

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6.00 P.M.

9TH JANUARY 2019

PRESENT:- Councillors Nigel Goodrich (Chairman), June Ashworth, Alan Biddulph and Caroline Jackson

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillors Roger Mace (Vice-Chairman), Tracy Brown, Rob Devey, John Reynolds and David Whitaker

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox

Officers in attendance:-

Susan Parsonage	Chief Executive
Kieran Keane	Assistant Chief Executive
Richard Crompton	Interim Regeneration Manager
Gary Watson	Senior Property Officer
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Jenny Kay	Civic & Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer

16 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 8th November and 13th December 2018 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17 UPDATE ON THE PROPERTY PORTFOLIO

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, Interim Regeneration Manager and Senior Property Officer to the meeting.

Members of the Committee had been provided with the updated analysis that distinguished between different types of asset - property used by the Council, small parcels of land and commercial assets.

The Committee discussed the updated analysis and agreed that a strategic approach was required for the City Council's Property Portfolio focusing on the largest assets the City Council owned rather than the piecemeal approach of disposal that had been the method in the past. An evaluation process to consider the disposal of the City Council's assets was required to take into account the strategic value of each asset.

It was agreed that an Informal Task Group would be scoped to consider the strategic intent of the City Council's Property Portfolio.

Resolved :-

That an Informal Task Group be scoped to consider the strategic intent of the City Council's Property Portfolio.

18 EDEN (NORTH) PROPOSALS

The Committee discussed the Eden (North) Feasibility Study. Members were reminded that the City Council had agreed to a contribution of £250,000 towards specific pieces of work which would significantly advance detailed work on the proposals for the development of the Eden (North) Project.

Members raised the possible issue of second home ownership increasing with the importance of affordable family housing being preserved in Morecambe and questioned if the City Council had any control over this. It was agreed that the Committee would request information on this issue from the Planning Department and also request confirmation on the second homes Council Tax levies.

The importance of Eden employing local people and using local suppliers was also discussed, as was the notion of Eden providing for the community if the project performed better than expected, for example contributing towards affordable housing and education to share the prosperity with the district.

At the Chairman's discretion, as set out in Part 4, Section 5, paragraph 15(c) of the City Council's Constitution, the Chairman welcomed other Councillors present to ask questions.

The Committee went on to discuss the process to move forward and it was suggested that Members were right to be cautious but should not be suspicious of the proposals. More information on the minute detail of the project would follow as the scheme progressed.

It was agreed that there would be a standing item on the Committee's agenda to consider updates on the Eden (North) project and that a Task Group be scoped in February to be reported in to the March meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the Committee request information on second home ownership from the Planning Department and also request confirmation on the second homes Council Tax levies.
- (2) That a standing item be added to the Committee's agenda to consider updates on the Eden (North) project.
- (3) That a Task Group be scoped in February to be reported in to the March meeting of the Committee.

19 UPDATE ON THE PEER REVIEW

The Chief Executive gave the Committee an overview of the progress that had been undertaken since the Peer Review. There had been many improvements made since the

Peer Review such as wide ranging partnership working, the Lancaster Story, staff recognition awards, communication, training etc.

Members discussed the decision making process and how improvements were being made, albeit slowly. This was also linked to the review of the City Council's constitution that was currently being undertaken. It was felt that culture change took time but officers were now making more decisions.

Members went on to discuss Councillors and officers at Council meetings and it was reported that there were examples of others authorities where officers did not contribute to Council discussions as the Council meeting was a political chamber.

Resolved :-

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress updates.
- (2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee refer future monitoring of key outcomes, identified through the LGA Peer Review or other strategic analysis, to be reported via "Delivering our Ambitions" performance and project reporting.
- (3) That the Committee recommends that the LGA be invited to conduct a Peer Review in 2020.

20 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

Members raised the issue of comments made by the Planning Inspector to the City Council regarding the District's Local Plan and it was agreed to invite the newly appointed Director for Economic Growth and Regeneration to a future meeting to discuss.

Resolved:-

That the newly appointed Director for Economic Growth and Regeneration be invited to a future meeting to discuss the comments made by the Planning Inspector regarding the District's Local Plan.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.22 p.m.)

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