

Minutes of Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date Thursday, 18 March 2021

Members present: Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Michael Green (Vice-Chair), Will Adams, Jacky Alty, Matt Campbell, Colin Coulton, Susan Jones, Jim Marsh, Colin Sharples, Matthew Trafford and Karen Walton

Cabinet members: Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform) and Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing) and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group)

Officers: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Jennifer Mullin (Shared Director of Communities), Neil Anderson (Assistant Director of Projects and Development), Darren Cranshaw (Shared Services Lead - Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

39 Minutes' Silence

The Chair, Councillor David Howarth, led members of the committee and guests in a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Colin Clark, who had recently passed away.

40 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Mal Donoghue and Stephen Thurlbourn.

41 Minutes of meeting Monday, 8 February 2021 of Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Monday 8 February 2021, be approved as a correct record.

42 Declarations of Interest

None.

43 Matters Arising from Previous Scrutiny Committee Meetings

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

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the update be noted; and
2. any completed actions be removed from the Matters Arising sheet.

44 Cabinet Member Update: Health and Wellbeing

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing (Councillor Mick Titherington) and the Director of Communities and Assistant Director of Projects (Neil Anderson) presented an update on the work of the portfolio since May 2019 and responded to members' comments and queries.

Key priorities for the portfolio included improving employment and economy levels in the borough; increasing activity levels amongst residents; improving air quality; preventing and dealing with homelessness; and improving community safety and resilience.

Members queried how success is measured within the portfolio and were advised, in response, that many projects can be measured through the level of engagement with residents and statistical data. For example, the success of the council's tree-planting scheme can be measured by the number of trees planted.

Business plans were currently being developed and would highlight performance indicators, which would be reported to the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel on a quarterly basis from the beginning of the next financial year.

Discussion largely focused on the beginning of the council's in-house management of leisure centres in the borough from April 2021. Members welcomed the Cabinet Member's assurances that preparations for the transfer were on-track.

In response to a query regarding what consultation methods would be used over upgrades to the facilities, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that such consultation would be fundamental to the council's management of leisure centres.

Both users and non-users of leisure centres could be asked for their views on possible works, to ascertain exactly what kind of facilities residents would benefit from.

Members also queried what differences residents would see as a result of council-managed leisure centres, to which the Cabinet Member stated that there would be an increase in facilities, appropriate membership fees and investment into leisure centres that matches private-sector facilities.

Assurances that leisure centre staff would be paid the living wage, in line with the council's terms and conditions of employment, were welcomed.

In response to a question regarding the long-term aspirations for the management of leisure centres, the Cabinet Member confirmed that it was anticipated that the council would retain management of premises.

The Cabinet Member also expressed a commitment to work with any organisation that offers residents opportunities to get active, such as Park Run.

Following a question on food hygiene visits, the Cabinet Member acknowledged some issues in the standards across South Ribble but confirmed that visits were still being undertaken to high-risk premises.

The Cabinet Member shared the concerns of members on the number of road traffic collisions in South Ribble and the committee was advised that the council works with Lancashire County Council to improve highway safety and the Sports Development team offer bike safety lessons.

Work is also ongoing on the Green Links project to encourage walking and cycling and the council also collaborates with the Community Safety Partnership.

Members also welcomed confirmation that Speed Indicator Devices (SPIDs) would be rolled out in hotspots in the borough.

It was also requested that the council lobbies the Community Safety Partnership and Lancashire County Council to improve street lighting and to end the practice of dimming lights.

A query was raised regarding what practical actions the council takes to prevent domestic abuse. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that he would discuss this further with officers.

Members expressed interest in the development of a safe space in South Ribble for people to report hate crimes. Work was ongoing with community groups and partners to identify suitable areas for safe spaces.

The committee also commended the Cabinet Member and wider council on the roll-out of the Holiday Hunger Scheme to all schools in the borough.

It was also requested that the Cabinet Member write to the Secretary of State to ask that virtual council meetings be allowed to continue after May 2021, particularly given the improvements this would provide to air quality.

Members also queried how obesity was tackled by the portfolio, particularly amongst children. In response, it was stated that there are specific projects aimed at improving health such as the Active Schools work, community programs and weight management. The My Neighbourhood Community Hubs could also help with tackling this issue and there is also a funding opportunity for additional work going forwards.

The need to review planning policy with regards to the proximity of hot food takeaway restaurants to schools was also raised.

The committee thanked the Cabinet Member and the Director of Communities and Assistant Director of Projects for their attendance.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee:

1. thanks the Cabinet Member and Director for attending and for their detailed report;
2. asks that future portfolio reports include more details on how success and performance is measured;
3. welcomes the Cabinet Member's commitment to reporting leisure performance and provide regular updates to Scrutiny in the future;
4. asks that consideration be given to organising a park run in Worden Park as part of encouraging active lifestyles;
5. asks that the homelessness commissioning process reviews potential service improvement models;
6. asks that the Council looks at what can be done with partners to improve road safety in South Ribble, including rolling out speed indicator devices (SPIDs);
7. invites the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire and relevant partners to a future committee meeting to discuss road safety following the elections;
8. asks that the Cabinet Member lobbies the County Council about the practice of dimming some street lights and potential impact on community safety;
9. commends the Council on the Holiday Hunger Scheme;
10. requests that the Council writes to the Secretary of State to encourage him to allow virtual council meetings to be made permanent;
11. asks that the Community Hubs consider childhood obesity in their areas; and
12. requests a review of planning policy regarding the proximity of hot food takeaways to schools.

45 Scrutiny Matters

45a Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities Update

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Review Task Group on Health Inequalities, Councillor David Howarth, provided an update on the progress of the review.

Since the last update at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Task Group had met with more key stakeholders, including Citizens Advice and the council's Revenues and Benefits Manager and Communities Manager, to gather evidence.

The Task Group looked forward to presenting their draft report to the Scrutiny Committee in summer 2021.

45b Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

There had been no recent meetings of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

45c Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

No training had recently been undertaken by Scrutiny Committee members due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

45d Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

45e Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

Members considered the Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan up until June 2021 and discussed potential topics to scrutinise going forwards.

There was particular enthusiasm to scrutinise the council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the council's management of leisure centres in the borough.

It was also requested that an invitation to attend a meeting be extended to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire, following the election in May 2021.

Chair

Date