

**MINUTES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 5 JULY 2023**

Present:

Councillor Cartmell (in the Chair)

Councillors

Ellison	Humphreys	Marshall	Webb
Hoyle	Jones	D Mitchell	

In Attendance:

Councillor Paul Galley, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board

John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director of Community and Environment (Community and Wellbeing)

Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection

Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager

Paul Hodgson, Service Manager for Parks and Green Open Spaces

Neil McArdle, Senior Highways Asset Management Officer

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made at the meeting:

- Councillor Emma Ellison declared a personal interest in item 6 on the agenda "Parks and Green Environment Annual Report" as a member of the "Friends of Anchorsholme Park" community group.
- Councillor Julie Jones declared a personal interest in item 6 on the agenda "Parks and Green Environment Annual Report" as a member of the "Friends of Anchorsholme Park" community group.
- Councillor Paul Galley declared a personal interest in item 6 on the agenda "Parks and Green Environment Annual Report" as a member of the "Friends of Anchorsholme Park" community group.
- Councillor Simon Cartmell declared a personal interest in item 6 on the agenda "Parks and Green Environment Annual Report" as a member of the "Friends of Watson Road Park" community group.

2 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers on this occasion.

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3 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions taken within its remit since the beginning of the municipal year.

Members discussed PH22/23 "School Road Safety Review" querying the timescales envisioned for the review. Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services, explained that the review would be undertaken at thirty-three schools over a six-month period. The Council had engaged a consultant to undertake the review and make recommendations regarding highway infrastructure around schools. It had been noted that many schools experienced an issue with traffic outside of their gates at the beginning and the end of the school day.

The potential for mobile CCTV at schools sites was raised in connection with the review with Mr Blackledge advising that it would be impractical to deploy a vehicle at every school site, but that a mobile CCTV van could be utilised and the deterrent effect of one had been recognised. Discussions with schools had also been undertaken regarding increased static CCTV coverage, with the potential for joint funding being considered.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan July 2023 to October 2023 of upcoming decisions.

The procurement of contractors for coastal protection schemes was raised with Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services, reporting that the Council had been engaged in discussions with the Environment Agency to develop a deliverability framework. The framework would support the funding from Government that had been allocated for coastal defence and beach improvements, with on-site investigations planned to commence during summer 2023, with work on the sea front planned to begin in September 2024. The work would focus on protecting Blackpool's infrastructure along the sea-front and preventing the recession of sands on the beaches.

5 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ANNUAL REPORT

Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services, presented the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Annual Report. He highlighted that the item had become part of regular reporting to scrutiny following a member of the public raising concerns regarding Footpath 11 in 2021. It had been noted that the Council had a statutory responsibility to ensure that PRoWs were accessible and scrutiny had agreed to undertake ongoing monitoring of the work taking place.

The Committee was informed that Blackpool had forty-six PRoWs covering a distance of approximately twelve miles. Mr Blackledge reported that the majority of these were in a good condition. However three had been determined to be impassable, this was attributed to them running on private land where engagement with the owners was required to secure their opening.

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The largest element of costs in relation to PRoWs was reported as maintenance of the pathways with Mr Blackledge advising that £4k had been spent initially and that the Highways Service had identified ongoing funding within existing budgets. He also reported that the increased use of PRoWs was promoted and that they formed an important element of the Active Lives agenda.

Ongoing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and issues caused by littering had been experienced in respect of Footpath 11 and the Council was therefore considering alterations to the existing route and improvements to how enforcement had been carried out. The Committee noted its concern in relation to incidents of ASB on pathways, and highlighted the risk associated if the Council encouraged more people to use them. Members therefore discussed potential mitigation, such as lighting and CCTV. Mr Neil McArdle, Senior Highways Asset Management Officer, explained that the Council had no obligation to ensure the security of PRoWs. Mr Blackledge added that the installation of lighting and CCTV along all Blackpool's PRoWs was impractical and that focusing public protection work on areas of the highest risk represented the best use of resources.

The promotion of PRoWs was considered with it being noted that although information on the location and routes was available it was not proactively publicised. The link between different PRoWs was also discussed with Mr Blackledge informing members that work had been undertaken between Highways, Parks and Leisure Services to improve the connections between pathways. Ms Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director, Community and Environmental Services (Community and Wellbeing), also explained that a cycleway around Blackpool using PRoWs had been scoped to determine feasibility and that this would be used to identify and access potential funding opportunities. Mr McArdle added that challenges in this project existed due to the differing nature of each pathway, including access rights and pathway condition.

Members asked that an update be brought to a meeting of the Committee in six-months' time to report on progress with work on linking up PRoWs in Blackpool.

The Committee agreed: That

1. The report be noted; and
2. That an update on progress to improve linkage between public rights of way be brought to a meeting of the Committee in six-months' time.

6 PARKS AND GREEN ENVIRONMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Mr Paul Hodgson, Service Manager for Parks and Green Open Spaces, presented the Parks and Green Environment Annual Report. The report outlined the work being undertaken and planned within the Parks and Green Open Space Service. Mr Hodgson highlighted the work being undertaken to improve play parks with Blackpool's various "Friends Of" community groups. He also advised on other partnership working, including with volunteer groups, to maintain and improve green open spaces, including on Marton Mere where work with young people had been undertaken to teach environmental skills.

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It was further reported that 3,775 trees had been planted during 2022-2023 as part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure and Tree Strategy work. Many of these had been at school sites where planting had been combined with engagement opportunities with young people, undertaken by the Park Rangers. In addition to this Parks had been working with Highways to ensure street planting was undertaken to create green corridors between open spaces.

A Tree and Landscape Officer had also been appointed to ensure that planning applications met the Council's tree and green space targets.

Mr Hodgson also advised that the ongoing problem of Avian Flu, being experienced by birds in Stanley Park, was being monitored in conjunction with Public Protection and ENVECO. Communications regarding the disease had been issued to ensure public awareness.

The Committee was informed that the Open Space Assessment had been completed in 2019, which provided information on the development of parks. The Green Flag Award assessments for six parks had also been carried out, which would inform the park development plans going forward.

Members raised the work being undertaken to promote tree growth in Blackpool, with increased planting towards and on the promenade being discussed. Mr Hodgson noted that this had been under consideration, but that issues existed in ensuring that the correct species of tree was selected, noting the difficult conditions for tree growth on the sea front. The species used for tree planting was also highlighted with Mr Hodgson explaining that although 90% were from native species the Council sought to trial a range of species to determine which suited each location and ensure that the population had resilience. He added that the Tree Strategy covered a ten-year period and that the Council also operated its own small nursery for some species as well as buying specimens where necessary. It was further advised that the strategy covered the promotion and planting of hedges within Blackpool, as their importance to green spaces and bio-diversity had been recognised.

The collection of rain water via the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) was discussed, with Mr Hodgson explaining that these would be installed to collect surface water from buildings for parks and green spaces. Parks would therefore be considering the location of each SuDS system to ensure it was utilised effectively in each park and that the volume of water collected could be managed.

Crime and Disorder in parks was considered with Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services reporting that the Council was undertaking a review of its CCTV infrastructure and that this would include those located in parks. As part of this process risk assessments would be developed to determine priority areas for CCTV. Mr Blackledge added that the Committee had been asked to undertake scrutiny of this work as part of its 2023/2024 work programme, allowing members to feed into the consideration of where infrastructure was installed and how it was used.

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It was added however that CCTV did not represent a complete solution to the crime and disorder experienced in parks and that work to address this also included partnership working between the Council and members of the Community Safety Partnership.

The Committee agreed: That the report be noted.

Councillor Alastair Humphreys left the meeting following this item.

7 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Ms Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection, presented a report providing an overview of the work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). She reported that the CSP in Blackpool was named the BSafe Partnership and worked to protect communities, prevent crime and disorder and support the victims of crime. In order to supervise this work the CSP held quarterly meetings which brought together all the partners involved in community safety work such as the police and fire and rescue service.

The CSP had identified strategic priorities for 2022-2025 which had been determined following a strategic needs assessment undertaken in 2022. Those identified were;

- Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation
- Domestic Abuse
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Serious and Organised Crime
- Sexual Offences, Rape and Prostitution
- Counter Terrorism
- Reducing Reoffending
- Burglary
- Road Safety

Each of these areas had a dedicated working group which, Ms Clayton reported, aimed at addressing one of the factors in the “crime triangle”; Offender, Victim and Location. In the case of Domestic Abuse, daily meetings were held as this had been noted as a high priority that required close working between partners to address.

In respect of ASB, Ms Clayton advised that this was the broadest area of work and involved the most multi-agency working to address. She highlighted “Operation Centurion” as a piece of work that had been undertaken by partners in Lancashire to address Youth ASB. The operation aimed to improve engagement with young people to address the factors that caused ASB to occur.

The Committee noted that the CSP had adopted a public health approach to the work undertaken to address its priorities and queried if data on the impact of this approach could be provided, including any comparator data from other CSPs. Ms Clayton stated that this could be provided for information to members of the Committee.

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Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Service, informed the Committee that the report had been in part presented to provide members with the opportunity to identify areas for deep dive review as part of its work planning for the 2023/2024 municipal year.

The Committee agreed: That

1. That the report be noted;
2. That data on the impact of the public health approach be provided to members of the Committee; and
3. That the Committee note the areas covered by the report for consideration to determine areas for deep dive scrutiny as part of its work planning for 2023/2024.

8 CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager, presented an overview of the Council's activity and position on Climate and Sustainability since the Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019. He reported that the Council had adopted an approach that brought together all the climate work taking place across the Council to achieve the declarations aim of Blackpool to have net zero carbon by 2030. The work focussed on cutting carbon and reducing energy use.

The Council had also started work to develop a Climate Adaption Action Plan, which recognised the change needed across the authority and ensured that mitigation was in place while embedding climate awareness across services. Mr Butterfield reported that the draft plan would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

Members were also informed that a Climate Citizens Assembly had been held in 2022/23 which had recognised that although Blackpool citizens had a relatively low carbon footprint compared to many other areas, there were elements that could be worked on within the town by both the Council and wider community. Mr Butterfield suggested that work undertaken here could send a powerful statement to other areas about what a relatively small local authority could achieve.

Mr Butterfield also discussed how the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) could be utilised to support climate work. He highlighted the eco-hub at the Palatine Library as an example of how the SPF could be used. Going forward he added that consideration would be given to how other projects could be funded through the SPF or any successor funding

In addition to work within Blackpool Mr Butterfield informed the Committee that Blackpool was leading on the climate work within the Lancashire 2050 partnership with other local authorities.

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Challenges going forward were also reported on with Mr Butterfield highlighting funding as a significant area where consideration would be needed. He reported that it was estimated that it would cost approximately £1.5bn for Blackpool to achieve net zero and therefore work would be needed to explore how the Council could bring in private funding to complement grants and the Authorities' own investment. Members noted that the net-zero target and associated costs were substantial ambitions, with Mr Butterfield advising that it was expected that the very best case scenario for Blackpool, including activity within the domain of national government, would only be able to achieve 68% towards net zero and that it was unlikely that £1.5bn could be found. He added that the most significant area towards achieving the Council's ambitions was energy reduction, with property owned by the Council such as the Winter Gardens and the Sandcastle Water Park being the biggest challenges due to the large amount of gas heating used in the operation of the buildings.

The generation of electrical energy was discussed, noting the undesirability of fossil fuels, with Mr Butterfield informing members that the proportion of emissions incurred through the generation of power changed constantly dependent on a number of factors affecting the National Grid such as weather.

Staffing also presented a significant challenge, with Mr Butterfield reporting that recruitment to posts was ongoing. The Committee discussed the challenges posed with Mr Butterfield explaining that the Council pursued a graduate model noting its limited ability to offer wages comparable to the private sector. The graduate model allowed the recruitment of qualified individuals usually at the beginning of their career and offered them opportunity to learn and develop their knowledge while at the Council. In addition to this, work had been undertaken to establish pathways from Lancaster University into the Council and Mr Butterfield highlighted that the Council was open to the idea of accepting student placements, one of which has recently led to an offer of employment

Members discussed the development of a Climate Communications Plan which would outline the topics which the Council wanted to engage Blackpool's community on. This plan was being developed with the Strategy team and details could be provided to a future meeting.

The Committee agreed: That;

1. That the report be noted.
2. That details of the Climate Communications Plan be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

9 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Chair informed the Committee that a Work Planning Workshop had been organised for Wednesday 12 July 2023 and would provide members with an opportunity to identify areas for scrutiny during 2023/2024. He added that officers and portfolio holders would also be attending the meeting to discuss areas of potential scrutiny,

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The Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board, Councillor Paul Galley provided the Committee with an overview of the role of scrutiny. Highlighting the need for each scrutiny Committee to have a clear vision of where they wished to be in twelve months' time.

The Committee agreed: That the date of the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Work Planning Workshop be noted as Wednesday, 12 July 2023 at 6.00pm.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as 6.00pm on Wednesday, 27 September 2023.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.58 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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