

Minutes of Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date Tuesday, 8 February 2022

Committee members present: Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Michael Green (Vice-Chair), Will Adams, Julie Buttery, Matt Campbell, Colin Coulton, Mal Donoghue, Colin Sharples, Kath Unsworth and Karen Walton

Committee members attended virtually (non-voting): None

Officers present: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer), Mark Lester (Director of Commercial), James Thomson (Deputy Director of Finance), 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)

Other attendees: Councillors Carol Wooldridge (attended virtually), Damian Bretherton (attended virtually), Margaret Smith (attended virtually), Phil Smith (attended virtually), Mick Titherington and Matthew Tomlinson

Public: 0

35 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jacky Alty, Stephen Thurlbourn and Matthew Trafford.

36 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

37 Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 11 January 2022 of Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: (unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

38 Matters Arising from previous Scrutiny Committee meetings

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

Resolved: (unanimously)

That

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

39 Draft Budget 2022/23 and Summary Position over the Medium Term

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets (Councillor Matthew Tomlinson) and the Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer (Louise Mattinson) presented the draft budget position for 2022/23 including the forecast for the following 2 years to 2024/25.

The draft budget proposed an increase of 1.99% to council tax and members queried why this was deemed necessary when the Council has healthy reserves. It was advised, in response, that the Council needed to account for rising inflation rates.

Confirmation was provided, however, that the 7% inflation rate was not built into the projected cost base for the budget but that it would be subject to review over the forthcoming year. Allowances for rising energy costs had been factored into the budget at various rates.

Clarity was sought over reference to there being no proposed cuts in services in the budget and assurances were provided that all council services would continue to be provided.

Members queried how the government-backed council tax rebate of £150 to households in Bands A-D to help with rising energy costs would impact the council.

In response, it was explained that this had only recently been announced and that further details and guidance on administration was expected imminently.

The committee also welcomed the Cabinet Member's aim to consult residents on the budget earlier in future years as it was questioned whether a 10-day consultation period was sufficient.

Some concern was expressed over the increase of the Disabled Facilities Grant administration charge from 5% to 12.5% and the impact this may have on disabled residents. Assurances were provided that this would not result in any increased charges to residents and that it would enable recruitment of an additional officer to support the scheme.

Confirmation was also provided in response to a member query that the £35,000 government grant for Brexit preparations had not been used and remained within the Council's reserves.

The committee challenged reference to the Community Conversations supporting positive mental health for young people after receiving contradictory information at a previous meeting. It was requested that the Thriving Communities section be updated to reflect that this was not the aim of these events.

It was also requested that reference to refurbishment works at Margaret Road playground in Penwortham be included within the investment priorities.

Members also queried the evidence for allocating £200,000 to target fly-tipping hotspots, or 'grot spots'. It was explained that most of this evidence was a recent spike in complaints of fly tipping and general untidiness, particularly after lockdown.

Members also queried the £3.1 million allocated for the development of affordable homes and requested further information on the funding streams for these projects.

Further information on the Council's promotion of apprenticeships across the borough was also requested.

In response to a final query regarding the role of the Scrutiny Committee with regards to the Capital Programme, the Cabinet Member commented that the committee would be best placed to assess and challenge the practicality, resources and capacity of the Capital Programme

The committee thanked the Cabinet Member and Director for their detailed report and attendance.

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. supports the Cabinet Member's wish to consult earlier in future years;
2. asks that the report be updated to clarify that the community conversations were not aimed at supporting positive mental health in young people as confirmed at a previous meeting;
3. requests that the refurbishment of Margaret Road playground in Penwortham, planned for 2023/2024, be included in the report;
4. asks that a breakdown of the different funding streams for the £3.1 million allocated for affordable housing be provided; and
5. welcomes the offer of information on the Council's role in promoting apprenticeships with businesses and acting as an exemplar being provided to all councillors.

40 Update on South Ribble Leisure Ltd

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing (Councillor Mick Titherington), the Director of Commercial (Mark Lester) and the Assistant Director of Projects and Development (Neil Anderson) presented an update on progress made by South Ribble Leisure Ltd.

The report highlighted progress made with regards to customer satisfaction and members queried how feedback from leisure centre customers is continuously gathered.

In response, it was explained that South Ribble Leisure now has a website and app where customers can provide feedback. A full customer survey is also anticipated to be undertaken by September 2022.

A full business plan had been devised and would be considered by the Cabinet. Members requested that this also be provided to the Scrutiny Committee.

Clarification was also provided that the Board of Directors for South Ribble Leisure Ltd. consisted of the Council's Director of Commercial, Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

The committee welcomed collaboration between the leisure company and the Council's Communities teams on the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme and asked that an upcoming report on this also be provided to the Scrutiny Committee.

Members also queried whether initial IT issues at the leisure centres had been rectified, to which it was stated that these had not been fully resolved despite significant improvements. South Ribble Leisure Ltd staff were working closely with IT colleagues to improve technical infrastructure.

It was also requested that a further update on the Leisure Local Action Plan be included in the next quarterly Leisure Company performance report to the Scrutiny Committee.

The committee thanked the Cabinet Member and Assistant Director for their detailed report and attendance.

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. requests that future reports be circulated with the agenda papers to allow time for Members to consider them;
2. looks forward to the Leisure Company Business Plan and HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) scheme evaluation report being presented to a future Scrutiny Committee; and
3. asks that a progress report on the Leisure Local Action Plan be included in the next Leisure Company quarterly performance report.

41 Scrutiny Matters

41a Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The Council's representative on Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, Councillor David Howarth, provided an update on the work of the committee and discussions from recent meetings.

The Health Scrutiny Committee had recently discussed the enhanced network of acute stroke care and visited the Extra Care facility in Chorley.

41b Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

There had been no meetings or training recently undertaken by members of the Scrutiny Committee.

41c Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

41d Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

Members considered the Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan for the 2021/22 municipal year, which outlined topics and areas due to be scrutinised.

The Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan was noted.

Chair

Date