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MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD 26 SEPTEMBER 2011

PRESENT

Cabinet Members: Councillor Cereste (chair), Councillor S Dalton, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Hiller, Councillor Holdich, Councillor Lee, Councillor Scott, Councillor Seaton and Councillor Walsh.

Youth MP: Kamal Hyman

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Dalton and Goodwin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 13 June 2011 were agreed and signed as an accurate record.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

4. OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING

Cabinet received a report providing details of the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding carried out in August 2011 and the agreed improvement activity. Councillor Scott advised members that initial investigation work had been undertaken and the scale of the challenge faced was now known. Councillor Scott acknowledged and thanked neighbouring authorities for their assistance.

Adrian Loades, the interim Executive Director of Children's Services, addressed Cabinet and advised that specialists from across the region were being brought in to assist with the work involved and highlighted needs such as recruiting more permanent staff and increasing the capacity of the teams involved.

Councillor Seaton requested that quarterly updates on progress were brought before Cabinet.

Councillor Scott committed to being more open and transparent and advised press statements would be issued for each stage of the improvement work. Thanks were passed to other council departments and officers and partners across Peterborough for their support for Children's Services and also for her.

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

1. Agree the planned improvement activity; and further resolved to

2. Agree to receive a quarterly report detailing the development of the longer term improvement plan that would have a particular focus on developing the capacity required for sustainable development.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

A core element of the Council's arrangements for safeguarding children had been identified as being inadequate by Ofsted. This finding required a response that would secure immediate improvement in the areas identified as failing and a longer term response to secure sustained improvement in the overall arrangements for safeguarding children in Peterborough. The findings of the Ofsted report and the themes identified through previous inspections necessitated the use of external capacity through the sector led model to support improvement activity.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The sector led approach is the primary means through which the Department for Education expects local authorities to be supported following adverse Ofsted inspections. It is unlikely that an alternative approach would receive support from the Department and would trigger more direct intervention. The scope of the improvement work reflects findings of the Ofsted inspection and an immediate analysis of the challenges facing the Council. The programme of work is sufficiently flexible to follow up additional issues as they are identified.

5. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2012/13 to 2016/17

Cabinet received a report as part of the council's agreed process for integrated finance and business planning. It continued the multi-year approach to budgeting to help plan for the financial challenges ahead. The plan would be extended to cover a ten year period so that the key challenges around delivering our priority of growth could be adequately captured. The drivers continued to meet the council's priorities by creating a sustainable budget strategy whilst responding to changes arising from decisions made in the distribution of local government funding.

Councillor Seaton advised Cabinet that the Council was in an excellent position to meet future budget challenges and service provision. The three main issues in the report were the current budget position, addressing the years ahead and major funding issues.

Cabinet was advised that savings were in the region of £28 million and rigorous monitoring of spending plans were taking place. The next financial plan would cover a 10 year period instead of 5 years. Other information highlighted was the changing legislation from central government including possible business rate retention, possible reduced overall funding and council tax legislation. Further to this, Cabinet was advised that the Council auditors, Price Waterhouse Coopers, had given the Council a clean bill of health following its submission of accounts.

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

1. Note the position in the current financial year and approve the actions to manage in year budgetary pressures that will ensure that the Council delivers a balanced budget position.
2. Note the current consultations on retaining business rates and localisation of council tax benefit and the implications on the Council's future settlements and medium term financial strategy (MTFS).

3. Approve plans to consult with Scrutiny and Stakeholders on the medium term financial strategy.
4. Approve the approach that is proposed for the budget process incorporating the MTFS.
5. Approve to move the planning horizon for the MTFS to a ten year view.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Constitution required Cabinet to outline its approach to developing the MTFS. This process helped to ensure that the Council achieved a balanced budget, aligned to corporate priorities.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option was to do nothing. This was rejected because:

1. The consultations would have a significant affect on council finances and it was important that PCC views were represented; and
2. The constitution requires us to outline our MTFS plans by the end of September – we would be in breach of it if we did not do this.

6. OUTCOME OF PETITIONS

Cabinet considered a report recommending it notes the action taken in respect of petitions presented to full Council.

Councillor Lee noted the positive response from officers and urged that officers continued to consult residents to agree a suitable implementation strategy.

CABINET RESOLVED TO:

Note the action taken in respect of petitions presented to full Council.

REASONS

Standing Orders require that Council receive a report about the action taken on petitions. As the petitions presented in this report have been dealt with by Cabinet Members or officers it is appropriate that the action taken is reported to Cabinet, prior to it being included within the Executive's report to full Council.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Any alternative options would require an amendment to the Council's Constitution to remove the requirement to report to Council.

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