

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD MEETING - THURSDAY, 5 MARCH 2020

Present:

Councillor Mrs Callow JP (in the Chair)

Councillors

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| Galley | Mitchell | Stansfield |
| Hobson | Mrs Scott | Walsh |

In Attendance:

Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Ms Annie Heslop, Green Infrastructure Development Manager
Ms Kate Staley, Corporate Marketing and PR Manager
Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communication
Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2019

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 19 September 2019 were signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services provided an overview of the work undertaken to date through the implementation of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and progress made against the action plan. He advised that a new position had been created to drive forward the green and blue agenda and that services were being regularly brought together to identify how the green and blue infrastructure could be improved through changes to planning policy, housing developments, leisure facilities and town centre development.

The Board was informed of the development of a Tree Strategy which aimed to increase tree coverage across the borough and it was suggested that a workshop be carried out in order to allow scrutiny input into the strategy development. The level of tree canopy was measurable and there was an intention to maximise social value from contracts to increase the level of trees to the maximum within resources. It was suggested that garden centres could be approached to sponsor trees and Mr Blackledge advised that the Council was being as innovative as possible in its work to improve tree planting.

In response to a question, Ms Annie Heslop, Green Infrastructure Development Manager advised that support was being provided to create new 'Friends of' groups at parks that did not previously have one e.g. Revoe Park. Members raised concern that the level of

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expectation on such groups was too high and that the Council should be the body approaching local businesses to increase engagement. Ms Heslop advised that groups were being supported and empowered and that additional work would be undertaken to further engage the business community.

Members noted that the land recently sold at Stanley Park Golf Course was not mentioned in the Strategy and suggested that it was a prime area to include green and blue infrastructure. Mr Blackledge noted the concerns previously raised around the site and the importance of preserving habitats. He suggested that some people viewed that the change of use would actually provide space that was available for use by more residents.

The town centre was discussed in detail, and the lack of trees in particular was noted. Potential options for increasing the number of trees were considered including the use of raised beds similar to the approach taken in Southport. The use of permitted sums to create green space was also discussed as was the importance of trees in flood management. Mr Blackledge reported that various approaches and models were being considered for implementation including how car parks could include green infrastructure and how private drives and gardens might be utilised with the support of residents.

The Leadership Board highlighted that the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy was largely focussed on 'green' aspects with little contact on the improvement of blue spaces such as lakes, ponds, and the seafront. Mr Blackledge acknowledged that there was a gap in the strategy around blue infrastructure and highlighted that the lake in Stanley Park was considered to be of excellent water quality. He advised that it was hoped the lake could be utilised for activities such as kayaking and sailing in the future. He also reported that the quality of bathing water at the sea was much improved.

The Scrutiny Leadership Board agreed:

1. To set up a workshop for scrutiny input into the developing Tree Strategy.
2. To receive a further report on the overall implementation of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan in approximately 10 months, with specific reference to:
 - a. Additional actions identified around 'Blue infrastructure' in that time following the Leadership Board's identification of a gap in that area.
 - b. Work undertaken by the Council to further engage the business community.

4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCRUTINY

Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager reported that the North West Employer's Review of Scrutiny at Blackpool had identified a number of recommendations around improving public engagement and potential use of social media. In order to explore the potential use of social media, Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications and Ms Kate Staley, Corporate Marketing and PR Manager were in attendance to discuss options with the Scrutiny Leadership Board.

Members highlighted that there had been success in improving engagement with community and third sector groups on particular issues to be considered by scrutiny, however, there was a desire to improve general public knowledge of scrutiny at the

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Council through tweeting, or including on Facebook, links to agendas and highlighting specific items in the week preceding a meeting. It was considered important to focus on items that would be of particular interest to members of the public.

Mr Welsh highlighted that The Gazette regularly reported on scrutiny meetings and therefore there was a base to build on. He suggested that Your Blackpool could be utilised to cover information about scrutiny and the dates of upcoming meetings and Members considered that it was important to raise general awareness of the function of scrutiny as well as of specific items.

It was considered that live streaming scrutiny meetings, delayed webcasting of scrutiny meetings with attention brought to key items and topics and utilising social media to broadcast 'soundbites' of meetings should all be explored.

Consideration was also given to utilising social media to gather the views of the public on certain areas of service provision to provide Members of Committees with an additional, anecdotal source of information. It was suggested that once the information had been considered by Committees, the outcomes of those discussions could also be highlighted.

The Scrutiny Leadership Board agreed that Mr Philip Welsh and Ms Kate Staley explore further the potential use of social media and other mediums to further promote scrutiny and engage the public and report back the Leadership Board with their findings.

5 EXECUTIVE/SCRUTINY PROTOCOL APPROVAL

The Scrutiny Leadership Board considered the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol and agreed to approve it for consideration by the Executive following which it would be submitted to Full Council for incorporation into the Constitution.

6 SCRUTINY WORKPLANS

The Chairs of the Housing and Homelessness Scrutiny Review, the Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review and the Channel Shift Scrutiny Review provided an update on the progress of the reviews and highlighted key issues to the Leadership Board.

Members went on to consider the workplans of each committee. The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee highlighted that the recommendations of the Healthy Weight Scrutiny Review had been approved by the Executive and that he had requested that addition of an item at the next meeting on infant mortality and preventable baby deaths following recent national press coverage.

The Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee advised that a focus was being placed on the Youth Offending Team due to the slow improvement being made, the issue of recruiting foster carers and the communication between the Getting to Good Board and the Scrutiny Committee.

The Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee Chair reported a focus on climate change, Housing Strategy and the Illuminations.

Following the consideration of items on this agenda the Scrutiny Leadership Board agreed

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to add items on Tree Strategy development, Green and Blue Infrastructure update, social media and Active Lives Strategy to its workplan.

7 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY SCRUTINY REVIEW

Councillor Galley, Chair of the Community Engagement Policy Scrutiny Review provided an overview of the work carried out by the review panel.

The Scrutiny Leadership Board noted the recommendations of the Panel and agreed to add consideration of the implementation of the Community Engagement Policy into its workplan.

8 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date and time of the next formal meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board was noted as Thursday 21 May 2020, commencing at 6pm subject to confirmation at Annual Council.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.46 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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