

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2019**

Present:

Councillor Mitchell (in the Chair)

Councillors

Burdess	Hobson	Owen	Wilshaw
D Coleman	Hugo	Walsh	

In Attendance:

Councillor Mrs Maxine Callow JP, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board
Councillor Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Climate Change
Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation

Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration
Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Tony Doyle, Head of Information Computer Technology Services
Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul Wilshaw declared a personal interest in Item 7 on the agenda, Local Full Fibre Network, as the business partner of a company that promotes fibre broadband.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TOURISM ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES HELD ON 19 JUNE 2019

Members considered the minutes of the 19 June 2019 meeting of the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Regarding the attendance the Committee asked that it be amended to include Councillor Mrs Maxine Callow who had attended in her capacity as Chairman of the Scrutiny Leadership Board.

The Committee agreed that, subject to the requested amendment, the minutes of the 19 June 2019 meeting of the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee represented a true and 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 noted the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions, within its remit, taken since the last meeting of the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 19 June 2019.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the contents of the Council's Forward Plan October 2019 to February 2020, relating to the portfolios of Cabinet Members whose responsibilities fell within its remit.

Members discussed the Lancashire and Blackpool Flood Risk Management Strategy in relation to the heavy rainfall that had occurred in September 2019. It was reported that there had been instance of surface water flooding on highways and some residents' gardens in the north of Blackpool. While thanking the Council and its officers for the work undertaken during this period to clear obstacles to drainage, Members asked if more could have been done by United Utilities to ensure it could not happen again. Councillor Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Climate Change, responded that the Council had secured £110,000 in funding to investigate flood risks in the north of Blackpool and the neighbouring areas of Fylde and Wyre.

The Committee was also informed that the Section 19 Flood Report into the November 2017 flooding at Anchorholme had recently been published, which had identified the unexpected nature of the heavy rainfall as the cause of the flooding. Councillor Jackson added that the Council had to be aware that the effects of climate change made unexpected weather events more likely and that work was being undertaken build resilience for the future.

The Sale of Land in North Blackpool was also discussed. Although the details of the sale could not be disclosed at the meeting due to commercial sensitivity, Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation, informed Members that once the sale had been completed further detail could be provided to the Committee.

6 CAR PARKING PERFORMANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019

Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications, and Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation, presented the Car Parking Performance Annual Report 2018-2019. The report outlined the trends in on-street and off-street parking during 2018-2019, the programme for replacing parking equipment and the income for the Council.

The Committee queried if any consideration had been given to reserving car parking in car parks adjacent to Blackpool Football Club's Bloomfield Road ground during matches for those attending. Members reported that these car parks were often full on match days

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with those using them not attending a match and forcing people to park elsewhere creating issues. It was suggested that by reserving the car parks during times when a match is taking place would force those not attending to park closer to the town centre, with benefits for local businesses. Mr Welsh responded that although there were potential difficulties in reserving car parks in this manner, the Council had a close working relationship with the football club and could discuss the issue of fan parking with them.

Members also queried if the income figures for on-street and off-street parking could be combined to give an overall figure. Mr Welsh responded that the possibility would be investigated for future reports although he noted that differing patterns in on-street and off-street parking could make combining figures difficult.

The upgrade of parking equipment, such as pay and display machines, was also discussed. Members asked if the cost of the work was available. In response Councillor Smith stated that the work was being undertaken to ensure that each car park allowed parking to be paid for in a variety of ways, whether by cash or card. The programme of work was ongoing and ensured that each car park would have its machines regularly upgraded. Mr Welsh added that the parking service was exploring the potential to introduce a Parking App to enable drivers to pay for parking via their mobile phones.

Access to the Seaside Way Car Park was queried by the Committee. It was reported that the current access and exits were unsuitable during busy periods and Members asked if any consideration had been given to improve the car park's layout. Mr Welsh responded that he would raise the issue with the highways team.

The report referred to the loss of town centre on-street parking, caused by the tramway extension on Talbot Road, and the creation of additional spaces in the south of Blackpool. Members queried if the replacement of parking in the town centre could be adequately compensated by additional parking in the south of the town. Mr Welsh responded that the Council had a Car Parking Strategy that aimed to ensure that there was adequate parking in the centre of Blackpool, Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Regeneration and Communication, added that the loss of on-street parking in the town centre was not linked to the creation of additional space in the south of Blackpool.

The Committee also asked what plans the Council had for Christmas parking during 2019. Councillor Smith responded that a similar scheme to that used in 2018 would be implemented during 2019 and that an announcement would be made shortly.

The Committee agreed that Members be provided with a link to the Car Parking Strategy.

7 LOCAL FULL FIBRE NETWORK

Mr Tony Doyle, Head of Information Computer Technology Services and Mr Steve Thompson, Director of Resources presented an update on progress on the development of the Blackpool Local Full Fibre Network. It was reported that the Council had joined a broadband co-operative which had helped with State Aid compliance and being signed off

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by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to access grant funding.

The Committee asked if any consideration had been given using the network to encourage digital innovation similar to the Baltic Triangle in Liverpool. Mr Doyle responded that the Council had a Digital Strategy to ensure that Blackpool gained a benefit from the development of the network. He added that the Business In The Community Group had also indicated that it would support the development of a Blackpool TechHub to promote digital innovation in the town. Members were also informed that the Department for Work and Pension's DWP Digital would be hosting a 'GovJam Hackathon' at the Winter Gardens during October 2019 where attendees would be presented with a problem and invited to creatively solve the issue using digital solutions.

Members also queried why guest houses located at Saint Chad's had been chosen by Co-Operative members to demonstrate the network's capability. It was suggested that Blackpool schools could have been a more appropriate location. Mr Doyle replied that the criteria for funding the network at the current stage required the property connected to be within a certain distance of the network connection, which the guest houses selected were. He also added that all the schools in Blackpool already benefited from a separate full fibre connection.

8 TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Regeneration and Communication, and Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation, presented an overview of progress on the town centre regeneration projects being undertaken in Blackpool Town Centre and updated the Committee on planned future work.

The Committee discussed the progress of the Talbot Gateway project and queried why there had been two vacant retail units at Bickerstaffe House since 2015 and asked what had been undertaken to fill these units. Mr Cavill responded that there had been high interest in the vacant units but that the Council had sought a tenant that fitted with its vision for the wider project.

The proposed underpass connecting the new Tram Terminus and Blackpool North Train Station was raised as an issue of concern by the Committee. It was noted that underpasses in other towns had become unsafe areas after dark and encouraged homelessness and begging. Members asked if any consideration had been given to these issues in the design of the underpass. Mr Cavill responded that the underpass had been designed to ensure that it was wide, would include shop fronts in its walls and would be lit for 24-hours a day which would help discourage rough sleeping and help ensure public safety.

The Committee also welcomed the news that improvements would be made to the Clifton Hotel. Mr Cavill reported that the Council was close to an agreement on the works to be undertaken and it was anticipated that they would begin in November 2019.

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Mr Cavill also informed the Committee that the office space at Bickerstaffe House had now been fully let.

Members of the Committee questioned if the delay to the delivery of the new Conference Centre at the Winter Gardens had caused any bookings that had been taken to be lost. Mr Cavill responded that no bookings had been lost as a result of the delay but that two events had been relocated to elsewhere in the Winter Gardens. The organisations affected had been supported in this to ensure minimal disruption to their events. The Committee further asked if the Council was confident that the centre would be delivered by Summer 2020 as outlined in the report. Mr Cavill responded that the building contractor had provided a date of July 2020 for completion of the Conference Centre and that remained the expected date for it being finished.

The figure provided for the expected annual spend created by the development central leisure quarter of £75 million was questioned. Mr Cavill responded that the figure had been based on a conservative modelling of the capacity of the attractions being developed and their expected occupancy.

The Committee also discussed the work being undertaken to relocate the Courts buildings that currently occupied part of the area to be developed as part of the central leisure quarter. Mr Cavill reported that a location for the Courts to move to had been identified but discussions regarding the costs were ongoing. It was also reported that the Council foresaw that the current buildings would be demolished by 2025 so that work could begin on phase three of the leisure quarter.

Members queried if anything of value had been stored in the Council storage facilities. Mr Cavill responded that all important documents were held in the Council's archive but that he would look to determine what was held in other storage areas.

The Committee noted that two long-standing businesses in the town centre had closed recently and asked if the traffic work that had been undertaken during the summer was the primary cause. Mr Cavill responded that although traffic works could have been a factor he did not believe that it was the primary cause for their closure. Members also reported that an issue with new overhead wiring for the tramway extension had prevented business owners cleaning their windows, Mr Cavill replied that he was unaware of any such issue but would check to determine if this was the case.

Work being undertaken outside of the town centre was also raised as an issue. The Committee agreed that a future report be provided outlining any regeneration work being undertaken in the outer areas of Blackpool.

9 BUDGET SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL

The Committee considered the establishment of a Budget Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise the 2020-2021 Budget.

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Members agreed to the establishment of the panel as outlined in the report, with nine members to be appointed by group leaders.

It was noted that the Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board Councillor Mrs Maxine Callow would act as Chair of the Panel.

Mr Steve Thompson, Director of Resources, informed Members that the date of the Panel meeting would be determined once the Government had confirmed the local government settlement for 2020-2021.

10 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee considered the Scrutiny Workplan report and associated updates.

The Chairman asked that an interim report on the work being undertaken by the Council to address climate change be brought to the next meeting of the Committee, 4 December 2019, ahead of a full report scheduled for 5 February 2020.

Members also noted the outcomes of the Community Safety Partnership Review Panel held on 11 September 2019 and the Libraries Ambition Plan Review Panel held on 18 September 2019.

In relation to the Community Safety Plan 2019-2022 considered at the review panel meeting Members asked that it be noted that although the Committee endorsed the plan and its priorities, partners would need to ensure resources were maintained to deliver on them.

11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was confirmed as Wednesday, 4 December 2019 at 6pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.05 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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