

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2017**

Present:

Councillor Hunter (in the Chair)

Councillors

G Coleman
Galley

Matthews
Mitchell

Ryan
Singleton

L Williams

In Attendance:

Councillor Simon Blackburn, Leader of the Council.

Councillor Christine Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing.

Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development.

Councillor Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services.

Councillor Luke Taylor, Cabinet Assistant for Deputy Leader.

Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services.

Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Place.

Mr Steve Thompson, Director of Resources.

Mr John-Paul Lovie, Waste Services Manager.

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 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 September 2017 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 its remit, taken since the last meeting of the Committee.

The Committee asked a number of questions in connection with decision number EX32/2017 'Town Centre Investment'. Asked whether the investment had gone forward and been signed off, Councillor Smith explained that it was going forward and was on

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schedule, as planned. He explained that more information would become available once the legal process and contractual agreements had been signed off.

The Committee asked questions about the building of the tram extension towards Blackpool North station and the need for the Wilkinsons store to be relocated before completion of the new tram terminus could be achieved. Mr Cavill explained that all parties involved had agreed dates for completion of various works, although the matter was still subject to the signing of contracts.

With regard to decision number EX33/2017 'Investment in support of Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone', the Committee asked whether uses for the airport had been identified prior to its purchase taking place. Councillor Smith explained that the Masterplan for the whole Enterprise Zone was being developed at the same time that the opportunity to purchase the airport had arisen. The opportunities for use were identified within the Masterplan, although it would now require certain modifications, following the purchase decision.

In connection with the same decision, the Committee asked how many new directors would be appointed in respect of Regional and City Airports (Blackpool) Holdings Limited and whether any Elected Members would be included as appointees. Mr Cavill explained that currently three senior officers within the Council occupied the board positions. A decision on the new structure had yet to be taken and both the Company Secretary and Elected Members would be consulted on this 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 2017 – March 2018, relating to the portfolios of the Cabinet Members whose responsibilities fell within the remit of the Committee.

The Committee agreed to note the Forward Plan items.

6 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING AS AT MONTH 4 2017/2018

The Committee considered a report which detailed the level of spending against the Council's Revenue and Capital budgets for the first four months to 31 July 2017.

The report was presented by Mr Thompson, Director of Resources who, along with Councillor Blackburn, responded to questions from the Committee on the report's content.

Members discussed the overspend figures within the Children's Services Directorate and asked why the overspend had increased by £30,000, despite the numbers of looked after children having reduced by four during the one month period since consideration of the previous report. Councillor Blackburn confirmed that the numbers of looked after

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children had come down, although he explained that the majority of cost reductions were achieved via children within cheaper placement areas. However, he did anticipate that the overspend would continue to diminish, going forward.

In connection with the residential care of looked after children, Members questioned why Blackpool was not investing more in the construction of its own facilities in order to achieve a greater control of costs, compared with external placements. Councillor Blackburn acknowledged the increased costs of external placements and agreed that it would be more efficient to house children within Blackpool's own facilities. However, he explained that this would rely on building children's homes in the town which he believed offered the worst possible outcomes for looked after children, with much better results being achieved from children being placed into foster care. He stressed his belief that institutional solutions to child care were not the best way forward.

The Committee discussed further the best possible ways of looking after children, together with the associated high costs of external placements. Councillor Blackburn explained that wherever possible, children were placed within family settings. Only when all other possibilities had been exhausted, did the Council look at external placements.

The Committee asked about the section of the report concerned with business rates collection, pointing out the collection rate of 33.2% and the fact that 350 business rate summonses had been issued in July 2017. Members asked if this was a typical figure and what the Council did to assist businesses who were struggling to pay. Mr Thompson explained that it was a typical figure, taking into account seasonal adjustments and the Council had a range of measures to assist businesses who were struggling to pay. Councillor Blackburn added that whilst it was right to offer every assistance possible to support businesses that were encountering genuine difficulties, there were certain successful businesses that were failing to meet their obligations and he stressed that robust action was being taken to deal with these situations.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

7 WASTE SERVICES AND STREET CLEANSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report which outlined the performance of Waste Services and Street Cleansing, with an emphasis on headline data, statistics and performance indicators. The report was introduced by Mr Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services, who summarised the key areas of the report before responding to questions from the Committee.

Asked about the very precise collection figures that related to the mobile recycling unit (the Rover service) and how these were obtained, Mr Blackledge explained the importance of monitoring such information and that each item was carefully recorded, as well as the outcome also being measured. He added that there was a requirement for all recycling figures to be reported to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

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The Committee asked about the Garden Waste Subscription Service, which currently had over 10,000 customers. Asked if the service was breaking even in terms of costs, Mr Blackledge explained that the service was comfortably delivering the costs of its running, and was helping to offset expenditure in other areas of waste collection.

Members discussed the section of the report which dealt with the review of the Veolia refuse and recycling contract. It was pointed out that Veolia was connected to the Environment Trust awards scheme for green projects and it had been noted that Veolia had been generous in its awards to apparently prosperous areas, such as the south coast and Alderley Edge in Cheshire, whilst Blackpool had been overlooked. Asked if it would be possible to insert a clause into a future contract which ensured there was some sort of return to be got back in the case of good performance, Mr Blackledge explained that social value was an important part of this type of contract, which would be examined carefully going forward.

The Committee asked about the success of weed killing within street cleansing and whether there were any plans to consider different methods next year in response to changing weather patterns. Mr Lovey, Waste Services Manager, explained that weather patterns were currently considered and would be subject to further review, taking into account the current resource pressures. He added that weeds tended to grow at the same time each year and that dry and sunny conditions needed to prevail for the treatments to be successful.

Responding to questions about the 3GS Environmental Solutions contract and the Council's approach to litter enforcement, Mr Blackledge explained that the Council's aim was to develop a more generic role for its enforcement staff in terms of littering and dog fouling, as well as looking at providing more resource to deal with the problem of fly tipping.

The Committee asked about the 900 fixed penalty notices that had been issued during the period of tenure undertaken by 3GS, with the report indicating that two thirds of those had been paid. Mr Blackledge acknowledged that there had been some notices issued in error and that there had been some issues relating to the quality of documentation in some cases. Asked if all outstanding fines had now been paid, Mr Blackledge explained that 31 cases were currently going through the prosecution process, together with a number of other cases in hand.

The Committee discussed the quantifiable benefits of an item of waste being recycled, taking into account the resources applied and asked whether figures were available. Mr Lovey explained that high level statistics regarding carbon studies did exist, although none were specific to Blackpool.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

8 BUDGET SCRUTINY PANEL

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The Committee considered the establishment of a Budget Scrutiny Panel to enable improved scrutiny of budget proposals, in particular the budget savings by directorate and their likely impact.

The Committee agreed to establish a Budget Scrutiny Panel, under the scope and terms outlined within the report.

Background papers: None.

9 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.

The Committee agreed to note the content of the Workplan.

Background papers: None.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 13 December 2017, at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 6.53 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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