

Minutes of Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date Tuesday, 13 July 2021

Members present: Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Michael Green (Vice-Chair), Julie Buttery, Matt Campbell, Malcolm Donoghue, Colin Sharples, Stephen Thurlbourn, Kath Unsworth and Karen Walton

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

Officers: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Jennifer Mullin (Shared Director of Communities), Mark Lester (Director of Commercial), Rachel Salter (Service Lead (Development and Business)), Neil Martin (Senior Environmental Health Officer), Heather Corson (Domestic Abuse Coordinator), Darren Cranshaw (Shared Services Lead - Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Guests: Councillor Mary Green, Councillor Keith Martin, Councillor Phil Smith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group) and Mark Baines (Chief Inspector for Lancashire Constabulary)

1 Welcome from the Chair

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor David Howarth, welcomed Councillors Julie Buttery and Kath Unsworth to the meeting, which was their first since being appointed to the committee following their election in May 2021.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Will Adams, Jacky Alty and Colin Coulton.

3 Declarations of Interest

None.

4 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 18 March 2021 of Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on Thursday 18 March 2021, be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

5 Minutes of meeting Monday, 14 June 2021 of Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel, held on Monday 14 June 2021, be noted.

6 Matters Arising from Previous Scrutiny Committee Meetings

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

The Shared Services Lead – Democratic, Scrutiny and Electoral Services reported that a late response had been received in respect of minute no. 44.12 from the meeting on 18 March 2021, relating to the proximity of hot food takeaways to schools. The response was as follows:

'This is being undertaken as part of the Central Lancs Local Plan. Draft policies should be consulted on in early 2022 and adopted by end of 2023.'

A further request was made for information on the land owned by the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets confirmed that this could now be shared with members.

Members also emphasised the need for a member briefing on the Climate Emergency Action Plan prior to it being considered by Full Council, which had been requested previously. Arrangements for this would be made.

It was also requested that an update on the leisure centre management, as requested at the meeting on 8 February 2021, be provided at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee given the progress already made.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the updated be noted; and
2. those completed actions be removed from the Matters Arising sheet.

7 Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Report

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing (Councillor Mick Titherington), Director of Communities, Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager, and Chief Inspector of Lancashire Constabulary presented an update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership and responded to members' comments and queries.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a statutory body made up of representatives from local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities and health and probation services. It was highlighted that overall crime figures had decreased and the Cabinet Member emphasised that South Ribble remained a safe place to live.

Members were particularly interested in the learning for the CSP following the COVID-19 pandemic and were advised that the reliance on the Partnership and the level of collaboration between partners had been noted especially during the pandemic.

The Chief Inspector also commented that the unpredictability of demand for assistance and the need to be flexible with this fluidity had been recognised.

In response to a query regarding how the Partnership ensures good governance, it was confirmed that robust governance measures are in place and that these are well-documented and publicly available.

The report highlighted that a recent review of the governance and partnership arrangements of the Lancashire Community Safety Partnership had concluded that either a thematic or geographic model would work well in practice.

However, South Ribble and Chorley CSPs had indicated that a thematic model was their preferred approach which was queried by members given the usual practice of a geographic neighbourhood model typically adopted by South Ribble.

Reassurances were provided in response that this would only apply to the wider Lancashire Community Safety Partnership and would have no impact on the CSP in South Ribble. It was advised that a thematic model was preferred to fully utilise the specialisms of officers within the Partnership.

A query was raised regarding how the success of the Integrated Offender Management scheme is evaluated. In response, members were informed that a decline in reoffending rates was viewed as the main indicator for success of this scheme and members welcomed the Chief Inspector's offer to provide figures on this after the meeting.

The success of Community Protection Warnings were also acknowledged, with only 10 of 51 being escalated to Community Protection Notices and 1 Fixed Penalty Notice.

Members were interested to hear the extent to which Domestic Homicide Reviews are conducted independently from the Council and how lessons are learned from such Reviews.

In response, the Director of Communities advised that Reviews are chaired independently. Reviews are then verified by the Home Office with the possibility of further assessment before publication.

Further clarification on the work of the South Ribble Integrated Team (SRIT) was also requested and the committee was informed that each local area will have their own Integrated Team, although it was acknowledged that some Teams are more advanced.

Integrated Teams like SRIT provide early assistance and intervention in communities before issues reach statutory services, such as the NHS. It was noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to a significant increase in referrals made by SRIT.

A query was raised regarding the link between the CSP and elected members and the My Neighbourhood Community Hubs. Members were pleased to note that discussions were ongoing regarding engagement with the Hubs and that there had been a commitment from the police to attend Community Hub meetings, where required.

The CSP would also have an annual conference, which members would be invited to attend.

A key line of enquiry focused on catalytic converter theft, which was acknowledged as a significant issue by the Chief Inspector. It was noted that the police were in receipt of funding to provide catalytic converter theft marking kits to previous victims and owners of targeted vehicles. These kits were provided free of charge by Chorley Nissan, although beneficiaries were politely asked to provide a small donation to charity in return.

In response to a member enquiry, confirmation was provided that Speed Indicator Devices (SpIDS) had been rolled out across the borough and that these could be relocated as needed. Members should contact the Director of Communities if they know of any speeding hotspots where a SpID would be of benefit.

A query was also raised regarding the possibility of a new prison being developed just outside of South Ribble, to which the Chief Inspector and Director of Communities asserted that this had not yet been discussed by the CSP.

Members also welcomed assurances that the crime rates within the borough are comparable to those of similar demographics and that Lancashire Constabulary are well-prepared for a 'Black Swan' event of multiple major incidents occurring at once.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

The Committee:

1. thanks the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, Cabinet Member and Director for attending and for their detailed report;
2. welcomes the offer of further information on the effectiveness of the Integrated Offender Management System;
3. asks that the Community Safety Partnership works more closely with the Council's Community Hubs;
4. encourages the Police to engage with elected Members more as part of their feedback model; and

5. requests that the Community Safety Partnership considers what more can be done to improve road safety and reduce road casualties and deaths in the Borough.

8 Climate Emergency Action Plan

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing (Councillor Mick Titherington), Lead Member for Climate Change (Councillor Keith Martin), Director of Communities and Senior Environmental Health Officer presented the Climate Emergency Action Plan and responded to members' queries and comments.

It was acknowledged in response to members' questions that consultation on the action plan had not been as extensive as hoped due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other time constraints. However, reassurances were provided that the action plan was a 'live document' and that consultation would remain ongoing.

Further information on the financial implications of the action plan was requested and members were informed that there would need to be significant investment in the projects highlighted within the plan. Each individual scheme would be costed and officers would submit bids for grant funding.

A commitment to reviewing each action to ensure it is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) was welcomed.

Members queried how the action plan will be monitored to ensure delivery and were advised that performance indicators and potential risks would be developed and identified.

The schemes within the action plan also contribute to the green agenda project within the Corporate Plan and would be incorporated into quarterly performance monitoring reports considered by the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel.

Progress would also be reported to the Climate Emergency Task Group.

In response to a question regarding how members can champion the action plan and help to tackle the climate emergency, it was suggested that they could broadcast and promote the action plan; petition the government for change; scrutinise the work on climate change undertaken by external partners; and create their own climate emergency action plans within their My Neighbourhood Community Hub areas.

Members also noted that discussions were underway with the council's procurement team to incorporate consideration of climate change impacts when awarding procurement contracts.

Reassurances were provided that the council has the knowledge, skills and capacity to deliver the action plan and it was acknowledged that any additional resources would be reliant on receiving funding.

A query was also raised about how the council would enforce the measures identified within the action plan without any real legal power. In response, it was stated that the council would endeavour to promote the action plan and persuade residents to engage with the projects within it.

Members also welcomed confirmation that there would be a Member Briefing on the action plan prior to it being considered at Full Council and that a report on the successes of the Air Quality Action Plan from 2018 would be provided.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. thanks the Cabinet Member, Lead Member, Director and Officers for attending the meeting and for their report;
2. commends the Climate Emergency Member Working Group for developing the Climate Emergency Action Plan;
3. welcomes the reassurance that partners have been engaged in the development of the action plan;
4. looks forward to more information on each of the actions, including financial appraisal SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) indicators being drawn up;
5. encourages Members to take personal responsibility in helping to tackle the climate emergency;
6. requests an update on the progress being made with the Air Quality Strategy; and
7. is grateful for the offer of a Member briefing on the climate change action before the Council meeting on 21 July 2021.

9 Exclusion of Press and Public

Following queries by members and consideration by the Monitoring Officer, it was confirmed that the press and public need not be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, given that any financial information contained within the report was already in the public domain.

10 Worden Hall Progress Update

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets (Councillor Mick Titherington), the Director of Commercial and Service Lead for Development presented a progress update on the Worden Hall project and responded to members' queries and comments.

Since the last update to the Scrutiny Committee, a new design team had been appointed and planning permission had been approved. The tender package for the main contractor of the refurbishment works had been formalised and a 5-week procurement process had commenced to run until late July 2021.

Members welcomed the progress and the confirmation that the project remained on-track to be completed in time for Leyland Festival in the summer of 2022.

It was acknowledged, however, that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted costs and material supply within the construction industry and that this could have some effect on the project's budget.

Further confirmation of the intention for the revenue model to break-even and create a surplus was requested and provided by the Cabinet Member. Members were also advised in response that several fixed contracts had been introduced into the scheme, including an additional retail space, to meet demand and gain further income.

Slight concern was expressed over the additional backlog of maintenance and how this had been unaccounted for during earlier surveys. In response, it was explained that such repairs had been identified in the preparatory work but that they were more significant than originally anticipated.

In response to a query regarding what progress could be expected by the next update, it was stated that the contract for the works will have been awarded with contractors on site. Hopes that visible progress would be apparent were also expressed.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. thanks the Cabinet Member, Director and Shared Services Lead for attending and for their report;
2. welcomes the progress being made on the Worden Hall project; and
3. looks forward to taking the Cabinet Member up on his offer of a site visit to Worden Hall to view the project.

11 Urgent Executive Decisions

Members received a report of the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer which provided information on a number of urgent decisions taken by the Executive over the last three months in accordance with urgency procedures outlined in the Council's Constitution.

The report highlighted that 9 urgent decisions had been submitted since February 2021, which required agreement from either the Mayor or the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee to be taken using urgency procedures.

Members acknowledged that many urgent decisions had been submitted in this period and expressed hopes that this would not become common practice.

The report was noted.

12 Scrutiny Matters

12a Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

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

The recent meeting was held as a workshop to develop the committee's work programme for the next municipal year and a further update would be provided after the next meeting.

12 Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

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Members of the committee had recently attended a training session with Dr Stephanie Snape from North West Employers, which was found useful.

The session focused on the legislative basis of scrutiny; reviewing what went well and what can be learnt from the past year of scrutiny in the council and the role of scrutiny in COVID-19 recovery.

Members also used the session to consider potential topics for the committee's work programme for the next municipal year.

12c Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

12 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

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Members considered several topics for their work programme which had been identified at the training session held previously.

It was agreed that the following topics be included on the work programme for the Scrutiny Committee for 2021/22:

- Housing Associations
- Regular updates on the Council's management of leisure centres, including a report to the next meeting
- The progress and achievements of Shared Services with Chorley Council
- The work of external partners on tackling climate change
- Public participation and engagement with residents

Chair

Date