

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE  
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

**10 NOVEMBER 2010**

**Present:** Councillors Todd (Chairman), S Day, C Burton, Simons, Serluca, JR Fox and Goldspink

**Co-Opted Member:** Ansar Ali – Cambridgeshire Police Authority

**Also Present:**

Councillor Hiller	Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning
Councillor Eley	Cabinet Member for Business Engagement
Councillor Sandford	Representing the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Jocelyn Cunningham	Director of Creative Learning, Royal Society of Arts

**Officers in Attendance:**

Paul Phillipson	Executive Director - Operations
Adrian Chapman	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Julie Rivett	Neighbourhoods and Community Engagement Strategic Manager
Karen Kibblewhite	Community Safety & Substance Misuse Manager
Graeme Clark	Project Lead for Citizens Power: Peterborough
Paulina Ford	Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer
Amy Brown	Solicitor

**1. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Collins and Councillor Serluca was in attendance as substitute.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Item 5 – Portfolio Progress Report From Cabinet Members Relevant to the Committee

As the report had made reference to planning services Councillor Todd and Councillor Burton declared personal interests in that they were members of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2010**

The minutes of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 September 2010 were approved as an accurate record.

**4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions**

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

## 5. Portfolio Progress Report from Cabinet Members Relevant to the Committee

Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods & Planning and Councillor Eley, Cabinet Member for Business Engagement attended the meeting and spoke to the Committee about the progress that had been made on their relevant portfolios. The report had informed the Committee of updates in planning services, neighbourhood services and transport and engineering which came under the remit of Councillor Hiller and the Visitor Destination Centre, retail businesses, CCTV and recent events held across the city which fell under the remit of Councillor Eley.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- In relation to the A15/Junction 8 improvement works Councillor Hiller was asked to brief the Committee on what type of traffic lights would be put in place at the roundabout? *There would be a sequential set of traffic lights in place which would also link into the Garden Park traffic lights and would be tested prior to going live. The improvement works had increased the lanes at the junction from two to three and four lanes. There would also be a staggered pedestrian crossing to allow pedestrians from the Dogsthorpe area to travel safely to the Garden Park area.*
- Councillor Hiller was also asked for an update on the latest situation regarding the residents of Finchfield who had concerns about the noise coming from the junction? *A public meeting had been held and it was agreed that a noise barrier would be installed along the area of the road where it widened. Consultation with the residents was continuing.*
- There was mention in the budget report about replacing the traffic lights in Bright Street. It also mentioned switching lights off at night to save energy. Could Councillor Hiller comment on this and advise if these lights would be switched off at night. *Paul Phillips informed Members that the Bright Street traffic lights were one of the oldest sets of traffic lights in the city and would be replaced with sequential traffic lights. It was possible that the new style of lights would have provision to alter in the way they work. Switching the lights off would be a road safety issue as it would mean raising awareness to the public that they would not be on all the time and this would have to be looked into.*
- Members congratulated the Cabinet Member on the installation of the new signalised junction at the Morrison's Store. There had however been some concerns from a resident that the existing pedestrian crossing near to Morrison's was to be removed. *The Cabinet Member and Director of Operations were not aware of this and would find out and report back to the Committee.*
- Who would pay for the remedial work still to be completed on the A1073 Spalding to Eye Improvement Scheme? *The contractors Morgan Sindall were charged with handing over a road that was fit for purpose before it was signed off for use. The contractors would therefore pay for the work to be done.*
- The Care and Repair service would not be transferring over with the Lot 3 bid. Could the Cabinet Member give reasons why? *It was determined that the Care and Repair Service was a useful service to have in house. It was a profitable service and could be developed further.*
- Could the Cabinet Member give an update on the repatriation project for the homeless? *It had been very successful but there was still a need to be vigilant.*
- The Chair congratulated the officers involved on the project for their excellent work.
- Members had asked for details on the number of complaints received with regard to the level of service in the Planning Department and how many planning appeals had been received. *There had been 19 complaints made from April 2009 to March 2010 and 16 from April 2010 to October 2010. Councillor Hiller considered this to be low compared to other authorities of a similar size. There had been 52 appeals during 2009.*
- Members requested a further breakdown of how serious the planning complaints were. *Councillor Hiller advised that he would provide this and also how many appeals were upheld or overturned.*

- Members had asked for details on the footfall for the Visitor Destination Centre in comparison to the Tourist Information Centre:
  - Tourist Information Centre - November 2008 (4516 visitors) – October 2009 (5610 visitors)
  - Visitor Destination Centre - November 2009 (5016 visitors) – October 2010 (10,239 visitors)

The figures had shown a consistent increase in footfall since its opening in November 2009 and Members congratulated Councillor Elsey and the officers running the centre on its success.

- Had consideration been given to removing the CCTV cameras and had an assessment been completed on their cost and use? *Councillor Elsey informed members that work had been done on the success rate of crime prevention and apprehending criminals through the use of CCTV. Consideration was being given to replacing the cameras with cameras that transmitted wirelessly therefore reducing the costs by not using leased lines. Consideration was also being given to offering a competitive commercial service to a variety of different businesses with the view to becoming cost neutral. The CCTV service was a unique 24hours, 7 day a week service that offered a direct line to the police. There was a possibility of other services that could be offered and these were being looked into.*

#### **ACTIONS AGREED**

- (i) To note the current progress on the portfolios for Housing, Neighbourhoods & Planning and Business Engagement.
- (ii) That the Executive Director of Operations:
  1. Investigate if there are plans in place to remove the existing pedestrian crossing near to Morrison's and report back to the Committee via the Scrutiny Officer.
  2. Provide further detail on how serious the complaints were which had been received with regard to the level of service in the Planning Department and report back to the Committee via the Scrutiny Officer

#### **CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ITEM 6 ONLY**

##### **6. Designated Public Place Order (DPPO) – Proposed New Orders**

Karen Kibblewhite, the Community Safety & Substance Misuse Manager introduced the report. The report informed the Committee about six areas of the City which were being considered for Designated Public Places Orders (DPPO) with a proposal that four of the six orders go ahead. The six areas being considered had gone out to consultation to the Parish Councils, residents and relevant ward councillors.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Why was the Pyramid Centre, Bretton not being recommended for a DPPO? *The number of anti social behaviour incidents logged in that area was 76 but only five had been alcohol related. There was some additional work being done to tackle the anti social behaviour by other means.*
- Members noted that when consulting with residents groups in the areas being considered for DPPOs, only 8 out of the 10 groups consulted had responded. The Chair pointed out that a great deal of consultation had already taken place at the Neighbourhood Panel meetings and therefore residents may have felt that they had already given their views.
- How big was the problem of alcohol drinking in the city? *The officer informed Members that it was no more than any other comparable city.*

## RECOMMENDATION

To endorse the proposed Designated Public Places Orders for

- a. Church Drive, Orton Waterville
- b. Millfield and New England
- c. Dogsthorpe
- d. Eastfield Road

and to recommend their adoption to Full Council.

### 7. Citizens Power Programme – Arts and Social Change & Social Media Projects

Graeme Clark and Jocelyn Cunningham, Director of Creative Learning from Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and the RSA lead on the arts and social change strand, presented the report. Citizens Power was an initial two year funded programme looking to bring people together to shape the future of the City and build connections between people and the places where they lived. There were seven strands which looked at new ways in which people could be supported and encouraged to make a positive difference within their communities.

Arts and Social Change looked at the way creative arts could develop a sense of belonging and pride within the City of Peterborough. It would support local people and key figures to understand the needs and build joint aspirations. ideas and solutions to tackle the challenges the City faced today. This was the biggest strand and covered five elements.

Social media was about developing an online platform which would connect different people from different communities and improve community participation. The long term goal was to have a network of sustainable community websites that were owned and developed by local people.

Councillor Goldspink had submitted a list of questions prior to the meeting to obtain further information and a written response to these had been provided. Officers welcomed the questions and advised the Committee that the questions had enabled them to examine every component of the report.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members commented that the report was not detailed enough and not in plain English.
- A budget of £199,914 had been allocated to Peterborough Core and officers were asked to explain what Peterborough Core was. *Peterborough Core was about managing communications, attendance at meetings and bringing the seven strands together and provided the core funding to bring all these links together.*
- The officers were asked to explain in plain English what “to inform the processes employed across all aspects of Citizen Power in order to understand how arts interventions impact upon attachment, participation and innovation” meant. *The three underpinning ideas of Citizens Power related to improving levels of attachment and belonging to the City. Informing the process was saying that this kind of work, arts and creativity would inform all the ways of working that citizen’s power would have.*
- What was the process of selecting people to get involved in the projects and avoiding the usual suspects who were already engaged with the Council? *The ‘Take me to’ engagement project provided an open invitation to all people and it was hoped that people who would not normally get involved but did excellent community work would be identified or come forward.*
- What was the total cost of this project for Peterborough City Council? *The Council had committed £125,000 for each of the next two years for this project. The programme*

*would continue to evolve and may attract further funding but the Council's contribution would remain at £125,000 for each of the next two years.*

- In the current budgetary climate were officers convinced that this should be a priority? *In a time of extreme financial pressure the programme which was unique and would continue to evolve and would act as a bridge between the impact of that financial pressure and our communities. It would place Peterborough in the best position to help our communities face what was to come.*
- Members felt that community engagement had been tried through various projects like resident associations, action groups, and Neighbourhood Councils and there seemed to be a move from one project to another dependant on where the funding was.
- The project documentation for the Citizens Power Programme had not contained a Project Initiation Document which was a key and essential document. Members were advised that the City Council no longer deemed a PID to be an essential document but Members agreed that it was an important document and therefore should be prepared. Members agreed that a Project Initiation Document should be completed and brought back to the Committee for review at the next meeting in January. Councillor Goldspink having experience of project management volunteered to assist Graeme Clark in preparing the document.
- Peterborough was proud of its rich cultural diversity but the Citizens Power Programme did not seem to reflect this in its reports. *Experiments in place making, dialogue in action and curriculum work would have specific focus areas in cultural diversity.*
- In future reports could the connections with cultural diversity stand out and be made very clear? *Future reports would show the links more clearly.*
- With the agreement of the Chair, Kevin Roddis gave his views on the Programme. He commented on some work that had already been completed under the Citizens Power Programme specifically referring to the comments on the Citizens Power website and he felt that the comments being made did not encourage community cohesion or pride in Peterborough. He felt that the programme did not address the people of Peterborough and was not addressing the cohesion aspect. *Officers responded and advised that the programme was trying to look at what people really thought and what they really felt about where they lived. The website was for the people of Peterborough to talk about Peterborough and the comments on the website were meant to provoke and promote dialogue.*

## **ACTIONS**

The Committee agreed:

- I. That Councillor Goldspink would work with Graeme Clark to produce a Project Initiation Document for the Programme.
- II. That the Project Initiation Document for the Citizens Power Programme would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting in January.

## **8. Neighbourhood Councils – Progress Report**

Julie Rivett, Neighbourhoods and Community Engagement Strategic Manager introduced the report. The report informed the Committee of the progress made by the Neighbourhood Councils during their first year of operation, key issues which had been identified and suggestions for moving forward and addressing those issues. Julie Rivett corrected an error in the report with regard to the section on financial responsibility which should have stated that the Neighbourhood pool would be 35% and the Strategic Pool 65%.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Had officers considered going out to meet the public directly rather than asking them to come to meetings? It was suggested that meeting places could include pubs or that raising awareness could take place in such places as shopping centres and

supermarkets. *It was recognised that our engagement strategy needed to be much more user friendly. What also needed to be recognised were all the other things that happened in between the Neighbourhood Council meetings and our engagement that under pinned that. All suggestions would be welcomed.*

- Adrian Chapman informed Members that the meetings had been formulaic which meant less flexibility for creative ways of engaging. Outside of the meetings residents were being engaged through street surgeries and at other venues of their choice at convenient times to suit them. He invited the Scrutiny Committee to help develop neighbourhood councils in a way that would enable them to engage with people in a more flexible way.
- Councillor Sandford was concerned that the £25,000 allocated to each Neighbourhood Council was being reduced to zero and would instead be allocated from the planning obligations scheme. He felt that that would create a very hit and miss situation if a Neighbourhood Council happened to be in one of the more established areas of the city where they could end up getting very little funding compared to an area where there was a major housing development where there could be quite significant funding. He asked if any calculations had been carried out to show what the total amount of money going to each Neighbourhood Council would have been if this had been implemented 12 months ago and would it have been an increase on the £25,000 or a cut. *Calculations had not been made and going forward there would be a need to ensure best use of the money from planning obligations.*
- When Neighbourhood Councils were first introduced the proposal was that they would have significant decision making powers to enable them to make decisions which affected particular areas but this had not happened. They were also to be delegated with a significant amount from the revenue budget of the Council but as soon as there were financial difficulties the Council wanted to take the funding away. *Adrian Chapman felt that in the current economic difficulties the role of Neighbourhood Councils should be even more important. Adrian advised Members that he would like to carry out a full review of Neighbourhood Councils and to redraft their Terms of Reference to develop and strengthen their role and asked for the support of Scrutiny in that process.*
- Members felt that rather than cutting the frequency of Neighbourhood Council meetings there should be an increase. Cutting the number of meetings may destroy the concept of the Councils as people could lose interest if they were only held twice a year. *Adrian Chapman pointed out that the concept of cutting Neighbourhood Councils budgets and reducing the number of meetings were only proposals and that through consultation at this Committee, Council and through other mechanisms Members could put forward their views. He also urged Members to encourage their constituents to give their views.*
- Members requested a full review of Neighbourhood Councils to look at what they were trying to achieve, what vehicles already existed to do it, how they could work with those vehicles and what realistic decision making powers they could have. A small sub committee could be set up to complete a review. *Adrian Chapman looked forward to working with the Scrutiny Committee on a positive way forward to review and reform Neighbourhood Councils and through this review come back to the Committee with additional recommendations during the consultation period for the budget.*
- Julie Rivett advised Members that some recent work had been done with rural communities as Parish Councils had felt that Neighbourhood Councils were duplicating work that they had been doing for years. Workshops had been held with the Parish Councils which had resulted in a change of view and the setting up of a Rural Affairs working group. The working group had prepared a business case to put forward to the leader and cabinet with their proposals on new ways of working.
- Members asked if co-opted members could join the task and finish group. The Scrutiny Officer advised that co-opted members could join the group provided they did not exceed the number of Members on the group and that the group agreed to them joining.
- Councillor Goldspink informed the Committee of some points that someone had raised with him regarding Neighbourhood Councils. It had been noted that most of the Neighbourhood Council time was being taken up by presentations from officers, some Councillors were not attending meetings and not even sending their apologies and no-one had ever asked members of the public about the seating arrangements. Last year

meetings had been held before Christmas and had not been very well attended and yet meetings were being held at the same time this year. If there were to be fewer meetings the special responsibility allowance for the Chairs could be halved.

- Councillor Sandford felt that a more formal approach should be taken with regard to seating arrangements and that Councillors should sit as a committee with members of the public sitting separately. This would avoid confusion when voting took place and would demonstrate that they had real decision making power. However other members felt that the best format was to sit informally and with the public as this format promoted better engagement and interaction with the public.
- Some members felt that special responsibility payments should not be paid to the Chairs of the Neighbourhood Councils and by doing this it would save £109,000.

The Committee agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to review Neighbourhood Councils. The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that she would write to the Group Secretaries asking for nominations. Councillors Todd, Burton, Simons and JR Fox all put their names forward as nominations for the group. It was agreed that the first part of the review would look at the financial element to ensure that it was fed into the budget setting process by February. The full review would be completed by the end of this Municipal year.

## **ACTION**

The Committee agreed:

- i. To establish a task and finish group to review the processes and principles of the Neighbourhood Councils and to come forward with recommendations for their continued development.
- ii. That the review will examine all aspects of Neighbourhood Councils, including their funding, delegated responsibilities and logistical arrangements. The review will also look at how the meetings can be developed to meet the expectations of local residents.

## **9. Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and agreed that there were no items for further consideration.

## **10. Work Programme**

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2010/11 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

### **ACTION AGREED**

To confirm the work programme for 2010/11 and the Scrutiny Officer to make any amendments as discussed during the meeting.

- Citizens Power Programme Project Initiation Document to be added to the January agenda.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 19 January 2011

*The meeting began at 7.00 and ended at 8.55pm*

CHAIRMAN