

**MINUTES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH 2024**

**Present:**

Councillor Cartmell (in the Chair)

Councillors

Critchley	Fenlon	Humphreys	Marshall
Ellison	Hoyle	Jones	D Mitchell

**In Attendance:**

Councillor Paula Burdess, Cabinet Member Community Safety, Streetscene and Neighbourhoods

Councillor Jane Hugo, Cabinet Member for Climate Change

Councillor Paul Galley, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board

Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director Community and Environmental Services (Community and Wellbeing)

Scott Butterfield, Strategy and Climate Lead

Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection

Kate Staley, Corporate Marketing and PR Manager

Samantha Hewlett, Content Marketing Manager

Paul Hodgson, Service Manager for Parks and Green Open Spaces

Superintendent James Black, Lancashire Constabulary

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Diana Mitchell declared a personal interest in Item 9 on the agenda “Public Protection Annual Performance Report” as the owner of a rental property in relation to Selective Licensing.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2024**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting on 15 November 2023 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

**3 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There were no public speakers on this occasion.

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### **4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS**

The Committee considered and noted the decisions taken by the Executive and Cabinet Members within its remit since the last meeting.

### **5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered and noted the decisions taken by the Executive and Cabinet Members within its remit since the last meeting.

Members queried the timescales for the approval of the Serious Violence Duty Action Plan, which had been marked as due in April 2024. Ms Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director of Community and Environmental Services (Community and Wellbeing) advised that the action plan had been approved by the Community Safety Partnership and discussion had taken place to consider if approval should be undertaken via the Executive or a Cabinet Member decision.

### **6 2024 CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy and Climate Lead presented the 2024 Climate Communications Plan, which provided an overview of the climate communications work underway and planned for 2024. He provided an update on the action outlined in the plan, highlighting that the opening of the Eco-Hub had been moved to April 2024, that the Climate Adaption Plan could be ready for public engagement and consultation earlier than indicated but that determination of this had been placed on hold due to the local elections taking place in May 2024. With respect to the Electric Vehicle Strategy, Mr Butterfield informed Members that the scheduled dates for communications would be dependent on the clarification of funding details. Mr Butterfield noted that the Council's bid for £1.7m had been successful, however this was subject to delivery of a post-approval action plan being provided by the Government, and as this had not been received at the time of the meeting, the Council would further consider its contents before taking any further steps.

It was also explained that further discussions regarding the Communications Plan were taking place with it being intended that a more detailed plan would be developed. This would in part be informed by ongoing conversations with partners in Lancashire about a joint climate communications approach. Mr Butterfield added that in addition to the overall Council Communications Plan, major projects would have their own dedicated plans detailing the communications work to be undertaken.

The Committee discussed if the delay in the receipt of funding for the Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy would impact on the Council's ability to install EV chargers in Blackpool. Mr Butterfield explained that a contract had already been awarded, whereby a provider would be responsible for the charging points in Council car parks before consideration was given to their installation at other private sector locations. The consultation on EV charging with consideration of utilising chargers at locations such as schools by the public was raised, with

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Mr Butterfield explaining that consultation would be undertaken with a wide variety of partners and would seek to ensure that Blackpool had a joined up approach to offering support for EVs. He added that in respect of concerns raised regarding overall capacity within Blackpool during the summer season, that the available data from existing chargers had shown that they were not being used to full capacity and therefore there was not expected to be a shortage for those visiting Blackpool in the summer.

The Committee noted that a number of actions within the plan had blank boxes under the "Next Actions" column. Mr Butterfield advised that this was as a result of there being no follow-up need in respect of those climate projects.

A potential future action was identified in respect of work with landlords to ensure that their properties were eco-friendly. The "Cosy-Homes for Lancashire" project was highlighted as an ongoing scheme to engage with landlords in this respect and the Committee asked that an item on the project be added for consideration for inclusion on its work programme for 2024-2025.

### **The Committee agreed:**

1. That the update be noted;
2. That the "Cosy homes for Lancashire" project be added as an item to be considered for the 2024-2025 Committee Work Programme.

### **Ms Staley and Ms Hewlett left the meeting following this item**

## **7 SHARED PROSPERITY FUND - CLIMATE RELATED PROJECTS**

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy and Climate Lead, presented a report outlining the use of Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funding for climate related projects. He explained that 22% of the SPF budget had been allocated to climate related projects and that these would deliver not only environmental benefits but also improvement such as cost savings and improved living standards for residents.

The Committee discussed the Eco-Hubs that had been established with it being noted that the first would open at the Palatine Library in April 2024. The hubs would assist residents in making eco improvements to their homes and were accessible to everyone. Promotion of the Hubs would be assisted by the provision of SPF funding for an Engagement Officer, part of whose role would be to improve the profile of projects such as the Eco Hubs. Going forward Mr Butterfield advised that a further hub would be established at the Solaris Centre and that plans existed to introduce more at other libraries in Blackpool.

A delay in the use of spending was queried by the Committee and the impact that this would have on a project. Mr Butterfield explained in response that the Government had a threshold for the amount that had to be spent within a given timescale. He further advised that the Levelling Up Scrutiny Committee would be receiving a more comprehensive report on the overall use of SPF funding within Blackpool that would include details of the

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thresholds and timescales.

**The Committee agreed:** That the update be noted.

**Mr Butterfield left the meeting following this item.**

**8 IMPLEMENTATION OF BLACKPOOL COUNCIL TREE STRATEGY 2021-2031**

Mr Paul Hodgson, Service Manager for Parks and Green Open Spaces, and Ms Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director for Community and Environmental Services (Community and Wellbeing), presented a report outlining the work undertaken since the implementation of the Tree Strategy in 2021 and detailing planned future work.

Mr Hodgson explained that the strategy had been developed in 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and outlined the current situation regarding trees, their management, the Council's legal obligations, planning process, policies and contained an action plan which aimed to increase and promote a high standard of tree management and care within Blackpool. Since 2021, over 9,000 trees had been planted, and each was subject to a three-year maintenance programme. He advised that the after care of trees planted and the maintenance of the existing stock formed the most crucial part of the strategy, ensuring that the green environment in Blackpool was sustainable.

A key achievement of the strategy had been the embedding of tree planting and preservation within other areas of the Council, such as planning and growth and prosperity. This had been shown by the involvement of tree officers in planning application considerations and the planning for economic development projects since 2021.

Going forward Mr Hodgson advised that a review of the strategy would be undertaken in 2024 to ensure that it remained relevant to the circumstances within Blackpool and that the accompanying action plan would also be reviewed to consider if its ambition could be grown.

The Committee queried if the existing objectives within the strategy's action plan remained realistic, noting that some had not been achieved. Mr Hodgson advised that the strategy covered a ten year period up to 2031 and therefore although good progress had been made work was ongoing or had not yet commenced on all the objectives. He added that the review of the plan would assist in ensuring its objectives, while ambitious, were realistic and achievable.

Members also discussed the development of a tree nursery in Revoe with Mr Hodgson explaining that currently 60 trees had been planted there with more planned. Supplies of trees for planting were sourced from a number of different locations, depending on species, with a supplier in Southport being the main source for the majority of trees planted.

The growing of Christmas trees for use in Blackpool was discussed, with Members noting this would assist in sustainability. Mr Hodgson responded that although this would be

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desirable, fir trees were not suited to Blackpool's coastal environment. If planted within Blackpool it was estimated that it could take up to 50 years for the trees to become acclimatised, meaning that if undertaken it would be a long term project for the Council.

The removal of trees before planning applications were submitted or tree protection orders could be imposed was highlighted, with Mr Hodgson stating that the Council was aware of the issue and that it had shown the importance of good intelligence and information on the location of trees within Blackpool.

Members queried the disposal of dead trees, with it being explained that disposal was based on an assessment of the area in which a tree had stood. If removed from a site a dead tree would be chipped at the Layton Depot. However, Mr Hodgson advised that in some cases leaving part of a dead tree was considered beneficial for the local environment, as it could be a habitat for wildlife. The other uses of dead wood was also under consideration, with it being noted that the high cost of milling wood meant that an identified purpose was needed before this could be undertaken.

Green improvements at bus stops were discussed with Councillor Paula Burdess, Cabinet Member Community Safety, Streetscene and Neighbourhoods, advising that previous plans had been delayed but that conversations would be restarted with Blackpool Transport Services Limited on what could be achieved. She added that it could be that Councillors adopted stops within their Wards to promote planting around them.

**The Committee agreed:** That the update be noted.

**Mr Hodgson left the meeting following this item.**

### **9 PUBLIC PROTECTION ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Ms Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection, presented a report which provided an overview of the work undertaken by Public Protection during 2023/2024. The report provided performance data in respect of Food Control, Health and Safety, Licensing, Trading Standards, Housing Enforcement and Mandatory and Selective Licensing. It also provided details of the joint working taking place with partners, such as the police, in addressing issues encountered in Blackpool.

Ms Clayton highlighted the good work undertaken with tattoo parlours where engagement with owners had encouraged compliance with health and safety standards enabling them to operate safely and successfully. Challenges in approach were also mentioned with Ms Clayton explaining that due to the nature of public protection work it was difficult to plan ahead, especially where unexpected threats emerged that required a timely response. She noted that the challenge in respect of implementing the restrictions imposed on XL-Bully dogs by the Government as an example of this. In part to assist in circumstances such as these and to improve the collection and sharing of data, the Council was seeking to acquire a new IT system. This would also improve the efficiency of data handling and allow better use of intelligence collected.

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The operation of selective licensing schemes was discussed with Ms Clayton explaining that once in place every landlord within the affected area would have to apply to the Council to continue to rent out property. This would allow the Public Protection team to engage with them and ensure that their property met the expected standards. If subsequent to this improvements were required, Ms Clayton clarified that it would be the landlords' responsibility to improve their property. In order that Members remained aware of the operation of selective licensing schemes in Blackpool, the Committee asked that an item on it be added for consideration for inclusion on the relevant scrutiny committee's work programme 2024/2025.

The Noise Service was also discussed with Ms Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director for Community and Environmental Services (Community and Wellbeing), explaining that the service had been withdrawn in the 2024-2025 Council budget. She advised that this had been undertaken as the service had been closed during the Covid-19 pandemic and that new digital options existed that would enable similar work to be undertaken.

Superintendent James Black, Lancashire Constabulary, was also in attendance for this item and discussed the partnership work undertaken with the Public Protection team. He reported that the information provided by the team and the data collected had shown that the positive relationship between the Council and Police was having a positive impact on protecting the public within Blackpool.

The Committee noted the reference to a contaminated land review within the report with Ms Clayton advising that a review was under consideration with the potential for a strategy regarding such land in Blackpool being developed. Although Blackpool did not have any areas of contaminated land Ms Clayton explained that having a strategy in place would be best practice. Members asked that when drafted that the proposed strategy be brought to a future meeting for consideration.

### **The Committee agreed:**

1. That the report be noted;
2. That Selective Licensing be added as a potential item for the relevant Scrutiny Committee's 2024/2025 Committee Work Programme; and
3. That the proposed Contaminated Land Strategy be added as a potential item for the 2024/2025 Committee Work Programme.

### **10 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Ms Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection, presented the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Year End Performance Report. The report showed the work undertaken by the CSP and the levels of crime and disorder experienced across Blackpool in 2023/2024. This included details of work in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), where all but three areas of Blackpool had seen a reduction in levels experienced, with Ms Clayton confirming that the increases experienced in the three areas were being investigated. In order to

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ensure that the CSP was able to effectively respond to issues being experienced within Blackpool a review of the working groups, within the CSP, would be undertaken during 2024.

A significant area of concern highlighted in the report was in relation to illegal and illicit tobacco and vapes. Ms Clayton informed the Committee that work was being undertaken to identify the sellers of these items and remove them from sale. Examples of items seized as part of this work were presented at the meeting.

The overall data presented and what it represented was discussed, with Members highlighting that some of the information presented gave a poor impression of the levels of crime and disorder within Blackpool, which the Committee did not believe accurately reflected actual situation. Superintendent James Black, Lancashire constabulary, explained that the data, in the case of ASB, represented reports received. Therefore the numbers could include multiple reporting of the same incident. Further challenges were also presented by Blackpool's transitory population, although it was noted that if a crime was committed within Blackpool it remained a local issue even if the perpetrator had left the area. He added that it was a challenge to understand the context behind the figures and that close working between partners within the CSP allowed the better sharing of information and analysis of the challenges faced. The Committee noted the explanations given and emphasised the importance of providing context with crime data to ensure that it could be understood in context.

Ms Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director for Community and Environmental Services (Community and Wellbeing), also advised that the data represented needed to be understood in context. The data received played an important part in allowing the CSP to target finite resources into the areas of greatest need.

The Committee asked that it be noted that it had commenced an ASB Scrutiny Review, where Members had asked that an overview of ASB in Blackpool be provided. Ms Arnold stated that this information would assist in the identification of areas of concern and help Members gain a better understanding of the levels of ASB experienced within Blackpool and determination of the focus of the review.

The risk of criminal acts relocating in response to increased CSP work in a specific area was discussed. Superintendent Black explained that the CSP was aware of such challenges but that an intelligence led approach allowed for better anticipation of where certain crimes might occur and therefore allow resources to be targeted to prevent it.

Members highlighted the progress of the upgrade to CCTV infrastructure within Blackpool and the operation of the new control centre and asked that data be provided on the impact of the changes made.

**The Committee agreed:**

1. That the report be noted; and

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2. That data on the impact of the new CCTV Control Centre and related infrastructure be provided to Members of the Committee in writing following the meeting.

**11 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

The Committee considered its work programme and action tracker for the remainder of the municipal year.

**The Committee agreed:** That, subject to the inclusion of items identified at the meeting, the Work Programme and Action Tracker be noted.

**12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted that the date and time of its next meeting was to be confirmed.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 8.35 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:  
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