

Lancashire County Council

External Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 21st January, 2020 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Edward Nash PSC (Chair)

County Councillors

D Stansfield	T Martin
J Burrows	Oades
A Cheetham	G Oliver
S Clarke	M Pattison
C Crompton	J Shedwick
D Foxcroft	

County Councillor Margaret Pattison replaced County Councillor Azhar Ali for this meeting.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

County Councillor Margaret Pattison declared a non-pecuniary interest for **Item 6 – Lancashire County Council Waste Treatment Facilities – Supporting Future Carbon Reduction Initiatives**, as she was a member of the Lancashire County Council Development Control Committee.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 October 2019

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on 15 October 2019, be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Report of the Strengthening Flood Risk Management and Preparedness Task and Finish Group

Also in attendance were County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Rural Affairs and Waste Management; Rachel Crompton, Flood Risk Manager; and Dianne Taylor, Principal Flood Risk Officer. There were requests to speak from County Councillor David Whipp, County Councillor Erica Lewis, Councillor John Singleton JP, Fylde Council, Siriol Hogg, Churchtown Flood Action Group (FIAG), and, Richard Guinness, Lower Yarrow FIAG.

County Councillor Matthew Salter presented the report of the Strengthening Flood Risk Management and Preparedness Task and Finish Group to the committee.

The following comments and suggestions in relation to the recommendations that were set out in the task and finish group report were raised by those who requested to speak:

- Recommendation 9 (Short term) – a request was made to strengthen the recommendation to state that flood resilience grants should be made available at all times.
- A new recommendation be added to request the Cabinet Member to give consideration to increasing the highways drainage budget.
- Letters need following up with sustained action.
- Primary flood risk assessments were produced by or on behalf of the developers seeking permission to build before being commented upon by the county council's Flood Risk Management Team. It was not thought appropriate that developers were able to play such a prominent role in the process to determine whether their own applications posed a flood risk.
- Request for the Flood Tactical Plans (23 sites) to be listed in the report.
- A need to reference the Local Government Association (LGA) where applicable within the recommendations and to send the report to the LGA.
- Concerns were raised about the non-performance of riparian owners.

It was suggested that the above points be incorporated into the recommendations of the Strengthening Flood Risk Management and Preparedness Task and Finish Group, and for the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Rural Affairs and Waste Management, County Councillor Albert Atkinson and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, County Councillor Keith Iddon to provide a written response. It was also suggested that the responses be considered in the first instance by an additional meeting of the task and finish group and to report the outcome of its meeting to committee.

Resolved: That;

1. The written responses from the relevant Cabinet Members be considered by the Strengthening Flood Risk Management and Preparedness Task and Finish Group.
2. The Task and Finish Group report on the outcome of its meeting to the External Scrutiny Committee at the earliest opportunity.

5. Learning lessons from lived experiences of Universal Credit

The Chair welcomed Lisa Scullion, Professor of Social Policy at the University of Salford, to the meeting. A presentation was delivered on learning lessons from lived experiences of Universal Credit.

Universal Credit was the most important and fundamental reform since the inception of the welfare state. Some of the ambitions of Universal credit were to:

- Reduce poverty
- Simplify the benefits system
- Ease movement in and out of work and taking on extra hours
- Financial incentives to make work pay

Other countries were looking to the United Kingdom to see how Universal Credit was working.

The committee was informed that a lot of research had been done around some of the issues regarding Universal Credit in terms of its implementation and impacts. Over the last few years there had been calls to pause and fix the Universal Credit roll out.

A summary of the key points raised at the meeting is set out below:

- Job Centres were viewed as a benefits administration place, rather than somewhere to go to find a job.
- Job opportunities were felt to be largely agency based and temporary and people did not feel secure.
- Evidence suggested that sanctions backed system was not beneficial and sometimes led to disengagement – the cost of which was then displaced and picked up by the third sector and the NHS. In some circumstances this could undo the good work of all other agencies.
- A need to recognise that for some people the transition from legacy benefits to Universal Credit proved difficult to manage, navigate and understand – in particular people who were vulnerable and had complex needs.
- The North West was the primary site for service leavers (veterans).
- Significant variation in support provided by work coaches in particular the manner in which they engaged with people. Particular reference was made in relation to people with mental health problems.
- Five week wait for the first payment. The implications of which meant that people accrued rent arrears and had little or no income to cover the basics.

The committee in considering the points raised at the meeting felt that there were two key points to investigate with the county council's Welfare Rights Service being; issues of dehumanisation as people try and work the system rather than finding work and how people would fall into a hole while they wait for the first payment (five week wait – or longer in some circumstances).

The following key lines of enquiry in preparation for when it hears evidence from the Welfare Rights Service were developed:

- How fit for purpose the county council's Welfare Rights Service was?

- Where can the most disadvantaged people go to for help and how the county council might assist?
- How can we use the county council's influence as the fourth largest local authority to instigate change?
- How will the gap in funding the county council's crisis support scheme be bridged?

Resolved: That;

1. The presentation as delivered be received as part of the External Scrutiny Committee's ongoing review of Universal Credit.
2. The key lines of enquiry set out in the minutes above be used in preparation for a future meeting of the External scrutiny Committee when it will hear evidence from the Welfare Rights Service.

6. Lancashire County Council Waste Treatment Facilities - Supporting Future Carbon Reduction Initiatives

The Chair welcomed Paul Brindle, General Manager, Lancashire Renewables Ltd and Steve Scott, Head of Service Waste Management, to the meeting.

A presentation was delivered on current waste processing activities and future opportunities at the council's two Waste Recovery Parks, in support of reducing carbon emissions and the associated carbon footprint within Lancashire.

The committee was informed that significant carbon reductions had been observed following the phased cessation of processing activities, ramp down and stabilization of reconfigured and simplified waste processing operations over the past few years.

In support of Lancashire County Council's approach to a low carbon future within Lancashire, Lancashire Renewables Limited intended to prepare and present to the company Board a new policy and supporting programme of works for consideration at its meeting in March 2020.

Lancashire Renewables Ltd had engaged with low carbon companies regarding solar power and had looked at opportunities to install solar roof panels at its facilities. The additional weight of solar roof panels was an overriding factor to the implementation of such infrastructure. The company had received some proposals from suppliers.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted as part of the External Scrutiny Committee's continued review of low carbon energy.

7. External Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2019/20

The report presented set out the External Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for the municipal year 2019/20.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the External Scrutiny Committee would take place on Tuesday 25 February 2020 at 10.00am in Cabinet Room B (The Diamond Jubilee Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston