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## MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2019

### **Present:**

Councillor Hunter (in the Chair)

Councillors

Callow	Critchley	Mitchell
Mrs Callow JP	Galley	Ryan

### **In Attendance:**

Alan Cavill, Director of Communication and Regeneration  
Steve Thompson, Director of Resources  
John Paul Lovie, Head of Waste Policy and Partnerships  
John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

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

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2018**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting of the Tourism, Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 14 November 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record

### **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 14 November 2018.

Members discussed Executive Decision EX49/2018 regarding the Blackpool Airport Strategy. The Committee referred to a leaflet publicised in the early 2000s regarding the development of the airport to 2030 and noted that £90m of investment and 5,000 jobs would be created by 2020, it was queried if the Council still aimed to achieve these targets. In response Mr A Cavill, Director Communications and Regeneration, responded that the ownership of the airport had changed hands twice since the publication of the

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leaflet and that events such as the 2008 financial crisis had meant that plans outlined in it were no longer current. While the Council aimed to create jobs at the airport the return of large scale passenger flights to Blackpool was no-longer financially viable. It was estimated that 1.5 million people would need to use the airport per year to generate a profit, whereas the highest passenger numbers recorded during the operation of large scale passenger flights had been 650,000.

Despite this smaller scale business flights such as in support of the offshore oil and gas industry where ongoing. Consideration of other sources of income from the airport was also being undertaken.

Members also queried if an update on the plans for the airport could be provided to all Councillors. Mr Cavill confirmed he would be happy to provide a briefing at Members' request.

The Committee also discussed Executive Decision EX50/2018 in relation to the release of land for business use in North Blackpool. Members queried the planned usage of the land and who it was envisioned would operate there. Councillor M Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development, responded that the land would be used for commercial mid-sized office units. Mr Cavill added that there was a strong demand for this kind of usage within Blackpool and that there were no plans to industrialise the site.

### **5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the contents of the Council's Forward Plan January 2019 to March 2019, relating to the portfolios of Cabinet Members whose responsibilities fell within its remit.

Members queried what percentage of outstanding loans from the Business Loans Fund represented 'bad' debt. Mr Cavill responded that a very small proportion of outstanding loans constituted 'bad' debt, representing less than 0.5% of the total.

The Committee also discussed the Lancashire Flood Risk Strategy, decision reference 11/2018, and the Council's relationship with United Utilities. Members expressed the view that following two meetings with United Utilities representatives to discuss the Anchorsholme flooding, the company still had yet to fulfil its duty of care to the residents of Blackpool. Councillor Jackson, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Highways, responded that he shared the Committee's concerns but that there was a need for an ongoing relationship with the company as Blackpool's utilities provider but that it should be based on honesty and trust. He also informed Members that he would be attending meetings with United Utilities in the near future where he would pass on the concerns expressed.

Members also discussed a letter to United Utilities from the Chairman that was being drafted to outline what the Committee believed to be the outstanding questions following the meetings attended by the company on 25 April 2018 and 14 November 2018. It was queried if the publication of the Section 19 report into the Anchorsholme flooding could be delayed until the response to the Chairman's letter had been received.

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Councillor Jackson responded that he would consult with Officers regarding the report and any response provided by United Utilities.

The Town Centre Parking Strategy, decision reference 4/2019, was also discussed. Members reported ongoing issues with the lift at the West Street Car Park that had affected accessibility over the Christmas and New Year period. Concerns were raised that this may have put people off coming into the town centre and that it had an adverse impact on businesses at an important time of year for trading. Councillor Smith responded that the concerns would be investigated with a view to finding a solution as soon as possible.

Discussion also took place regarding the Business Rates Retention Scheme. Mr Thompson informed the Committee that the Council was part of a pilot pool of Lancashire authorities that had applied to retain 75% of business rates collected in 2019/2020. Formal approval of Blackpool's participation in the scheme had been agreed at the 21 January 2019 meeting of the Executive. It was envisaged that the money raised from participation in the scheme could be used to support economic growth across the Lancashire footprint.

A query was raised regarding partnership working and potential income from the Local Full Fibre Network. Mr Thompson replied that the Executive had approved progression of the project and that Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's preferred approach would be to co-operate with partners in the development of the network.

**6 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING AS AT MONTH 8 2018/2019**

Mr Steve Thompson, Director of Resources, presented the Financial Monitoring Report outlining the level of spending against revenue and capital budgets for the first eight months to 30 November 2018.

The Committee discussed the ongoing overspend in Children's Services and queried if officers were aware of any work being undertaken on a national level to identify the causes of the problem. Mr Thompson replied that this was a topical issue affecting a number of councils and that a relevant National Audit Office report had been issued the previous day (22 January 2019).

Members also asked how the Children's Services overspend had affected the Council's budget as a whole. Mr Thompson replied that work was ongoing to manage the effects of the overspend and that underspends in other services would be utilised to mitigate the impact. A final review of the Council's financial position would be undertaken in the Provisional Outturn report 2018/2019.

The overspend of £234k due to the loss of catering contracts was queried by the Committee. Members asked what monitoring was undertaken of contracts and if it was sometimes better to relinquish bad contracts than continue them. Mr Thompson responded that this was sometimes the case but that every contract was monitored to ensure that it delivered value for money.

The Committee queried a reference to delayed income in Communications and

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Regeneration contributing to an overall overspend. Mr Cavil responded that the income related to support given to a film project produced in Blackpool which would not generate income until it had been released, however an initial payment was expected to be forthcoming soon.

Members also discussed the reduction in bus and tram usage, which had contributed to an underspend in Concessionary fares, and if this had been caused by the ongoing regeneration work in the town centre. Mr Thompson replied that reductions in public transport patronage was a national issue caused by behavioural changes that saw increasing numbers of people using cars as their primary mode of transport besides changes to the state pension age. It was also noted that there would be a corresponding negative effect on Blackpool Transport Services as a result.

The remaining level of funds available in Ward Budgets was highlighted, with Mr Thompson informing Members that the figures shown represented the position at the end of November 2018 and that current levels would be lower and would be reported in the month nine Financial Monitoring report.

## **7 BLACKPOOL TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE**

Councillor Gillian Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development, and Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration, presented an update on the ongoing and planned Town Centre Regeneration projects.

In relation to the proposed leisure development in Blackpool central the Committee queried if consideration had been given to underground parking instead of the development of an above ground multi storey car park which could then free up land for further leisure development. Mr Cavill responded that the sandy nature of the land and the close proximity of the sea meant that any underground development would be costly due to a need to prevent flooding. The low value of the land also made such development financially unviable.

The Committee queried the bid to the Coastal Communities Fund to support the development of Blackpool Museum and what the impact would be on the project should the bid fail. Mr Cavill responded that the bid represented only one of the funding streams for the project. A substantial bid had been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund and was at an advanced stage. The outcomes of bids would become known by the end of 2019 and the Council was confident that funding could be secured to support the project.

Members asked what the bid to the Future High Street Fund would be used for if successful. In particular the Committee asked if the possibility of creating clusters of independent retailers in the town centre and the conversion some retail areas into high quality housing stock had been discussed. Mr Cavill responded that the bid was currently under development and that a number of options were being considered to increase the number of people coming into the centre of town, including independent clusters and the creation of additional office space to attract businesses to relocate their staff into the town centre.

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**8 SINGLE USE PLASTICS POLICY UPDATE**

Mr John-Paul Lovie, Head of Waste Policy and Partnerships, presented a report on the development of a Single-Use Plastics Policy and Charter to reduce the usage of plastics by the Council and its wholly-owned companies.

The Committee asked if the policy would sit within a wider framework for making Blackpool 'greener'. Mr Lovie replied that the Government had produced a strategy in December 2018 which sought to incentivise the use of environmentally friendly materials and create greater opportunities for community involvement in 'green' projects.

Mr Lovie also explained, in response to a question from Members, that there would be possible cost implications in sourcing environmentally friendly materials for use by the Council but that this should be offset against the benefits to the environment. It was further noted that some of the Council's wholly-owned companies, in particular Blackpool Operating Company Ltd, had already made progress in introducing sustainable products and that the Council could benefit from their experience when sourcing its own materials.

Members asked that their congratulations be passed on to Blackpool Operating Company Ltd for their work in reduction the use of plastic and the introduction of recyclable materials at the Sandcastle Waterpark.

The Committee asked if the Council would be working to encourage businesses and residents within the town to reduce their plastic usage as part of the policy. Mr Lovie explained that it was important that the Council improved its own position in relation to plastic usage first so that it could set an example before working with other groups within Blackpool.

It was queried if additional funding was available to support the policy. Mr Lovie responded that there were limited additional funding opportunities open to the Council but that officers would investigate any that arose.

**9 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

Members considered the Committee's Workplan for the upcoming year.

It was agreed that following discussion at the meeting that updates on the Town Centre Regeneration and Single Use Plastic Policy should be added to the Workplan for consideration at the June 2019 meeting of the Committee.

Members were also informed that the Council's Audit Committee had requested the Committee consider the Council's channel shift process which had been designed to improve overall service delivery by better signposting the Council's services via the website. Members agreed to add this to the Workplan as an agenda item for a future meeting of the Committee.

The input from the scrutiny task and finish group into the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy was also noted.

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**10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as 19 June 2019 commencing at 6.00pm, subject to confirmation at Annual Council.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 7.20 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:  
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