

Minutes of Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date Tuesday, 17 January 2023

Members present: Councillors Angela Turner (Chair), Michael Green (Vice-Chair), Will Adams, Julie Buttery, Matt Campbell, Lou Jackson, Colin Sharples, Stephen Thurlbourn, Kath Unsworth and Karen Walton

Officers: Darren Cranshaw (Head of Democratic Services) and Ben Storey (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Guests: Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing) and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group), Jennifer Mullin (Director of Communities), Rachel Salter (Strategic Lead (Future Investments)) and Suzanne Ravenscroft (Housing Options Team Leader)

Public: 0

85 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mal Donoghue, Matthew Trafford and Colin Coulton.

86 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Michael Green declared a personal interest in item 6 – Leyland Town Deal Update as a parish council representative on the Leyland Town Deal Board.

87 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 24 November 2022 of Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on Thursday, 24 November 2022, be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

88 Matters Arising from previous Scrutiny Committee meetings

Members received an update on recommendations made at previous meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members noted progress on previous recommendations and unanimously resolved to remove the following completed actions from the Matters Arising Sheet;

- Minute 67.2 – Information regarding consultation responses to the Penwortham Masterplan.

- Minute 67.6 – Consideration of public transport and connectivity within the Penwortham Masterplan.
- Minute 80.3 – Consideration of including key leisure company indicators within quarterly performance reports.
- Minutes 80.4 – For the Leisure Company to be invited to attend the Scrutiny Committee annually.

Other recommendations would remain until they are completed with comments from the appropriate cabinet member.

89 Community Safety Partnership Update

Item withdrawn.

90 Leyland Town Deal Update

The Chair welcomed the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Mick Titherington and Strategic Lead, Rachel Salter to provide an update on progress of the Leyland Town Deal.

The Strategic Lead provided an overview and timeline of key milestones in the progression of the Leyland Town Deal, its aims and objectives, governance arrangements in place with the Leyland Town Deal Board and risks identified with the project.

The report highlighted key points drawn from the full programme with further refinements progressing as the design process developed. Ongoing work included the identification of where critical paths are and how work can be phased to best minimise any disruption during construction.

The Committee also heard how stakeholder engagement was carried out throughout the process, noting several consultation sessions had taken place with good turnout and positive feedback.

In response to a query regarding how consultation feedback would be incorporated into the scheme, given the designs and business case had already been submitted, the Committee heard that the consultation in May 2022 provided an update on earlier consultation feedback and how that had fed into the designs. In addition, members were advised that although the budget was set, where applicable or possible the views of residents would be considered.

The Committee were reassured that outstanding queries between the Town Deal Board and the Government had now been resolved following a visit by the Government's independent representatives. The representatives scrutinised the project management systems, the designs and proposals and were satisfied that the scheme could progress.

On the makeup of the Town Deal Board, Members heard that public, private and voluntary sectors were all represented, within this membership included construction

contractors, the job centre and established businesses in the Leyland area which provided a wide skillset to the Board.

Members heard that the physical development of the two projects would be distinct from how they are split in the business cases which focused on the strategic links in terms of the benefits and outcomes that would be delivered by the scheme. The construction phase will consider both projects together in order to best minimise disruption and also to facilitate greater use of local contractors for some of the smaller works. Consideration for the market traders was also factored into the phasing plan.

Responding to a query on membership of the Board and attendance at meetings, the Committee were advised that all members were required to sign the terms of reference. If members were not attending meetings and engaging with the Board on a regular basis, the Chair of the Board would be in contact to discuss their membership being withdrawn.

Following a query regarding the decision-making processes and role of the Leyland Town Deal Board, members were informed that South Ribble Borough Council was the decision maker with the Board taking an advisory role in the development of the scheme.

The Leyland and Farington Community Hub had been engaged separately from other stakeholders throughout the process and were represented with members on the Town Deal Board. Although the designs were set, as the project develops the Hub would be able to contribute to how the scheme achieves social value within the Leyland and wider South Ribble area. Members requested that the Hub representative provide a monthly update to the Hub as the work progresses.

The Committee were told that feedback from residents had been positive despite understandable concerns about any disruption during construction and potential problems around parking provision. Ongoing engagement with residents would continue in the form of drop-in sessions, opt in email alerts, direct correspondence on specific issues and general online communication through the website.

On ensuring the development benefited the borough more widely than the Leyland area, members were reassured that the business skills and enterprise hub would provide a base for education and learning for all ages and demographics. In addition, members heard that improvements to the night time economy will make Leyland a more attractive offer and boost the local economy.

On the number of red risks identified on the risk register, members were advised that these were being closely monitored and reviewed by the whole design team, so it is clear who is responsible and what mitigations need to be implemented. Although allowances had been factored in with regards to inflation, this remained the most significant risk to the delivery of the scheme given the current market. In addition, the ground conditions of the site and challenges around utilities were highlighted as other areas where potential issues could arise.

Clarity on the risk of not obtaining access was requested as the risk score had increased significantly. In response, the Strategic Lead advised the Committee that this could be an error and would review and update members after the meeting.

In response to a query about the contingency and risk balance, it was confirmed that this £3,343,838 balance was included within the £38 million budget.

On the ambition to make the scheme carbon neutral, the use of a district heating system had been considered although due to limited space on the site and the logistics of establishing an energy company this was not pursued. Other ways of achieving these targets included the use of air source heat pumps, use well insulated fabrics and using new technology to manage it all efficiently.

When asked on the increases in the construction price indices since initial funding bid was submitted and how this would impact on the project's budget and its delivery, the Strategic Lead explained that the initial cost in October 2020 was just under £25 million. During the next stage when the business case was developed a revised budget of £38 million was agreed. Within that budget was allowances associated to inflationary risk of the scheme, the current market volatility made forecasting challenging but was monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. There remained the option of value engineering the scheme should there be any additional pressures on the budget but it was felt that the healthy risk contingency would be able to meet those challenges.

The Committee questioned how social value had been incorporated into the project. The Strategic Lead confirmed that the project followed the Council's social value policies in place. Due to a technical problem the highest scoring bidder failed to include any social value outputs, all demolition contractors were asked to re-submit to ensure this was fully considered.

The Strategic Lead confirmed that the 31 March 2026 was the date for full completion of the scheme in line with conditions stipulated in the government funding. There was currently limited detail on the risk of claw back of funding in the case of any slippage on the scheme; however there was a change request process should any mitigating circumstances arise.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Committee;

1. thanks the Deputy Leader and Strategic Lead for attending and answering questions;
2. welcomes the reassurance that the Government funding is now in place and the Town Deal is progressing well;
3. is grateful for the commitment to continue to engage with the Leyland and Farington Hub, including the Hub representative feeding back;
4. requests that further information be provided on the risk of not obtaining access rights and permissions scoring and mitigations put in place;
5. asks that the risk concerning increasing construction costs and inflationary pressures be reviewed; and

6. suggests that the format of the dashboard include a total budget box to better explain the financial position.

91 Select Move Allocations Policy

The Chair welcomed the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Director of Communities and the Housing Solutions Team Leader to the meeting to present draft proposals to amend the Select Move allocations policy and answer any questions from the Committee.

The Deputy Leader provided an overview of the pressures faced in relation to housing and homelessness, especially given the difficult financial climate. The Committee were advised that the Council had a statutory obligation to review the housing allocations policy on a regular basis. The report highlights proposed changes to the policy with the aim of improving the experience for users, making processes more efficient and strengthening local connection criteria. A consultation on the proposed policy would commence once approved by Cabinet.

When asked on the likely numbers affected by the proposed changes, it was noted that whilst the number was ever changing there was around 2,000 registered users currently on Select Move.

Members sought further details on how the local connection criteria at South Ribble compared to neighbouring authorities. Members heard that other local authorities had much stronger criteria around local and family connections which the proposed policy changes sought to address. As a result, people with a stronger connection to the South Ribble area would be prioritised on the housing register waiting list.

Members questioned the word 'reasonable' in relation to grounds on which properties were refused by prospective tenants. Whilst it was acknowledged it was difficult to give a definitive answer it was highlighted that refusal on 'unreasonable' grounds caused significant delays in the process and exacerbated the huge demand for properties. It was for this reason the draft policy seeks to reduce the number of refusals from 3 to 2 to speed up the process.

On managing the demand on the service and a need for more suitable properties, the Committee were told that the Council works closely with partners and registered housing providers, such as Progress Housing, who do actively encourage and incentivise tenants to consider downsizing so that larger properties could become available.

On addressing the challenges of meeting the significant demand for housing, work was needed to ensure developers incorporate more social housing within their projects and that South Ribble has a Local Plan that meets the needs of the population in the future. Members also were reminded of the Council's desire to contribute in the way of building its own social houses.

Questions were asked on the consultation programme and how it would be effectively communicated to residents. The Deputy Leader was committed to reaching as many residents and stakeholders as possible through direct contact with Select Move users, through the Council's website, multi-agency forums and other

avenues. It was requested that consideration be given to residents who many not find online forms of communication easily accessible when forming the consultation plan.

The Deputy Leader also confirmed that the draft policy aligned with the Armed Forces Covenant and the team would work with the Armed Forces Hub.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Committee;

1. thanks the Deputy Leader, Director and Team Leader for attending and answering questions;
2. is grateful to the Deputy Leader for consulting the Committee prior to it being considered by the Cabinet;
3. welcomes and supports the draft policy going out the consultation;
4. asks that the consultation reach out to those who do not have internet access; and
5. looks forward to the results of the consultation being made available to Members.

92 Scrutiny Matters

92a Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The Chair invited the Council's representative on Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Lou Jackson to provide an update on recent meetings she had attended.

Recent meetings had focused on the roll out of the virtual wards programme which was a concept developed in response to the pandemic where patients could receive care in their own homes with the aim of preventing avoidable admissions to hospital.

93 Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

No training was noted since the last meeting.

94 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

95 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

The Committee requested that the Community Safety Partnership item be rescheduled for the next meeting in February.

Councillor Michael Green thanked the members of the task group and the work of the officers supporting the group. Recent meetings had seen guests from the Council's planning enforcement team, the County Council's highways team and education departments discuss the impact of housing developments.

Several more meetings were planned before a final report would be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee.

Chair

Date