

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 19 JUNE 2014

Present:

Councillor Taylor (in the Chair)

Councillors

| | | | |
|---------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Mrs Callow JP | Doherty | Hutton | O'Hara |
| Coleman | Elmes | Lee | Smith |
| D Coleman | Evans | M Mitchell | Stansfield |

In Attendance:

Carmel McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive - Human Resources, Communication and Engagement

Alan Cavill, Assistant Chief Executive - Regeneration, Tourism and Culture

Gary Smith, Audit Manager

Venessa Beckett, Corporate Development and Policy Officer

Ruth Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer

Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Services Advisor

Councillor Fred Jackson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Urban Regeneration

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Member for Tourism and Leisure

Councillor Eddie Collett, Cabinet Member for Public Health

Councillor John Jones, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Equality and Diversity

Councillor Ivan Taylor, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 1ST MAY 2014

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1st May 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

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4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee considered the decisions taken since the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee by the Executive and Cabinet Members.

A question was also raised in relation to decision number EX/35/2014 'Statutory Duties Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Final Blackpool and Lancashire Flood Risk Management Strategy', with regards to whether the deadlines had been met for the recommendations made by the Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Review Panel. Councillor Jackson reported that an answer would be sought for the Committee Members.

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

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, issue number 05/2014.

The Committee agreed to note the Forward Plan items.

6 APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the appointment of a Call-In Sub Committee, together with the appointment of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the Committee.

The Committee agreed:

1. To appoint a Call-In Sub Committee with the following membership: Councillors Mrs Taylor, D Coleman, Elmes, M Mitchell, Benson, Mrs Callow, Williams and Clapham.
2. That the Call-In Sub Committee undertakes the functions and responsibilities in relation to Call-In requests and detailed in the Council's Constitution (Part 4, Rules of Procedure, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, paragraphs 15 and 16).
3. That the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Call-In Sub Committee be occupied by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee respectively.

Background papers: None.

7 COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT 2013 / 2014

Mrs R. Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer, presented the priority report for the final quarter of 2013/2014, with specific consideration for Corporate Priorities Five, Six and Nine. Mrs Henshaw explained the context of quarterly priority reports being made to the Scrutiny Committee and advised Members on the format of the reports.

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The Committee was advised of proposals to make slight alterations to priority reporting for 2014/2015, which involved the timetable for reporting being amended so that reports would be presented by Council Plan theme.

Mr A Cavill, Assistant Chief Executive – Regeneration, Tourism and Culture, provided the Committee with reports on Priority Five – ‘Attract Sustainable Investment and Create Quality Jobs’ and Priority Six – ‘Encourage Responsible Entrepreneurship for the Benefit of our Communities.’

With regards to Priority Five, Mr Cavill advised the Committee of the various construction schemes, which had brought a number of jobs and apprenticeships in the construction industry to the borough for local residents. Responding to questions, Mr Cavill reported that some of the apprenticeships had led to full time employment.

Mr Cavill provided the Committee with details relating to the work being undertaken by the Council in order to increase business growth. He reported that the Council had launched its own loan and grant scheme called ‘Blackpool Investment Fund’, which was financed from interest earned from previously successful commercial loans, together with some town centre ring fenced grant funds provided by the government. Mr Cavill advised that the fund could be used to finance property improvements or expansions, the purchase of essential machinery and equipment and for associated infrastructure.

Mr Cavill also provided the Committee with a summary of the challenges for 2014/2015 with regards to Priority Five before responding to a number of Members’ questions.

The Committee was also given details of the activity that had been undertaken in relation to Priority Six, which involved aiding Start Up businesses and increasing business survival rates, encouraging innovation and embedding responsible procurement practices.

Mrs C McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive, provided the Committee with an update report on Priority Nine – ‘To Deliver Quality Services through a Professional, Well-rewarded and Motivated Workforce.’

Mrs McKeogh provided the Committee with the key issues relating to the Priority for the last quarter. Members were advised that the position with regards to the budget had been relatively successful so far, with staff voluntarily agreeing to changing their terms and conditions with regards to unpaid leave. The Committee was also made aware of the work that had been undertaken to maintain and improve operational resilience, in what had been a challenging period that had resulted in many changes to the organisation. It was noted that those changes for staff included office moves, car parking arrangements, IT equipment and redundancies.

Members requested that their gratitude for the hard work of Council staff during the past few challenging years be recorded.

Mrs McKeogh also discussed Customer Service with the Committee, with Members raising a number of questions regarding customer satisfaction.

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report and to approve the proposed changes to priority reporting for 2014/2015.

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Background papers: None.

8 GRANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR INTERNAL AUDIT 2013 / 2014

Mr G Smith, Audit Manager, presented the Internal Audit report into the review of grants to the voluntary sector.

The Committee was advised that the overall opinion was satisfactory and that all of the payments for service level agreements and grant allocations made to the organisations within the sample compliance test, had been spent appropriately and in accordance with the intended objectives.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None

9 OUTSIDE BODIES SCRUTINY PANEL

Mr Kelly, Senior Democratic Services Adviser (Scrutiny) presented the report of the Outside Bodies Scrutiny Panel, following the Panel's meeting with Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Development Company.

It was requested that apologies for absence at the meeting were noted for Councillor D. Coleman and that it was noted that the apologies for absence recorded for Councillors Mrs Callow and Hutton were due to them being on Council business.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

10 CHILD POVERTY FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered an update report on progress on the child poverty framework and related issues and activity.

Ms Beckett, Corporate Development and Policy Officer reported that since the publication of the agenda, the Big Lottery Fund had announced that the Better Start Blackpool bid, which had been led by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in partnership with the Council, had been successful. The Committee was advised that the £42 million funding was to deliver a new approach to service delivery for pre-birth to three years, in order to improve the life chances of disadvantaged babies and young children. Ms Beckett anticipated that over 9,000 babies would benefit from the funding over the next ten years.

Members raised a number of questions in relation to how the funding would be allocated across wards in the borough and in regards to details of the projects that would be undertaken as a result of the funding.

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The Committee considered that it would be important to ensure effective scrutiny of the Better Start bid implementation. Mr Kelly advised that the most appropriate method for future scrutiny of this topic would be considered and reported to Members.

Ms Beckett provided Members with an update on the Council's response to the National Child Poverty Consultation, which suggested that the priorities of the national child poverty strategy should be:

- Helping families escape poverty through work.
- Supporting living standards.
- Preventing poor children from becoming poor adults.

The Committee was provided with a summary of the key points included within the Council response and it was noted that the response included:

- The actions in the strategy would not directly impact on the indicators they were linked to;
- The strategy did not adequately capture the complexity and variety of issues suffered by families deepest in poverty;
- The draft strategy was simply a continuation of existing activity rather than a serious attempt to address the root causes of child poverty; and
- Universal Credit pushed the burden of subsidising a flexible workforce onto the taxpayer rather than the businesses which arguably benefit most from it.

Ms Beckett also provided Members with a summary of the Young People's Consultation exercise, which aimed to identify from a young person's perspective what the issues were in Blackpool for young people. Ms Beckett explained that there had been a series of workshops for young people in which the 'five whys' methodology had been used to identify the root causes of issues or problems. Ms Beckett highlighted the key findings from the workshops to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to note the update report.

Background papers: None.

11 SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE

The Committee considered a progress report on the appointed Scrutiny Panels.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background Papers: None.

12 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Committee considered its Workplan for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

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The Committee agreed to note the Workplan.

Background papers: None.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Thursday 11th September 2014, at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.30 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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