

**MINUTES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2023**

Present:

Councillor Cartmell (in the Chair)

Councillors

Ellison	Humphreys	Marshall	S Smith
Hoyle	Jones	Mrs Scott	Webb

In Attendance:

John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director of Community and Environmental Services (Community and Wellbeing)

Clare Nolan-Barnes, Head of Coastal and Environmental Partnership Investments

Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager

Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection and Enforcement

Paul Hodgson, Service Manager for Parks and Green Open Spaces

Nicky Todd, Senior Environmental Protection Officer

Superintendent Chris Hardy, Lancashire Constabulary

Chief Inspector Chris Barton, Lancashire Constabulary

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting on 27 September 2023 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers on this occasion.

4 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Ms Clare Nolan-Barnes, Head of Coastal and Environmental Partnership Investments, presented the Flood Risk Management Annual Report 2023. The report outlined the Council's statutory duties and the work undertaken in relation to Flood Risk Management during 2023. She informed the Committee that the Council had worked with neighbouring local authorities as part of the Lancashire Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) to reduce risk to the public and ensure communities had resilience in flood incidents. The LFRMS was supported by an Action Plan which had been provided as part of the meeting's

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papers.

Members were advised that the main flood risk was the sea which had led to significant investment in coastal defence work planned up until 2027, totalling £150m.

The Committee discussed public engagement in respect of flood works taking place and planned with Ms Nolan-Barnes explaining that following a significant flood incident in Anchorsholme during 2019 the Council had sought to establish Flood Forums. These forums would allow engagement with residents and ensure their involvement in flood risk planning within their communities. Resilience would also be built through the forums, educating residents on what actions to take in a flood incident and who to contact. A Flood Forum had been established in Anchorsholme and it was hoped that further ones would be established across Blackpool.

A further link to the community was the Flood Hubs set up to provide information to schools and residents online. Members highlighted that this could disadvantage those members of the community without access to IT, with Ms Nolan-Barnes reporting that the Council held a list of vulnerable people whom it could contact in an emergency and that it had been used to ensure that they were invited to flood events and for posting out information.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Leadership Board would be undertaking a review of public engagement in scrutiny in 2024 and the Committee therefore asked that engagement with residents in respect of flood risk be referred to the Board for inclusion for consideration in the review.

Members of the Committee noted that a number of actions contained within the LFRMS Action Plan were “in progress” and queried if these were achievable by the year-end 2023/2024. Ms Nolan-Barnes confirmed that it was foreseen that all the outstanding actions would be completed by the end of the financial year, but that in the event any were missed they would be highlighted in the Action Plan for the 2024/2025 year. It was added that Members would be informed once all the actions for 2023/2024 had been completed. Councillor Jane Hugo, Cabinet Member for Climate Change added that the Council had performed well since 2019 against its statutory duties in relation to flood risk management. She noted that some elements of flood risk remained outside of the Council’s control, as flood waters could be generated in neighbouring areas, which highlighted the importance of co-operation with other local authorities in Lancashire.

Ms Nolan-Barnes further reported that a review of the Section 19 notices issued following major flood incidents would be reviewed in 2024 to ensure that they were in-line with those used by other local authorities and make them more accessible to the public. Members therefore asked that the updated document template be shared with the Committee for comment once available.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the Flood Risk Management Annual Report 2023 be noted;

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2. That Members be informed once all actions within the Lancashire Flood Risk Management Strategy Action Plan had been completed;
3. That public engagement in respect of flood risk be referred to the Scrutiny Leadership Board for inclusion for consideration as part of the Public Engagement in Scrutiny Working Group; and
4. That a draft of the updated Section 19 Report template be shared with Members of the Committee for comment.

5 BATHING WATER MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Ms Clare Nolan-Barnes, Head of Coastal and Environment Partnership Investment presented the Bathing Water Management Annual Report. The report outlined the Council's duties in respect of bathing water management, with Ms Nolan-Barnes noting that these were not onerous. She highlighted that they related to the need to ensure signage on bathing water quality on beaches based on a forecast supplied by the Environment Agency (EA). In addition to this the Council also worked with the EA and United Utilities (UU) to improve bathing water around Blackpool.

The Committee discussed a challenge the Council had made to the way in which the EA provided pollution forecasts which had resulted in neighbouring beaches showing different pollution levels, sometimes resulting in one being closed while an adjoining beach was open. Ms Nolan-Barnes reported that the challenge had been successful and the EA had agreed to a change to prevent such inconsistencies occurring in future.

Work in relation to the Motion for the Ocean was raised with it being noted that an Action Plan was being prepared to support work taking place. Members agreed that once this document had been prepared, it be brought to a future meeting for comment.

The spillage of sewage water from a UU underwater discharge pipe during Spring 2023 was discussed with Members seeking reassurance that a similar event would not occur in future. Ms Nolan-Barnes advised that the EA was conducting an investigation into the incident, the outcome of which was unknown. However, UU had spent a considerable amount of money on fixing the pipe and had informed the Council that the fault had been an isolated incident and that they were confident that a recurrence was unlikely.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the Bathing Water Management Annual Report be noted; and
2. That the Motion for The Ocean Action Plan be brought to a future meeting for comment.

Ms Nolan-Barnes left the meeting following this item.

6 GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY UPDATE AND REVIEW

Ms Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director of Community and Environmental Services (Community

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and Wellbeing) and Mr Paul Hodgson, Service Manager for Parks and Green Open Spaces, presented a report outlining work undertaken to review and update the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Mr Hodgson informed the Committee that the document represented a first draft of the revised strategy and that following consultation a final draft would be brought back to a future meeting.

The strategy had originally been agreed in 2019 and Mr Hodgson reported that new legislation and the impact of recent events such as the Covid-19 pandemic had meant that a review of the document had been considered appropriate. The strategy had therefore been amended to link it to the new legislation and re-emphasise its links to other related Council strategies and policies. The strategy aimed to expand Blackpool's "green" infrastructure across the town, especially into the town centre. In order to support this work he advised that development of an Action Plan had been undertaken with a consultant. He also highlighted that community engagement would be a key part of promoting green infrastructure work going forward.

In response to a query from Members, Mr Hodgson explained that the work to move the strategy forward would be undertaken by a new manager, who would work with the consultant to establish the Action Plan's timetable, ensuring achievable targets and realistic timescales for projects. Ms Arnold added that the Action Plan would also have a degree of flexibility that would allow actions' timescales to be amended if funding opportunities arose that allowed projects to be commenced sooner than expected.

Linking the work outlined in the strategy with other related Council strategies, Members highlighted the importance of a joined-up approach to ensure ambitions were achieved. Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager, advised that the Council was revising its strategy development guidance for officers, to encourage a more joined-up approach to all strategy work. He added that work to embed this guidance was planned for February 2024.

The possibility of establishing seed banks for residents to use in their gardens as part of green and blue infrastructure work was raised, with Ms Arnold advising that although this was not a service that the Council could provide, the various "Friends Of" groups associated with various parks in Blackpool could be engaged to offer this services. It was noted that these groups would be best placed to provide residents with seeds suitable to their area.

The Committee noted that the original strategy had experienced issues in implementing projects, identifying issues with a scheme to provide Christmas trees that had resulted in many not surviving. Ms Arnold recognised that some issues had been experienced under the original strategy and that the Council was keen to learn from those mistakes and ensure learning was incorporated into future project planning.

Members also discussed what employment opportunities would be generated by green infrastructure work in Blackpool, with Mr Hodgson advising that opportunities were being explored with the Ranger Service and at Marton Mere. He added that discussions had also taken place regarding apprenticeships and work was underway to further upskill and

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training existing staff.

Habitat creation at Heron's Reach was also raised with Mr Hodgson explaining that the work would be water based and would allow the area to retain more water while increasing ecological diversity in the area. The work with the Prince's Trust at Heron's Reach was queried with Members being informed that volunteers from the Trust were taught skills at the site by Council staff.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the update be noted; and
2. That the final draft of the revised Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

7 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER FOR PARKS, GREEN SPACES AND CEMETERIES

Ms Lisa Arnold, Assistant Director of Community and Environmental Services and Ms Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection and Enforcement presented a summary of the results of the recent consultation regarding a new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Parks, Green Spaces and Cemeteries and an overview of the contents of the proposed PSPO.

The PSPO was designed to deter Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in green spaces across Blackpool. In order to ensure that the PSPO fulfilled this objective a public consultation was undertaken between May and June 2023 on the proposed order. The outcome of this exercise had shown that there was broad public support for the proposed PSPO. As a result of this, officers would be drafting the PSPO and circulating it to partner organisations before submissions to the courts for approval.

Members noted that a number of green areas had been omitted from the list of areas that was proposed would be included in the PSPO. This raised a concern that the PSPO would only move problem areas from one green space to others in Blackpool. Ms Arnold responded that this had been recognised and that other areas would be included to ensure the PSPO covered as many areas as possible.

Superintendent Chris Hardy and Chief Inspector Chris Barton from Lancashire Constabulary addressed the Committee and discussed the role of the Police in enforcing the PSPO. It was highlighted that the intention of the order would be to deter ASB rather than lead to additional resources being committed to the issue. Superintendent Hardy added that ASB was an issue that was best addressed through partnership working and noted that in many cases Council teams such as Public Protection were best placed to deal with cases of ASB.

In order that the public were aware of the introduction of the PSPO, Ms Arnold advised that signage would be introduced in the affected green spaces. Social media would also be utilised to communicate with residents along with information in the Your Blackpool newsletter.

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The process of information sharing between the Police and Council was discussed, with Superintendent Hardy advising that the process of information sharing was under review. It was emphasised that the focus of engagement with the public would be to ensure that residents knew which partner would be the most appropriate to contact to report incidents of ASB. Chief Inspector Barton added that Partnership working between the Council and Police was good and represented the best partnership working in Lancashire.

The Committee also noted that the introduction of the PSPO would complement existing powers already in place to address ASB. Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services stated that other powers such as the Dog Control PSPO would be reviewed in 2024 to ensure that the collection of powers in place achieved the desired results.

The challenge of policing ASB involving electric bikes and scooters was discussed with the Committee being advised that the policing of such ASB was difficult. Superintendent Hardy reported that there was a lack of national guidance in respect of such vehicles and that how best to approach this form of ASB needed further consideration.

Public communications and information sharing via Apps was also raised with Inspector Barton highlighting that the Police operated the "In The Know" app. This allowed targeted information sharing on issues that affected residents, such as incidents of burglaries in a local area. Members also highlighted that other apps such as "Next Door" could be utilised in this respect.

The Committee agreed: That the work to develop a Public Space Protection Order for Parks, Green Spaces and Cemeteries be noted.

Superintendent Hardy and Chief Inspector Barton left the meeting following this item.

8 AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN AND AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager, Ms Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection and Enforcement and Ms Nicky Todd, Senior Environmental Protection Officer, presented the final draft of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and Air Quality Strategy (AQS) for consideration by the Committee. Mr Butterfield advised that AQAP and AQS had been developed as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan to ensure air quality in Blackpool. He also stated that although the documents would be beneficial for Blackpool, air quality was not a significant problem within the town.

Ms Clayton informed the Committee that Blackpool was the subject to an Air Quality Management Plan, following the introduction of the Environment Act, due to historical instances of poor air quality. Going forward she advised that if Blackpool registered air quality below the threshold set out in the Act for three years in a row then the plan would no longer be required. It was hoped that this would be the case in the near future.

The importance of air quality had also been noted in respect of the increased economic

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development occurring within Blackpool. The AQS had therefore been designed to link with work already underway. Highways and air quality considerations were also required to be included at the planning stages of major developments.

Members noted that the public response to the consultation undertaken as part of the development of the AQS and AQAP had been limited, with only 119 respondents. Mr Butterfield stated that this had most likely been a result of air quality not being a major issue for the majority of residents within Blackpool.

The Committee agreed: that the Air Quality Action Plan and the Air Quality Strategy be noted.

9 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee considered its work programme and action tracker and noted the documents for the remainder of the municipal year.

Members agreed the final reports and outcomes from the meetings of the Beach Management and Coastal Defence Scrutiny Review and the CCTV Scrutiny Briefing and Control Centre Tour.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the work programme and action tracker be noted;
2. That the Beach Management and Coastal Defence Scrutiny Review Report be agreed;
and
3. The CCTV Scrutiny Briefing and Control Centre Tour Report be agreed.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Wednesday, 7 February 2024 commencing at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.15 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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