

## MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2014

### Present:

Councillor D Coleman (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Councillors

Elmes	Mrs Henderson MBE	Galley	Mrs Jackson
I Coleman	Stansfield	L Taylor	M Mitchell
Mrs Callow	Benson	Hunter	

### In Attendance:

Mr A. Cavill, Director of Place.

Mrs C. McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive - Human Resources, Communications and Engagement.

Mrs R. Henshaw, Corporate Development Officer.

Mr S. Sienkiewicz, Scrutiny Manager.

Councillor S. Blackburn, Leader of the Council.

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

Councillor J. Jones, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Equality and Diversity.

Councillor G. Cain, Cabinet Member for Tourism and Leisure.

Councillor C. Wright, Cabinet Member for Culture and Heritage.

### Also Present:

Councillor Green.

Councillor P. Callow.

### 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 11TH SEPTEMBER 2014

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 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.

### 4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

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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 EX/50/2014 'Central Business District – Four Star Hotel Development', as to what was the estimated date for the start of construction. Councillor Blackburn responded that the date was dependent upon site clearance factors but would hopefully be during Autumn 2015.

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 10/2014.

The Committee agreed to note the Forward Plan items.

### **6 PROSPEROUS TOWN THEME REPORT 2014/15**

Mr A. Cavill, Director of Place, presented a report to the Committee that detailed current performance information against the following Council priorities;

Priority 3 – Expand and promote our tourism, arts, heritage and cultural offer.

Priority 5 – Attract sustainable investment and create quality jobs.

Priority 6 – Encourage responsible entrepreneurship for the benefit of our communities.

Referring to priority 3, Mr Cavill highlighted the Creative People and Places Programme for Blackpool and Wyre. Funded through a £3m award from the Arts Council for 3 years, the programme had now been in place for 12 months. During this period, a range of key arts and cultural programmes had been initiated, the details of which were outlined to the Committee.

The Committee was informed that the Museum for Blackpool Project had been successful in its Round 1 grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The project was now at the development stage which would be completed by the end of 2015, at which point the Round 2 application for funding to the HLF would be submitted.

On the subject of developing Blackpool's library services, Mr Cavill spoke of the various initiatives in place that were aimed to increase the basic online skills of people, small businesses and charities by 25% over a 12 month period. Events such as Get on Line Week and the creation of the Digital Charter for Go-On Blackpool were helping to increase the numbers of Blackpool residents to get online for the first time.

Mr Cavill concluded his Priority 3 presentation by outlining some of the Blackpool visitor statistics for the recent months. Overall numbers had increased by more than 200,000 during the summer and the number of overnight stays had gone up by 30%. Much of that growth had been derived from people who had attended a specific event in the resort.

Moving onto Priority 5, the Committee was informed that the Lancashire Local Enterprise

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Partnership had secured £233.9m from the Government's Local Growth Fund to support economic growth, of which £50m had been allocated to projects in Blackpool. The benefits would be widespread and be based around infrastructure improvements, transport and housing renewal.

Members were informed that a key element of both the Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and the Lancashire Growth Plan was the requirement to produce a local Growth Accelerator strategy for the Fylde coast area. The strategy was focussed on change and creating and growing economic opportunities for local communities in the greatest need. Amongst the priorities identified for Blackpool were the development of the energy sector, the development of the town centre as a sub-regional centre (including the Central Station site) and the development of junction 4 of the M55 and the airport approaches.

In relation to Priority 6, the Committee was updated regarding progress of the Get Started Service. This was a scheme that provided advice and guidance to new start businesses and in the previous 6 months, 42 individuals had been assisted to start their own business via the support that was provided.

Mr Cavill went on to provide members with details of how the Council encouraged its suppliers to utilise the Social Value Toolkit, which came about as a result of provisions of the Social Value Act, 2012. The Act placed a requirement on public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental wellbeing in connection with public services contracts. As a result, the Council had implemented a number of measures to ensure that social value was embedded through its commissioning and procurement activities, as well as those of its contractors.

Responding to questions from the Committee, Mr Cavill explained that in relation to the stage 2 HLF funding for the Museum of Blackpool, in order to access the next stage of funding it was necessary to prove that the required criteria had been met, although Blackpool was no longer part of a competitive process for the funding. The 8 new posts that were being created as part of the scheme were costing £250k per year which was being drawn from the HLF funding and were considered absolutely necessary in order to progress. He went on to answer a number of further questions from the Committee on the subjects of the proposed energy college, the resort pass, the airport, the library service and the illuminations switch on.

The Committee was then shown a video which illustrated the highlights of the 2014 Blackpool season review, before moving on to receive a report that detailed current performance information against Priority 9 – Deliver quality services through a professional, well rewarded and motivated workforce. The report was presented by Mrs C. McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive, Human Resources, Communications and Engagement.

The Committee was informed that preparations for the 2015/16 budget cycle had now commenced and communications would shortly be going out to employees and residents about the process to be followed for the year. Mrs McKeogh then spoke regarding the key issues under the priority for the last quarter. These included ensuring compliance with

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key ICT standards, including the Public Services Network (PSN), the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) and the Information Governance (IG) Toolkit. There were also a number of risks and threats to data security which the IT service was working to reduce or eradicate where possible. These included spam mail, mobile apps' and other vulnerabilities. Information requests received by the Council had also continued to increase, with 931 freedom of information requests having been received between January and September 2014 and 296 subject access requests under the Data Protection Act, during the same period.

Members were informed of the progress resulting from the current Leadership Programme, together with feedback from the Employee Conference that had been held in September. Sickness absence figures were then reported to the Committee, which currently stood at 10.27 days lost per full time employee. Of that figure, 55.9% was reported as short term (up to 4 weeks) and 44.1% long term. It was reported that stress, depression and anxiety remained the most common cause of sickness absence, at 22.58%. Mrs McKeogh gave details of the services offered by the Occupational Health Service and the Employee Assistance Programme in relation to employees who were suffering from those conditions.

Details were then reported to the Committee about the apprenticeships and traineeships programmes in which the Council was currently engaged and also of the Investors in People reaccreditation programme process that was currently underway.

In relation to the Customer First service, Members were informed that the Council was now close to its target on dealing with queries at the first point of contact. Improvements had been achieved in customer satisfaction rates, although it was acknowledged that waiting times, call answering times and percentage of calls answered were all off target. Mrs McKeogh spoke of various initiatives that were being put in place to improve the situation.

To conclude her report, Mrs McKeogh gave details to the Committee about the Policy Framework review that was currently underway to determine which strategy documents would be included in the Council's Policy Framework.

Mrs McKeogh responded to a number of questions from the Committee. On the subject of staff retention and whether exit interviews were undertaken, she confirmed that staff turnover figures remained at a relatively static level and that exit interviews were carried out. She offered to bring further details to a future meeting of the Committee.

On the subject of the apprenticeships and trainee programmes, it was confirmed that apprentices were paid the national minimum wage. There was however certain programmes that were designed to prepare young people ready for work and those persons were employed under the fairtrain model. The six month work experience programme was a training package and Mrs McKeogh said she would confirm whether it was paid or not and pass the details to the Committee as soon as possible.

The Committee asked several questions and raised issues of concern about the telephone customer waiting times in Customer First. The average waiting time was reported as 3

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minutes, 45 seconds and was not improving. The Committee asked Mrs McKeogh to note that those figures were unacceptable and that action was required to improve matters. Mrs McKeogh acknowledged that the service had suffered as a result of budget cuts and front line staffing reductions. She stated that she would report the Committee's concerns to the Corporate Leadership Team and bring a further report back to a future Committee meeting.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background Papers: None.

### 7 CHILD POVERTY FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on progress on implementing the multi-agency Child Poverty Framework and related issues and activity. The report was introduced by Mrs R. Henshaw, Corporate Development Officer.

The Committee raised the following questions, to which Mrs Henshaw agreed to obtain the answers and report back as soon as possible:

- What is the definition of 'teenage pregnancy'?
- Comparison with other authorities – why do they perform better than ourselves?
- In relation to paragraph 5.1.1 of the report, third bullet point – (worsened ranking) – what is being done about this?
- Regarding the recruitment of Directors for Better Start, how many directors are being recruited? Also, how is the £45m of lottery money being spent?

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report

Background papers: None.

### 8 SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE

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

Councillor Galley, Lead Member for the Community Safety Scrutiny Panel presented an update report, outlining a very successful meeting of the Panel that took place on 28<sup>th</sup> October. He referred to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act which would give additional and much needed powers to the Council and Police to deal with anti-social behaviour issues.

Councillor Mrs Henderson MBE, Lead Member for Adult Social Care spoke regarding Member's visits to care homes and encouraged more members to take part in the visits. Councillors Benson and D Coleman agreed to join the group of members who accompanied officers on pre-arranged visits to care homes.

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Councillor Mrs Callow, Lead Member for Tourism and Leisure, Highways, Transport and Equality and Diversity, mentioned that the date for the Scrutiny Panel meeting with representatives from Blackpool Zoo, that was originally scheduled to take place on 13<sup>th</sup> November, would now be re-arranged.

In relation to the Education Scrutiny Panel, the Committee requested that the Scrutiny Manager contacted other non-executive members of the Council, who were not members of the Scrutiny Committee, to enquire as to whether they would like to join the Panel.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background Papers: None.

### **9 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

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

The Committee agreed to note the Workplan.

Background papers: None.

### **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014, at 6.00pm.

### **Chairman**

(The meeting ended 7.34 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:  
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