

Report of Scrutiny Committee

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January 2021.

Climate Change Action Plan

2. The Chair of the Climate Emergency Task Group (Councillor Keith Martin) and the Director of Communities (Jennifer Mullin) and the Environmental Health Officer (Neil Martin) gave a presentation on the public consultation on the Climate Change Action Plan to the Committee.
3. We were informed that the Climate Change Action Plan was being developed and a public consultation undertaken to identify priorities for the action plan and what climate change initiatives residents would like to see the Council implement or promote.
4. We firstly queried the approach taken to the public consultation and were advised that five key themes (transport, energy and the built environment, waste and water, consumption and offsetting) had been identified by the task group to base the consultation on, similarly to other local authorities.
5. Members had also been encouraged to complete and promote the consultation to residents and we supported this.
6. We were pleased to note that there had been approximately 50 responses to the consultation, following an extension to the deadline due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. We also queried the evidence sources used to develop the Action Plan and were advised that this included the carbon footprint and emissions of the Council and wider borough, cost-benefit analysis of suggested measures, published studies and officer and member research.
8. We were pleased to note that the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel would receive regular updates on the progress of the wider Green Agenda project through quarterly performance monitoring reports.
9. Engagement with partners on climate change work was also discussed and we welcomed the commitment to improve this level of engagement.
10. We were particularly interested in how the Climate Change Action Plan would inform the Local Plan review. In response to our queries, we were advised that officers had already made representations to the review and that it was hoped that the requirements for carbon reduction considerations within the planning process would be strengthened under the new Local Plan, particularly around Supplementary Planning Documents.
11. We also discussed fuel poverty and the challenge this presents to reducing carbon emissions. Work was ongoing to assess energy efficiency levels of properties and government grants, such as the Green Homes Grant, to install energy efficient improvements would be promoted through the Council's communication channels. An officer will also be recruited to enforce energy efficiency improvements to privately-rented properties.

12. We were pleased to note that the Climate Change Action Plan would encourage local procurement by assessing the distance travelled by contractors to provide services, thereby benefitting local businesses.
13. We requested a Member Briefing on the Action Plan be held prior to consideration at Full Council to ensure that all members are fully informed.
14. We also asked that the Action Plan be brought back to the committee for further review prior to Full Council.
15. We noted the report and thanked the Cabinet Member, the Director of Communities and the Environmental Health Officer for their attendance.

Worden Hall Progress Update

16. 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.
17. We were informed that, since the last update to Scrutiny Committee, a Leyland-based project management and Quantity Surveying firm, Gosling Construction Services, had been appointed and on-site works were expected to begin in late March 2021.
18. We were also assured that the Cabinet Member remains ambitious that the project would be completed for summer 2022. We welcomed the progress being made and the ambition to have the Hall open in time for Leyland Festival in 2022.
19. We queried the level of stakeholder engagement and requested further detail on who the stakeholders for the project were. In response, we were advised that communications were in place with occupiers of the craft units and the café at the park, the Scrutiny Committee and the wider public through the Council's media channels.
20. We welcomed the Cabinet Member's commitment to keeping the project on budget.
21. We queried what progress could be expected by the next meeting and it was hoped that planning permission would have been approved and that the procurement for more detailed work would have progressed.
22. We received a written question from a member of the public, who queried the estimated value of the contract with Gosling Construction Services and the decision-maker for awarding this contract. In response, it was explained that the value could not be disclosed as it related to a private business contract. However, the company has experience in similar projects to the Worden Hall works and has a positive reputation in addition to being a South Ribble-based business.
23. We thanked the Cabinet Member and the Assistant Director of Projects and Development for their attendance.

Recommendation(s)

That Council note the report.

COUNCILLOR DAVID HOWARTH
CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
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