

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 30 MARCH 2022**

Present:

Councillor Jackson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Burdess	Kirkland	Wilshaw
Hunter	Walsh	

In Attendance:

Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture

Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation

Councillor Neal Brookes, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport

Councillor Jane Hugo, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Aspiration and Community Assets

Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration

Lisa Arnold, Strategic Head of Community and Wellbeing Services

Mark Golden, Chief Accountant

Annie Heslop, Green Infrastructure Manager

Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications

Peter Legg, Head of Economic and Cultural Services

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2022

The minutes of the last meeting held on 2 February 2022 were agreed as a true and correct record

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no applications from members of the public to speak on this occasion.

4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Members Decisions taken since the last meeting.

A query was raised in relation to PH13/22 "Emergency Active Travel Fund Proposed Cycle

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Scheme (St Walburgas Road)", asking what consideration had been made regarding pedestrian safety and in particular noting that cyclists using pavements posed a danger to pedestrians. Councillor Neal Brookes, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport, agreed that cyclists should not be using pavements to travel and emphasised that the safety of all those on footpaths and roads was important to the Council. The decision had therefore been made to set up a dedicated cycleway that would ensure that people travelling on foot, by bike and in cars would be separated and safe while travelling.

Members of the Committee also asked if clarification could be given regarding the establishment of a charitable organisation to operate the Showtown Museum. Concern was expressed that the sub-letting of the Council's lease for the space for the museum in the Sands Building would be adding an unnecessary layer of complexity to operating arrangements for the museum and questioned if this would lead to the Council subsidising the charity. Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council, confirmed that the Council would not be subsidising the charity and Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration, explained that the business plan expected that the museum would make a healthy profit. He also added that the charity would sub-let the museum's space from Council and the Council would be the Sands Building tenant. This proposed operating structure would not have any impact on the lease agreed with the Sands and would not lead to any additional costs for the Council.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan March 2022 – June 2022 of upcoming decisions.

Members asked that an update on the number of business loans made by Council be provided and queried if the £500k level outlined in the plan was too high. Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration, responded that the level of £500k was the level at which the Executive was required to approve a loan, applications for loans below that level could also be made. Mr Peter Legg, Head of Economic and Cultural Services added that the smallest loan granted had been for £72k. It was also explained that overall between thirty and forty loans had been made from the fund and that other councils had experienced a similar uptake for comparable schemes.

6 PARKS AND GREEN ENVIRONMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Ms Lisa Arnold, Strategic Head of Community and Wellbeing Services, presented the Parks and Green Environment Annual Report outlining the work undertaken by the Park Development Service during 2021-2022. She informed the Committee of the services' areas of responsibility and the policies it operated with. The service consisted of thirteen members of staff most of whose roles had been externally funded. This included a new Community Engagement Officer who would be driving forward work to involve communities in the service's projects.

Projects undertaken by the service during 2021-2022 included improvements to the playground and walkways at Stanley Park, a new football area at Common Edge and new playground equipment at Bispham Cliffs, Boundary, Gynn Sunken Gardens and Carr Road

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play areas.

The Park Rangers were also reported as having had a productive year, delivering nature based activities to children and families. The service had been registered with OFSTED, allowing an expanded range of full day activities during the school holidays.

The lifting of Covid-19 restrictions had also enabled the return of events and promotions to Blackpool's green spaces. The Adventure Cinema had staged a number of screenings during August 2021 and was scheduled to return during April and May 2022. Ms Arnold also stated that further enquiries from other events had also been received and were increasing in number.

The impact of avian flu on swans of Stanley Park was also mentioned, with Ms Arnold informing the Committee that twenty-birds had died from the disease. This had been a challenge for the service to manage and the lake had been closed on a number of occasions in response.

During 2021 the Parks Operational Team had transferred to ENVECO and regular relationship meetings had been taking place between them and the service to agree work plans and improvements to Blackpool's green spaces.

Ms Arnold also reported that a tree survey of all the trees on Council owned land had been undertaken in 2021. This had enabled the Council to identify maintenance work needed and the condition of tree assets going forward.

Members were informed that a key piece of future work for the service was the updating of the service's webpages. This work would include ensuring that the webpages contained detailed and up to date information on Blackpool's parks and green spaces. The webpages would also look to raise the profile of the service and the good work it was undertaking. It was anticipated that the relaunch of the website would take place in September 2022.

The Committee discussed the cost of the skate parks to the service and queried if the high rope attraction in Stanley Park would impact on the areas accessible to members of the public. Ms Arnold responded that the costs of the skate park development had been externally funded and that the high rope attraction did not impact on access to Stanley Park which remained open and free to access to members of the public. Mr Cavill added that the attraction was an important factor in bringing people into the park.

Members of the Committee asked if a management plan for the Council's green spaces and park was available and if it had been included in the Blackpool Destination Guide. Ms Arnold replied that the management plan was not currently part of the guide but work would be undertaken by the service's new Marketing Officer to update a refresh the document. Once this had been completed consideration could then be given to its inclusion in the guide.

The cost of new trees on Edwards Street was discussed, with the Committee being informed that the figures could be provided in writing following the meeting by the Highways Service. The Committee also noted that the cost of trees on Cookson Street, at

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approximately £10k each, had been high and questioned if such costs for new trees was sustainable. Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council, explained in response that a cost benefit analysis of planting trees had been undertaken in Ontario, Canada, and had shown that the social benefits of trees in urban areas outweighed the financial costs of planting them. She added there were also visual benefits to Blackpool along with long term environmental improvements from planting trees.

The Committee agreed that the report be noted; and that the Highways Team provide details of the cost of new tree planting on Edwards Street following the meeting.

7 TOURISM PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications, presented the Tourism Performance update to the Committee. He informed Members that the 2021 Christmas entertainment package had been the most ambitious one ever undertaken by Blackpool. This had been supported by an extended illuminations season, and it was hoped it would lay the foundations for a successful year for tourism in 2022. Footfall during this period had been 75% above the levels seen in 2019 and numbers of visitors for the early weeks of 2022 were also reported as encouraging.

The Committee noted that this would be the first full tourist season since 2019, and Mr Welsh explained that the 2022 season would officially be launched at an event at the new Winter Gardens Conference Centre on 31 March 2022. Events planned for the new season included the Air Show, for which the Red Arrows and Battle of Britain Memorial Flight had been confirmed. Work was also being undertaken to ensure events were planned for the additional bank holiday to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The increasing costs of living and high rates of inflation were raised as concerns by the Committee, noting that pressure of people's finances could reduce the amount they were able to spend on leisure activities including holidays and days out to resorts like Blackpool. Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture, agreed that this was a concern and that therefore the Council would seek to ensure it promoted Blackpool's tourism offer effectively and exploit any opportunities that became available.

The Committee agreed that the update be noted.

8 MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ART ON THE PROMENADE

Mr Peter Legg, Head of Economic and Cultural Services, presented a report on the maintenance and commissioning of art installations on the promenade. He informed the Committee that the original ten pieces of art installed had been grant funded, but that no provision had been made for their maintenance at that time. Each piece had a lifespan of ten to fifteen year and the Council had therefore agreed that £30k be made available for future maintenance works.

Work on the Mirrorball installation on the south promenade had been undertaken during 2021-2022 and a short film had been recorded highlighting the maintenance and involvement of the local community in this work. Mr Legg added that there was

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significant enthusiasm for the art on the promenade from local communities in Blackpool. The Committee welcomed this and asked that the film be circulated following the meeting.

The Committee discussed the decommissioning of art pieces and queried if any installations or parts of them could be preserved for future display. Mr Legg replied that this was a complex issue. The original artists would need to be engaged in the decommissioning process and in some cases they would object to a piece being removed or the art being displayed in a context outside of that for which it was intended. In other cases, damage from salt water spray and weather meant that installations were in too poor condition to be preserved. An example of this was the tide organ that had been dismantled and found to be badly corroded preventing it from being preserved.

Damage to the Comedy Carpet outside Blackpool Tower caused by skateboards was raised by the Committee. Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Regeneration and Communications, explained that the cleaning of the carpet repaired any damage caused by skateboarding which had been reported as minor. He added that efforts had been made to discourage activities such as these from taking place on the carpet.

The Committee agreed that the report be noted and that the film on the Mirrorball be circulated following the meeting

9 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee considered its workplan and updates on the outcome of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) review panel meeting and the Arts and Culture review panel's tour of artistic and cultural spaces in Blackpool. The scoping document for a proposed review of Temporary Holiday Accommodation in Blackpool was also presented for agreement.

Members noted that as part of the CSP review, they had been informed that PACT meetings would resume across Blackpool. It was highlighted that police attendance at these meetings was crucial to their effectiveness and the review panel's recognition of this was welcomed.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the TEC Scrutiny Workplan 2022 be noted;
2. That the report of the Community Safety Partnership review panel be noted; and
3. That the scope for the review of Temporary Holiday Accommodation be agreed.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date and time of the next meeting, subject to confirmation at the Annual Council meeting, as 26 June 2022.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.05 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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