

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Thursday, 23 January 2020

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

CABINET MEMBERS: Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group), 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: Peter McHugh (Assistant Director of Property and Housing), Howard Anthony (South Ribble Partnership Manager), Darren Cranshaw (Assistant Director of Scrutiny & Democratic Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor Margaret Smith (Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Conservative Group) and Councillor Phil Smith

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28 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Lomax and Colin Sharples.

29 Minutes of the Last Scrutiny Committee Meeting

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on Thursday, 14 November 2019, be signed as a correct record by the Chair.

30 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Michael Green declared a personal interest in Item 6 – South Ribble Partnership Update.

31 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

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

Members acknowledged steady progress being made and raised no concerns with any matters arising.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the update be noted.

32 Worden Hall Project Update

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets (Councillor Matthew Tomlinson) and the Assistant Director of Property and Housing (Peter McHugh) presented a report on the progress of the Worden Hall project to the Committee and responded to members' comments and queries.

The officer working group had met in December 2019 and was working to develop a hybrid option for Worden Hall that would enable community use and event hire. Members were also informed that the business plan had been reviewed to reflect the anticipated costings for the project and were assured that this could be delivered without the need for subsidy by the Council.

Members were informed that work on the Hall would link with the wider estate by establishing different areas which would provide a variety of activities and amenities. A café quarter would be created to bolster the existing refreshment facilities and a commercial zone would provide space for businesses and craft stalls to display their work to visitors.

It was acknowledged that substantial work would be undertaken and a target date for completion could not be confirmed as a result. An 18-month period was recognised as realistic and an indicative timeframe would be reported to Cabinet in February 2020.

In response to a query around the social value of the project, assurances were given that there was a strong emphasis on this because of feedback from the public consultation. Social value would be assessed through accessibility to the Hall and the demographic of visitors. Further information on this would be available as the project progresses further.

Members expressed some concern with the possibility of increased costs and sought reassurance around the measures that the Council would take to reduce the risk of this. The Cabinet Member and officers were confident that the Hall would become financially self-sufficient and reiterated that the budget for the project would be shared once confirmed.

Public engagement would continue through the Council's social media channels and through attendance at the Leyland My Neighbourhood Forum meetings.

As the Council had recently declared a Climate Emergency, members queried what measures would be taken to make the Hall environmentally-friendly. Constraints were acknowledged due to the Hall's status as a Listed Building, but officers would consider sustainable options where appropriate.

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

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the Scrutiny Committee looks forward to a further progress report at the next meeting, including timescales and costs going forward.
2. the Scrutiny Committee welcomes the commitment to social value as part of the project.
3. the Scrutiny Committee feels reassured that all members and the My Neighbourhood Forum will continue to be updated and involved in the project.

33 South Ribble Partnership Update

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Paul Foster), the South Ribble Partnership Manager (Howard Anthony) and the Chair of the South Ribble Partnership (Jacqueline de Rose) presented an update on the work of the Partnership to the Committee and responded to members' comments and queries.

The Partnership had recently been relaunched following a restructure and revisions to its governance arrangements. Key objectives had been identified and there was an emphasis on improving the quantity of services available to residents and on utilising connections to bolster co-operative working. The Partnership also seeks to increase volunteering opportunities in the borough.

Substantial consultation had been undertaken to identify the needs and desires of residents and the Partnership is confident in the defined outcomes of this, including the Community Awards and the establishment of a time credits scheme.

The Partnership benefits from several grants and most organisations involved provide funding for projects. South Ribble Borough Council, Progress Housing Group and other partners also contribute to the Partnership and members were assured that finances are used wisely to ensure sustainability.

Members queried the new governance structure of the Partnership and were informed that a formal constitution is adhered to and all Partnership work and reports are publicly available to view. The Executive Board is made up of members with a variety of skills and specialisms.

In response to a query around the Partnership's action plan and its ambitions, members were assured that the Partnership hoped to see tangible benefits from their work within two years. The action plan was developed through a desire to make a difference to the borough and through feedback from community events.

Members were interested in the social progress index which the Partnership was considering employing. This would track social improvement using several indicators, such as housing quality and education levels, and is currently used by the United Nations. Discussions were ongoing with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, who are the pioneers, and further information would be sent to committee members.

The data dashboard is similarly used to understand the profile of the area. The dashboard was acknowledged as valuable in providing instant information as to what the Partnership could influence.

Members enquired as to how partners are incentivised and were advised that the agreed, clear objectives of the Partnership motivate their work and there is a strong emphasis on recognising the value and contribution of partners.

As the Council had recently declared a climate emergency, the Partnership's work on climate change was questioned. The need to consider environmental impact was identified by the Partnership and activities could include improving green spaces and assessing how accommodation can be environmentally-friendly.

A further update on the work of the Partnership would be received by the Committee in around 12 months, by which time it was anticipated that there would be a better understanding of existing services, more effective mapping and an increase in volunteering across the borough.

The committee thanked the Chair of the Partnership, Leader of the Council and Partnership Manager for attending and for their comprehensive report.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the Scrutiny Committee welcomes the Partnership's commitment to delivering outcomes.
2. the Scrutiny Committee looks forward to receiving further information on the social progress index.
3. the Scrutiny Committee wishes the Partnership well and looks forward to receiving a progress report in 12 months' time.
4. the Scrutiny Committee encourages the use of plain English or the provision of a glossary.

34 Scrutiny Matters

34a Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The last meeting of the Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee had been postponed due to Purdah.

34 Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

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Councillor Michael Green informed members of the committee that he had attended a meeting of the North West Scrutiny Network, which he found useful for meeting Scrutiny Committee members from other authorities.

The North West Scrutiny Network meetings are open to all Scrutiny Committee members, who are encouraged to attend.

It was agreed that Councillor Stephen Thurlbourn would provide the Scrutiny Committee with a bi-annual update on the work of the Climate Emergency Task Group.

34c Forward Plan

Members requested that the Cabinet report on the Implementation of Community Involvement Recommendations also be received by the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting in March.

34 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

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Members requested that a report on housing associations be received by the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting in March.

Members expressed their desire to assess key providers in the borough in their quality of housing, processes for dealing with complaints, availability of single-person accommodation and their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint.

Chair

Date