

**MINUTES OF THE GROWTH, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 PM, ON
TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2022
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors I Yasin (Chair), M Jamil (Vice-Chair), G Casey, C Fenner, M Haseeb, M Rangzeb, R Ray, N Sandford, and Co-opted Member Parish Councillor Neil Boyce

Officers Present: Rob Hill, Acting Service Director, Communities
Matthew Gladstone, Chief Executive Sam Smith, Assistant Director of Customer & Digital Services
Nick Carter, Assistant Director, Growth & Regeneration
Mandy Pullen, Assistant Director of HR and Development
Sam Smith, Assistant Director of Customer & Digital Services
Matt Oliver, Head of Think Communities
Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Ramin Shams, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: Cllr Wayne Fitzgerald, Leader of the Council
Tom Hennessy, Chief Executive Opportunity Peterborough
Eva Woods, Peterborough's Youth MP
Kirtan Uttarkar, Youth Council Representative

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest or whipping declarations were received.

12. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The minutes of the Joint Scrutiny meeting held on 9 February 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the Joint Scrutiny meeting held on 5 July 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the Joint Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 12 July 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny held on 12 July 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

13. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISION

No call ins were received.

14. INDEPENDENT IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE PANEL REPORT

The Chief Executive, accompanied by the Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which provided the Committee with the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel's first six monthly review of the work of the Council against the previously agreed Improvement Plan and the recommendations of the independent reports commissioned by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report, and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members raised concerns over the high inflation and interest rate. The Chief Executive advised that the national situation was uncertain and volatile, and there could be a further increase in the inflation rate. The Council had medium-term financial plans for every quarter in response to the rapid changes in the cost-of-living crisis. The Council currently had a two-year budget settlement with the Government, and the Council was reviewing a three-year budget settlement which would be a key for long-term stability. Members were advised that the Council was also reviewing the use of more energy-efficient measures at the Town Hall and the Sand Martin House to lower the energy cost.
- Members were advised that there was a gap of millions in the budget, and the Council reviewed its leadership structure and third-party contracts. Furthermore, the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel highlighted the gap in the budget as a priority that needed to be addressed.
- Members sought clarification on whether areas were identified where savings could be made. The Chief Executive informed Members that the savings plan had now been updated from 28% to 12% and currently mitigating procurement saving and security contracts, photocopying, and a whole range of different contracts to curb the Council's expenses. The Council would also reconsider its position regarding the Culture and Leisure area to see if the saving promised could be retained. The Council had a plan in place for reviewing cost and cash limits. He explained that there was further work needed to be done to close the gap.
- Members queried if the Council had plans in place for energy efficiency measures for the Council offices. The Leader of the Council advised Members that the Council was reviewing all budget areas to make a saving, including the energy cost.
- Members queried the Council's partnership plans and whether withdrawing from any current partnership arrangements could help the Council's financial position.

The Leader of the Council advised Members that the Peterborough Improvement Partnership (PIP) delivered massive success to the Council, including two million cash back to the Council on the Fletton Quays. He described the PIP as a financier between the Council and the partners. PIP had delivered development and profit to the Council. The Chief Executive clarified that the Council was looking into PIP closely, and there would be a number of changes, including at the board level and the Shareholder Committee, and had put training and support in place for CIPFA.

- Members were advised that the financial position for the in-year was 0.2millions overspend for Council as reflected in the 2021/22 budget. Last year the projected budget had higher overspending, but it was underspent because of the uncertainties involved in projecting the budget.
- In regard to the Council's underspend performance, where the Council position was set for over-spend in the budget last year. Members were advised that the financial monitoring was not robust last year, and a financial moratorium was put in place to strengthen the Council's position. Furthermore, there was the Government's extra funding in regard to Covid19, which partly helped the Council's position to underspend.
- In regard to the farmers' tenancies, the Leader of the Council advised Members that all Council tenancies where they have the right to renew would be honoured. However, the Council had a duty to the best value for money and would strive to achieve it.
- Members queried how the Council could ensure it was getting the best value for money from its in-house contractors. The Leader of the Council advised Members that the Council was currently reviewing all in-house contractors to ensure the Council was getting value for money.
- Members were advised that the Council's leadership structure had been unanimously agreed upon, including the Director for Place and Economy, Commercial Director for new assets, and expected to appoint the Director for Legal and Governance. He explained that the Council had worked closely with the Local Government Association (LGA).

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to review the first report of the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel and agreed with the actions and progress being made with the delivery of the Improvement Plan.

15. PORTFOLIO HOLDER PROGRESS REPORT

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the Leaders portfolio, which covered areas within the remit of this Committee. Also in attendance to support the Leader was Cllr Sainsbury, Cabinet Adviser to the Leader, Chief Executive Opportunity Peterborough, Assistant Director, Growth & Regeneration, Assistant Director of Customer & Digital Services, Assistant Director, Growth & Regeneration and Assistant Director HR and Development.

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report, and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members queried about the Towns Fund projects, whether the Culture Centre and the Community Hub in the Town Centre between them would cover Youth activities, or if the Council was still going ahead with the Youth Centre. In response to the question, the Leader of the Council advised Members that the Youth Centre project would go ahead, which could require a new build, and this would be entirely grant-funded apart from some revenue-funded contribution from the Council.
- Members raised concerns over the local bus services where the local bus company had cut services to bus routes. Members were advised that the Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough held the responsibility for Transport and Highways for Peterborough, and the Council did not have any jurisdiction over a private bus company. However, the Leader of the Council explained that he would convey the views of this Committee and the public to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- In regard to the contaminated land found in MiddleHolme, the Assistant Director, Growth & Regeneration, confirmed that it was not a public health issue at this stage, and the Council had received £550,000 in grants to undertake remediation work.
- Members queried the Council's approach to digitalisation towards a cloud-based system and whether the Council was getting a good value for money. The Assistant Director for Customer and Digital Services advised that the Council had a robust procurement process for any contract, including any digital procurement services.
- Members queried about the Levelling Up fund bid that the Council had submitted and whether there were alternative fund arrangements for the Peterborough Train Station enhancement if the bid was unsuccessful. Members were advised that the redevelopment of the Peterborough Train Station would create a new western entrance to the station with a car park and double-sided station, with a new wider footbridge over the train lines. This would also make it safer to travel around the City by bicycle. The Council would wait for the outcome of the bid to assess its options.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to consider and scrutinise the report and endorse the approach being taken under the portfolio of the Leader of the Council relevant to this Committee.

16. SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ANTI-POVERTY ACTIVITY, INCLUDING HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

The report was introduced by the Head of Service Think Communities, which provided the Committee with an update on the latest national and local context of the Social Mobility and Anti-Poverty agenda.

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report, and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members queried whether the data provided in the report was old information and that some changes had been made since 2018. The Head of Think Communities advised Members that Opportunity Peterborough produced an economic report which provided information about the local context. It captured local insight from national data sets that were pertinent to the local economy, growth, and social mobility. He explained that there was a two-step approach to this, first to get the Household Support Fund to mitigate the anti-poverty and move forward to Social Mobility.
- Member sought information on the delivery approach, including the feasibility of a mobile office in rural areas. Members were informed that the feasibility of the mobile hubs in the rural areas would be based on the impact of how the Household Support Fund would be piloted in the next six months.
- Members sought information about the massive jump in the number of referrals for the Good Neighbours and how quickly this would be communicated and implemented. Members were informed that a proposal would be sent out to find out people who would be interested in being a delivery partners for the Household Support Fund. In terms of communication, the Council was working closely with the Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS) and held a cost-of-living summit with them. The Council and the PCVS agreed that the forum was an appropriate place to publicise information.
- Members requested a briefing note from the Head of Think Communities regarding the steps the Department of Education/Council had taken to address the City's below-average performance in education.
- In regards to developing a resilient society, the Head of Think Communities advised Members that he was working closely with young people to build resilience in their personal development by providing them with opportunities. He explained that organisations such as the Safer Peterborough Partnership group, which also provided mental health care joined support with other similar organisations to help young people to make a positive transition into adulthood.
- The Head of Think Communities advised Members that he would work with partners to facilitate the Household Support Fund.
- Members were advised that Peterborough was on a journey that would bring growth to the City because the City was a logistic triangle, and it would create opportunities for jobs. He explained that the Council would work closely with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and other similar organisations that influenced the skills development.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to review, scrutinise and comment upon the information provided in the report and endorse the proposals as set out in section 4.1.6 (Social Mobility), and 4.2.4 (Anti-Poverty).

17. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Senior Democratic Officer introduced the report, which included the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

- There were no points raised.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to consider the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

18. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023

The Senior Democratic Services introduced the item which gave Members the opportunity to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2022/23 and discuss possible items for inclusion.

No further items were put forward at the meeting for inclusion.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the work programme for 2022/23.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committee was noted as being on 11 October 2022.

The next meeting of the Committee was noted as being the 1 November 2022.

CHAIR

Meeting began at 7:00 pm and ended at 8:45 pm