

MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD 21 MARCH 2016

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members: Councillor Holdich (Chair), Councillor Coles, Councillor Elsey, Councillor Hiller, Councillor North and Councillor Seaton

Cabinet Advisors: Councillor Casey and Councillor Stokes

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Serluca and Councillor Maqbool. Councillor Stokes was in attendance, on a voluntary basis, in place of Councillor Maqbool.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS HELD ON:

3.1 29 FEBRUARY 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3.2 7 MARCH 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. PETITIONS PRESENTED TO CABINET

There were no petitions presented to Cabinet.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

5. ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT GRANT SCHEME

Cabinet received a report which sought endorsement for ongoing support for work involving the Armed Forces Community Covenant and associated grant scheme.

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to understand the success that the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant had had in integrating Forces and Civilian communities.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital introduced the report and explained the relationships that Peterborough City Council had with the Armed Forces and the ways that the Council had offered support. It was commented that the Council was committed to ensuring that the Armed Forces community should not face any disadvantage compared to other members of the community and that all would be done to recognise and address the issues that veterans may have.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital introduced Mark Davis from RAF Wittering and the Social Inclusion Manager, who outlined key achievements and projects.

The Service Director Adult Services and Communities thanked RAF Wittering and other partnership organisations and commented how positive it had been to work in partnership with the base and on the project. It was commented that Councillor John Fox had taken the role of Armed Forces Champion extremely seriously and was now seen as a true champion by many individuals and communities.

Cabinet debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Wittering Parish Council had been consulted about each project that had been undertaken;
- The coordination and delivery of support for the mental and physical health outcome for the Community Covenant grant scheme had closed. It was expected to reopen later in 2016 when the government announced the new criteria;
- The priorities for future projects would be a veterans gateway single point of communication for advice; to support families in stress; projects which could join up local delivery amongst Councils and projects about community integration and cohesion;
- Future plans for the Community Covenant Scheme would take the four priorities for future projects and apply these to the needs of Peterborough. The focus would be on the first three priorities. A project was currently being worked on with Inspire Peterborough and Disability Peterborough to get veterans back into sport;
- The Wittering Families Centre and Community Learning Centre helped to generate community cohesion between Armed Forces and civilian families because they were placed in the centre of the village, had no military protection and were open to all members of the Wittering community;
- The Youth Drop In had moved buildings and had taken into account the needs and wants of young people. Young people had been involved in planning the building, via the Youth Forum, and they had stated that they wanted to learn life skills. As a result a large kitchen area, a music area, an arts and crafts area, more toilets and a café were to be created; and
- Members wished for it to be minuted that a fantastic job had been done so far and Peterborough should be proud.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the close partnership working between the Council and RAF Wittering which had led to a number of successful projects to support the Armed Forces and Civilian communities.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To ensure Cabinet was informed of the close partnership working between the Council and RAF Wittering which had led to a number of successful projects to support the Armed Forces and Civilian communities.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There were no alternative options considered.

6. PETERBOROUGH SKILLS STRATEGY

Cabinet received a report following a request from Councillor John Holdich OBE, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University.

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to approve the Peterborough Skills Strategy.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University introduced the report and the Principal City College Peterborough provided Members with an overview of the Peterborough Skills Strategy and the methods by which it was informed.

Cabinet debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Principal, City College Peterborough had visited all secondary headteachers in the area to discuss a city wide approach to the Skills Agenda and the options to build a pathway to post 16 learning. Headteachers had also been consulted to map the current curriculum and as a result of that, a Local Authority post 16 education plan had been created;
- The Gigabit City underpinned all aspects of the Peterborough Skills Strategy and linked with Digital City Peterborough;
- Engagement with employers would be wide and it would include 'Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)'. The Peterborough Chamber of Commerce and Opportunity Peterborough would lead on an employer engagement group which would include a Forum;
- The demand in Peterborough for 'English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)' was great and there were a number of waiting lists for qualifications. The qualifications required very highly qualified staff to deliver the training. The levels of ESOL that people needed and the reasons why they needed it was in the process of being determined and mapped with the hope of achieving a reduction in waiting times;
- Two projects were currently being undertaken to increase capacity. One of these projects was training people in the local community to teach the language requirement of ESOL and in turn they would do pro-bono work in the community to teach ESOL. The other was providing the training for those attending the course to become qualified to teach ESOL;
- The Strategy Action Plan would be updated quarterly and the Peterborough Skills Strategy would be reviewed annually;
- Employability would be addressed in the Peterborough Skills Strategy and skills would be mapped to local employers;
- The questions and comments from Members of the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 14 March 2016 were outlined; and
- Members commented that the Air Cadets could become involved in the Peterborough Skills Strategy.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to approve the Peterborough Skills Strategy for implementation.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Strategy would assist in:

- supporting partnership and collaboration on the collective vision and shared purpose;
- strengthening and building capacity;
- aligning skills development to local need;

- addressing business skills gaps;
- improving the social and economic wellbeing of local residents;
- improving health and wellbeing; and
- reducing poverty.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To not develop a Skills Strategy; this option would not enable the City to focus attention on the need to increase skills levels in the city and this would adversely impact on the economic growth of the City.

7. LEASING COUNCIL OWNED PROPERTY TO START-UP AND FLEDGLING BUSINESSES

Cabinet received a report following approval of the Phase 2 Budget Proposals by Council on 9 March 2016 which included a proposal to use empty Council owned commercial properties to support new businesses.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval from Cabinet to implement a scheme to support new and fledgling companies to lease Council owned property for an initial rent free period, subject to the company paying normal business costs such as rates and utility charges.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and the Interim Assistant Director Property Services introduced the report and commented that it was the first of two reports to follow on from the recent agreement by Council to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The scheme would be cost neutral to the Council and would be piloted in four locations.

Cabinet debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- When determining which businesses would benefit from the scheme, Opportunity Peterborough had agreed to provide support to businesses;
- Members commented that they were worried about the proposed plans regarding business plans being considered and supported by Opportunity Peterborough. It was commented that due diligence must be taken by Peterborough City Council and that the incoming businesses must be viable;
- Members suggested that the Manager of Peterborough Workspace could work with Opportunity Peterborough;
- Two leases were currently under negotiation and the scheme would start fully immediately; and
- The scheme could be extended to other Council owned property in the future.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to agree:

1. A scheme to let Council owned retail and industrial units to fledgling and start-up businesses for short periods on 'easy in easy out' rent free terms at the following locations:
 - a) Herlington Centre, Orton Malborne
 - b) Pyramid Centre, Bretton
 - c) Alfric Square, Woodston
 - d) Saville Road, Westwood
2. That the Corporate Director Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Corporate Director Resources be given delegated authority to extend the scheme.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The proposals would assist with letting of Council owned vacant commercial units and supporting new and fledgling businesses in their early stages.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To do nothing. The Council would remain financially liable for void rates and other property costs associated with void premises. The proposal recommended offered an opportunity to better manage the Council's ongoing liabilities on vacant premises.

8. FUTURE DELIVERY OF PROPERTY SERVICES

Cabinet received a report following the Phase One Budget Proposals approved by Council on 17 December 2015. This included a proposal to transfer property services into a joint venture with NPS Property Consultants Ltd (NPS), including estate management, asset acquisition, disposals and rent collection.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval from Cabinet to formally establish a joint venture property services company with NPS Property Consultants Ltd (NPS).

The Cabinet Member for Resources and the Interim Assistant Director Property Services introduced the report and outlined the proposals. It was proposed that the joint venture would be implemented by 1 July 2016. The Corporate Director Growth and Regeneration commented that the report demonstrated a much more proactive and rigorous approach to property services.

Cabinet debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Additional income would be generated because the joint venture would operate on a commercial basis with a profit and loss account, an annual business plan and profit would be divided between the shareholders;
- The shareholders would be Peterborough City Council and NPS;
- In year one, emphasis would be placed on improving service provision and after this, it was envisaged that the shareholders would provide services to a broader base of clients across local authorities in Cambridgeshire and perhaps in East Anglia, the East Midlands and Bedfordshire;
- Income gained from providing services to a broader base of clients would be limited to 19% of revenue; and
- NPS were chosen because they were controlled by a local authority, had a public sector ethos and had a long standing track record of creating joint ventures with other local authorities.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to agree:

1. To approve the proposal to formally establish a joint venture company with NPS Property Consultants Ltd;
2. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth & Regeneration and Corporate Director Resources to conclude negotiations and set up a performance framework for managing the joint venture;
3. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration and Director of Governance the ability to finalise any individual matters within their remit; and

4. To recommend to Council amendments to the Constitution 'Appointments to external organisations' to include the joint venture company within the key partnerships category to enable the Leader to make appointments to the governing body.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This report sought to implement the approved Phase One Budget proposals to enter into a joint venture with NPS Property Consultants Ltd, including access to robust and quality property specialisms at short notice and the ability to generate income, thereby contributing toward closing the budget gap.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The following options were considered:

1. To do nothing. This option was ruled out for the reasons set out in the EELGA report, relating to the sub-optimal way that property services were currently provided; and
2. To bring the service in house to address the issues set out in the EELGA report. This had a number of disadvantages related to cost and the management resource required to establish the significant team required to specify, procure and manage appointments of a wide range of property service providers. It would also run counter to the commissioning council model and would not provide significant income generation opportunities.

9. ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS – EXECUTIVE PROCEDURE RULES

Cabinet received a report which followed the Council's decision on 27 January to adopt an alternative form of governance to take effect from the Annual Council meeting in May 2016 and to approve amendments to those sections of the Constitution relating to overview and scrutiny.

The purpose of the report was to obtain Cabinet's approval to the amended executive procedure rules for ratification by Council. These amendments reflected the changes in the Council's governance model from Annual Council 2016.

The Director of Governance introduced the report and explained the reasons for the amendments to the executive procedure rules.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to agree:

1. To approve the proposed changes to the Executive Procedure Rules (Part 4 - Section 7); and
2. To request that Council ratify the Rules at the Annual meeting of Council on 23 May to take effect upon introduction of the new governance model.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The proposed changes would ensure the Cabinet Procedure Rules are aligned with the scrutiny procedure rules agreed by Council. The Constitution needs to be amended to enable the arrangements to be put in place following the Annual meeting in 2016.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

If the Executive did not agree with the proposals, it would not be possible to implement them without the approval of the Leader who had statutory responsibility for executive decision making and delegations of executive functions as set in the Local Government Act 2000 as amended.

Chairman
10.00am – 10.56am

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