

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

6.00 P.M.

9TH SEPTEMBER 2015

PRESENT:- Councillors Nigel Goodrich (Chairman), Lucy Atkinson, Alan Biddulph, Rob Devey, Caroline Jackson, Chris Leadbetter (substitute for Brett Cooper), David Whitaker and Phillippa Williamson

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillors June Ashworth (Vice-Chairman) and Brett Cooper

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Davies	Chief Officer (Environment)
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Jenny Kay	Civic & Ceremonial/Democratic Support Officer

17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 8th July and 17th August 2015 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

18 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Caroline Jackson declared an interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Draft Energy Strategy as she was the Director of a renewable energy company.

Councillor Rob Devey declared an interest in respect of agenda item 10 – Work Programme – Policy on Chuggers as he worked for a charity.

20 DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

As Councillor Blamire had sent her apologies for the meeting, it was agreed to invite her to a future meeting of the Committee.

21 DRAFT ENERGY STRATEGY

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Officer (Environment) to the meeting.

Members were advised that the Council's Energy Strategy and Action Plan had been approved by Cabinet in February 2015.

Cabinet had agreed in principle to develop a 5MW solar farm on the former ICI site in Middleton. Since that time, work had moved forward with the solar farm but the viability of the project was now in question as the Government had launched a consultation on the funding of solar energy, which would potentially reduce the amount of income that could be expected to be gained from the solar farm. The likelihood of having to undertake a detailed survey on the impact of the site on migrating birds before planning permission was sought, added to this.

It was noted that it was now probable that the original target of having the solar farm developed by March 2016, to maximise income, would be unachievable due to these factors. This would not in itself stop the project but would require a reassessment of whether the project might still be viable in the future taking into account reductions in price of solar panels, increase in energy costs etc.

It was reported that other developments were ongoing, which included energy audits being undertaken on the Council's buildings, reviewing the use of private cars and pool cars and tracking on the Council's vehicle fleet.

Members asked a number of questions relating to the solar farm including the viability of the solar farm, possible costs, feed in tariffs and payback of the project.

It was agreed that further information on the future of the project be provided to Committee, when available.

Other questions were then asked on pool cars, journeys between Council buildings and biomass boilers.

The Committee agreed :

- that the information on business mileage undertaken by the Council using private cars be provided to the Committee.
- that any further Cabinet reports regarding the Energy Strategy and Action Plan would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- that an update be provided at the March 2016 meeting of the Committee.

Resolved :-

- (1) That further information on the future of the solar farm project be provided to Committee, when available.
- (2) That the information on business mileage undertaken by the Council using private cars be provided to the Committee.
- (3) That any Cabinet reports regarding the Energy Strategy and Action Plan would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (4) That an update be provided at the March 2016 meeting of the Committee.

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

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

23 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 the accordance with the Consideration of Petitions process.

24 LOCALITY WORKING

It was noted that there was no update on locality working.

25 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

Members were requested to consider the Committee's updated Work Programme.

The Committee considered whether any further action was required regarding a policy on Chuggers following the circulation of a briefing note on this issue. After some discussion, it was agreed that no further action be taken on this issue.

With regard to the possible Task Group to investigate issues arising from the Marmot Review, it was agreed that this should be considered later in the municipal year.

Members considered a letter that had been received from Stagecoach regarding bus fares for over 16 year old school children. Discussions moved to the same issue regarding train fares.

It was agreed to invite Stagecoach to a future meeting of the Committee and that the Chairman would write to the County Council regarding train and bus fares for school children under 19.

It was reported that a suggestion had been made that the Committee ask for an update on the Morecambe Business Improvement District. It was noted that it was moving along and it was perhaps too early to request an update. Members went on to discuss the Portas Project in Morecambe. It was agreed to request an update on the project which would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

The Chairman advised that a request had been made to the Committee to re-consider investigating toilet provision in Morecambe. It was agreed that the main issue was signposting. It was reported that there was a plan to incorporate new signage as part of the improvement works currently taking place in Morecambe as part of the MAAP.

Members went on to discuss the October meeting when the Five Year Housing Land Supply would be considered. It was suggested it might be useful to set up a Task Group to consider this issue in more detail, with meetings held possibly on a weekly basis. The Committee was advised that a Task Group would need to be scoped to provide clarity on its purpose and determine how it would undertake its work. Members were informed of the difference between a formal and informal Task Group and the reporting mechanism for both.

It was agreed to invite all Members to the October meeting to hear and ask questions on this agenda item.

Resolved :-

- (1) That a possible Task Group to investigate issues arising from the Marmot Review, be reconsidered later in the municipal year.
- (2) That Stagecoach be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee and that the Chairman write to the County Council regarding train and bus fares for school children under 19.
- (3) That an update on the Portas Project be requested and circulated to Members of the Committee.
- (4) That all Members be invited to attend the October meeting of the Committee when the Five Year Housing Land Supply would be considered.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.43 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Jenny Kay, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582065
or email jkay@lancaster.gov.uk**