

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

**Present:**

Councillor Hunter (in the Chair)

Councillors

Mrs Callow JP  
Critchley

Galley  
Hobson

Matthews  
Ryan

L Williams

**In Attendance:**

Councillor Gillian Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council (Tourism, Economic Growth and Jobs)

Councillor Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Municipal Assets

Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business and Economic Development

Mr Paolo Pertica, Head of Visitors Services

Mr Phil Redmond, Chief Accountant

Mrs Hurst, Head of Democratic Governance

Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer

Mr Steve Sienkiewicz, Clerk to the Committee.

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2016**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 September 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

**3 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

The Committee noted that there were no applications from members of the public to speak at the meeting.

**4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS**

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions within the portfolios of the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council, taken since the last meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Jackson, Cabinet Member for Municipal Assets, responded to questions from the Committee regarding decision EX/42/2016 'Transport for the North'. He considered that Transport for Lancashire and Blackpool would become part of the Transport for the

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

North body and that it was important for Blackpool's issues to continue to be heard. He anticipated that Blackpool's good representation would continue and that confidence remained high, going forward.

The Committee requested further details be provided in connection with decision PH/64/2016 'Purchase of Property – 148 Church Street and 1 Caunce Street'. Councillor Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council, confirmed that there would be a further Cabinet Member decision taken on the matter in due course.

The Committee agreed to note the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions.

## **5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, November 2016 – February 2017, that related to the portfolios of the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council.

The Committee requested further details be provided in connection with decision reference 22/2016 'Executive Decision Making Procedure'. Councillor Campbell explained that it would be considered by the Executive as a constitutional change and that the papers in relation to it would become available at a later date.

A number of questions were raised in connection with decision reference 25/2016 'Future options for Central Station site'. Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Business and Economic Development, explained that the situation was looking more positive going forward and that interest in the redevelopment was being shown from a number of interested bodies. In connection with the re-location of the County and Magistrates courts, a feasibility study was currently being undertaken.

The Committee agreed to note the Forward Plan items.

## **6 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING AS AT MONTH 4 2016/2017**

The Committee considered the financial performance monitoring report, which set out the summary revenue budget position for the Council and its individual directorates for month 4, the period April 2016 – July 2016, together with an outlook for the remainder of the year. The report was complemented with an assessment of progress to date against the latest capital programme.

The report was presented by Mr Redmond, Chief Accountant. He outlined the headline situation, which was an overall overspend of £3.2m at month 4, compared with £2.6m at month 3. That was largely due to the increased number of looked after children and the associated costs, particularly in relation to external placements. As a result, the Children's Services Department was forecast to be £3.1m overspent, although the national trend was showing a similar upward trajectory. Mr Redmond added that there had been a significant increase in anti-social behaviour in the town, which had contributed to the increased numbers and cost of residential places.

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

Mr Redmond went on to outline the overspend within Property Services of just under £500,000, which was based mainly on the current pace of property rationalisation and pressure from rental income within the Central Business District. He also referred to the overspend on Concessionary Fares, which was mainly due to the increased patronage of buses and the impact of fare increases. He also made reference to the favourable position within Treasury Management of just over £1m due to the ongoing temporary windfall from the short-term interest rates that were currently being paid to finance recent capital expenditure. Those savings were helping to offset the forecast overspend within Children's Services.

Mr Redmond responded to a number of questions from the Committee. Referring to a section of the report which stated that within the remaining eight months of the financial year, there ought to be sufficient time to redress the current position, Mr Redmond was asked how that would be achieved in terms of working balances. He explained that the statement was a forecast but plans were in place with individual directorates to achieve the savings and the Director of Resources was involved in regular meetings to monitor those plans. Upon being asked about whether an overall strategy existed to bring about the required savings, Mr Redmond pointed to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, where the budget pressures were being reviewed.

Referring to individual service overspends, the Committee raised questions about Print Services, the Grundy Art Gallery and Governance and Partnerships. Asked whether Print Services were able to carry out any commercial activities, Mr Redmond confirmed that the service actively sought external work and income. The £63,000 forecast overspend by the Art Gallery was due to a loss of grant funding, which the service was now looking to replace via other means. Within Governance and Partnerships Services, the forecasted pressure of £34,000 within Legal Services was mainly due to an unachieved Priority Led Budgeting savings target and an income shortfall.

Responding to a question about how to reconcile increased demand for Council services against a reducing budget, Mr Redmond explained that as part of the budget process, a risk analysis would identify the pressures and a judgement would be made about savings targets. Upon questions being raised whether the £6m was a realistic target, Mr Redmond stated his belief that it was, although it might not be achievable due to the demands within Children's Services.

The Committee made reference to the unidentified savings of £122,000 in the Visitor Economy within the Places Directorate and requested a more detailed explanation. Mr Redmond explained that the savings were as yet unidentified and were yet to be delivered. The matter would be picked up with the Directorate.

The Committee raised the issue of the £856,000 PFI grant within Community and Environmental Services being no longer available. Mr Redmond confirmed that was the amount which Blackpool had lost in PFI credits at the time when the waste disposal operating company 'Global Renewables' went into liquidation. The amount was being considered along with Lancashire County Council in the review of recycling plants with the risk being covered against the specific waste PFI reserve.

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

The Committee asked about the reason for the overspend of £42,000 within the Resources Directorate, which the report stated was due to staffing costs and income pressures. Mr Redmond confirmed that that was not due to agency costs and was as a result of the need to provide additional staff support for the reception areas at Municipal Buildings and Bickerstaffe House.

The Committee discussed the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the deteriorating collection rate. Members agreed that it would be helpful if the actual costs could be illustrated within the report, as well as percentage figures. It was confirmed that the Revenues Department pursued arrears and non-payments, but also provided as much help and support as possible for people who were struggling to pay.

Mr Redmond was asked about the reduction in Business Rates collection, down from 35.7% last year to 33.8% as at month 4, 2016. He explained that was mainly due to a change in the phasing of payments and an extended period from 10 to 12 months which now applied. Going forward, he confirmed that the greatest risk to revenue collection was the appeals and back dated appeals processes.

Referring to the section of the report on the Summary Cash Flow Statement, and the interest charged by Lancashire County Council on the Local Government Reorganisation Debt, Mr Redmond was asked about the actual figure of the debt and he confirmed this to be approximately £19m.

The Committee agreed:

1. To note the report.
2. To request that in future, the actual costs involved within the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, in addition to percentage figures, were illustrated within the report.

Background papers: None.

## **7 WASTE SERVICES AND STREET CLEANSING PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Committee considered the Waste Services and Street Cleansing Performance Report, together with the results from the Council's Household Waste and Recycling Public Satisfaction Survey of 2015.

Councillor Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council, responded to questions from the Committee regarding the content of the report.

On the subject of timetabled waste collection from properties, Councillor Campbell confirmed that only items that were placed within the collection bins would be taken away and the leaving of additional items was discouraged. Upon being asked what would happen if Euro bins (otherwise known as large commercial bins) were full, Councillor Campbell stated she was not aware of this being a problem, but the street cleansing department would always strive to keep the town tidy.

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

The Committee queried whether the Selective Licensing Scheme could do anything to encourage landlords of Houses in Multiple Occupation to purchase Euro bins, it was pointed out that there were conditions as to where residents could store waste, although every effort was being made to encourage the take up of Euro bins. It was explained that a number of older buildings that had been converted from hotels and guest houses into Houses in Multiple Occupation, did not have adequate room to accommodate Euro bins. Therefore, the Planning Department had made it a requirement that any application for a conversion of premises into a Houses in Multiple Occupation, had to indicate where adequate storage for waste bins would be allocated within the converted building. In addition, Councillor Campbell agreed to find out how many Houses in Multiple Occupation currently had Euro bins in use and to report back in due course.

Referring to a section of the report which stated the reduction in cleansing frequencies to residential streets was at breaking point if held to account on the frequency for regular cleaning, the Committee asked for an explanation of the term 'breaking point'. Councillor Campbell explained that very difficult conditions currently existed and that residential street cleansing had been reduced. Where possible, the frequency was now being aligned in to follow bin collections, so that anything left over or blown away would be cleaned up, but there simply were not the finances available to carry out the job as previously. The Committee made specific reference to the reducing budget as detailed within the report and asked about the possibility of delivering on all of the current aspirations, given the difficult circumstances. Councillor Campbell acknowledged the difficulties that lay ahead but pointed out the hard work undertaken by all of the staff. Referring to the start of the current budget process, she confirmed that the Executive would undoubtedly have to take difficult decisions and that unfortunately, it was not possible to give any reassurances currently.

On the subject of the Keep Blackpool Tidy campaign, Councillor Campbell confirmed that proactive work was being undertaken with primary schools. A recent meeting had taken place with Keep Britain Tidy and various stakeholders and there would be an official launch of the campaign in February 2017.

The Committee agreed that the general state of cleanliness on the Promenade was very good and asked for its compliments to be passed to the Street Cleansing Team.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

## **8 COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT APRIL 2016 - AUGUST 2016**

Mr Pertica, Head of Visitors Services, presented the Committee with the Community Safety Performance Report for April – August 2016. The report considered the performance of the Community Safety Partnership's 2016-2019 priorities during that period. These were detailed as: violence against the person, anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, sexual offences and rape and child sexual exploitation. The report also made reference to additional ongoing work such as counter terrorism, serious organised crime, hate crime and modern day slavery.

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

The Committee considered the content of the report and put a number of questions to Mr Pertica in relation to it. He was asked about the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and its impact, specifically whether there was anything that could be added to it. Mr Pertica explained that work was ongoing to consider whether its coverage and prohibitions could be extended. Upon being asked whether it would be necessary to carry out a further public consultation if that was to be the case, Councillor Campbell confirmed that whilst relevant stakeholders and partner organisations would be consulted, it would not be necessary to carry out a further public consultation. Mr Pertica added that all Alleygates and Dog Control Orders would need to be converted to Public Space Protection Order by October 2017. In connection with that piece of work, the Committee asked whether some of the job roles would become more universal. Mr Pertica advised that a number of officers could enforce Public Space Protection Orders, for example all Public Protection, Community Safety, Street Scene and Civil Enforcement officers all had delegated authority to enforce against the existing prohibitions of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order. However, Mr Pertica explained that officers were often extremely busy with their core roles and therefore had limited capacity to assist with other duties.

On the subject of the Park Public Space Protection Order, the Committee enquired about the need for relevant signage and were advised that signs were on order, but that in most cases, enforcement action could already be undertaken by the Police as the behaviours covered by the Public Space Protection Order could also be classified as criminal damage. The Committee pointed out that anecdotal evidence had been received that the Police consider such action to be a Council matter and Mr Pertica agreed to pursue the matter further.

The Committee raised questions in relation to progress in relation to the methadone use reduction programme. Mr Pertica explained that commissioners of drug treatment services had made attempts to reduce the number of people on long term methadone use. He advised that ultimately, decisions regarding an individual's methadone prescription was a clinical decision to be taken by appropriate professionals. Mr Pertica explained the differences between chronic or acute conditions, noting that for some problematic drug users, their addiction was of an acute nature and could therefore be treated accordingly. It was noted that other users may be chronic users and would therefore require different approaches to treatment, which in some cases required long term methadone treatment. Mr Pertica advised that the contract was out to tender for drug and alcohol services and referred to an ideal period for the maximum length methadone prescription.

Referring to the Counter Terrorism section of the report, the Committee asked who the main targets were in terms of prevention measures. Mr Pertica explained that Prevent was part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and any prevention measures were part of the overall strategy to prevent radicalisation and terrorism. Mr Pertica also explained that there were a number of types of terrorist activities that could occur, which included animal welfare and environmental issues, as well as religious and political. However, Mr Pertica explained that one of the main targeted audience were schools and students. He pointed out the changing nature of terrorism risks and how difficult it was to envisage where a risk might arise, particularly due to the use of the internet.

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

Noting the merger of the sexual offenses and rape BSafe Blackpool working group, with the prostitution BSafe Blackpool working group, the Committee raised questions relating to the membership of the new group. Mr Pertica explained that there had been a substantial amount of cross-membership between the two groups, which had been a key reason for merging the groups. The agencies represented in the group included the local authority, the Police and a number of third sector organisations that operated in the area.

The Committee noted and pointed out that there had been an increase in crimes of violence and theft, both in Blackpool and across Lancashire. Mr Pertica explained that recording procedures for crimes of violence against the person had recently changed which had contributed to the increased figures. He added that the increase in Blackpool had been less than across the County and that although the figures for less serious assault had increased, there had been a reduction in more serious assaults.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

## **9 ANNUAL CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT**

The Committee considered the Annual Customer Feedback Report which covered the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The report included a breakdown of the comments, compliments and complaints received by the Council during that period. It summarised the Council's performance in dealing with complaints and explored the themes within customer feedback. It also included an overview of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman. The report concluded by identifying a number of actions that could be taken to improve the way that customer feedback is dealt with and to increase understanding of the causes of complaints.

The report was presented by Mrs Henshaw, Delivery Development Officer, who responded to questions from the Committee in connection with the content of the report. On the subject of building resilience into the community and encouraging residents to carry out more activities themselves, Mrs Henshaw explained that whilst there were limits on the extent of volunteering, efforts were underway to promote this type of activity wherever possible, an example being the excellent work carried out by friends groups within parks. Elected Members were also encouraged to try to persuade members of the public to do more themselves. Mrs Hurst, Head of Democratic Governance, added that an exercise was being undertaken to map out Community Groups within areas and meetings were taking place with Councillors in connection with that initiative.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

## **10 BUDGET SCRUTINY PANEL**

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

The Committee considered the establishment of a Budget Scrutiny Panel.

Mrs Hurst explained that the establishment of a Budget Scrutiny Panel would enable improved scrutiny of budget proposals, with a particular focus on the budget savings across directorates and their likely impact. It was further explained that the Panel would consist of nine non-Executive members, comprising of six Labour and three Conservative Members, to be appointed by the Group Leaders. The aim for the Panel would be to complete the review in a day on a date in December or early January, with an additional meeting to be scheduled later in January, if required, to follow up any unanswered queries. It was intended that the response from the Scrutiny Panel would be forwarded to the Executive in time for its first budget meeting on 6 February 2017.

Responding to questions from the Committee, Mrs Hurst confirmed that the Panel would be supplementary to the current scrutiny process which involved meetings with Non-Domestic Rate Payers and Trades Unions.

The Committee agreed to approve the recommendation to establish a Budget Scrutiny Panel.

Background papers: None.

## **11 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

The Committee considered its Workplan for the remainder of the current Municipal Year. The Chairman explained that it was a flexible, working document and he was open to suggestion from members for Workplan items at any time. He added that any issues raised by the Committee would be taken to the Workplan meetings which were held with Directors.

The Committee also considered the monitoring recommendations table which had been included, enabling Members to monitor progress on the implementation of scrutiny recommendations.

The Committee noted that a new Community Safety Group had been formed in October and asked if a report could be brought to the Committee in due course. The Chairman agreed to take the matter forward accordingly.

Members discussed the impact of the scrutiny review on Licensed Horse Drawn Hackney Carriages that concluded towards the end of 2015. It was considered that the recommendations from the review did not appear to have progressed with sufficient vigour. Particular concern was raised in connection with the amount of horse droppings on the promenade which was considered to be at totally unacceptable levels, despite the recommendations following the scrutiny review. Councillor Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council, explained that she recognised the extent of the problem and assured the Committee that action was being taken.



**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016**

The Committee asked questions around the Council's Transience Programme and a suggestion was made that it would be a suitable topic for scrutiny activity in due course. The Chairman agreed to raise the matter at the next Workplan meeting.

The Committee agreed:

1. To note the Workplan and scrutiny recommendations table.
2. To request that a detailed update on progress of the recommendations from the Licensed Horse Drawn Hackney Carriage be brought to a Committee meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Background papers: None.

**12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Thursday 15 December 2016, at 6.00pm.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 7.35 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:  
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