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MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018

Present:

Councillor Hunter (in the Chair)

Councillors

Mrs Callow JP	Humphreys	Ryan
Galley	Matthews	Singleton

In Attendance:

Andrew Foot, Head of Housing
Paolo Pertica, Head of Community Safety Strategy
Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Philip Welsh, Head of Visitor Economy
Ruth Henshaw, Delivery Development Officer
Vikki Piper, Housing Options Manager
John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

Councillor Gillian Campbell, Deputy Leader
Councillor Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Highways
Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development
Councillor Mrs Christine Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing

Apologies:

There were no apologies for absence received at this meeting.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ryan gave a personal explanation in relation to a Cabinet Member decision to provide a business loan to Blackpool Teaching Hospital NHS Trust outlined in agenda item 4. They confirmed that they are an employee of trust, but that they had no involvement in the management of the loan.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 25 APRIL 2018

Members considered the minutes from the 25 April 2018 meeting.

The Committee discussed the minute regarding Flood Risk Management. Members requested that more detail be included regarding the questions asked at the meeting.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman and Councillor Ryan would agree proposed wording for an amendment to the minute with Officers and that the minutes of the 25 April 2018 would return to the Committee for consideration at its September meeting.

MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications to speak by members of the public on this occasion.

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 on 25 April 2018 and asked a number of questions pertaining to decision EX24/2018 'Provision of a Business Loan to Blackpool Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust'. Members queried what guarantees existed in the event the Trust was unable to repay the loan. Mr Steve Thompson, Director of Resources, advised that the Department of Health had guidelines in such circumstances and the liability would ultimately fall to them. He also stated that he was unaware of any precedent of this happening.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the items within the Forward Plan, June 2018 to September 2018, relating to the portfolios of Cabinet Members whose responsibilities fell within the remit of the Committee.

Members also queried the process for applications for Business Loans. Mr Thompson responded that all applications were considered by a sub-group of the Public Loans Group. The Committee was advised that there were 9 applications under consideration and a further 4 had been recently approved. He added that all applicants were required to pay a 1% deposit towards due diligence costs and the Council's out of pockets expenses as part of the application process, which had the effect of discouraging frivolous applications.

The Committee also discussed investments in Blackpool town centre. Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development, reported that work was ongoing and that the details were yet to be finalised.

The Committee also asked questions around the Flood Risk Management Strategy. Councillor Jackson, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Highways, responded that the strategy was still in development and solutions to tackling the issues of flash flooding and how to respond to unforeseen situations were being considered.

Members also discussed the use of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in Blackpool. Councillor Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council (Tourism, Economic Growth and Jobs) responded that the Council was currently making the best use of PSPOs. They also reported that work was being undertaken with partner organisations, such as the Police, to expand the areas covered by PSPO.

6 PROVISIONAL REVENUE OUTTURN 2017/2018

The Committee considered the Provisional Outturn for 2017/2018 compared with the approved budget and capital expenditure in the year ended 31 March 2018 with sources

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018**

of funding.

Members discussed Council Tax collection rates and noted that arrears had increased for the year. Mr Thompson responded that the collection rate was a four-yearly figure and that the return was better than previous years, but that the Council would continue to explore any options that could improve the collection rate. In regard to the increase in the amount in arrears Mr Thompson explained that this was in part driven by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and that the maximum attachment of benefits often exceeded the annual council tax due. Councillor Campbell explained that poor quality housing was also partly responsible for this and that the Council was looking for opportunities to invest to improve the situation.

The Committee also asked questions around the number of Business Rates summonses issued, which was stated as 873 for the 12-months up until the end of March 2018. Mr Thompson informed Members that the recovery of money owed had been effective through the use of bailiff services.

7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2017/2018

The Committee considered the Treasury Management Outturn Report for the year ended 31 March 2018.

Members queried the 'Authorised Limit' in relation to the level of Council borrowing. Mr Thompson explained that this was a ceiling which could not be exceeded and was agreed annually by Full Council and internal monitoring was undertaken by Officers to ensure it was maintained.

It was also noted that there had been an increase in amount of temporary loans, Members queried why this was the case. Mr Thompson responded that this was to exploit the low Bank of England base rate which made short-term loans cheaper for the Council.

The Committee also queried if more borrowing could be undertaken to invest in future. Mr Thompson replied that this would be undesirable as there was a cost to holding cash and the external auditor would typically only allow borrowing three years in advance of need.

8 COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT APRIL 2017 - MARCH 2018

The Committee considered the Community Safety Performance Report for April 2017 to March 2018.

Members discussed the issues of homelessness and begging within the town and queried what work was being undertaken to address it, including the scheme for 'Alternative Giving'. The Committee raised particular concern with instance of professional and aggressive begging, which could deter people from visiting the town centre. Mr Paolo Pertica, Head of Community Safety Strategy, responded that work was being undertaken to raise the profile of 'Alternative Giving'. Regarding the issue of professional and aggressive begging, Mr Pertica informed the Committee that many of these individuals

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018**

have complex needs and where possible they were referred to the appropriate help. However, the Council can and has used the tools and powers from the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and issued numerous Community Protection Warning (CPWs) and Community Protection Notices (CPNs) to those begging aggressively. Those individuals who persisted to beg following a CPW and a CPN were taken to Court and in some cases Criminal Behaviour Orders were issued to them. Councillor Campbell reported that such enforcement had been a significant success for the Council and a number of those who used to regularly beg in the town centre have ceased their activity following the enforcement work referred to above.

Members asked if the management of the fracking site has had an impact on the crime level reported for the 2017/18 period. Mr Pertica stated that he could not speak on behalf of Lancashire Constabulary, but that it would be naïve for anyone to suggest that the management of the fracking site has had no impact at all on the Police's capacity. Mr Pertica then explained that his understanding was that initially the management of the fracking site was covered by officers from the Western Division only, but that now it is shared by officers from the Constabulary's whole area. The Committee asked Mr Pertica to raise his concerns about this with senior Police Officers and he agreed to do so at the next available opportunity.

With regards to the overall figures for 2017/18 period, Mr Pertica made reference to the fact that for some crime categories, such as Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences, an increase is not necessarily negative because it may be due to more victims feeling able to report such offences against them, whereas in the past they may have felt unable to do so. Mr Pertica also explained that another change which could of had an impact on the overall figures for 2017/18 is that in previous years Police Officers had 72 hours to determine if what had been reported to them was a crime, whereas now they have to do so within 24 hours. Therefore, there could be occasions where certain reports which are recorded as a crime then prove not to be, however they still would remain included in the overall figures. Mr Pertica stated that if the crime increases experienced during 2017/18 had only taken place in Blackpool, then it would be a concern, but similar increases have also taken place in the rest of Lancashire and nationally.

Members also asked about the ongoing issues with the 101 telephone number and the difficulties which members of the public are having with having their calls answered. Mr Pertica explained that the 101 line is a Police service, not a Council one and therefore he could not comment on behalf of Lancashire Constabulary. However, Mr Pertica stated that his understanding was that, although there were some issues with accessing the service initially, recently it has improved and callers are getting their calls answered.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

9 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan, which outlined the extent and causes of homelessness in the town and the Council's response to it.

Members discussed rough sleeping in the town and how the Council was responding and if it had the necessary resources to do so. Mr Andrew Foot, Head of Housing, informed

MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018

members that additional resources had been awarded following a bid for 'Trailblazer' funds, which would allow the service to increase capacity to meet the demand and complexity of issues.

It was noted that many rough sleepers had come to Blackpool from outside and it was queried if these individuals could be returned. It was reported that approximately two-thirds of people who had travelled to the town and sought help from the Council could be returned, and that when this happened work was undertaken to ensure that they continued to receive support and address any needs that they may have.

The Committee agreed to note the report and the attached strategy and action plan.

10 TOURISM PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Committee considered the Tourism Performance Update, which had been held back from the 25 April 2018 meeting.

Members queried the statistics provided as part of the report. Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Visitor Economy, informed the Committee that the figures provided a snapshot of the visitors to the town and had been intended to give an idea of the tourism in the town.

The use of the figures and how they were linked to marketing strategies was also discussed. Mr Welsh informed Members that a wide range of data and intelligence was used, some provided by partner organisations, to develop and monitor strategies.

A query was raised regarding the apparent under-performance of the Grundy Art Gallery and if this would affect plans for the proposed Blackpool museum. Mr Welsh responded that the Grundy had suffered as a result of a lack of a curator, but that this issue had now been resolved and the performance figures were expected to improve.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

11 ANNUAL COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/2018

The Committee agreed to note the Annual Council Plan Performance Report 2017/2018.

12 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee agreed to note the Scrutiny Workplan.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was confirmed as 12 September 2018.

Chairman

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018**

(The meeting ended at 7.45pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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