Statement on the Approval of the Commissioners’ 2022 Draft Area Plan Consultation Response

A recent letter received by the Commissioners insinuated, through selectively quoting an extract from the September 2022 minutes, that the Commissioners’ 2022 Area Plan consultation response had not been considered and authorised by the Board. This information was released to the public and the media on the day the Commissioners received a copy of this letter.

The Commissioners’ contemporary records report the following:

* The public consultation period for the Draft Area Plan for the North and West published on 24 June 2022 from 24 June 2022 to 16 September 2022 (a 12 week period)
* During this consultation period the Board were scheduled to meet on 21 July, 18 August and 15 September 2022 in accordance with their Local Government Act standing orders. The Draft Area Plan was an agenda item at each of these meetings.
* After receipt of the Board papers the Commissioners postponed their meeting on 15 September 2022 as a mark of respect following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.
* The elected Commissioners held a group discussion on the content of the Commissioners’ Area Plan consultation response during week commencing 12 September 2022. Only one Commissioner wanted changes to its tone and emphasis on the need for infrastructure to support new development.
* The elected Commissioners made an officially requested for a two week extension to the consultation period to allow their postponed Board meeting to take place on 26 September 2022. This application was refused by the Cabinet Office who provided advice on making a late submission.
* In these circumstances on the final day of the consultation period, the Chair supported by the Lead Member Committee for Property and Asset Management approved the submission of the Commissioners’ amended consultation response. This response addressed all the technical issues raised by the Board by placing greater emphasis on infrastructure requirements. In addition, the consultation response advised the Cabinet Office a supplementary submission may be sent once the postponed September Board meeting had taken place.
* At the rescheduled Board meeting on 26 September 2022 the Deputy Chair reiterated her views on the Commissioners’ consultation submission which forms the basis of the recent enquiry made 18 months after this meeting took place. However, these minutes also go on to report the lack of any support from the other Commissioners present at this meeting for the Deputy Chair’s views. For transparency both the Deputy Chair’s views and the lack of support is recorded in the minutes of this meeting including the Deputy Chair’s unsuccessful motion to rezoning of PO007 from Tourism/Leisure to Public Open Space. At the conclusion of the discussion on this agenda item (Item 6 ref 22/049) the Board agreed the Deputy Chair’s other infrastructure and mixed use supplementary issues could officially communicated to the Cabinet Office by the Town Clerk provided for within the Commissioners’ 16 September 2022 consultation response.
* The Deputy Chair accepted this matter was fully discharged prior to 11 October 2022 when the Commissioners’ final supplemental information submission was sent to the Cabinet Office.
* The minutes from the next Board meeting held on 20 October 2022 report:

“The Board noted the Commissioners’ additional comments had been submitted.”

On the basis of this information, which was readily available on request, the consultation response was considered and authorised by the Board of Peel Town Commissioners.