

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

6.00 P.M.

6TH JUNE 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors Jane Parkinson (Chairman), Mark Bevan, Roger Dennison, David Kerr, Ceri Mumford, Ian Pattison, Pam Pickles, Emma Smith and David Whitaker

Also Present:-

Councillors Blamire and Newman-Thompson

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Cullinan	Chief Executive
Adrian Robinson	Head of Revenues and Benefits
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Tom Silvani	Democratic Support Officer

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2012 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 APPOINTMENTS

Members considered a report which set out a number of appointments the Committee were required to make.

The following appointments were agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillor Roger Dennison be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year.
- (2) That Councillor Parkinson be appointed Scrutiny Chairman for the Municipal Year.
- (3) That Councillor Roger Dennison be appointed Pre-Scrutiny Champion for the Municipal Year.
- (4) The following were agreed as Cabinet Liaison Members:

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|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| • Councillor Eileen Blamire | - | Councillor Jane Parkinson |
| • Councillor Janice Hanson | - | Councillor Roger Dennison |
| • Councillor Abbott Bryning | - | Councillor David Kerr |
| • Councillor Ron Sands | - | Councillor Ceri Mumford |
| • Councillor Karen Leytham | - | Councillor Emma Smith |
| • Councillor David Smith | - | Councillor Mark Bevan |
| • Councillor Jon Barry | - | Councillor David Whitaker |
| • Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox | - | Councillor Ian Pattison |

(5) The following appointments will be agreed to outside bodies:

- Homelessness Forum – Councillor Roger Dennison
- Lancaster and District Vision Board - Councillor Jane Parkinson
- Lancaster and Morecambe Fairtrade District Steering Group – Councillor Mark Bevan
- Museums Advisory Panel – Councillor Pam Pickles

5 DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Blamire to the meeting. Councillor Blamire provided an update on developments in her capacity Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Relationships with other Council's, Communications and Performance Management.

Councillor Blamire advised the Committee of her role as Leader of the Council, including outside bodies on which she was a member. The Committee discussed various issues including proposals for business rates retention, the introduction of Universal Credit and council tax banding.

The Committee asked a number of questions relating to Councillor Blamire's portfolio, including corporate consultation, community leadership, engaging with the electorate, how corporate priorities would enhance the lives of vulnerable people, the Storey Creative Industries Centre, and bus station signs.

Councillor Blamire advised that Cabinet Members and the Storey Creative Industries Centre were in discussions regarding the future of the Centre. It was agreed that an update on the issue be requested.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillor Blamire be thanked for her attendance at the meeting to discuss her portfolio.
- (2) That the committee be provided with information regarding the number of people who had signed up to use the Council's online consultation system 'Have Your Say'.
- (3) That an update regarding the future of the Storey Creative Industries Centre be requested.

6 UPDATE REPORT ON HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Newman-Thompson, the Council's representative on the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, to the meeting.

Councillor Newman-Thompson gave Members an update on the issues that Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee had been considering.

The Committee was updated on the situation regarding the Morecambe Bay NHS Health Trust. It was advised that a new interim Board was now in place at the Morecambe Bay NHS Health Trust, and that Sir David Henshaw was now in place as the interim Chairman of the Board. The new board had explained their recovery plan to the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, where members had sought assurances from the New Board that the previous problems had been addressed.

The Committee was advised that a multi-agency steering group had been appointed who would monitor progress and would hold the trust to account. The group were due to be carrying out site visits by the end of the month.

The Committee was advised of the services provided by the Trust which were currently under special measures including coronary care, accident and emergency, outpatient care, patient records and maternity services.

It was reported that Lancashire County Council were organising a drop in meeting with the Morecambe Bay NHS Health Trust, and that it was expected that representatives from District Councils in North Lancashire and South Cumbria would be invited to attend.

Resolved :

That Councillor Newman-Thompson be thanked for his update, and that further updates be requested at regular intervals for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

7 UPDATES ON FUTURE LEGISLATION ON REVENUES AND BENEFITS

The Chairman welcomed Adrian Robinson, Head of Revenues Services to the meeting.

Members heard a presentation regarding the Welfare Reform Act, which was due to be introduced in April 2013. The Act would replace Council Tax Benefit with a new Discount Scheme, with responsibility for the scheme being transferred to Local Authorities. Government linked funding would be provided at 10% less than current spending, which was equivalent to a shortfall of £1.112m towards current benefit spend in Lancaster. Guidance was to be provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), rather than the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The Council Tax Support Scheme developed by the Local Authority was likely to be informed by the following:

- the framework set by Central Government
- a requirement to mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local area
- forecast of demand by eligible groups

- the level of grant available including any other sources of funding, and any estimated impact of council tax yield.

The scheme would be based on three principals:

- pensioners should be fully protected
- vulnerable groups should be protected as far as possible, as determined locally
- local schemes should support work incentives

The Committee was advised that work was ongoing at a Lancashire level to develop a county wide means tested scheme for consideration by members, resulting in three suggested options:

- applying a flat rate scheme to all claimants.
- a percentage reduction to the support at the end of the calculation.
- limiting the amount of Council Tax eligible for rebate.

Other recommendations included:

- not to give a definition of Vulnerable Groups.
- to allow the district council to determine hardship cases.
- that a percentage be factored in for the risk of increased demand.
- not to introduce a 'Band Ceiling' for higher banded properties.

Members were advised of the Timetable for implementation of the Scheme.

Members asked a number of questions relating to the new Council Tax Support Scheme including, details of Consultation to take place, Council Tax rates relating to Empty Properties and Second Homes, and the effect on Business Rates.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the Head of Revenues Services be thanked for his presentation.
- (2) That more information regarding the different Options for a Local Scheme be provided to the Committee.
- (3) That regular updates be provided to the Committee at appropriate times and that these be incorporated into the Committee's Work Programme.

8 CONSIDERATION OF ANY REQUESTS FOR COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCESS)

It was noted that there had not been any requests items to be considered in accordance with the Councillor Call for Action.

9 CONSIDERATION OF ANY PETITIONS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCESS)

It was noted that there had not been any requests for items to be considered in accordance with the Consideration of Petitions.

10 LOCALITY WORKING

Councillor Whitaker advised that there had not been a meeting of the Three Tier Forum since the last meeting of the Committee. Members requested Councillor Whitaker to raise the issue of Rural Broadband in view of no response being provided to queries on this issue to date.

11 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Principal Democratic Support Officer gave the Committee an update on the Work Programme.

The Committee reiterated its request to arrange a special meeting with Lancashire County Council and BT to consider Rural Broadband, and emphasised the importance of being provided with strategic maps relating to the scheme that had previously been requested.

It was reported that the final meeting of the Commissioning Plan Informal Task Group had taken place on 15 May 2012 with the Final Report being brought to the Committee for consideration.

The Committee was informed that Officers had met with the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss ways to streamline Committee Meetings and allow Members to concentrate on the major Agenda items. It had been suggested that the standing Agenda item 'Update from Overview and Scrutiny Members' be removed from the Agenda. Members of the Committee would be asked to provide a six monthly update and produce a short Annual Report.

It was also suggested that Shadow Cabinet Members could continue to meet with their respective Cabinet Members and highlight to the Committee any work areas of issues that may arise. The Shadow Cabinet Members would also work with their Cabinet Member before they attended an Overview and Scrutiny meeting if they had been requested to attend.

The Committee was informed that the Chairman had agreed that both the Chairman of Budget and Performance Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meet on a monthly basis with the Pre-Scrutiny Champion and Officers to consider the Forward Plan and Cabinet Agenda. Any issues identified would then be highlighted to this Committee.

The Principal Democratic Support Officer advised the Committee of the issues which had been raised at this Meeting, including CCTV, Rural Broadband, Shared Services and letting of Council Buildings.

The Committee discussed these issues, it was agreed that consideration of the issues relating to CCTV be added to the Committee's Work Programme to be considered at the Community Safety meeting to be held later in the year.

The Committee asked that Briefing Notes be requested on the following issues:

- Legislation Relating to Dog Fouling
- Update on the Storey Creative Industries Centre
- Update on GP Consortia

- Provision of Facilities for Anglers on Morecambe Promenade

Resolved:-

- (1) That the standing Agenda item 'Update from Overview and Scrutiny Members be removed from the Agenda.
- (2) That the Committee reiterate its request to arrange a Special Meeting with Lancashire County Council and BT to consider Rural Broadband.
- (3) That consideration of issues relating to CCTV be included on the Committees Work Programme to be considered at the Community Safety meeting to be held later in the year.
- (4) That a Briefing Note be requested regarding legislation relating to dog fouling.
- (5) That a Briefing Note be requested to provide the committee with an update relating to the situation regarding the Storey Creative Industries Centre.
- (6) That a Briefing Note be requested to provide an update on GP Consortia.
- (7) That a Briefing Note be requested regarding the provision of facilities for anglers on Morecambe Promenade.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Tom Silvani, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582132 or email
tsilvani@lancaster.gov.uk**