

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present:

Councillor Mrs Taylor (in the Chair)

Councillors

Benson	D Coleman	Mrs Jackson	Doherty
I Coleman	Elmes	M Mitchell	Galley
Mrs Callow JP	Mrs Henderson MBE	Stansfield	L Taylor

In Attendance:

Carmel McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive
Delyth Curtis, Assistant Chief Executive - Adult Services
Steve Thompson, Assistant Chief Executive - Treasurer Services
Karen Smith, Interim Director Adults Services
Marie McRoberts, Assistant Treasurer
James Kelly, Head of Integrated Transport and Waste Services
Ruth Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer
Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Services Adviser

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

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Member for Tourism and Leisure

Councillor Amy Cross, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and the Environment

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

Councillor Kath Rowson, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Councillor Ivan Taylor, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Councillor Christine Wright, Cabinet Member for Culture and Heritage

Also Present:

Councillor Green

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 19TH JUNE 2014

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19th June 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 raised in relation to decision number PH/70/2014 'Acquisition of 40/46 Tyldesley Road' and whether further details of the funding for the acquisition could be provided. As the relevant Cabinet Member was not in attendance at the meeting, Mr C Kelly, Senior Democratic Services Adviser, advised that an answer would be sought for 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 08/2014.

The Committee agreed to note the Forward Plan items.

6 RAISING ASPIRATIONS THEME REPORT 2014 / 2015

Mrs R. Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer, presented the Raising Aspirations Theme report, which summarised performance against the following Council priorities:

- Priority One – Tackle child poverty, raise aspirations and improve educational achievement.
- Priority Two – Safeguard and protect the most vulnerable
- Priority Nine – Deliver quality services through a professional, well-rewarded and motivated workforce.

The Committee was advised that performance against each priority would be presented by Council Plan theme throughout 2014/2015.

Mrs D Curtis, Director of Children's Services, provided the Committee with reports on Priority One. She advised the Committee of the key challenges for 2014/2015, which included keeping children safe in Blackpool, ensuring children were ready for school, ensuring more good and outstanding schools in Blackpool and securing apprenticeships and developing pathways into work. Mrs Curtis informed the Committee of the various ways in which Children's Services intended to tackle those challenges and explained that the recently secured Better Start funding would be important for use in many of the schemes to tackle the challenges of this priority.

Mrs Curtis also provided the Committee with a summary of the recently published Ofsted report following its inspection of Children's Services. Members were advised that Ofsted had recognised the progress that had been made since its previous inspection and the report highlighted a number of strengths, such as there being appropriate measures in place to prevent child sexual exploitation and there being a strong commitment from Members and Senior Leadership to drive improvement in services. However, Mrs Curtis explained to Members that the report also highlighted a number of areas that required

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improvement and she summarised what the next steps would be in order for the Council to make those improvements.

Councillor Ivan Taylor responded to a question from the Committee regarding plans to improve all secondary schools in Blackpool. It was noted that all but one secondary school was now an academy and therefore the local authority no longer had the same level of control in order to drive improvements as it had done in the past. Councillor Taylor explained that, although the issue was particularly challenging, the local authority needed to monitor and challenge all schools' plans and that Children's Services worked hard to maintain relationships with all schools and sponsors.

Ms K Smith, Director of Adult Services, provided an update to the Committee on Priority Two. She advised that the key challenges for the priority for 2014/2015 were to:

- promote independence and person-centred care;
- instigate service redesign and modernisation in light of the Care Act 2014 and the Better Care Fund;
- further improve safeguarding;
- raise quality standards across the service offer in partnership with stakeholders; and
- maximise the use of resources.

Ms Smith reported the current areas of activity being undertaken to meet those challenges, which included promoting independence and person-centred care, instigating service redesign and modernisation in the light of the Care Act 2014, making further safeguarding improvements and raising quality standards. Ms Smith also responded to questions from the Committee in relation to issues around the Priority.

Mrs C McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive, provided the Committee with an update report on Priority Nine, highlighting the key issues for the last quarter. The Committee noted that the key challenges for 2014/2015 were to:

- continue to manage budgets well and take action to ensure that future years budget pressures were addressed;
- move all agreed staff to Bickerstaffe House within the agreed timescales and with minimal disruption;
- ensure the ICT roll out plan for staff was executed effectively to help deliver efficiencies and meet the requirements of the Public Services Network;
- support staff through continued budget pressure and build team and individual resilience; and
- improve customer feedback mechanisms so that we continue to improve our understanding of the residents' view of Council services.

It was noted that when the Priority Report was last presented to the Committee, Members had raised a number of questions with regards to customer service. Therefore, Ms McRoberts, Assistant Treasurer, presented the Committee with information regarding the performance of Customer First.

Ms McRoberts noted the services provided by Customer First, with a breakdown of which services were delivered one stop, which services were arranged by Customer First and

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which services for which requests were logged.

The Committee was advised of the current situation with regards to the 2014/2015 budget of the service and the calls and other forms of contact received, as compared to the position in 2012/2013. Members noted the increase in the number of complaints in relation to people not being able to get through to the service, the decrease in percentage of calls answered and the increase in the average wait time for calls. However, Ms McRoberts reported that this was inevitable as a result of the reduction in resources of the service, with there being 17 fewer members of staff and those staff that remained having additional unpaid leave. The potential impacts of this issue with regards to staff, customers and the Council were discussed.

There then followed a discussion on how the situation could be improved. Ms McRoberts reported on a number of ways in which improvements would be made. Those included:

- a review of staffing levels in Customer First;
- an improvement in digital access, which would include an improved telephony system;
- a greater emphasis on shared responsibility and ownership from other Council Services, Elected Members and residents 'self-helping'; and
- help to access services online for those that are currently unable.

In response to questions raised by the Committee, Ms McRoberts reported that approximately 40 per cent of failure calls were regarding some aspect of waste, such as fly tipping, missed collections, or drains being blocked.

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

Background papers: None.

7 ANNUAL CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT 2013 / 2014

Mrs R Henshaw, Corporate Development Officer, presented the Annual Customer Feedback Report 2013/2014 to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that the report provided an overview of customer feedback recorded by the Council in the period 1st July 2013 – 31st March 2014, following a refresh of the Council's complaints procedure and the introduction of the customer feedback system in July 2013.

Mrs Henshaw noted that the report included a breakdown of the comments, compliments and complaints received during the year and summarised the Council's performance in dealing with complaints and feedback. In terms of lessons learnt, Mrs Henshaw reported that changes would be made to the customer feedback system to further simplify the system for users, Council services would be encouraged to use the customer feedback system more and a report would be produced investigating the reasons for late responses to complaints.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

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Background papers: None

8 APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the appointment of one additional Member to the Call-In Sub Committee.

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Mrs Jackson to the Call-In Sub Committee.

Background papers: None.

9 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2013 / 2014

The Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/2014 was presented to the Committee.

The Committee approved the Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/2014.

Background papers: None.

10 SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE

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

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

11 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

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

A proposal for a scrutiny review into the Skip Hire Initiative and a Scrutiny Selection Checklist was circulated amongst Committee Members. The Committee agreed that the request should be considered at a future meeting, at a date when the impact of the initiative could be assessed.

The Committee agreed:

1. To note the Workplan.
2. To reconsider establishing a scrutiny review into Skip Hire and Waste Metal Collections at a future meeting of the Committee.

Background papers: None.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Thursday 16th October 2014, at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended 7.40 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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