

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

6.00 P.M.

16TH OCTOBER 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Brett Cooper (Chair), Maria Deery, Martin Gawith, Paul Hart, Sally Maddocks, Sue Penney, Grace Russell (substitute for Suhir Abuhajar) and John Wild

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillors Suhir Abuhajar and Chris Hanna

Officers in attendance:-

Joanne Wilkinson	Chief Officer - Housing and Property
Stuart Galley	Compliance Co-Ordinator
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Jenny Kay	Civic & Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer

Also Present:-

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources

Councillor Jason Wood, Cabinet Member with responsibility Corporate Services

23 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

It was moved by Councillor Martin Gawith, seconded by Councillor Brett Cooper: -

“That Councillor Chris Hanna be appointed Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.”

There being no further nominations, the proposition was declared carried.

Resolved: -

That Councillor Chris Hanna be appointed Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2024 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

25 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

At this point the Chair welcomed Councillor Maria Deery, as a new Member, to the meeting and also Councillor Grace Russell as a Substitute Member.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Brett Cooper and Paul Hart declared interests as Members of Morecambe Town Council.

Councillor Grace Russell declared an interest with regard to working for Food Futures to that part of the meeting that referred to the Allotments Review.

27 STOCK CONDITION SURVEY

It was moved by Councillor Brett Cooper, seconded by Councillor Martin Gawith and resolved as follows:-

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, had been invited to attend the meeting and provided a PowerPoint presentation. Both he and the Chief Officer – Housing and Property then answered questions from Members of the Committee.

Resolved:-

That an update be provided to the Committee at an appropriate time.

28 SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

Councillor Jason Wood, Cabinet Member with responsibility Corporate Services, had been invited to the meeting to discuss the way forward regarding the Scrutiny Protocol.

A copy of the minute for this item and the report submitted to the meeting held on 1st August 2024 was provided. The minute recommended:

- (1) That the Committee recommend the introduction of a Pre-decision Scrutiny Protocol.
- (2) The Committee request that the following be included in a Pre-decision Scrutiny Protocol:
 - The way in which senior officers and Cabinet will keep scrutiny informed of the outlines of major decisions as they are developed, to allow for discussion of scrutiny's potential involvement in policy development. This involves the building in of safeguards to mitigate risks around the sharing of sensitive information with Scrutiny members.

- That the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Vice-Chair and Pre-Scrutiny Committee Champion be invited to Cabinet briefings and be permitted to ask questions at those briefings.
- That a Pre-Scrutiny meeting be arranged when required by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the forthcoming list of Key Decisions. The meeting would include the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, Chair and Vice Chair of the Budget and Performance Panel, the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Champion and relevant officers identified by the Chief Executive. This enabled those Members to query and question officers on issues that were to be considered at the next Cabinet meeting and obtain information on background papers/list of the documents submitted to the decision taker for consideration in relation to the matter.
- That a meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Chair of the Budget and Performance Panel and Cabinet Members be arranged at the beginning of each municipal year to discuss forthcoming Key Decisions, projects and ways in which Scrutiny can be involved at an early stage of the decision-making process.
- That, with regard to the list of Key Decisions, the Committee recommends a commitment to provide an extended list of Key Decisions for a period of 6-12 months to better enable scrutiny identification of future decisions for early Pre-Scrutiny and provide improved transparency.
- That, as part of the consultation process, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be consulted on all major projects as a matter of course.

Minute 13 refers.

The Cabinet Member advised that this had been discussed at political Cabinet on 15th October. At that meeting a number of queries had been raised with regard to scrutiny members attending Cabinet Briefings and also the list of Key Decisions being provided for a period of 6-12 months to better enable scrutiny identification of future decisions for early Pre-Scrutiny and provide improved transparency. With regard to briefings, and following discussions with the Chief Executive, it was suggested that a scrutiny briefing on Cabinet reports be provided on the Thursday following the Cabinet briefing on the Tuesday. It was noted that, for briefings only, an additional cover sheet is to be provided to summarise the information contained in reports. It was also reported that it was felt that providing a list of Key Decisions for a period of 6-12 months would not be possible, as this would only contain items such as the Capital Programme.

Members of the Committee felt that Scrutiny Briefings would be beneficial. They also informed that they wished to be involved at an early stage to pre-scrutinise and to be less reactive. The Committee felt that by creating Task Groups would assist with the work of Cabinet and also assist Officers. The recommendations of the recent Peer Challenge Review with regard to the work of scrutiny were also referred to.

Councillor Wood also informed of information available for all Councillors regarding Quarterly Monitoring. It was felt that a training event should be arranged via the Cabinet Member with responsibility and Chief Officer.

The Cabinet Member then answered questions from Members of the Committee.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member would consider the issues raised, discuss with Officers and report back to the Committee in order to jointly agree a Protocol.

Resolved :-

- (1) That briefings for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be arranged for the Thursday before Cabinet meetings.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member report back to the Committee with the issues raised at a later date.

29 WORK PROGRAMME - UPDATE REPORT

Members were reminded that, at the last meeting of the Committee, Members were advised that the Chair had agreed to postpone the three items that were scheduled for the September meeting.

It was agreed that:

- Remote monitoring of litter bins and route optimisation,
- Lancaster District Allotment Review, and
- the Draft Fly Tipping Strategy,

be deferred to a meeting later in the year as the Cabinet Member had not been available to attend.

In view of the number of items already included on the Committee's Work Programme Members were advised that they may wish to hold an additional meeting in November/December when the Cabinet Member, Chief Officer and LESS were available to attend.

With regard to the scoping of the Tackling Obesity Task Group a meeting had been arranged and held with Councillor Gawith, the Chief Executive and Principal Democratic Support Officer on Tuesday, 1st October. It was reported that, since the last meeting of the Committee, the City Council has been informed of a programme of work that Food Active were undertaking on behalf of Lancashire County Council to create healthier weight environments – Lancashire Healthier Places. Members had been invited to an online briefing on Wednesday, 9th October. Councillor Gawith had made arrangements for a meeting with Health and Wellbeing Officer(s) and would then make arrangements for the scoping of the Task Group.

It was noted that arrangements were also being made for a date to scope the Neighbourhoods Task Group.

At the meeting Members also agreed to form a Property Assets Working Group of interested Members of the Committee to report back to the Committee on the issues that the Committee requires more information on.

The Committee resolved as follows.

Resolved: -

- (1) That, if the Draft Fly Tipping Strategy was available, the items deferred at the previous meeting be considered at an additional meeting of the Committee on either 6th or 27th November 2024. If the Strategy was not available, then the Lancaster District Allotment Review be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on 20th November 2024. These dates being subject to LESS, Councillor Joanne Ainscough, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Environmental Services, and the relevant officers being able to attend.
- (2) That the arrangements being made for the scoping of the Tackling Obesity Task Group be noted.
- (3) That it be noted that arrangements were being made for a date to scope the Neighbourhoods Task Group.
- (4) That, whilst the Cabinet – Scrutiny Protocol is being developed, a Scrutiny Briefing on the Corporate Repairs Programme be arranged on the Thursday evening prior to Cabinet making a decision. Notes of the views of Members from the briefing to be produced to enable those views to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration in its decision-making process.
- (5) That a Property Assets Working Group be created, with membership from interested Members of the Committee, to report back to the Committee on the issues that scrutiny Members require more information on.

30 FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Forthcoming Key Decisions were noted.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 7.24 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Stephen Metcalfe, Principal Democratic Support Officer, Tel: 01524 582073**