

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Present:**

Councillor Hunter (in the Chair)

Councillors

Mrs Callow JP  
G Coleman

Galley  
Roberts

Rowson  
L Williams

Matthews  
I Coleman

**In Attendance:**

Councillor Gillian Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Mrs Christine Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Procurement and Income Generation

Councillor Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Municipal Assets

Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business and Economic Development

Steve Thompson, Director of Resources

Alan Cavill, Director of Place

John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

John Donnellon, Chief Executive Blackpool Coastal Housing

Andrew Foot, Head of Housing

Paolo Pertica, Head of Visitors Services

John Paul Lovie, Commercial Waste Manager

Nicky Dennison, Senior Public Health Practitioner

Ruth Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer

Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser (Scrutiny)

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs Callow declared a personal interest with regard to item 10, 'Waste Services and Street Cleansing Performance Report', the nature of the interest being that the Re-use shop made an annual contribution to the Mayor's charity.

Councillor Hunter declared a personal interest with regard to item 4, 'Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions', the nature of the interest being that he had recently been appointed as a Board Member of Blackpool Housing Company.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 9 JULY 2015**

Councillor G Coleman noted that in item 1 of the minutes, it was stated that the nature of his interest was that he was a Hackney Carriage Licence holder. He noted that this should have stated 'Private Hire' rather than 'Hackney Carriage'.

Subject to the above amendment, the Committee agreed that the minutes of the Tourism, Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 July 2015, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**3 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

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The Committee noted that there were no applications to speak by members of the public on this occasion.

**4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS**

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions within the portfolios of the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council, taken since the last meeting of the Committee.

With regards to decision number PH39/2015, 'Acquisition of Property – 22 Tyldesley Road', Members questioned the type and size of the property acquired for £245,000. Councillor Mrs Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Procurement and Income Generation, advised that the property had been a small hotel/ bed and breakfast and its purchase had been to enable the continuation of the Rigby Road development.

The Committee questioned the budget allocation of the £2,000,000 contribution towards the museum project in regards to executive decision number EX/30/2015. Mr Thompson, Director of Resources, explained that the funding had been identified over 12 months ago from the Council's earmarked reserves and that the project was also being undertaken with Heritage Lottery Funding.

In relation to executive decision EX/32/2015, 'Funding for a wholly owned Housing Regeneration Company', Members raised questions regarding the transfer of resources from the Council and the rate at which the Council would lend to the company. Mr Thompson advised that the transfer of resources to the company would be a mix of loan and equity but that a final decision had yet to be made regarding this. He also explained to the Committee that any loan to the Company must be at a commercial loan rate to avoid State Aid challenge.

The Committee, in relation to decision number PH43/2015 'Sundry Debt Write Offs', asked whether Members could be provided with the total amount for the 2015/2016 financial year. Mr Thompson advised that this information would be provided for Committee Members.

Further questions were raised by the Committee in relation to executive decision number EX/34/2015 'Acquisition of land for Central Station Site Development'. Mr Cavill, Director Place advised that the acquisition was just for the Bonny Street Police station and did not include the law courts. It was noted that a new location was required for the law courts before the site could be redeveloped and Mr Cavill advised that as part of the Growth Deal, the Council was working with the Government in order to acquire the law courts and was working with the Ministry of Justice to find a suitable alternative location for them.

The Committee agreed to note the Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions.

**5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, October 2015 –

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January 2016, relating to the portfolios of the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council.

The Committee agreed to note the Forward Plan items.

**6 ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANTS OVER 25K MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered the report detailing the appointment of consultants exceeding £25,000 for the period 1st May 2014 to 31st July 2014.

The Committee noted that there had been three appointments in the above period and that those appointments had been for specific non-recurrent projects. Members raised questions relating to the appointment of Aecom to produce a comprehensive long term Parking Strategy as part of the Strategic Parking Review. Mr Thompson reported that a specialist was required that had not been available within Blackpool. It was noted that approximately 1,000 Council parking spaces had been lost over the last eight years, but that income targets had largely remained static, which had resulted in those income targets becoming increasingly challenging. The Strategic Parking review would therefore aim to increase income generation and ensure adequate capacity for the present and into the future. Members were also advised that the consultant would consider technical recommendations regarding signage for the car parks and various payment methods that would improve the experience of car park patrons. Councillor Mrs Wright explained that there was an expectation that the return from the Strategic Parking review would be greater than the cost of the consultant, although it was not possible to quantify the level of return at this stage.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Committee was due to consider a report on car parking at its next meeting and it was requested that the report incorporated information and further details on the issues raised by Members.

Members discussed the method by which they would receive monitoring information regarding consultants over £25k in the future and requested that monitoring reports continue to be presented at Committee meetings on a regular basis.

The Committee agreed to note the report and requested that monitoring reports continued to be presented at Committee meetings.

Background papers: None

**7 DECENT HOMES**

Mr Donnellon, Chief Executive, Blackpool Coastal Housing presented a report containing details of the Decent Homes Investment made in the Council owned housing stock, following the award of grant that came with the transfer of management to the arm's length management company, Blackpool Coastal Housing.

Committee Members noted that as part of the move to an arm's length management arrangement for the Council's housing stock, Blackpool was awarded £66m to invest in its housing stock to bring it back to an agreed standard. This money was to be made

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available over a number of years with the programme concluding in April 2015. It was considered that the investment had provided Blackpool's social housing stock with a significantly improved lifespan and had reduced the investment burden on the Council in the medium to long term.

Upon questioning from Members, Councillor Mrs Wright informed the Committee that the main areas of concern for the future would be in maintaining the housing stock to the Decent Homes Standard solely from the Council's own revenue streams. The Council's ability to maintain this standard would be under greater pressure as a result of the recent budget announcement to cut social rents by one per cent per year for the next four years.

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

Background papers: None.

## **8 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE**

The Committee considered a report detailing the performance in the Community Safety Partnership's priorities in quarter one of 2015/2016.

Members noted that the priorities were Assaults, Sexual Offences, Domestic Abuse, Antisocial Behaviour (including Deliberate Fires), Drugs and Alcohol. However, the Partnership had also decided to pay particular attention to Child Sexual Exploitation and Counter Terrorism as those remained the two most important emerging threats. It was requested that in future meetings, information be presented to the Committee summarising the work done by the Partnership in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and work regarding Counter Terrorism.

Members raised a number of questions regarding Antisocial Behaviour, with particular reference to Public Space Protection Orders, which would give greater powers to the Police and the Council to deal with certain types of antisocial behaviour. Councillor Campbell, Deputy Leader of the Council, explained that a draft order had recently been made open to the public for consultation, with an intention that an Executive decision would be made to finalise the order in early October.

The draft order covered the town centre and proposed stopping a number of activities within that area, including drinking, taking legal highs or selling 'lucky charms' or heather, amongst other activities. Councillor Campbell explained that the order needed to be robust for the town centre and then it could be rolled out into the town's parks. The Committee was also assured that the Council would ensure appropriate resources would be allocated in order to enforce the order once it was in place.

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

Background papers: None.

## **9 COUNCIL COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT**

Mrs R Henshaw, Corporate Development Officer, presented the Annual Customer

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Feedback Report 2014/2015 to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that the report provided an overview of customer feedback recorded by the Council in the period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015, as well as providing information on the Council's performance in dealing with complaints, exploring the themes within customer feedback, and including an overview of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Members questioned whether the report took into account feedback received via social media, noting that Blackpool Transport Services did incorporate social media comments into its complaints recording process. Mrs Henshaw advised that social media comments were not currently recorded, but that she would consider the processes required in order to do so in future.

Mrs Henshaw also noted that the report also identified a number of actions for improvement that had arisen from the review of customer feedback, but due to limited capacity within the Corporate Development team and the Customer Relations team, not all of the identified actions could realistically be implemented. Mrs Henshaw welcomed Members' comments as to which actions should be prioritised over the past year and the Committee recommended that:

- Further work be undertaken with departments to encourage all services to follow the Council's complaints procedure and improve their complaint handling, particularly across those services which have changed due to restructures or where officers designated to deal with customer feedback have left the authority.
- Further work needed to be done to encourage services to capture and act upon learning from complaints where appropriate so that services could be improved as a result.

The Committee agreed to note the report and recommended that the above actions be prioritised following the review of customer feedback.

Background papers: None

## **10 WASTE SERVICES AND STREET CLEANSING PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Mr Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services, provided the Committee with a Waste Services and Street Cleansing Performance report, which included an outline of the various elements of the services and highlight any current or anticipated issues.

The Committee was informed that waste collection and street cleansing proved a particular challenge in Blackpool, often due to the wind and seagulls. However, he reported that the services had made a number of achievements that had been recognised locally and nationally. Mr Blackledge summarised the successes of the Rover mobile recycling unit service that had recently won a National Award for Excellence in Waste Management and Recycling, as well as providing details of how the Household Waste Recycling Centre and Bulky Waste service had performed.

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The Committee discussed the cost implications of the Council terminating its contract with Global Renewables Limited and its transfer of responsibilities for operating waste recycling facilities to an operating company owned by Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council. Members noted that, whilst some savings had initially been realised in the financial re-modelling of its waste recycling contract, it had resulted in the loss of the Government's waste-credits grant (Private Finance Initiative credits), which had been worth £850k per year. In response, Mr Blackledge advised that the contract with Global Renewables Limited needed to be terminated as the company had not been adequately delivering on the contract. The Council had not anticipated losing the Private Finance Initiative credits and Mr Blackledge reported that Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council were taking the issue to judicial review. Upon further questioning regarding the issue, Mr Blackledge explained that he did not know when the hearing would take place, but that it would be beneficial for the Council for it to be resolved as soon as possible.

The Committee also noted that the report stated all shops had sufficient litter bin provision and questioned whether the Council held discussions with shopkeepers and businesses regarding litter being dropped outside of shops, in particular receipts from customers' purchases. Councillor Campbell reported to the Committee that the Council was working with Keep Britain Tidy regarding this issue and this should include holding conversations with shopkeepers to improve the situation.

Members also raised a number of questions regarding the treatment of weeds. It was acknowledged that poor weather had hindered the Council's ability to undertake spray treatment on weeds. However, it was considered that in certain areas the growth of weeds had been particularly problematic. Mr Blackledge assured Committee Members that those areas that were particularly problematic would be cleared of weeds as soon as possible, even if it was not feasible to spray in those areas due to the weather conditions. He advised that a review in light of the resources available would be undertaken to consider how the Council dealt with areas of heavy weed growth in periods of adverse weather in future.

The Committee also raised questions regarding Seagull-Proof Sacks. Responding to questions Mr Lovie, Commercial Waste Manager, advised that approximately 10 per cent of properties in Blackpool received black bag collections and the Council was piloting using Seagull-Proof sacks in 42 areas of the town. He reported that feedback so far had been positive and the pilot seemed to be helping to alleviate the problems caused by seagulls in those areas it was being tested. It was explained to Committee Members that, whilst the Seagull-Proof sacks did cost more money than regular rubbish sacks, the Council considered them value for money as it was far costlier in terms of resources, to clean up after rubbish had been spilled onto the street.

The Committee agreed to not the content of the report.

Background papers: None.

## **11 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

Mr Kelly presented the Tourism, Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee Workplan

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for the remainder of the Municipal Year. It was noted that this was a flexible, working document. Members could submit items for consideration by the Committee at any time through the Chairman.

In order to make a request for a scrutiny review on a particular subject, Members were informed that the Scrutiny Selection Checklist must be completed and submitted to a Committee meeting for consideration.

Members also considered the scoping document for the scrutiny review of landaus on the promenade. Mr Kelly advised that the review would cover all Licensed Horse Drawn Hackney Carriages.

The Committee agreed to approve the workplan and the scrutiny review scoping document.

Background papers: None.

**12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Thursday, 15 October 2015, at 6.00 p.m.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 7.16 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:  
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