

**MINUTES OF INFORMAL TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2021**

Present:

Councillor Jackson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Burdess

Collett

Kirkland

Walsh

G Coleman

Galley

Owen

Wilshaw

In Attendance:

Councillor Neal Brookes, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport

Councillor Jane Hugo, Cabinet Member for Climate Change

Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation

Councillor Mrs Maxine Callow JP, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board

Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration

John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Steve Thompson, Director of Resources

Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager

Clare Nolan-Barnes, Head of Coastal and Environmental Partnerships and Investment

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Chairman explained that it was an informal meeting as agreed at Annual Council on 24 May 2021.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Maria Kirkland declared a personal interest in respect of Item 4 on the agenda, 'Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions'. As the previous Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Leisure she had made Cabinet Member Decision PH40/2021 'Blackpool Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan Update'.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 14 APRIL 2021

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2021 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers on this occasion.

**MINUTES OF INFORMAL TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2021**

4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions taken within its remit since the last meeting of the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 14 April 2021.

Members of the Committee queried Executive Decision EX23/2021 'Levelling Up and Community Renewal Fund' asking if there had been any scrutiny involvement in the application to the fund. Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Regeneration and Communication, replied that due to the limited time provided to submit an application and the restrictions of the pre-election period in May 2021 the involvement of scrutiny members had not been possible.

Executive Decision EX25/2021 'Talbot Gateway Phase 3 – Office Accommodation' was also discussed, with the Committee querying if the office space was still needed in light of changes to working practices in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members noted that greater use of home working could lead to no tenant being found if the office accommodation was built. Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation advised that the Council was aware of how such changes could affect the project and that construction of the office accommodation would only commence once a lease had been agreed and signed with a tenant.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the contents of the Council's Forward Plan June 2021 to October 2021, relating to the portfolios of the Cabinet Members whose responsibilities fell within its remit.

Members noted the inclusion of the Blackpool Tree Strategy on the plan and queried what funding was available to support it. Mr John Blackledge, Director for Community and Environmental Services, responded that a report on the strategy would be considered by the Scrutiny Leadership Board at its next meeting. This report outlined that the strategy was the first adopted by the Council and that it would allow access to national funding opportunities once in place. He added that scrutiny would be consulted at every stage of the strategy's development and implementation.

The Committee also raised the decision relating to the Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) on King Street to facilitate the Talbot Gateway Phase 3 project and asked if any issues had been encountered with the businesses affected. Mr Cavill responded that the Council was in negotiation with those affected by the project, with a view to purchasing their property and assisting with any relocation, and that the use of a CPO was a last resort in the event no agreement could be reached.

The New Housing Development at Grange Park was also discussed with Members asking if the number of houses planned had been confirmed and if any existing residents would be displaced.

**MINUTES OF INFORMAL TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2021**

Councillor Neal Brookes, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport, replied that no existing residents would be displaced by the development and that the number and mix of planned houses could be provided to the Committee in writing following the meeting.

The Committee queried if agreement of the Community Safety Plan (CSP) had been delayed and if the new plan contained provision for addressing the crime and disorder issues occurring in the town centre in relation to young people. Mr Blackledge responded

that the CSP would be shaped by the outcome of the strategic needs assessment and that the Committee, as the Crime and Disorder Panel, would be consulted on the resulting document. He added that the Police were aware of the issues in the town centre and that they would be working with the Council's Public Protection team going forward.

Members discussed the replacement of the CCTV system in the town centre and asked if greater details regarding the plans, cost and level of coverage could be provided. In response Mr Blackledge confirmed that a review panel meeting would be organised for July 2021 so that the plans for CCTV could be presented to the Committee and allow scrutiny member input. In response to a query regarding funding for live CCTV in the town centre and at Council owned sport facilities, Mr Blackledge stated that the Council considered all possible funding opportunities. He also noted that the replacement of CCTV was a process and therefore infrastructure would not be replaced all at once. The Committee further asked if any consideration had been given to the saturation of CCTV in the town and if a policy existed to determine this, noting possible privacy concerns. Mr Blackledge answered that although no policy existed, all cameras had a risk assessment conducted before they were placed and that locations were determined by the level of concern associated with an area.

6 EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

Mr Steve Thompson, Director of Resources, presented the Engagement of External Consultants Annual Report. He informed the Committee that the spend on external consultants had mostly been to support capital schemes. In most cases consultants had been needed as the required skills to support a scheme were not possessed by the Council and the limited timescales associated would have made it unrealistic to employ additional Council staff.

The Committee queried why consultants had been used for a £6k redesign of the screen at the Blackpool Museum, noting that the museum building had only recently been completed. Mr Cavill responded that the Museum rented the building used, therefore when originally designed the Council had to assume the size of the screen needed based on the original plans for the building. The landlord had subsequently changed these plans, which had necessitated a redesign of the screen to fit the new building dimensions.

**MINUTES OF INFORMAL TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2021**

7 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Ms Clare Nolan-Barnes, Head of Coastal and Environmental Partnership Investments presented an update on the progress of Flood Risk Management work since the 26 January 2021 Flood Risk Strategy Scrutiny Review Panel meeting. She reported that the Lancashire Flood Risk Strategy public consultation had taken place since the review meeting and the responses had been summarised in the report, the majority of which had been positive. The Committee was also informed that the timescales outlined in the strategy had been linked to the funding strategy developed by the Environment Agency and that further discussions would be taking place with Lancashire Strategic Partners on 23 June 2021.

The Committee asked what the Council's ambitions were for the strategy and what it was hoped would be achieved in Blackpool. Ms Nolan-Barnes responded that the development of the strategy had been led by Blackpool Council and offered an opportunity to engage with local people. The business plan associated with the strategy had been designed to ensure transparency and that information regarding flood risk management was accessible. Details of all the partners involved in flood risk had also been included.

It was also noted that United Utilities had expressed a concern regarding the run-off of water from driveways on new housing developments, and the need to ensure proper drainage. Ms Nolan-Barnes replied that the Council and its partners were aware of the potential issue that water run-off and drainage in new developments could cause. The strategy therefore was designed to allow partners to work with planners and developers to ensure that new builds were supported by sustainable drainage systems.

Members expressed concern regarding reports of blocked watercourses near to the Warren Drive housing development and the impact that this could have on the houses nearby. In response Ms Nolan-Barnes explained that the drainage for the site would be covered in the Local Plan and added that the strategy and associated business plan ensured greater consultation with developers to ensure that drainage schemes were in place for new developments.

The Committee raised reports in local media which had claimed that the impact of climate change on rising sea levels could result in parts of the Fylde Coast being submerged by 2050. Members asked if therefore the Council expected the sea wall to be breached at any point in the future. Ms Nolan-Barnes replied that the Council and partners had invested in new sea defences that were expected to provide protection for one-hundred years. It was further asked in response to this how often the defences were assessed. Ms Nolan-Barnes stated that the Environment Agency undertook monitoring of the defences and that the Council had an increased awareness of how environmental changes affected the sea level.

8 CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION: CLIMATE ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager, presented the Climate Emergency update on the outcome of the Climate Assembly.

**MINUTES OF INFORMAL TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2021**

He informed the Committee that the Climate Assembly had produced a report outlining its findings and its final recommendations. These were presented in two parts: recommendations which directly addressed issues around the climate emergency and those which were wider reflections covering issues with a less direct impact. He reported that the Council would be considering in detail the recommendations made to understand how these could contribute to the delivery of a net-zero Council and town. He also noted that although some of the recommendations related to local groups and businesses with Blackpool, the majority were Council specific. While some of the recommendations were similar to work already undertaken by the Council, others needed further consideration on how they could be implemented and where funding to support the additional work could be identified.

The findings and recommendations of the Youth Climate Assembly had also been provided to the Committee for information. Mr Butterfield noted that the recommendations from the youth assembly were similar to those made by the Climate Assembly.

The Committee welcomed the report and the outcome of the Climate Assembly and the Youth Assembly and noted their recommendations. However it was asked if officers believed that the Council could do more to promote Blackpool as a 'green town' with a greater diversity of green spaces. Mr Butterfield replied that the Council was adopting an ambitious approach to climate change, including the ambition to be net zero carbon as an organisation by 2030 and the adoption of new strategies, such as those relating to the purchase of electric vehicles. Mr Blackledge also added that the Council had a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy which encouraged bio-diversity. Blackpool also had a number of diverse park areas and the strategy was being used to further develop these and other parts of Blackpool to improve access to green spaces. He also stated that as a result of this the Council was in a strong position to attract funding for green spaces and climate work.

Members asked if consideration had been given to what simple big impact actions could be undertaken to achieve the zero carbon ambition for Blackpool and what more difficult actions existed. Mr Butterfield responded to advise that modelling had taken place which had identified that the Government's plans for reduced emissions meant that Lancashire had halved its emissions based on 2007 levels and that actions which emerged from this work would be considered alongside the recommendations of the Climate Assembly to form a "roadmap" to net zero. He added that the biggest issue identified in Blackpool was domestic heating emissions and that work was underway to model possible solutions.

The Vancouver Model of increased town centre living to reduce the need for longer commutes to work and reliance on vehicles was raised by the Committee and it was queried if consideration had been given to implementing a similar model in Blackpool. Mr Butterfield replied that the Council understood that the principles of the "15-20 minute city" could be of benefit to Blackpool, but research would be needed into the core benefits of such a model to support any move to implement one in Blackpool.

**MINUTES OF INFORMAL TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2021**

The Committee noted that the Climate Assembly had recommended that a low emissions zone be implemented in Blackpool. While the benefits of such a zone were noted, Members asked if the impact on visitors had been considered, highlighting that such a zone could discourage some from coming to Blackpool. In response, Mr Butterfield accepted that this was a bold ambition that would require close consideration of its impact, including how it would be implemented and where it could be located. He also stated that there could be alternative ways of achieving the aim of the recommendation of reducing emissions in the town centre.

Members also raised the issue of commercial waste recycling in the town centre. It was noted that none currently existed and that there had originally been more but these had been removed. Mr Blackledge responded that the Council would be looking at improved

commercial waste recycling in the town centre with its wholly-owned waste company, Enveco. He added that new technology such as sensors in bins would allow greater monitoring of levels of waste in bins and lead to more efficient waste collection.

9 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee considered the Scrutiny Workplan report including an update on work undertaken by the Illuminations Scrutiny Review Panel.

Members noted that the workplan had been updated following its work planning workshop held on 9 June 2021.

The Committee queried the future reporting on the issues identified within the Illumination Scrutiny Review Panel report. Mr John Greenbank, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser advised that a report had been scheduled for the 8 December 2021 of the Committee, following which further work could be identified by members.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Scrutiny Workplan and the outcome of the Illuminations Scrutiny Review.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was confirmed as Wednesday, 6 October 2021 at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.20 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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