

Lancashire County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 11th May, 2012 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillors

T Aldridge	P Malpas
S Chapman	D O'Toole
Mrs F Craig-Wilson	Mrs L Oades
C Crompton	V Taylor
M Devaney	D Westley
K Ellard	B Winlow

County Councillor T Aldridge replaced County Councillor J Hanson for this meeting only.

County Councillor J Mein attended the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 19(1).

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor J Shedwick.

2. Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None were received.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 April 2012

Resolved: That, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Urgent Business - Street Lighting

This item had been accepted as urgent by the Chair on the grounds that the Committee was due to receive an update report from Electricity North West (ENW) on Street Lighting. However, in light of recent changes to the provision of street lighting in Lancashire it was felt that the Committee should receive an update from the County Council on this matter.

The Chair welcomed Shaun Capper, Assistant Director Environmental Services - South, and Martin Dunwell, Design Group Manager North, to the meeting.

The Committee was informed that for a significant length of time, the council had been working towards opening up the market for the provision of street lighting connection services with accredited independent connection providers (ICP). As of 23 April 2012, the council had developed a contract with a number of ICPs to carry out such work on Lancashire's network of street lights. It was hoped that the benefits of such a move would provide the council with greater and tighter control of connection work to be done by working directly with ICPs effectively acting as the council's sub contractors, rather than through the electricity companies. It was also hoped that the council would save an estimated 15-40% on costs. Officers re-iterated that the council had only entered into the new arrangements two weeks ago and that the new arrangements were still in their infancy.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the new arrangements, a summary of which is provided below:

- One councillor asked if the new arrangement would improve the time taken to make connections. The Committee was informed that through a new commissioning process and improved work programming, the council would know in advance when work was scheduled so that planning work could be done in advance. It was highlighted that this new arrangement provided much tighter control that the council did not have with ENW under previous arrangements.
- A question was asked in relation to how much the council would save with the new arrangement. It was reported that depending on the type of work to be carried out the council could save between 15 and 40%. On how much the council spent in any given year for connection work, the Committee was informed that depending on the work programme for the year the council would spend somewhere in the region of £500K to £750K.
- Councillors were pleased to hear of the new arrangements and asked whether there were any penalties in place if there were any delays with connections to be carried out by ICPs. The Committee was informed that performance was measured through the Guaranteed Standards of Performance (GSOP) which had transferred from the Electricity companies to the ICPs. For example; for the connection of a new single unit a maximum of 35 working days had been imposed with a penalty charged imposed for failure to carry out the work every day after that. Whilst it was acknowledged that this was a nationally set timescale, councillors expressed concerns that 35 days represented too great a timescale.
- Councillors also queried the length of time taken to rectify faults on the network. It was reported that faults would still be managed by ENW and that the guaranteed standards of service would still apply. A threshold of 20 working days applied to all faults.
- Councillors asked if ICPs would take over responsibility for the council's programme of re-lamping and whether the use of LED lighting would become the standard for all replacements – in particular on new housing developments. The Committee was informed that the council's Highways Service would continue to be responsible for the re-lamping programme.

On LED lighting, councillors were informed that wherever appropriate the council would look to fit or specify the use of LEDs. However, the Committee noted that conventional lighting sources may still be required on larger/main roads as the illumination factor of LEDs would not be strong enough for such a purpose. The Committee was informed that LEDs were manufactured to light up relatively narrow roads. One councillor suggested that perhaps the implementation of 20mph zones should be a consideration for when planning for street lighting on new housing developments irrespective of road width/type.

- A question was asked in relation to whether ICPs could sub-contract work out to companies whom the council had no working relationship with and whether there would be an element of 'cherry picking' from the list of ICPs. It was reported that contracts were not able to be sub-contracted out. The new arrangements would mean that if the first ICP could not meet the requirements of the council then other ICPs would be approached to carry out the work instead.

Overall, councillors welcomed the efficiencies that the new arrangements would have on street lighting connections. It was suggested that an update report be provided to the Committee.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report be noted;
- ii. An update report on Street Lighting and Independent Connection Providers be presented to the Committee in six to nine months.

5. Task Group Updates

The Committee received an update on current task groups and their proposed completion dates. It was hoped that the final report of the Arts Funding task group would be presented to the Committee at its meeting in June.

Some discussion was had at the meeting regarding the Member Development Working Group and the development of training programmes for councillors for 2012/13. In particular, it had been highlighted that only a small number of councillors had been trained to sit on those Committees which required mandatory training such as the Development Control Committee. It was hoped that the training programmes for councillors would identify additional reserves which would greatly assist the Group Secretaries in appointing temporary replacements for future meetings of those Committees.

A question was asked in relation to how long a trained councillor's knowledge would be valid for especially in view of any changes in law. Concern was also raised that there could be a considerable time gap between councillors receiving the training and attending a meeting as a replacement. The Chair of the working group agreed to look in to the matter further.

Resolved: That the update on existing task groups be noted.

6. Recent and Forthcoming Decisions

The committee considered recent relevant decisions made and also forthcoming decisions including those set out in the current Forward Plan.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

7. Workplan 2012/13

County Councillor J Mein attended the meeting and was given permission to speak by the Committee on this item in accordance with Standing Order No. 19(1).

The workplan for the committee was presented. As this was the final meeting in the council year, the Chair invited councillors to suggest topics for future scrutiny in 2012/13. The following topics were suggested by councillors:

- One councillor expressed disappointment that the Highways Agency (HA) were not attending the full meeting of this Committee. It was explained that, whilst it was the committee's preference for this to be the case, it had not been possible to arrange, and a separate meeting with the HA had therefore been agreed, which would allow councillors to scrutinise the service.
- On the "Who Cares?" task group report, councillors requested that a final response to the recommendations be added to the workplan for June/July 2012. Councillors also requested that a copy of the final report of the task group be deposited with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) provided that any factual errors were checked and corrected beforehand.
- In relation to changes on welfare benefits and the impact on the council, one councillor requested that a future item regarding Adult Social Care be put on the workplan. The Chair highlighted that any such item would need to be specific as the suggestion related to the terms of reference for the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- Councillors suggested that further information on the current position in relation to the arrangements for subsidies for bus services in Lancashire would be beneficial for the committee to consider.

Other matters proposed for the Committee's workplan included; child sexual exploitation, corporate property, the Lancashire County Commercial Group and Adult Social Care commissioning.

Some discussion was also had at the meeting on preparation for the crime and disorder themed meeting on 6 July 2012.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report be noted;
- ii. A report on the "Who Cares?" task group be put on the workplan for June/July 2012
- iii. A copy of the final report of the "Who Cares?" task group be deposited with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) provided that any factual errors are checked and corrected beforehand
- iv. The topics suggested by councillors as outlined in the minutes be considered by the Chairs and deputies of the three Scrutiny Committees at their meeting to determine their respective workplans for 2012/13.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on 8 June 2012 at 10:00am at County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston