

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

6.00 P.M.

6TH APRIL 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors Nigel Goodrich (Chairman), June Ashworth (Vice-Chairman), Lucy Atkinson, Alan Biddulph, Brett Cooper, Rob Devey, Caroline Jackson, David Whitaker and Phillippa Williamson

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Karen Leytham – Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Housing and Environmental Health

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Cullinan	Chief Executive
Suzanne Lodge	Chief Officer (Health and Housing)
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Jenny Kay	Civic & Ceremonial/Democratic Support Officer

71 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th February, 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

72 LGA PEER REVIEW ACTION PLAN

The Chief Executive presented a report on the outcomes of the recent LGA Peer Review and the Action Plan that had been produced.

It was reported that the Review had highlighted the need for the Council to make better use of the Scrutiny function. It was suggested that Overview and Scrutiny could make a better contribution to how the Council delivered its key priorities in such ways as policy development and service reviews.

Members discussed how to best utilise Scrutiny within the Council and the following was agreed :

- (1) That Officers investigate and report back to the Committee on Lancashire County Council's Pre-Scrutiny process.
- (2) That, subject to (1) above, the City Council undertake an informal 6 month trial period of a Pre-Scrutiny process based on the County Council's model and, if successful, make recommendations to the appropriate Committee to make the relevant changes to the Council's Constitution.
- (3) That the items contained in the 'Saving Options to be Explored' circulated at Council on 2nd March including Service Reviews, be included in the

Committee's future Work Programme ensuring that there was no duplication with the Work Programme of the Budget and Performance Panel.

- (4) That Officers be requested to provide the Committee with details of decisions that are to be taken in the forthcoming year where scrutiny could review and options be investigated prior to the decision being made.
- (5) That the constitutional issues regarding Overview and Scrutiny Members viewing draft reports, as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process, be reported back to the meeting.

The Committee received an update on the points raised in the Action Plan and asked a number of questions.

The first point in the Action Plan was to develop options to manage demand in public realm services. It was agreed that it would be useful if there was a document which differentiated in terms of street furniture, trees etc, what the Council owned and what the County Council was responsible for and that this be circulated to the Committee.

Regarding influencing educators to develop skills for the district for the future, it was agreed that more information would be provided for the Committee.

Members discussed Risk Management and agreed that a timescale on this piece of work should be provided for the Committee.

The Committee went on to discuss the Council's approach to digitalisation. It was agreed that a Briefing Note should be requested providing an update on what the Council's plans were regarding digitalisation, what the obstacles were and how the Council would ensure it took place.

The final point raised by the Peer Review was to establish a mechanism for staff to feed ideas about service delivery, budget savings or income generation to management. The Committee discussed different ideas for engaging with staff and Kaizen model for continuous improvement.

It was agreed that the new Chief Executive, once in post, be requested to consider different methods of staff engagement including an incentive scheme and suggestion box for staff.

The Committee requested an update report in 6 months time.

Resolved :-

- (1) That the report be noted and that the Chief Executive be thanked for attending the meeting.
- (2) That the following actions be agreed :-

With regard to how to best utilise Scrutiny within the Council :-

- That Officers investigate and report back to the Committee on Lancashire County Council's Pre-Scrutiny process.
- That, subject to the above, the City Council undertake an informal 6 month trial period of a Pre-Scrutiny process based on the County Council's model

and, if successful, make recommendations to the appropriate Committee to make the relevant changes to the Council's Constitution.

- That the items contained in the 'Saving Options to be Explored' circulated at Council on 2nd March 2016 including Service Reviews, be included in the Committee's future Work Programme ensuring that there was no duplication with the Work Programme of the Budget and Performance Panel.
- That Officers be requested to provide the Committee with details of decisions that are to be taken in the forthcoming year where scrutiny could review and options be investigated prior to the decision being made.
- That the constitutional issues regarding Overview and Scrutiny Members viewing draft reports, as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process, be reported back to the meeting.
- That if there was a document which differentiated in terms of street furniture, trees etc, what the Council owned and what the County Council was responsible for, that this be circulated to the Committee.
- Regarding influencing educators to develop skills for the district for the future, it was agreed that more information would be provided for the Committee.
- That regarding Risk Management, a timescale on this piece of work to be provided for the Committee.
- That a Briefing Note on the Council's approach to digitalisation be requested to include the Council's plans regarding digitalisation, what the obstacles were and how the Council would ensure it took place.
- That the new Chief Executive, once in post, be requested to consider different methods of staff engagement including an incentive scheme and suggestion box for staff.
- That an update be provided in 6 months times and that this be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

73 DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR KAREN LEYTHAM

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Karen Leytham, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Environmental Health and the Chief Officer (Health and Housing) to the meeting.

Councillor Leytham gave Members a detailed overview of her portfolio which included Food Safety, Pest Control Cemeteries, Dog Control, Environmental Protection, Food Safety & Hygiene, Health & Safety, Caravan Sites, Port Safety, Private Sector Housing and Council Housing.

Members were invited to ask questions. A number of questions were asked relating to homelessness, licensing for private sector landlords, customer care, council housing and voids.

The Committee went on to discuss Council Housing voids and the time it takes to repair these properties so they could be re-let to new tenants. The recent APSE report that had been undertaken had highlighted this as a problem for the authority as it was taking far too long to re-let the properties.

It was suggested that a Task Group could be established to look into this issue.

It was agreed that the Committee request that the APSE report be circulated to Members of the Committee and that before considering whether to scope a Task Group to investigate this piece of work, the Committee consider the outcome of a Value for Money Audit for the Council Housing Repair and Maintenance Service that the Council was hoping to commission in the next few months.

Resolved :-

- (1) That Councillor Leytham and the Chief Officer (Health and Housing) be thanked for their attendance at the meeting.
- (2) That it be requested that the APSE report on Council Housing Repair and Maintenance Service be circulated to Members of the Committee.
- (3) That the Committee consider any Value for Money Review of the Repair and Maintenance Service before considering whether to scope a Task Group to investigate this piece of work.

74 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.

75 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.

76 LOCALITY WORKING

It was noted that there was no update.

77 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Committee was requested to consider the Work Programme report.

It was reported that the Chairman and Councillor Jackson had met with officers to scope the proposed Resilience Commission Task Group.

It was agreed that the Resilience Task Group be established on an informal basis.

Members were reminded that the Special meeting of the Committee to consider Flooding Issues had been arranged for 20th April 2016.

The format of the meeting was discussed at length and the following was agreed :

Before the meeting – Members of the public and other Councillors – written questions only

Present Council Report

Environment Agency presentation 5-10 mins

Electricity North West presentation 5-10 mins

The Committee will then consider the following themes :

- *Lack of Communication/Dissemination of Information*
- *Emergency Response*
- *Disruption of Businesses*
- *Disruption of Residents*
- *The Future*

With regard to the Briefing Note that had been requested on Health and Housing Functions and Policies, it was agreed to remove this item from the Work Programme following discussions with Councillor Leytham.

Resolved :-

That the following actions be agreed :

- That the Resilience Task Group be established on an informal basis.
- That the format of the Special Flooding meeting be :
 1. Present Council Report
 2. Environment Agency presentation 5-10 mins
 3. Electricity North West presentation 5-10 mins
 4. The Committee will then consider the following themes :
 - Lack of Communication/Dissemination of Information
 - Emergency Response
 - Disruption of Businesses
 - Disruption of Residents
 - The Future

- That the Briefing Note on Health and Housing Functions and Policies be removed from the Work Programme.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.)

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