

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Thursday, 22 October 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Michael Green (Vice-Chair), Will Adams, Jacky Alty, Matt Campbell, Colin Coulton, Chris Lomax, Jim Marsh, Colin Sharples, Stephen Thurlbourn, Matthew Trafford and Karen Walton

CABINET MEMBERS: Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group), Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder (Cabinet Member (Community Engagement, Social Justice and Wealth Building)), Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Health, Wellbeing and Leisure) and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Matthew Tomlinson (Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets))

OFFICERS: Gary Hall (Interim Chief Executive), Darren Cranshaw (Shared Services Lead - Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services), Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer), Jonathan Noad (Director of Planning and Property), Jennifer Mullin (Director of Neighbourhoods and Development), Paul Hussey (Director of Customer and Digital) and Neil Anderson (Assistant Director of Projects and Development)

14 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mal Donoghue.

15 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Michael Green declared a personal interest in Item 6 – Community Wealth Building Action Plan.

16 Minutes of the Last Scrutiny Committee Meeting

Minute number 7 – South Ribble Partnership – was queried and members requested a further update on the implementation of the Refernet service. This would be provided outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting, held on Thursday, 9 July 2020, be signed as a correct record by the Chair.

17 Minutes of the Last Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel

Discussion around the minutes of the last Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel focused on the legitimacy of the Panel.

Assurances were provided that meetings of the Scrutiny Panel are open to members and residents and that the minutes of each meeting are available on ModGov. Responsibility was also placed on members of the Panel to feedback on meetings to other members of their political group.

It was agreed that the role of the Panel would be considered further.

The minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel, held on Monday 14 September 2020, were noted.

18 Matters Arising from Previous Scrutiny Committee Meetings

The Committee received an update on progress made against matters arising from previous meetings.

The update was noted and those actions implemented would be removed from the table.

19 South Ribble Community Wealth Building Action Plan

The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Social Justice and Wealth Building (Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder) and the Director of Planning and Property (Jonathan Noad) presented the South Ribble Community Wealth Building Action Plan to the Committee and responded to members' comments and queries.

The independent Policy Advisor (Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson) for the Action Plan was also in attendance at the meeting.

Members were informed that the Action Plan would ensure resiliency in the local business and community sectors and would identify tangible benefits with the intention of localising wealth and supporting enterprise.

This would be achieved by diversifying the local economy, using planning powers to recognise wider benefits and ensuring that wealth reaches more residents through a democratic economy.

Members initially sought assurance that the proposals were realistic for a shire district like South Ribble compared to cities and unitary authorities. In response, confidence in the delivery of benefits in South Ribble was expressed with particular reference to the large numbers of public and private sector employers in the borough.

Other local authorities such as the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Camden, Birmingham City Council and Wakefield Council had successfully implemented similar Wealth Building Action Plans. Further information on other authorities who had adopted similar strategies could be found on the Centre for Local Economic Strategies website.

In response to a query regarding the evidence base for the Action Plan, the Committee was informed that significant engagement had been undertaken. A core

officer group had been established in the Council's Economic Development department and consultation had been undertaken with South Ribble Partnership.

Disappointment was expressed that the report and draft action plan did not include engagement with businesses and business organisations. Assurances were provided, however, that officers would meet with local businesses to discuss the Action Plan in early November.

Members suggested that corporate organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Directors, also be consulted.

Members also queried how success of the Action Plan would be measured and were informed that a Social Value Monitoring Officer would be employed to oversee progress and observance by businesses and employers. A social value portal would also provide ready-made indicators for success.

The benefit of appointing officers to deliver and monitor the Action Plan was questioned and the Committee was informed that they would be able to monitor the outcomes of the Action Plan and provide evidence for the Council to make strategic decisions. A review of current resources would be undertaken to confirm whether additional staff are needed before a business case is submitted.

It was confirmed that an implementation plan would be devised for the Action Plan if approved by Cabinet and an annual progress report would be created. All reports going to Cabinet, Full Council or committees would be required to assess social value impacts.

Some concern was expressed over the abilities of small businesses to commit to the social values of the Action Plan and reassurance was provided that the report would recommend that the values only apply to tenders over the value of £30,000.

Clarification on anchor institutions was also sought and it was explained that these are public sector organisations such as hospitals and colleges which are major contributors to employment and the economy in their areas. South Ribble has many anchor institutions and the procurement network within the Action Plan would bring these organisations together to discuss efficiencies and value for money.

Members were interested to note how the Action Plan could link to other policy such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. A gap between the Action Plan and health was acknowledged but assurances were provided on the possibility for synergy between the Action Plan and other Council strategies. More explicit links with the Community Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy were requested.

Case studies of social value work and the Action Plan would be used on the Council's online channels to communicate and promote community wealth-building in a user-friendly and understandable way.

It was suggested that, owing to the implicative and novel nature of the Action Plan, the report should be considered by Full Council. The Cabinet Member and officers were receptive to this recommendation and confirmed that this could be included in the Cabinet's resolution if appropriate.

A Member Briefing could also be held to ensure that the proposals are sufficiently communicated to all members.

Discuss also focused on worker-owned co-operatives and the need for them in South Ribble. In response, it was stated that there are over 7000 co-operatives in the UK with the aim of preventing divisions between capital and labour. The Action Plan proposed promoting a culture of co-operatives to local businesses.

Members questioned the reference to 'socially-just use of land' and how this could be practiced in South Ribble. It was explained in response that the Council could utilise land previously inaccessible to residents for different uses, such as community and health benefits.

Further information on land owned by the Council was requested.

In response to a question regarding the benefits of the Action Plan for residents, it was explained that more opportunities would be available and spending power would be concentrated for residents of South Ribble.

The committee thanked the Cabinet Member, the Director of Planning and Property and the Policy Advisor for their attendance and discussed a series of recommendations to Cabinet regarding the Action Plan.

Councillor Michael Green moved an amendment to the recommendations requesting that they be widened to include that consultation be undertaken with business organisations; that the adoption of the Action Plan be subject to a formal vote at Full Council; and that the risk of attracting less businesses, employment and training opportunities to South Ribble as a result of adopting the Action Plan be incorporated into the report.

The vote on the Amended Motion was For: 5 Against: 7 and the Chair declared **that the Amended Motion was lost.**

Upon taking a vote on the Substantive Motion it was RESOLVED: (Unanimously) that the Scrutiny Committee

1. thanks the Cabinet Member, Director and Mr Baqueriza-Jackson for attending and presenting their detailed report.
2. expresses disappointment that the report and draft action plan does not include engagement with businesses and business organisations.
3. requests that consultation is undertaken with business organisations, such as the Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Directors and the Confederation of British Industry.
4. looks forward to performance measures being developed as part of the implementation plan.
5. welcomes the suggestions to promote the benefits of community wealth building with residents.

6. requests that the final draft of the action plan be presented to Full Council following a Member Briefing.
7. more explicit links be made with the Community Strategy and health and wellbeing strategy.
8. information on the Council's land ownership be provided to a future meeting.
9. looks forward to receiving progress report on the action plan as part of the performance monitoring report.

20 Scrutiny Portfolio Update: Community Engagement, Social Justice and Wealth Building

The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Social Justice and Wealth-Building (Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder) and the Directors of Customer and Digital (Paul Hussey), Neighbourhoods and Development (Jennifer Mullin) and Planning and Property (Jonathan Noad) presented an update on the work of the portfolio since May 2019 and responded to members' comments and queries.

Key achievements for the portfolio included the response to the COVID-19 pandemic; changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2000 residents; the implementation of 'One Front Door' model and the presence of the Citizens Advice Bureau in the Civic Centre; high customer satisfaction; and the development of the My Neighbourhood Community Hubs.

Members, however, alluded to the wide-reaching breadth of the portfolio and queried its appropriacy. Assurances were provided in response that the different areas of the portfolio link well together and underpin the practices of care for South Ribble residents.

In response to a query regarding learning from customer complaints, members were informed that complaints are thoroughly investigated with learning shared with the relevant department. Regular training sessions are also held for Gateway staff.

The committee sought clarification on the term 'channel shift' and how residents who cannot access services electronically can still engage with the council.

'Channel shift' was defined as the move from traditional methods of engagement to informal means such as social media and live chat. Assurances were provided, however, that traditional methods of communication would remain available for residents who could not access services digitally and that extensive training would be held for the public.

Further information on this would be available in due course.

Members were interested to note that work on the Council's new website was in the advanced stages and a beta version would be available for members to test before Christmas 2020. It was anticipated that the new website would go live in the New Year.

An update on the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in South Ribble was also requested and members were informed that no dates had been confirmed for the arrival of the next cohort.

Discussion centred around the delivery of the portfolio's projects and assurance was sought that sufficient resource and staff was available. In response, officers expressed confidence in the current capacity of staff.

In response to questions around the decision-making and budgetary powers of the new My Neighbourhood Hubs, assurances were provided that the models were still in development but it was the Cabinet Member's hope that decision-making would be more autonomous. Individual budgets would be allocated to each Hub with the option of applying for additional funding from a central budget consisting of £20,000 for larger-scale projects.

Further development of the My Neighbourhood Hubs would take place in early 2021 and this was identified as a key priority for the portfolio moving forwards, in addition to implementing the Community Wealth Building Action Plan.

The committee thanked the Cabinet Member and the Directors of Customer and Digital, Neighbourhoods and Development and Planning and Property for their attendance.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. thanks the Cabinet Member for her detailed portfolio update and answering Members' questions.
2. commends the work of the portfolio since its creation last year.
3. praises the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and support provided to residents, businesses and communities.
4. welcomes the reassurance that the My Neighbourhood Hub model would be developed for the new year.
5. wishes the Cabinet Member well with her portfolio priorities moving forward.

21 Worden Hall Update

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets (Councillor Matthew Tomlinson) and the Assistant Director of Projects and Development (Neil Anderson) presented an update on the progress of the Worden Hall project to the Committee and responded to members' comments and queries.

Clarification was sought on the expected cost of the project to which members were informed that £2.17 million had been reserved for the project and that this sum included cover for any contingencies.

Members queried if the Hall would retain its name following completion of works and were assured, in response, that the matter had not been discussed and that there was no intention to change this.

The Committee was pleased to note that the project was expected to be completed in the next financial year and acknowledged the major works being undertaken.

The decision to extend the current car park site at Worden Park as opposed to creating a separate provision was questioned. Members were informed that the original plans would have meant cutting down trees which was felt to contradict the administration's green agenda.

Members were pleased to note that the car park would comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to include disable parking provisions.

Further information on the number of parking spaces within the extended car park was requested.

In response to a query regarding what progress could be expected by the next meeting, it was explained that a planning application for the project was likely to have been submitted for consideration by the Planning Committee.

The Committee thanked the Cabinet Member and the Assistant Director of Projects and Development for their attendance.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. thanks the Cabinet Member for his detailed report and answering Members' questions
2. looks forward to an update at the next meeting, including details of car parking arrangements.

22 Scrutiny Matters

22a Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The Chair, Councillor David Howarth, virtually attended a recent meeting of Lancashire County Council's (LCC) Health Scrutiny Committee and provided members with an update.

The implementation of the new NHS 111 First initiative was discussed at the meeting. This was a new appointment system for those who would normally self-present at A&E departments supported and aimed to reduce overcrowding, waiting times and subsequently COVID-19 infection rates.

The initiative was currently operating in Blackpool, Warrington and Blackburn to assess effectiveness and outcomes prior to the national campaign launch. All A&E departments would be implementing the system by the end of November 2020.

Representatives from two adult social care providers in Lancashire also attended the meeting to detail their experiences of the support provided by LCC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councillor Howarth also informed members that a Task and Finish group had been established to review the proposals for the future of Chorley and South Ribble District Hospital.

22 Update on Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities

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The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Review Task Group on Health Inequalities, Councillor David Howarth, informed members that the Task Group had met twice since September 2020.

Work was underway to scope the review and a number of potential areas for focus had been identified.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Wellbeing, Councillor Mick Titherington, and key officers had also attended a recent meeting to provide an overview of ongoing work and projects to tackle health inequalities in South Ribble.

The Task Group would meet again in early November.

22c Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

Councillor Michael Green informed members of the committee that he had recently attended a virtual Strategic Scrutiny in Practice session, hosted by North West Employers.

The session was useful and Councillor Green found it particularly interesting to hear different perspectives of scrutiny in other local authorities.

22 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan and Work Programme

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Members discussed the committee's work programme and suggested potential agenda items for future meetings.

Suggestions included the Playgrounds Strategy; a portfolio update from Councillor Sue Jones (Cabinet Member for Environment); the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and the Council's rebrand.

Members also agreed that it may be useful to include the progress of works to the borough's leisure centres as a standing item on future agendas.

22e Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

Chair

Date