

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING
HELD AT 2:00PM, ON
MONDAY 15 MARCH 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Cabinet Members Present: Councillor Holdich (Chair), Councillor Ayres, Councillor Cereste, Councillor Farooq, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Hiller, Councillor Seaton, Councillor Walsh

Cabinet Advisor Present: Councillor Bashir

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Allen.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests received.

60. CORPORATE STRATEGY 2021-25

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Corporate Strategy 2021 to 2025.

The purpose of this report was to provide Cabinet with an overview of the proposed strategy and to endorse the Corporate Strategy for public consultation.

The Director of Business Improvement and Development introduced the report and advised that the proposed strategy had been developed over a six month period, based on the past two years' experience. It was intended to assist the Council in reaching better outcomes, a strong financial grip, and the best possible recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Cabinet had previously been clear that a strong, forward-looking vision was needed, which was honest in its approach to the challenges faced by the Council. The proposal built on the progress made so far and offered a strong committee to Peterborough's community and outcomes.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- It was noted that the proposed strategy related to 2021 to 2025, and not to 2019 to 2021 as the report title suggested.
- The key changes from the previous strategy included the learnings gleaned from the pandemic work with communities and partners. The priorities included had been carefully chosen with a view to what could be achieved working together.
- It was acknowledged that the new strategy would be operating in a different financial landscape than that which had come before it.
- Proper action plans were recognised as a key component of success in implement strategies like the one discussed.

- A large amount of work had been undertaken in relation to needs assessments, and understanding the impact of COVID-19 on groups of people who may not have engaged with the Council before.
- Focus was also placed on the importance of opportunities around the environment with the strategy and who this could be taken forward.
- Members discussed a desire to provide a safe corridor from the car parks around the city into the city centre, in order for people to feel confident visiting the city.
- Comment was made that the Think Communities approach had been clearly referenced within the document, and Members were advised that the progress made towards the aims set out in the strategy would be monitored, with performance overviews being provided to the Cabinet.
- It was further considered important to capture the 'lived experience' of service users alongside the analysis of data received.
- Members were advised that the consultation process would take place through social media and other previously used routes.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the Corporate Strategy 2021-2025, which would then move forward for public consultation before being recommended to Full Council.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

As well as articulating a framework to guide Council action, the Corporate Strategy communicated the Council's objectives and priorities to the community and to partners. It provided clarity about how the Council would be focusing its resource and effort and allowed the Council to measure performance and progress.

In developing the new Corporate Strategy Members at the Cabinet Policy Forum workshop agreed that it was important to have a strategy which:

- clearly articulated our ambition;
- honestly acknowledged the challenges we faced;
- helped us to make choices;
- allowed us both the freedom to innovate and the rigour to evaluate;
- flowed through the business.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council had managed well with individual service and functional strategies to date but, as the context in which the Council operated had become both more challenging and more complex, the option to continue without an overarching Corporate Strategy and Strategic Framework was dismissed.

To evaluate the options in the Corporate Strategy, four elements were considered:

- the degree to which the proposed priority outcomes supported delivery of the Council's statutory functions;
- the degree to which the proposed priority outcomes met the needs of the citizens of Peterborough;
- the degree to which the proposed priority outcomes were financially viable and sustainable; and
- the degree to which the proposed priority outcomes were deliverable.

61. BUDGET CONTROL REPORT JANUARY 2021

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the Peterborough City Council Budget Control Report for January 2021.

The purpose of this report was to provide Cabinet with the forecast for 2020/21 as at January 2021 budgetary control position.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and advised that COVID-19 budget pressures remained constant, while the net pressure on the budget had decreased to £4.7 million. Funding from Government had increased to cover 89% of COVID-19 spending. The updated year-end projection was a net overspend of £1.4 million, an improvement of £2.2 million. The key change leading to this had been reprofiling and efficiencies in ICT.

The Council's overall position was £3 million better than the COVID-19 position. Members were advised that COVID-associated costs had started to slip into the 2021/22 financial year, though similarly, funding for this was likely to also slip into the next year.

Finally, the Cabinet Member advised that Council Tax collection figures had remained consistent and Business Rate collection had improved. Grants to business and individuals were ongoing.

Cabinet Members debated the report and in summary responses to questions raised included:

- It was considered beneficial that the Government was providing further support to local business. Members encouraged local business who were experiencing issuing in paying their rates to contact the Council to enable discussion.
- Concern was raised that funding was not reaching all eligible businesses and officers were reviewing the distribution approach to ensure that this was provided in an accountable way in a shorter timescale.
- It was hoped that the £4.8 capitalisation funding from the Government would not have to be used for the current financial year.
- The performance of the capital programme should, it was felt, be considered in a realistic manner. Members suggested that the next financial year would be different, with work on the towns fund and schools.
- It was noted that the Council maintained the value of its assets.
- It was anticipated that the fund from the capitalisation directive would be delivered in tranches, with the arrangements for this delivery to be finalised prior to the July Parliament recess.

The Leader of the Council noted that this would be the last Cabinet meeting for Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Finance, and thanked the Councillor for his work.

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

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To provide Cabinet with the forecast for 2020/21 as at January 2021 budgetary control position.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None provided.

Chairman
2.00pm to 2:36am
15 March 2021