

Lancashire County Council

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 17th January, 2020 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor David O'Toole (Chair)

County Councillors

M Salter	E Nash
T Ashton	P Rigby
C Crompton	P Steen
B Dawson	D Whipp
J Fillis	G Wilkins
S Holgate	

County Councillor Bernard Dawson replaced County Councillor Erica Lewis.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 September 2019

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on 27 September 2019 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. CAS Blue Badge Service - Revised Eligibility Criteria Update

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Peter Buckley, Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services; Sarah Jenkins, Head of Service Customer Access Service; and Ben Zebrowski, Quality Team Manager, to the meeting.

The report presented provided an update on the Department for Transport's (DfT) new Blue Badge criteria to extend eligibility to people with 'hidden' disabilities.

The changes to the Blue Badge scheme came into force in August 2019. A lot of work had been done in preparing and training staff for dealing with queries and new applications. Consultations had taken place with the DfT and local authorities as well as internal services such as Lancashire Parking Services and

Corporate Communications. The next piece of work that the Customer Access Service Team would look into would be an Enforcement Policy.

The committee was informed that Blue Badges had a time limit of three years, then badge holders were required to reapply. There were processes on the Customer Access Service website explaining what to do when badge holders had passed away or circumstances had changed. Registrars also updated the Customer Access Team when someone had passed away.

Members asked why all reapplications were treated like a first time application. The committee was informed that it was stipulated in the guidance that every badge holder had to renew their application after three years. It was acknowledged that some conditions were not going to see any significant improvement after three years and that the authority was looking at a piece of work to allow the current database system to override some elements of the application process. This piece of work was planned for the next 6-12 months and would make it easier for customers to reapply for badges.

Concerns were raised that the push for applications to be completed digitally risked disadvantaging many of the people who might be in need of a blue badge. Members were informed that online applications freed up time for staff to help those in need. The Customer Access Team offered support in completing applications for applicants that required guidance and who were perhaps not adept at completing online applications. Applicants were urged to ring up the team and they could book an appointment and the team would help fill in their details and post their photos to the team rather than trying to download them online. The Customer Access staff had extensive training to help applicants. It was pointed out to the committee that library staff could also help applicants with downloading their photos and providing advice.

The committee was informed there was little flexibility permitted regarding the wording of questions asked in applications relating to how far somebody could walk. There was a suggestion from the committee that the focus should be on an applicant's capability to walk on their 'worst day'.

It was pointed out to members that the Customer Access team followed up any lack of information or contradictions on a Blue Badge application rather than dismissing it.

Members enquired about how many complaints the Customer Service Access Team had from Blue Badge holders who did not have a physical disability but qualified under a different criteria. They were told that the Customer Access Service Team had not received any reports to back up concerns expressed on social media that people with hidden disabilities might be targeted by others who saw them using a Blue Badge. Members asked if wording could be put on the Blue Badge explaining the person's disability. They were informed that the badges were produced nationally but the Customer Access Service Team would feed this back.

Resolved: The Internal Scrutiny committee notes the changes to eligibility criteria for Blue Badge applications.

5. Corporate Strategy Monitoring - Recommendations of Targets for Key Performance Measures

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mike Kirby, Director of Strategy and Performance; Donna Talbot, Head of Business Intelligence; Michael Walder, Information, Intelligence and Performance Manager; Joanne Reed, Head of Service Policy, Information and Commissioning (Live Well); Dave Carr, Head of Service Policy, Information and Commissioning (Start Well); John Davies, Head of Highways; and Becky Joyce, Interim Head of Strategic Development – Agency, Economic Development and Officers.

The report presented explained that performance indicators had been agreed by Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement against the five objectives of the Corporate Strategy. These indicators would form the content of future quality corporate performance reports to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement. Targets had also been proposed for the indicators.

The committee enquired if it would be more appropriate in some areas where targets were proposed, to be monitored instead of having a target set. It was highlighted that there was an opportunity for regular updates regarding performance against targets through the Cabinet Committee for Performance Improvement (CCPI). The Corporate Strategy was also looking at a schedule of deep dive investigations of how performance was being delivered. The committee felt there was a role for scrutiny to play in how or if these targets were being met or not.

Regarding performance indicators on repairs for highways defects, it was noted that timescales were measured quarterly. Over the Christmas period there were a number of carriageway defects that were not dealt within the timescales as detailed in the targets due to tarmac plants being closed. Members were informed that looking forward it would be a good idea to look at how the county council dealt with those times when tarmac plants were shut as there were ways to overcome this with temporary measures.

In terms of the delivery of Lancashire County Council's digital strategy, the committee noted that the performance measure was that 100% of people were able to access information and stated there were a number of people that did not want to or were unable to engage in digital. The delivery of the digital strategy needed to ensure that this issue was addressed, this issue would be picked up in the annual deep dive. Lancashire County Council would be working on the development and roll out of its systems and the development of training programmes.

Members felt that in addition to the benchmarking, it would be useful to have the previous year or previous quarters figures for comparison purposes to help indicate the direction of travel which showed critical information. They were

informed that where the county council could and had the relevant trajectory, it could show this. The committee pointed out that it was difficult to determine from the report whether Lancashire County Council was getting better or worse. The direction of travel and clear indicators such as the traffic light system was important. The committee was informed that a full quarterly performance report went to the CCPI and was available on the system, a copy of the report would be shared with members.

It was noted that the target for revenue forecast outturn percentage variance to budget was currently 1.5% and the target for budget outturn variance for 2020/21 was 0% for variance to budget. Members felt a more realistic target was to say below 1% rather than specifically saying 0%.

It was pointed out by the committee that Lancashire County Council previously had a multi access system for reporting highway defects, now it was targeted to reporting via the internet and there was a four stage process for reporting one defect. There was a request to look at the figures about how many people reported highway issues before going digital and how many reported issues after going digital. It was thought it might be the case that Lancashire County Council was not improving its highways service but just restricting the way people could report issues. This could be the same across other services.

Questions were raised in regards to how the data was collected in regards to performance indicators for reporting purposes. The committee was informed that data was collected through the HAMS system for Highways. For other services data was taken from operational systems. All the performance indicators were based on operational data which dealt with the day to day basis of the authority.

Regarding highway defects, it was felt by members that some autonomy should be given to the people who fix the potholes. It was stated by the committee that if an officer had come out to fix a particular pothole, if there was another damaged hole close by that had not been reported, it should be fixed and this should be allowed rather than having to wait for the second hole to be also reported and go through the whole process. Members were informed that this should be happening now as the Highways Service realised it was not sensible or cost effective when officers had to revisit sites due to other holes nearby.

Resolved: That;

- i. The Internal Scrutiny Committee note the report and the performance indicators presented.
- ii. The Internal Scrutiny Committee receive the full quarterly monitoring report.

6. Budget Savings Position

The Chair welcomed Neil Kissock, Director of Finance, to the meeting. The report presented provided an update on agreed budget savings as requested by the Internal Scrutiny Committee.

The council was committed to the delivery of a significant savings programme of around £127m over the period 2019/20 to 2022/23.

The total target saving was for £194.404m. There were undeliverable items of £18.300m with over delivery on certain savings initiatives of £6.972m. This left a current gap of £11.328m and a delivery of £183.076m or just over 94% of the total savings. It was highlighted that 94% was still extremely good in terms of forecast delivery of the savings.

The question of how the savings were going to be achieved was raised. Lancashire County Council had to accept there was a massive deficit which the current administration had to address. This meant that every possible option had to be explored to see what savings could be made. It was noted that some of the savings were offset by things that did not need policy decisions. If they did need policy decisions they would go through the appropriate process and be presented at Cabinet.

The committee was informed that there had been a one year spending review in September 2019 which was positive for local government. It was pointed out that Lancashire County Council could set a budget for next year without having to call on reserves. Looking forward there was still a lot of difficulty and uncertainty for local government.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report presented be noted
- ii. Further updates be included as part of the Internal Scrutiny Committee work programme.

7. The appointment of a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee for the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS)

The report presented informed the Internal Scrutiny Committee that there had been a request to appoint a proposed Joint Health Scrutiny Committee for the purpose of reviewing proposals for the reconfiguration of services proposed by the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System that would affect the whole of the Lancashire and South Cumbria area. The proposed Terms of Reference were presented along with the report.

Despite concerns that there would be disproportionate representation from the smaller authorities, committee members felt they had no option but to accede to

this request. There had to be adequate and effective representation to be able to contribute to effective scrutiny. It was acknowledged that any scrutiny committee had to make compromises when considering its membership.

Resolved: The Internal Scrutiny Committee agree the proposed Joint Health Scrutiny Committee and its Terms of Reference.

8. Internal Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/20

The Internal Scrutiny Committee work programme was presented to members along with the work programmes for the other scrutiny committees. The External Scrutiny Committee's work programme was currently being revised and would be presented at a future meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee.

The topics included were identified at work planning workshops held during June and July 2019.

Regarding performance indicators it was requested that the Internal Scrutiny Committee should be able to scrutinise the performance management reports at an appropriate interval.

The committee was informed that County Councillor Michael Green, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Environment and Planning, had agreed to hold a Green Summit later in the year.

Resolved: The report presented be noted.

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee would take place on Friday 13 March 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