

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING
HELD AT 10:00AM, ON
MONDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2018
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Cabinet Members Present: Councillor Holdich (Chair), Councillor Ayres, Councillor Cereste, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Hiller, Councillor Lamb, Councillor Smith, Councillor Walsh and Councillor Seaton.

Cabinet Advisors Present: Councillor Allen and Councillor Fuller.

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

43. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS HELD ON:

(a) 24 SEPTEMBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2018 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

(b) 15 OCTOBER 2018 - EXTRAORDINARY

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 15 October 2018 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

44. PETITIONS PRESENTED TO CABINET

Councillor Casey presented a petition to Cabinet that had been signed by employees at Lougueville Court and residents of Moggswell Lane in relation to the introduction of new street lighting Moggswell Lane.

45. PETITION FOR DEBATE – ‘HERLINGTON POST OFFICE’

The Cabinet received a report following the receipt of a petition containing more than 170 valid signatures from people who lived, worked, or studied in the city. The petition called on the Council to intervene to ensure that the ‘essential public service’ provided by Herlington Post Office in Orton Malborne continued.

The purpose of this report was for Cabinet to debate the request set out within the petition and to determine what action, if any, should be taken to address the issue raised.

Heather Skibsted, the Lead Petitioner, address the Cabinet and advised that Post Office in Orton Malborne had been closed since July 2018. This had been advertised as a temporary closure, however Ms Skibsted had been informed by the Post Office tenant that they could no longer afford the rent, which was the reason for the Post Office shutting down. Although plans had been made to open a Post Office elsewhere within the ward, this would still be too far for those residents who were not mobile. It was queried with the Cabinet whether anything could be done to entice other businesses to the area, as it was felt it had the potential to become a vital hub in Herlington.

The Cabinet Member for Communities introduced the report and recommended to Cabinet that the petition be noted, but no further action be taken. The Cabinet Member advised that, following referral from Ward Councillors the Cabinet Member had met with the Post Office, alongside the MP and Ward Councillors. At this meeting it was confirmed that the Post Office had closed due to the resignation of the Postmaster. Discussions were currently underway between the Post Officer and a potential new client, details of which would be shared when available.

The Cabinet Member further advised that the Post Officer were keen to expand their list of sites and would welcome recommendations from Ward councillors.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the petition and comments but take no action.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Post Office were already taking action and considering future options for expansion in Orton Malborne. It was not appropriate to intervene prior to the outcome of full discussion with the Post Office.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To take the action requested in the petition. This option was disregarded as it was considered that appropriate action was already being taken by the Post Office and the Council did not have the power to intervene in any meaningful manner.

To refer the petition to a Cabinet Member or relevant Scrutiny Committee. This option was not felt necessary, as it was not believed that further consideration by a Cabinet Member of Scrutiny Committee would enhance the decision made.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

46. PETERBOROUGH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) DEVELOPMENT

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the development of a Peterborough Business Improvement District (BID) in the City Centre, following a request from the Cabinet Advisor to the Leader.

The purpose of this report was to seek support to develop a BID to Peterborough City Centre, which was proposed in line with the Council's ambitions to support businesses and the City's vibrant and growing economy.

The Cabinet Advisor to the Leader introduced the report and advised that the BID would facilitate partnership between the authority and local businesses following a levy on non-domestic ratepayers in the BID area. The BID would only be established

following a ballot of those liable to pay that was returning with a majority of support. The BID would last for a period of five year, however, the majority of BID's in the country were extending beyond this initial period following success.

A survey of the local businesses in the area had identified a number of areas that a BID may address and it was anticipated that a ballot could be commenced in the summer of 2019.

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

- It was advised that, following a ballot that returned a majority in favour, the BID would cover all business in the identified area. All businesses would then be obliged to pay the levy, regardless of how they voted in the ballot.
- If the business did not indicate a majority support through the ballot, the scheme would not go ahead.
- Michelle Baker had been appointed as BID consultant and had met with a majority of the businesses in the area.
- Should the Cabinet support the recommendations a steering group would be set up to determine the exact area the BID would cover.
- This steering group would also draft the business plan for the BID Board to consider.
- A Cabinet Member, the Chairman of Queensgate and a mix of representatives would make up the BID Board.
- It was noted that all areas within the city centre should be approached to establish whether they would like to be part of the BID area.
- The BID was not simply for ground floor, front facing business, but included those without a shop front as well.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to approve the development of a Business Improvement District (BID) application for Peterborough City Centre.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

As a result of recent budget savings, City Centre Management would not be able to continue to deliver service at the current level (including producing and facilitating the wide range of events in the City Centre). Reduced investment in the City Centre was not desired. Moreover, the Council wished to see greater investment in the City Centre so that residents and visitors could have a vibrant, exciting, clean and safe City Centre everyone could be proud of and enjoy.

The development of a successful Business Improvement District (BID) in Peterborough City Centre would address this by providing the additional investment required.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

If the Council did not proceed with a BID then certain City Centre Management functions and events over the next two years (including the deletion of the post of City Centre Manager) would have to cease, as the budget for these activities was reduced.

47. COUNCIL TAX AND CARE LEAVERS

The Cabinet received a report following a request from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services in relation to Council Tax requirements of care leavers.

The purpose of this report was for Cabinet to consider whether the Council should adopt a scheme whereby care leavers who were the responsibility of the Council were exempted from paying Council Tax and whether this would be an effective way of ensuring that the Council is providing the best form of support to care leavers while making best use of available resources

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report and national discussions had taken place in relation to the issue. Not all of Peterborough's care leavers lived within the unitary boundary, and not all care leavers within the boundary were the responsibility of Peterborough City Council. It was felt that, to avoid any inequality and until a national scheme was introduced, that no exemption should be applied.

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

- Cabinet were advised that the Council's advisors worked closely with care leavers in order to support them and also to not create any dependency. Work was also undertaken to ensure that tenancies were not lost due to difficulties with Council Tax. If care leavers were in financial troubles support would be provided on a case by case basis.
- Members noted that the decision felt initially discomfoting, but it became clear that to act unilaterally without national guidance would be counterproductive.
- It was considered appropriate to lobby for a national scheme.
- Cabinet were advised that while some authorities had adopted such a scheme that authorities with in the eastern area had decision not to following investigations.
- It was suggested that an additional recommendation be included to seek support from the Local Government Association and the local MPs to lobby central Government.

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

1. Note the content of the report;
2. Agree that in the absence of any nation scheme, it was not appropriate for the Council to exempt care leavers from Council Tax;
3. Support the Director of Children's Services in writing to Central Government to suggest the implementation of a national scheme that provides some exemption from Council Tax to all vulnerable young people and adults up to the age of 25 living away from home;
4. Support the Director of Children's Services in writing to colleague Directors and seeking support in lobbying for a national scheme; and
5. Support the Director of Children's Services in writing to the Local Government Association and local MP's seeking support in lobbying for a national scheme.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The principal reasons for the recommendations related to the difficulties associated with implementing any scheme locally while avoiding the risk of challenge from other individuals or groups who could argue that they were being discriminated against.

There were also other reasons, including that care leavers were already provided with considerable support and given the financial realities facing all local authorities, any

additional financial support to this group would need to result from reductions in services elsewhere.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option was to implement a scheme that attempted to provide Council Tax exemption for Peterborough care leavers, regardless of where they may be living and that did not expose the Council to the risk of broader challenge. The challenges in achieving this combined with the financial impact were sufficient to rule out this approach.

48. PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

The Cabinet received a report following consideration by the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee and four weeks of public consultation in relation to the Council's Biodiversity Strategy.

The purpose of this report was to provide the Cabinet with an updated Biodiversity Strategy for consideration to refer to Full Council as part of the major policy framework.

The Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development introduced the report and advised that the Strategy had been opened for consultation alongside four other environmental strategies. The Biodiversity Strategy would replace the current plan, which was eight years old, and set out a realistic and achievable vision.

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

- The changes made in relation to net gain were welcomed.
- It was suggested that further work could be considered in relation to hedgehog preservation and comment was made that all major roads planning did have hedgehog underpasses included within them.
- Members noted that ways in which the Council managed its own assets needed to be carefully considered. This included looking at opportunities to work with local partners and securing funding that had not been previously accessible.
- Eye Green nature reserve was currently being considered for the Council to work in partnership with a local group from the beginning of January 2019.
- National figures had noted a decline in wildlife levels. A practice approach had been taken within Peterborough, including a barn owl recovery programme in the Fens and working with developments to assist in the preservation of newts.
- Members commented on the progress made with Hampton lakes around angling with the local group Embryo.
- It was advised that if Councillors were aware of any sites of concern or potential, officers were keen to investigate these.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to recommend the Biodiversity Strategy to Full Council for approval.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In exercising its functions, the Council had a duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to have regard, so far as was consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

It was important therefore that the Council set out a clear strategy to ensure biodiversity was considered in all Council strategies, plans, programmes and practices. The Council's constitution determined that the Strategy was a 'major policy item', and therefore could only be adopted by Full Council.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Do not update the 2010 Biodiversity Strategy. This would represent a missed opportunity to refresh the now outdated list of actions, present information in a clearer format, and reflect current Government advice. As such, this was not the preferred option.

MONITORING ITEMS

49. BUDGET CONTROL REPORT SEPTEMBER 2018

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Revenue Budgetary Control position for 2018/19, following discussion by the Corporate Management Team.

The purpose of this report was to provide Cabinet with an updated on the budgetary control position as at September 2018.

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the report and advised that the projected overspend position had improved by £1.5 million. The reserves position had improved by was still forecast to reduce. Risks were identified in the outturn deficit future, however, mitigation was being put in place around agency and project spend.

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

- The main area of concern was around the People and Communities directorate and the permanency services, which had identified at £4.5 million overspend.
- It was expected that the pressure would remain at a similar level for the rest of the year.
- Any new funding to support this pressure would have to be bid for.
- It was noted that the Troubled Families programme may be extended, which helped the Council to fund the early help service.
- It was suggested that when requesting further funding from Government that evidence be provided on the action currently taken by the Council and how it was helpful, in order to evidence how further funding would be beneficial.

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

1. The Revenue Budgetary Control position for 2018/19 at September 2018 includes a £4.910m overspend position on the revenue budget.
2. The key variance analysis and explanations are contained in Appendix A to the report.
3. The estimated reserves position for 2018/19 is outlined in Appendix B to the report.
4. In year budget risks were highlighted in Appendix C to the report.
5. The Asset Investment and Treasury Budget Report was contained in Appendix D to the report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The report updated Cabinet on the September 2018 budgetary control position.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There had been no alternative options considered.

50. OUTCOME OF PETITIONS

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the outcome of petitions received by the Council.

The purpose of this report was to update the Cabinet on the progress being made in response to petitions submitted to the Council.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the actions taken in respect of petitions.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

As the petitions presented in the report had been dealt with by Cabinet Members or officers, it was appropriate that the action taken was reported to Cabinet.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There had been no alternative options considered.

Chairman
10:00am – 11.05pm
19 November 2018

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