

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 16 JUNE 2016**

Present:

Councillor Hunter (in the Chair)

Councillors

Mrs Callow JP	G Coleman	Hobson	Ryan
D Coleman	Galley	Roberts	

In Attendance:

Councillor Simon Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Councillor Gillian Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council
Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business and Economic Development
Councillor Mrs Christine Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Procurement and Income Generation

Mr Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Place
Mrs Marie McRoberts, Assistant Treasurer
Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Visitor Economy
Mr Dominic Blackburn, Community Safety and Drugs Officer
Mr Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser (Scrutiny)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 31 MARCH 2016

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the Tourism, Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 31 March 2016, 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.

4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions within the portfolios of the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council, taken since the last meeting of the Committee.

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Members raised questions in regard to decision number EX22/2016 'Additional Licensing for the Central Area' and Councillor Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council advised Members that the additional licensing scheme did not apply for holiday lets, but that other methods of enforcement would be considered where appropriate, in order to improve the standards of properties in the area.

The Committee noted decision number EX26/2016 and requested that the total figure for sundry debt write-offs for 2015/2016 be circulated amongst Committee Members. With regards to decision number PH36/2016 'Kerbside Green Waste Collection – Creation of a Charging Scheme', Members queried the level of response to the charging scheme. In response, Councillor Campbell advised that 5,696 residents had currently signed up to the scheme.

In regards to a question raised in relation to decision number EX27/2016 'Provision of Loan Finance to Blackpool Transport Limited', Councillor Blackburn, Leader of the Council, advised that the loan of £7,740,000 to purchase 10 double buses in June 2016 and 25 vehicles in June 2017, was based upon recommendations from the Finance Director of Blackpool Transport Services Limited. Councillor Blackburn advised that he was satisfied that Blackpool Transport Services Limited was able to operate as a going concern with adequate resources.

The Committee discussed decision number EX24/2016 'Acquisition of Wilkinson's building, Talbot Road'. In response to Members' questions, Councillor Blackburn advised that the Homes and Communities Agency had inspected the site and officers were continuing to explore the possibility of selling part of the site to the Agency. Questions were also raised by the Committee in relation to the possibility of establishing a 'transport interchange' in the area and Councillor Blackburn explained that options were currently being explored with Network Rail to establish such an interchange, although it would not necessarily involve a specific building.

The Committee agreed:

- 1) To request that the total figure for sundry debt write-offs for 2015 / 2016 be circulated amongst Committee Members following the meeting.
- 2) To note the Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, June 2016 – September 2016, relating to the portfolios of the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council.

The Committee agreed to note the Forward Plan items.

6 ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANTS OVER £25K MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the report detailing the appointment of consultants exceeding £25,000 for the period 1 February 2016 to 30 April 2016.

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Members queried the identity of the third parties referred to in the appendix and Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Business and Economic Development advised that they were Fylde Borough Council and Wyre Borough Council, which were the other local authorities in ownership of the Economic Development Company.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

7 CORPORATE CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

Mrs McRoberts, Assistant Treasurer, presented a report to the Committee that provided information on the Corporate Customer Services Strategy and progress and findings of the channel shift project.

Members were advised that the Channel Shift Group had been formed to ensure a systematic approach to moving services on-line where appropriate, which was essential activity to reduce demand on the face-to-face and telephone channels in Customer First, following the reduction of resource in the service.

The Committee was provided with the Customer Services Strategic Group plan, which set out the vision and principles that every service should strive to deliver when dealing with residents, businesses and clients. Members were also provided with details of the methodology used to engage service users with services for channel shift activities and details of the outcomes achieved so far in the process.

In response to questions raised by Members, Mrs McRoberts advised that the Highways Service was on the Channel Shift Plan and officers were working closely with Highways officers to bring its services on-line. It was explained that there were currently some issues relating to the compatibility of back office software, but that work was being undertaken to resolve the problems.

The Committee raised questions regarding how services used emails received from residents and it was queried whether residents' email addresses could be used by services to market Council news and issues. Mrs McRoberts advised that email exchanges with residents placed significant demand upon resources in a manner similar to telephone interactions. Instead, the aim of the Channel Shift system was to steer residents more towards using digital channels to access the service directly, which would reduce the back office resources required. It was explained to Members that the development of a Council app for smartphones would assist in the achievement of the aim further. Members discussed the potential for the Council app in more detail, with Councillor Blackburn advising that the rationale for its development would be to have one app with a drop down menu enabling users to access all appropriate services and Council news.

In response to questions relating to social media, Mrs McRoberts advised that the Communications Team monitored social media platforms and forwarded any appropriate data or comments to the relevant service.

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Members raised further questions regarding staffing levels and Mrs McRoberts advised that in regards to staffing levels, there were now 20 full time equivalent staff in the Customer Service Team, compared with 47.5 in 2012. It was noted that vacant posts were filled internally where possible.

Background papers: None.

8 TOURISM PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Welsh, Head of Visitor Economy presented a report on tourism performance between January and April 2016 using various indicators including number of visits, footfall, tram usage, satisfaction ratings and events.

He reported to Members that the first four months of the calendar year had been positive, although performance over the Easter holidays had not been to the levels that had been expected, which was attributed to poor weather.

In response to questioning from the Committee regarding the reduction of visitors in the evening compared with during the daytime, Mr Welsh advised that it remained a challenge to encourage visitors to stay for longer, but that it was hoped that the investment in the early evening economy would help to assist with achieving the aim.

Members noted the media's recent reporting of the Visit England Survey and raised questions regarding the basis that had been used for the resort of Scarborough being placed higher than Blackpool. Mr Welsh advised that the media coverage had focused on the figures for the numbers of leisure tourists staying overnight. He noted that when daytime visitors were taken into account, Blackpool had approximately two million more visits per year than Scarborough.

Members considered that the performance figures were useful and it was requested that the Visitor Economy Performance Indicator report be circulated to Members on a monthly basis.

The Committee raised questions relating to the former King Edward Cinema and its potential future usage. Mr Cavill, Director of Place reported that the site was part of the wider Central Station development site and, as a result, it would be difficult to attract an investor as only a very short term lease would be able to be offered and the building required significant levels of investment. On the subject of the Central Station development site, the Committee questioned whether there was any update regarding the relocation of the County and Magistrates courts to new sites within Blackpool. Mr Cavill advised that negotiations were ongoing with the Ministry of Justice, but that progress on the relocation had been slow.

Members queried the location of the cameras for recording the levels of footfall in the town centre and Councillor Campbell provided Members with a list of the Camera positions, which amongst others included outside Coral Island, Marks and Spencer's, and the Credit Union on Birley Street.

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Members noted the increased usage on the trams and queried the reasons for the increased patronage and whether the trend would continue. Mr Welsh advised that the performance was partly due to increased numbers on the trams, but was also due in part to the ability to better manage usage. He explained that the ability to manage usage included improved queuing systems and being better equipped to ensure all people using the trams paid for their journeys. Councillor Blackburn also noted that the decision to restrict concessionary fares on trams to Blackpool residents only had resulted in an increased number of fare paying customers on the trams.

The Committee agreed to request that the Visitor Economy Performance Indicator report be circulated to Members on a monthly basis.

Background papers: None.

9 PARKING SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT

Councillor Wright introduced a report that provided the Committee with information on the performance data of Council owned car parks, both with regards to patronage and income. She considered that the performance for 2015/2016 had been positive, with it being noted that both occupancy and income had improved, compared to recent years. The Committee was advised that the income generated from the car parks and on street parking during 2015/2016 was up by 5.1% from the 2014/2015 income and was the highest amount received in the last five years, despite the closure of a number of Council-owned car parks.

The Committee raised questions regarding East Topping Street and was advised that the car park had been unavailable for a number of months whilst the Syndicate building had been demolished. However, the car park was now very busy and changes to the staff parking scheme, which would be introduced in August 2016, would positively impact on the income generated by the car park.

Members also raised questions in relation to the former Devonshire Road Hospital site and were advised that the car park would no longer be included in the staff parking scheme from 1 August 2016. Councillor Wright also advised that notice had been served to terminate the lease for the site and return it to the site's owners. Upon further questioning from Members, it was reported that the rental costs for the site were approximately £30,000 per year.

Background papers: None.

10 COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT APRIL 2015 TO MARCH 2016

Councillor Campbell presented a report that detailed performance against the Community Safety Partnership's priorities between April 2015 and March 2016. The report also set out the new Partnership priorities for the 2016/2019 period, as well as the addition of several areas of further consideration deemed as 'causation factors'.

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Councillor Campbell reported that all crime in Blackpool had increased over the period, which was considered disappointing, despite reflecting a trend across Lancashire.

The Committee questioned whether any organisation involved with the Partnership did not contribute appropriately. Mr Blackburn, Community Safety and Drugs Officer, advised that there was a strong tradition of partnership working in Blackpool and all partners contributed appropriately.

The Committee also raised questions in relation to Community Protection Notices, with specific regards to whether they would be issued to a child as young as 10 years old. Mr Blackburn advised that, although it was possible, it was not always appropriate to issue to children of that age. However, if a child was not issued with a notice in such circumstances, notices would be issued against the parents of the child. Members noted that during the period of April 2015 to March 2016, 645 Warning Letters, 78 Community Protection Notices, seven Fixed Penalty Notices, five Civil Injunctions and one Criminal Behaviour Order had been issued. Mr Blackburn considered that Blackpool was leading nationally on the utilisation of Community Protection Warnings and Notices.

The Committee discussed a known cohort of approximately 50 to 60 young people who had been causing a great deal of nuisance within the town centre, parks, car parks and leisure centres. Councillor Blackburn reported that a large piece of work had been undertaken to gather intelligence and address the antisocial behaviour issues caused by the cohort. He advised that using Community Protection Notices, as well as other powers available to the Partnership, was starting to have an impact in reducing the levels of antisocial behaviour caused by the cohort.

The Committee also raised questions relating to hate crimes and Mr Blackburn advised that victims appeared to be more willing to report crimes, which was considered positive. However, concerns were raised with regards to the increased numbers of sexual hate crimes.

Background papers: None.

11 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Chairman presented the Tourism, Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee Workplan for the remainder of the Municipal Year. It was noted that it was a flexible, working document. Members could submit items for consideration by the Committee at any time through the Chairman.

The Committee noted that the Monitoring Committee Recommendations table had been included that enabled Members to monitor how their recommendations had been implemented.

The Committee agreed:

- 1) To approve the Workplan

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2) To note the Monitoring Committee Recommendations table.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Thursday, 21 July 2016, at 6.00 p.m.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.20 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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