this.</p> <p>The Housing Joint Venture company would be a development company and could build on land owned by the council and land acquired by the council.</p>
		<p>Housing Joint Venture. Members sought reassurance with regard to the statement within the report on page 188 <i>"It's hoped the company could be up and running later this year"</i>.</p>	
		<p>Members sought assurance that the council was still fully committed to meeting its affordable housing targets and needs.</p>	
		<p>7.20pm. Councillor Eisey left the meeting at this point.</p>	
<p>The Committee noted this section of the budget.</p>			
8.	<p>Governance Schedule G, Appendix 5 (Page 192)</p>		<p>The Director of Governance announced that a member of the HR Team had been asked to represent Britain nationally in the European Court of Strasberg to do some research on the Working Time Directive.</p>
		<p>Members were pleased to see that additional resources had been proposed to support scrutiny.</p>	
<p>The Committee noted this section of the budget.</p>			

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9.	Public Health Schedule G, Appendix 6 (Page 193 - 194)	No comments or questions were made on this section of the budget.	
The Committee noted this section of the budget.			
10.	Staff Implications Schedule G, Appendix 7 (Pages 195)	No comments or questions were made on this section of the budget.	
The Committee noted this section of the budget.			
11.	Treasury Strategy & Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Schedule D (Pages 44 - 81) Capital Strategy , Programme & Disposal 2016/17 – 2025/26 Schedule E (Pages 82 – 113) Asset Management Plan 2014 – 2019 Schedule F (Pages 114 – 155)	Members noted that in the list of asset disposals small areas of green space had been sold off. Members sought clarification on the Cabinet policy regarding green space and whether they should be protected or sold off.	The policy on green space remained the same in that it should be protected where it was appropriate. Ward councillors were always consulted on any green space that might be under consideration for disposal within their ward.
		Members sought further clarification with regard to page 64, paragraph 4.9.2, <i>A Joint Venture, Limited Liability Partnership (JV LLP)</i> and also asked what “loan notes” were.	The Joint Venture, Limited Liability Partnership (JV LLP) was the vehicle to develop Fletton Keys. Loan notes were I.O.U’s which were interest bearing.

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		Could the capital value of the loan note go up or down.	The capital value of the I.O.U would only go down if the value of the project did not achieve its financial objective. If it achieved its financial objective the value of the loan note would go up.
		<p>The Chairman put forward a recommendation that before any areas of green space are put up for sale there should be a consultation with ward councillors and if relevant also members of the public and that the contribution that the green space makes to the overall network of green space be taken into consideration.</p> <p>The recommendation was put to the vote and approved. (14 in favour and 9 against)</p>	
		7.30pm. Councillor Serluca left the meeting at this point.	
The Committee noted this section of the budget and made the following recommendation to Cabinet.			
<p>RECOMMENDATION</p> <p>That before any areas of green space are put up for sale there should be a consultation with ward councillors and if relevant also members of the public and that the contribution that the green space makes to the overall network of green space be taken into consideration.</p>			
11	General Comments, any overall recommendations and Conclusion		
	There were no further comments or questions.		

The Chair thanked all members of the Scrutiny Committee and Commissions for attending the meeting and the Cabinet Members and Directors for attending and responding to the questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION OF THE BUDGET AND OVERALL BUDGET POSITION INCLUDING REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER, REVENUE OUTTURN FORECAST AND BUDGET PROPOSALS, KEY FIGURES & CASH LIMITS AND COUNCIL TAX

ACTION

The Director of Governance to provide information regarding the valuation of the Mayors Car registration plate.

2. RESOURCES INCLUDING STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND PARTNERSHIPS

RECOMMENDATION

That consideration be given to instructing Amey to start the Spring Clean prior to the budget being confirmed on 9 March at Full Council. The Director of Governance to advise Councillor Sandford, in his capacity as Chair of Chairs if special urgency provision can be applied to allow the Spring Clean to commence prior to the budget being confirmed.

ACTION

That the Cabinet Member for Resources approaches the Environment Agency to discuss possible revenue from rod licences for fishing at lakes that the council may be responsible for or have an interest in.

3. TREASURY STRATEGY & MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY, CAPITAL STRATEGY , PROGRAMME & DISPOSAL 2016/17 – 2025/26, ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014 – 2019

RECOMMENDATION

That before any areas of green space are put up for sale there should be a consultation with ward councillors and if relevant also members of the public and that the contribution that the green space makes to the overall network of green space be taken into consideration.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting began at 6.00pm and ended at 7.45 pm