

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING
HELD WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY 2023
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

THE MAYOR – COUNCILLOR DOWSON

Present:

Councillors Ansar Ali, Imtiaz Ali, Jackie Allen, Steve Allen, Ayres, Barkham, Bi, Bisby, Andrew Bond, Sandra Bond, Burbage, Casey, Cereste, Coles, Day, Dowson, Elsey, Mohammed Farooq, Saqib Farooq, Fenner, Fitzgerald, John Fox, Judy Fox, Harper, Haseeb, Hemraj, Hiller, Hogg, Howard, Hussain, Iqbal, Jamil, Alison Jones, Dennis Jones, Lane, Moyo, Gul Nawaz, Shaz Nawaz, Perkins, Qayyum, Rangzeb, Ray, Robinson, Rush, Sabir, Sainsbury, Sandford, Seager, Shaheed, Sharp, Simons, Skibsted, Stevenson, Tyler, Warren, Wiggin, Yurgutene

A vote was taken and Council **RESOLVED** (unanimous with no Members indicating to vote against or abstain) to suspend standing order 2.1 (8), 2.1 (14), 18 and 19 for the duration of the meeting, therefore suspending the right for Members to ask questions on notice and to submit motions on notice.

93. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Yasin, Councillor Over, and Councillor Knight.

94. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

95. Minutes of the meetings held on 25 January 2023

The minutes of the special Council meeting held on 7 December 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

COMMUNICATIONS

96. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised of the following civic engagements:

- The Mayor attended celebrations for Michael Kickaj and colleagues to recognise 45 years of service at Westcombe Engineering.
- The Mayor hosted one in a series of the Mayor's Open Days to provide an opportunity for people to visit the Town Hall.
- The Deputy Mayor attend the Annual Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration and the Katherine of Aragon Service.

- The Mayoral Party attended a vigil in Cathedral Square in support of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.
- The Mayoral Party also attended the Quakers Snowdrop Day, at which over £300 was raised.

The Mayor further advised of the following upcoming events:

- Curry Evening on 28 February 2023.
- Finale Bash at Milton Golf Club on 20 May 2023

The Mayor then thanked Councillor Shaz Nawaz, who was attending the meeting for the final time in his capacity as leader of the Labour Group.

97. Leader's Announcements

The Leader made a number of announcements on the following areas:

- Thank you to everyone who attended the vigil for those affected by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.
- The Council had been shortlisted for Most Improved Council and Local Government Chronicle Awards.
- The Leader was due to write to Lee Rowley MP to confirm the progress made following the Improvement Panel's second report and the outcome of tonight's meeting.
- A recent visit had taken place from the Under Secretary of State for Primary Care and Public Health at the First Steps and Children and Family Centre on Welland Road.
- Peterborough had been awarded £3 million and was now developing three Family Hubs in "high need" areas of the city.
- The Council had successfully bid for £81 million across the past year to spend on growth projects in the city.
- It was confirmed that the Council would also receive £600,000 to support those with drug and alcohol problems, including people who were experiencing homelessness.
- A spring clean was to take place across the city, with further details to be announced in the next few weeks.
- Friday 24 February 2023 was the one-year anniversary of the start of the war in the Ukraine and a minute's silence was taking place at 11am. A vigil would also take place in Cathedral Square at 5pm.
- Since March 2022 individuals from Peterborough had been working with Ukrainian refugees in Gliwice, southern Poland, and were soon to set off on their eighth trip to deliver food, warm clothes, and medicine.
- The public were invited to make donations and collection points set out on the Council's website.

Group Leaders responded and raised the following points:

- Councillor Shaz Nawaz thanked Members for their words and let Members know that it had been a pleasure working with them across the board.
- Thanks were given to all those who had worked to on the earthquake relief support efforts and the Ukrainian vigil.
- Members were pleased to hear about the Council's recognition as a shortlisted Council for the 'Most Improved' award.

- Positive comments were made in relation to the funding awarded to the Council in various areas, though it was noted that central Government funding had been significantly reduced over the years.
- The spring clean announcement was welcomed, with comment made that the city should be maintained all year round.
- It was noted that no announcement had been made in relation to the provision of disabled car parking spaces at the regional pool before the car park was closed, and it was hoped that this would be delivered upon.

QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

98. Questions from Members of the Public

One question was received from members of the public in respect of the following:

1. Sale of EG1 licence plate.
2. Tackling fly tipping.
3. Bus service precept and funding.
4. Divestment of pension funds from fossil fuels.
5. New bus depot.
6. Fly tipping by Highways England.

The questions and responses are attached in **APPENDIX A** to these minutes.

7. Petitions

(a) Presented by Members of the Public

There were no petitions presented by Members of the public at the meeting.

(b) Presented by Members

There were no petitions presented by Members at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS

8. Executive and Committee Recommendations to Council

8(a). Cabinet Recommendation – Final Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-2026

Council received a report from Cabinet in relation to the final Budget for 2023 to 2024 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023 to 2026.

Councillor Coles moved the recommendation and advised that the Council was in the final stage of an extraordinary journey to balance the budget for 2023 to 2024 and to approve the MTFS. All those involved were commended, including CLT and officers who had worked hard to achieve this. This also extended towards all parties and, specifically, those members of the Financial Sustainability Working Group (FSWG), who had met monthly and worked collaboratively to challenge and play a vital role on the budget process. The budget was a collective document that included propositions from opposition groups. It was noted that the global COVID-19 pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine, the cost of living crisis and the high demand for Council services had put significant pressures on the Council. In spite of this the Council had continued to provide

quality services.

The focus on the budget was on managing inflation, controlling spending and managing demand. A key focus for change had been on service transformation and this would allow for support in the coming year via community hubs and developing plans to increase homes and jobs, and transforming the use of the Council assets. This, it was advised, could not be achieved with the 4.99% increase in Council Tax. The Council was now in a better position, but risks still remained for all local authorities around inflation, demand and uncertain funding.

Feedback had been received from more than two-hundred residents via the budget simulator and the budget consultation. These had been taken into consideration, alongside comments for the joint meeting of scrutiny committees and it was hoped that this could be built on in the future.

Councillor Fitzgerald seconded the recommendation and reserved his right to speak.

Council debated the recommendation and the summary of the points raised by Members included:

- Members expressed their thanks to officers for helping to draw together a budget that covered not just the coming year, but planned for the mid-term as well.
- It was acknowledged that there was still work to do on the Council's finances and Members were hopeful that the collaborative approach and openness to opposition group ideas would continue.
- It was noted that there were still some areas of the budget that were felt to be lacking, such as walking and cycling provision, a new pool provision, and recognition of the climate change challenge.
- Comment was made that the increase in Council Tax was a reduction for the Council in real terms and that not increasing would mean a cut to Council services.
- It was noted that the Government had reduced funding to local government significantly in the past 10 years.
- The changes made to governance and culture were welcomed.
- The Council Tax Hardship Fund was highlighted in line with the increase in Council Tax, which was accessible to those who were in most need of help.
- It was felt important to acknowledge that the budget presented to Council was cross party and comment was made that all groups should be supporting if Members truly wanted to avoid Government intervention, particularly in light of the Council voting against four-yearly elections when it had the chance.
- The Council had been open and honest about the challenges facing it.
- While many decisions had been made by the administration, it was important to recognise that opposition groups have been involved in the process.
- It was felt that with this budget the Council was in a much better position than it had been last year, though it was suggested that the collaborative arrangements, such as the FSWG, had only been put in place following the suggestion of the Improvement Panel.
- Comment was made in relation to the Council giving its employees a 3% pay rise, while increasing Council Tax by 4.99%, which gave the impression the Council was not supporting its own employees and should be considered going forward.
- It was hoped that, with procurement and property services coming back in-house, out-sourcing of Council services wasn't to be continued.
- It was felt that quarterly review of the MTFs was vital to monitor the Council's direction of travel.

- It was noted that some of the responses to the Council consultation provided some good insight and it was hoped that these were taken on board.
- Comment was made that the issues facing the Council had not gone away and that work was still needed to achieve a sustainable budget and to continue to work in a cross-party manner.
- The Council's preparedness and key assumptions were questioned, as well as anticipated issues with recruitment and retention, and rising adult social care costs.
- A view was provided that ideas presented to the FSWG were not fully incorporated into the budget.
- It was felt that the establishment of the FSWG removed the argument that opposition groups did not have the relevant expertise to contribute to the budget discussions.
- Concerns were raised in relation to raising Council Tax and Business Rates, as many Peterborough residents were already relying on foodbanks and struggling with the cost of living crisis.
- It was suggested that some residents felt as if the Council had let them down, particularly in relation to fly tipping, littering, anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping. It was hoped that this could be improved upon in the future.
- It was commented that the Council had come a long way in a short space of time and was much more focused on achieving sustainability.
- The strengthening of the Audit Committee function had been welcomed.
- Comment was made that it was unfair to have had funding cut from central Government, for the Council to be always bidding for specific pots of funding, and then to be threatened with intervention.
- While it was agreed that the FSWG forum had seen great improvement, suggestion was made that if the Council moved towards a committee structure rather than an executive and leader model, then such discussions could be held in public.
- Members were pleased to now have Corporate Strategy in place with clear plans in place, but sought clarification on what targets were to be achieved when.
- The work of the Section 151 Officer was commended in transforming the culture and way in which the Council operated.
- Comment was made that the Council's revenue support grant had been cut by £43 million, which would bankrupt many organisations.
- It was suggested that further work be done to improve skills in the area, as well as the use of AI and robotics, in order to support the city's economy.
- Further comment was made that no budget would be 100% supported and that opposition groups abstaining was a sign of progress.
- Members commended the work of the past year and the collaborative approach to the budget, however, suggested that without a financial crisis befalling the Council, and the establishment of an Improvement Panel, that such measures may not have been taken.

As a second of the recommendation, Councillor Fitzgerald advised that he was pleased to listen to a debate take place in friendly, non-adversarial terms. It was noted that the FSWG had been in place for a number of years. Suggestion was made that, while nobody wanted to raise Council Tax, if the Council didn't, it would also be subject to criticism. A sincere thanks was made to group leaders and members of the FSWG for a truly collaborative approach to the budget. It was felt that all had been listened to and proposals taken forward, and, if unable to, good reason had been provided. Thanks was also passed on to the Section 151 Officer, the Chief Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team who had worked with all departments to turn the Council's financial position around.

It was noted that the Council was in the top ten in the country for housing delivery, including social housing. Comment was made that the budget was the Council's responsibility and not any one party's. It was felt that outsourcing of service had been good practice in the past and had provided success, but needed to be re-examined now to ensure that arrangements were fit for purpose. It was hoped that the collaborative arrangements established this year could continue in the years to come.

As mover of the recommendation, Councillor Coles summed up, and recalled the previous year's tactical budget. That meeting of Full Council had been challenged and the issues were urgent. Now, however, the Council had a well-established and well-recognised system in the FSWG to discuss and work through issues. The debate these evening had been very different to last year, with Members expressing different views, but, around important matters and looking after residents, the decisions of the Council were for the benefit of residents. The increase in Council Tax was needed to meet the demand of future years. The budget presented to Members was good and projected forward towards a sustainable Council.

A recorded vote was taken on the recommendation and Council **RESOLVED** (33 voted in favour, 1 voted against, and 23 abstained from voting) to approve:

1. The final Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/26 outlined in Appendix A- Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/2026 Final Settlement, which includes the key financial assumptions, strategic direction, and estimated budget gaps in future years.
2. The proposed Final Budget for 2023/24, outlined in Appendix B- Revenue & Capital Budget 2023/24 Final Settlement which includes:
 - a. Funding and Council Tax Summary, which includes a proposed Council Tax increase of 4.99% in 2023/24 and 2024/25.
 - b. Detailed Revenue budgets and proposal detail
 - c. Detailed Capital Budget (Programme)
 - d. Section 25 robustness statement
3. The feedback from the budget consultation summarised in section 4 of this report and outlined in Appendix C- Budget Consultation Feedback
4. The Reserves commitments outlined in section 2 of the draft budget report and the Reserves Strategy and Policy outlined in Appendix D- Reserves Strategy & Policy which sets the future direction of travel and planned use of reserves.
5. The Equality Impact Assessments outlined in Appendix E- Equality Impact Assessments, which have been completed for all major budget proposals
6. The Carbon Impact Assessments outlined in Appendix F- Carbon Impact Assessments, which have been completed for all major budget proposals
7. The Treasury Management Strategy outlined in Appendix G- Treasury Management Strategy, which has the fundamental roles of managing external investments, outlining the Prudential Indicators, ensuring debt is prudent and economic, and that decisions comply with regulations.
8. The Capital and Investment Strategy outlined in Appendix H- Capital and Investment Strategy 2022-25, which manages its assets and investment resources to help achieve the strategic priorities of the Council.

9. The proposed Schools Budget as set out in Appendix I- The Schools Budget 2023/24
10. The outline Asset Management Plan (AMP) as set out in Appendix J- Asset Management Plan, which sets out principles for managing the Councils assets in the most efficient and effective manner and the direction of travel for future years while a more detailed and refreshed AMP is developed.
11. The Council Tax Resolution, setting out the Council Tax requirement and precepts including those from the Parish Councils, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (new for 2023/24) is outlined in Appendix K- Council Tax Resolution 2023/24 Final Settlement.
12. The Budget Virement Rules Appendix L- Budget Virement rules which sets out the financial approval limits for transferring budgets between different cost codes and directorates.
13. Community Leadership Fund policy for 2023/24 as outlined in Appendix M- Community Leadership Fund, which outlines revised spending criteria and an allocation per Councillor of £3,000, (£180,000 in total).
14. The Councils response to the Budget Consultation feedback received from residents, businesses, and community groups, as set out in Appendix N- Response to the Budget Consultation

9. Questions on the Executive Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting

Cllr Fitzgerald introduced the report which outlined the record of Executive decisions made since the last meeting.

Members asked questions on the following Executive Decisions.

Electricity Contract Renewal: 1 October 2024 – 30 September 2028

In response to a question from Councillor Hogg, Councillor Coles advised that not all the energy provided from the contract was green, though some of it was, as there were a number of providers involved.

In response to a question from Councillor Sandford, Councillor Coles advised that the key issue around greener energy tariff in general, as well as specifically for the Council, was cost. A solely green tariff would represent a significant price increase.

Shared Prosperity Funding

In response to a question from Councillor Imtiaz Ali, Councillor Fitzgerald advised that he would provide full details of the breakdown of budget allocation for the regeneration of Lincoln Road, and how this related to the Millfield area.

In response to a question from Councillor Hemraj, Councillor Fitzgerald advised that the subject of the £5,000 towards fly tipping had been discussed at Cabinet and that Councillors would provide the full detail in writing.

10. Questions on the Combined Authority Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting

The Mayor introduced the report which outlined the record of Combined Authority decisions made since the last meeting.

There were no questions on Combined Authority decisions made since the last meeting.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

11. REPORTS TO COUNCIL

11(a) Appeals and Planning Review Committee Chair and Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee Vice-Chair

Council received a report from Cabinet in relation to the appointment of chair to the Appeals and Planning Review Committee and the appointment of vice-chair to the Health Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Shaz Nawaz moved the recommendation and advised that following the resignation of Councillor Ansar Ali from the Labour Group, Councillor Alison Jones and Councillor Qayyum were recommended for the positions of chair to the Appeals and Planning Review Committee and vice-chair to the Health Scrutiny Committee respectively. It was noted that neither of these positions attracted a special responsibility allowance.

Councillor Jones seconded the recommendation.

A vote was taken on the recommendation and Council **RESOLVED** (unanimous with no Members indicating to vote against or abstain) to:

1. Appoint Councillor Alison Jones as the Chair of the Appeals and Planning Review Committee, for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.
2. Appoint Councillor Qayyum as the Vice-Chair of the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee, for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

11(b) Polling Districts, Places and Stations 2023

Council received a report from Cabinet in relation to polling districts, places and stations for 2023.

Councillor Coles moved the recommendation and advised that further information could be found in the additional information pack, updating the address of the former St. George's Hydrotherapy Pool site.

Councillor Steve Allen seconded the recommendation and reserved his right to speak.

Council debated the recommendation and the summary of the points raised by Members included:

- Comment was made that the former Hydrotherapy Pool address would likely not be recognised by a large number of residents and it was suggested that 'formerly known as St George's Hydrotherapy Pool' be included so that the site could be recognised.

A vote was taken on the recommendation and Council **RESOLVED** (unanimous with no Members indicating to vote against or abstain) to approve the following changes to polling districts, places and stations for elections taking place in 2023 as follows:

1. Eye Youth & Community Centre, Crowland Road, Eye Village to be assigned as the dedicated polling station for the EYE2 (Eye, Thorney & Newborough Ward) Polling District replacing House of Feasts, Crowland Road, Eye Green.
2. 367 (formerly known as St George's Community Hydrotherapy Pool), Dogsthorpe Road to be assigned as the dedicated polling station for the PAR2 (Park Ward) Polling District replacing Elm Tree Tavern, Garton End Road.

The Mayor
6.00pm – 8.19pm
22 February 2023

**FULL COUNCIL 22 FEBRUARY 2023
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Questions were received under the following categories:

<u>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</u>	
<u>Questions from members of the public</u>	
1.	<p>Question from Mark Simlo</p> <p>Councillor Fitzgerald, Leader of the Council</p> <p>Regarding the EG1 index plate assigned to the Mayor's car.</p> <p>Please could I ask for an explanation as to what benefits to the taxpaying residents of Peterborough would be lost if it were to be sold in these tough economic times?</p> <p>Mr Simlo was not in attendance, but the Leader of the Council was happy to answer the question at the discretion of the Mayor.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member responded:</p> <p>I was so looking forward to this as I have had to wait two months for this question. Anyway, so Mr Simlo if you are watching or I'm sure you'll watch this back. This was a matter discussed at length by the way by every member of the cross-party working group on finance. But my response would be this historically significant number plate, which is the EG1, being the first issued for Peterborough.</p> <p>We did have it valued actually in cash terms about £38,500 from an independent broker. That valuation was requested by members of that cross-party FSWG Working Group, who also requested other valuable assets to be put to the test, but it was agreed at the time that the cross-party working group thought it not in the best interest of the Council to sell what is a piece of history. Just the same as the mace in front of you Mr Mayor or the chains you are wearing or the Deputy Mayor, or the Deputy Mayoress or the Mayoress. So, these things are part of the city's history, do we go into the museum and strip the walls of paintings and other historical artifacts. I don't think we're quite there yet cause they can never be replaced. So, I was anticipating a follow up so I'm including some other remarks in the follow up which is non-existent but those are the comments I expected. But happy to always, we should keep all options available about Council assets whether they be buildings, items, chattels whatever we want to call them and as long as we're mindful of that. But at the moment that's the answer I have given tonight for Council Mr Mayor. And I hope the questioner, person putting the question will be satisfied with that answer. Thank you.</p>
2.	<p>Question from Mr M Handford</p> <p>Councillor Simons, Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment</p> <p>Thank you. Yes, my question is Flytipping in this City is on the increase with the number of incidents and the cost to the taxpayer rapidly increasing. What plan does the Council have to tackle this problem that is turning Peterborough into a fly tipping capital?</p>

	<p>The Cabinet Member responded:</p> <p>Thank you, Mr Mayor, and thank you Mr Handford for your question.</p> <p>This council is totally committed to reducing fly tipping. What are we doing you ask Mr Handford.</p> <p>We have funding for 5 waste education officers, although this will require full council approval. We are investing in surveillance cameras with good success and Prosecutions. We have recently started to name and shame these successful prosecutions. Thank you, Matt Gladstone and Adrian Chapman, for supporting this action. This will be an ongoing policy.</p> <p>We are reviewing our HRC, although I believe is an excellent facility. There is room for improvement. We are also working with an independent enforcement company; this is at no cost to PCC. We are in discussions with this company to increase their activities. We also recently provided farmers with concrete blocks to help protect vulnerable areas. Rest assured we take this matter very seriously. Every resident is also a potential surveillance officer, witness a fly tip. Use your phone and report it to us. We will investigate and prosecute as appropriate. Thank you.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Mr M Handford</p> <p>Councillor Simons, Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment</p> <p>My second question is along a small section of road near me which is confirmed as being Council responsibility there are at least forty plus abandoned items including large metal A frames, sandbags, cones, old diversion signs etc discarded by Highways England months and some even years ago. They are prolific offenders in our city for not collecting and cleaning up after works are completed.</p> <p>Will the council take action against Highways England to fine them the same as it says it will do for the public and commercial flytipping?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member responded:</p> <p>This is the latter question in the list that Mr Handford has brought forward. I'm happy to answer it, it's a question he was going to ask at a later item.</p> <p>Thank you, Mr Handford, for your second question.</p> <p>Highways England have assured me they are looking into this ongoing issue, and I do agree with you it's a problem.</p> <p>Is it appropriate to take action against Highways England for discarded road signs, I believe it is not. I do believe that we all need to work together and get the situation sorted.</p> <p>The Spring Clean has just been announced, I plan to clear that section of road using some of that money and we will be collecting all those signs. I do agree it's unacceptable we need to work closely with Highways England so in the future this doesn't happen. Thank you.</p>

4.	<p>Mr Knight was not present at the meeting and at the Mayor's discretion the Cabinet Member did not answer the question at the meeting. The answer would be provided in writing to Mr Knight.</p> <p>Question from Steven Knight</p> <p>Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning, Housing and Transport</p> <p>How much has Peterborough City Council set aside to pay for supported bus services in 2023/24 and how much of that will be provided through income from the Combined Authority's Mayoral Bus Service Precept? Will monies raised through this Bus Services Precept by Peterborough City Council be 'ring fenced' and limited in use for Peterborough City Council supported services only or be handed over for general use by the Combined Authority?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member responded in writing:</p> <p>Peterborough City Council is responsible for paying a levy to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) each year to support Passenger Transport services which is separate from the new Mayoral Precept. The budget that has been allocated for the levy in 2023/24 is £3,615,714 which represents a 2% increase on the previous year's budget.</p> <p>The new Mayoral Precept will be collected by Peterborough City Council as part of the Council Tax collection process, and this will be paid to the CPCA in ten instalments throughout the year. Just as council tax collected by PCC is not ringfenced to the ward within which it was collected there is no geographical restriction on council tax collected on behalf of the Combined Authority.</p> <p>As set out in the Combined Authority's budget, the funds raised from the Mayoral precept are being internally ringfenced to deliver passenger transport services across the region, not spent on 'general uses.'</p>
5.	<p>Question from Danette O'Hara</p> <p>Councillor Fitzgerald, Leader of the Council/Coles, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Governance</p> <p>Cllr Cereste started each of the climate debates at the end of last year claiming that we, as a city, need to act now, and we need to make changes to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. One of the most impactful changes we can make is to ensure our pensions are invested for the betterment of the planet and our environment, rather than profit at the expense of it. In fact, it has been reported that having a greener pension is 21 times more effective at cutting your carbon footprint than changing energy provider, stopping flying and going veggie combined.</p> <p>Towards the end of last year, Cllr Day of the Green Party, with support from Cllr Wiggins of the Lib Dems, put forward a motion calling on the Cambridgeshire pension fund to divest from fossil fuels. Cllr Coles of the Conservative Party prevented this from happening when he pushed for a number of amendments; namely, removing any reference to divestment.</p> <p>At last count, the Cambridgeshire pension fund had approximately 80 million pounds of direct investment in the fossil fuel industry. If the City Council is serious about enacting change, they should join others, such as Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, and pass a motion in support of divestment of the</p>

pension fund. Cllr Fitzgerald, will you as the Leader of the local Conservative Party, call for full divestment from fossil fuels for the Cambridgeshire County Council Pension fund, and urge your colleague Cllr Coles, in his position on the committee, to advocate for divestment at committee meetings?

Point of Order raised by Councillor Hogg.

I'm just a bit confused that Mr Simlo's question was answered by the Leader, and he wasn't in attendance and yet you're saying that Mr Knight's question is not to be answered. I'm trying to understand and ascertain what the difference between the two residents are that one gets one type of service, and one gets a different type of service

The Monitoring Officer responded:

Thank you, Councillor Hogg. So, the questioner isn't in attendance, so within 16.7 of our constitution, the Mayor has discretion not to answer the question and for the question not to be asked or answered. That's within the scope of the Mayor's discretion and that's on 16.7 of the constitution. Nothing's wrong but it's the Mayor's discretion, in the first there was an answer prepared and the Mayors used his discretion for the answer to be given.

Councillor Hogg:

All I'm asking for is a bit of consistency. You know, we've got a member of the public who's put a question in to Council and I think that he deserves the same rights that the previous questioner has asked. I would presume that the questions had been prepared for his as well.

The Monitoring Officer responded:

In response, it is at the Mayor's discretion and Councillor Cereste was given the opportunity to response and he asked the Mayor what the Mayor wanted to do, if I recall correctly.

The Cabinet Member responded:

Thank you very much Mr Mayor. Just for the assurances of probably Members, I'm sure the questioner will get the questions answered in writing. In my case, I offered to answer the question and the Mayor allowed it.

Thank you and sorry for pausing Ms O'Hara there for a moment.

By the way I'm the Leader of the Council, I'm not the Leader of the Conservative Party in here and I can't do anything other than Leader of the Council in terms of making decisions for the Council and that's what we all do. There is a difference between what you're asking me as an individual to do. As the Leader of the Council, I can do things, the politics we try to keep out as such.

But what I would say to you, and I'm pleased you're asking me to answer, I thought you might want to hear more of me as its actually my colleague Councillor Coles portfolio but I'm happy to answer the best I can for you.

So, Cllr Cereste started each of the climate debates as you quite rightly say last year because we're taking it very very seriously. We're putting a lot of effort into this.

But the Pensions Committee have in place already a Responsible Investment (RI) Policy that is the culmination of over a year of deliberation and has been the subject to consultation with each scheme employer in the Fund and tens of thousands of scheme members.

The RI Policy is suitably ambitious, lending support to the Paris Agreement, support for a 'just transition' to a low carbon economy that ensures fair treatment for employees and communities that otherwise would bear the brunt of industrial change and includes the setting of a net zero target. The Policy would lead to significant decarbonisation of the Fund and significant improvements in climate and stewardship reporting. The Fund is taking a lead role in working alongside other Funds in the ACCESS Pool, where the majority of the Fund's assets are held, to ensure these RI ambitions can be met.

In early 22 the Committee agreed plans to decarbonise the Fund's portfolio and the plans are aligned to an appropriate transition pathway and have clearly expressed carbon reduction targets as milestones.

The Committee's fiduciary responsibility means that the primary purpose of such an action is to manage the climate and carbon risk within the Fund's holdings. However, the Committee believes that keeping a global temperature rise this century to well below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels is entirely consistent with securing strong financial returns.

The Committee's approach is one of engagement over blanket divestment of any sector or region. This is entirely consistent with the Paris Agreement and a 'just transition', as even the most ambitious transition pathways require a fuel mix that includes oil and gas decades into the future.

The Fund expects each of its investment managers to appropriately manage environmental, social and governance risks alongside financial risks, and constructively engage with the investee companies on any issues identified. Should these issues not be addressed satisfactorily, selling or divesting from the individual stock remains an option.

Transition to a low carbon economy will not be achieved by simply divesting from fossil fuel companies, which may have limited real world impact. Our appointed investment managers also seek opportunities to support the green transition, for example, by investing and engaging with companies to influence change that will make a difference.

For example, Ørsted, is a company invested in by one of our active managers when it was a "black" energy company and which they have supported through its transition to leading pure play renewable energy company, and now forms part of a sustainable portfolio.

A simple divestment approach would hinder the ability for such portfolio transition to take place and may simply place such companies in the ownership of asset owners who do not act in the same responsible manner as the Cambridgeshire Pension Fund. Thank you, Mr Mayor and sorry for quite the lengthy answer.

Supplementary Question:

The response used to be engagement and in part it still is, which doesn't work. This was over 4 years ago when I sat in this chamber calling for divestment. At that time,

the average investment from fossil fuel companies overall into renewable stood at about 5%. That figure is not much different today. This clearly shows that engagement doesn't work as I pointed out four years ago. This new response from the Committee has been its response for more than a year now, and still the amount it invests in fossil fuels is in the millions. It is widely known that if we as a society are serious about tackling the climate crisis, we need to move away from fossil fuels. In doing so there is a major risk of the investments in fossil fuels becoming stranded assets meaning the value of our pensions is greatly diminished. What assurances can you give that my pension along with every PCC employee and many others across the county will not still be invested in fossil fuels to the tunes of tens of millions in years to come?

The Cabinet Member responded:

Mr Mayor, I can pick out the bones of what was the end of the statement rather than question.

All I can say, you ask me for some kind of commitment and all I'll say is that working with Councillor Day and others who feel passionately about climate change and many in the Liberal Democrat Group do as do many here this side and many in the Labour party.

We're all trying to do the best we can so if there are some issues that come forward through Councillor Day's committee for example, specific points that the Cabinet Member can take back to the board and fly the flag and fight the corner for what this Council feels and again I'm taking the politics out of it for you. It's not a Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat or Green. This is about what the Council wants to do, so all I can give you is an undertaking to keep having the dialogue and explore the options, but they will come through policy, through scrutiny and through members and members should query what is happening in the pension fund and whether or not what we're doing is appropriate. And there are sixty members in this Council that make those decisions. So that's my undertaking to give to you, that through our scrutiny system we should pose these questions, many of which you have raised tonight which are concerning. We agree but slowly slowly we can make change.

I hope that gives you some reassurance that we are taking it seriously. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

6. **Mr Knight was not present at the meeting and at the Mayor's discretion the Cabinet Member did not answer the question at the meeting. The answer would be provided in writing to Mr Knight.**

Question from Steven Knight

Councillor Cereste, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning, Housing and Transport

Mr Knight was not in attendance and at the Mayor's discretion it was agreed that the response would be provided in writing.

What is the City Council's strategy for a new Bus Depot for Peterborough? Does the City Council plan to own the land and infrastructure, which would any future bus franchising aspirations, and lease the site to a lead operator, or will the City Council expect an operator to fully own the land and depot infrastructure?

The Cabinet Member responded in writing:

Both Peterborough City Council and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) recognise that the size and location of the existing bus depot in Millfield constrains the city's potential to grow the local network and transition to a more sustainable fleet.

As such the CPCA, as the authority responsible for passenger transport services in the area, successfully secured a grant of £4m from Government to develop a new facility for the city and the Council is working very closely with the CPCA to develop and deliver this project.

At this stage we are not in a position to confirm how the depot might operate, from a lease or ownership perspective, but this will be fully considered and determined as part of the project, and we will keep Members informed as this progresses.