

Lancashire County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 8th April, 2011 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor John Shedwick (Chair)

County Councillors

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| S Chapman | P Malpas |
| Mrs F Craig-Wilson | D O'Toole |
| C Crompton | Mrs L Oades |
| M Devaney | M Otter |
| K Ellard | D Westley |
| Mrs J Hanson | B Winlow |

County Councillor Mike Otter replaced County Councillor Peter Steen for this meeting only.

The Chair welcomed County Councillor David Smith, Lead Member for Community Services who had been invited to speak at items 4, 5, 6 and 7.

1. Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

County Councillor F Craig-Wilson declared a personal interest in items 4 and 5 as she was a Member of 'Friends of St Annes Library' and a personal interest in items 4, 5 and 6 as she was a Member of Fylde Borough Council.

County Councillor B Winlow declared a personal interest in item 4 as he was a Member of the Friends of Lytham Hall.

County Councillor K Ellard declared a personal interest in item 4 as he was a Member of the Sounding Board of the Lancashire Sinfonietta.

County Councillor J Shedwick declared a personal interest in item 4 as he was a Member of Dukes Playhouse Board of Directors, and Member of the Sounding Board of the Lancashire Sinfonietta.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 March 2011

County Councillor Chapman suggested an amendment to the draft minutes to reflect better the view of the committee around priority setting by the Safer Lancashire Board.

Resolved: That, subject to the inclusion of the Committee's concerns raised above the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2011 be confirmed and signed by the chair.

3. Culture and Sport Strategy

The Chair welcomed County Councillor David Smith, Lead Member for Community Services, Ian Watson, Head of Cultural Services, Julie Bell, County Libraries Manager, Bruce Jackson, County Heritage Manager, and David Blackett, Cultural Services Development Manager, to the meeting.

County Councillor Smith gave a brief introductory summary, stating that the County Council's current Culture and Sport Strategy, which had been launched in 2010, was a new development for the County Council. The intention was that by employing a very broad definition of culture and sport the Strategy would help to integrate these themes within all policies and services delivered by the County Council. Smith hoped in particular that such an approach would enhance the contribution of the County Council to local economic regeneration by providing a clear direction to the leisure economy and raising the profile of Lancashire and the County Council both regionally and nationally.

Ian Watson, informed the Committee that the strategy was split into seven sections each of which were detailed in the report containing examples of the type of activities the County Council was working on to deliver culture and sport related services. The seven sections of the strategy were:

- Raising the Profile
- A place to live and work
- Shared Experiences
- Learning to Grow
- Health and well-being
- Valuing the Past
- Building the Future

The Committee was also informed that at the time of writing the strategy during the year 2009, there was already an indication that public sector spending cuts would be imposed and as such officers felt that it would be inappropriate to create an action plan at that stage. Instead, the strategy simply set out the ambition, vision, outcomes and objectives to which existing services would aspire.

Included with the report was the Cultural Services Draft Business Plan for 2011/12. It was reported that, in addition, officers would analyse and extract objectives and outcomes from all the other Directorates' business plans to facilitate the broader definition of the strategy. It was hoped that this overall assessment would be completed by the summer.

Members raised a number of comments and questions. The main points of which are summarised below:

- Officers were asked how they would approach the monitoring of progress over the next few years. The Committee was informed that the business

management team would be monitoring the outcomes from the strategy and assessing whether or not they had been achieved. A set of targets for Lancashire were currently being developed.

National targets from central government were also being rolled out.

These included monitoring the take-up of cultural services by young people. It was suggested that this particular target could prove difficult to measure practically and would therefore need to be monitored by carrying out user surveys.

Officers were also looking to benchmark services against other authorities in England from sources such as public library user surveys.

- One Member queried how the County Council could disseminate better the message that its libraries were not at this time closing – as many others were - but instead were being developed. The Committee was informed that Cultural Services were developing an action plan with the Corporate Marketing Team to raise the profile. One challenge here, however, was that recent structural changes to the delivery of Corporate Communications limited the control which Cultural Services had in ensuring that this message was publicised. One example of the need here to improve on communicating this message was the library in Burnley, where members of the public were regularly expressing dismay over its imminent closure, when in fact this was not and never was due to happen. One suggestion was a poster campaign and free bookmarks as a starting point towards spreading the message.

The Chair reminded the Committee that it was due to receive a report on all aspects of the Communications Service from the Head of Communications at its next meeting (13 May 2011).

- Members raised concern over the ageing population and people with disabilities and their correlation with culture and sport and monitoring activities/targets. The Committee was informed that officers were looking to establish stronger links within their Adult and Community Services Directorate with other work relating to older people and those with disabilities. However, officers did not currently undertake any specific monitoring regarding people with disabilities. Information regarding performance measurement was not currently available.
- On a question about work being done to establish dual-use of school facilities for members of the public, officers said they anticipated that the Building School for Future (BSF) project would provide such additional facilities. However, this approach had proved difficult to realise in the first instance. Furthermore, the BSF project nationally had now been abandoned due to an overhaul of capital investment in England's schools in 2010.

It was reported that there was no dedicated sports officer within the County Council. Officers were, however, looking to perhaps influence the Children and Young People Directorate establishing contact with Head Teachers to maybe assist in mapping out and developing dual-use facilities. The Committee was informed that Wyre Borough Council had recently identified Garstang High School as a model site for dual-use. The concern from officers was how experiences and achievements in developing the school would be rolled out across the remainder of the county.

County Councillor Oades felt that the County Council should have a dedicated sports officer. The Chair asked County Councillor Smith as Lead Member to perhaps give some consideration towards the implementation of such a post.

- Mention was made of the Lancashire Playing Fields Association and whether the County Council still had any representation on this outside body. County Councillor O'Toole had previously served on this body and suggested that this could be an additional resource for the Cultural Services Team to look into.
- When asked about what the County Council was doing to assist voluntary organisations and District Councils in obtaining funding and the acquisition of land perhaps "tied-up", Mr Watson explained that the Lancashire Sport Partnership was responsible for delivering projects on behalf of the County Council, District and Unitary Authorities. The partnership received its funding from Sport England.

The role of the partnership was to drive participation in recognised fields of sport, provide advice to Local Authorities and to assist local groups in bidding for funding. The partnership also recruited professionally trained coaches and also provided additional training where necessary.

- County Councillor Otter queried why in the report Parish Councils were only mentioned once and only in relation to public rights of way matters. In response, Mr Watson explained that the strategy was written prior to the Big Society agenda and that the Environment Directorate was keen to simplify processes relating to countryside management. It was seen as an opportunity to reflect three-tier working.

Resolved: That;

- i. The Committee noted the report and shared the notes from it with the lead member in order that he and his officers might consider some of the suggestions and recommendations made by members of the committee for improvements to delivery of the strategy;
- ii. A further report on the Culture and Sport Strategy and the finalised Cultural Services' Business Plan be brought back to the Committee in six months' time for further consideration.

4. Cultural Services Restructure

County Councillor Smith gave a brief introductory summary to the report. There were some 700 staff working in the Cultural Services department who provided an excellent resource to the public and the County Council. The restructure was driven by the imperative to make savings and eradicate duplication whilst at the same time delivering corporate priorities.

Mr Watson explained to the Committee that the restructure was designed to support the Culture and Sport Strategy with the key aim to create a more cohesive Cultural Services. Members were informed that the new structure consisted of three teams; Heritage, Development and Libraries. A structure chart detailing phase one (management) of the restructure was provided with the

report. It was anticipated that phase two (staffing) of the restructure would commence on 1 August 2011.

Bruce Jackson, County Heritage Manager, provided some background detail on the Heritage Service. The Committee was informed that the service consisted of three smaller teams; the museums service, record office and community history which previously formed a non-statutory part of the library service. Mr Jackson mentioned that the restructure had presented an opportunity for the service, whereby better support and knowledge would be accessed through the joining up of services. The restructure had also opened up a range of material and potential projects for the public. However, one of the key issues facing the service was the need to consider the long term in respect of retaining material for years to come.

David Blackett, Cultural Services – Development Manager, gave a brief power point presentation on his team's responsibilities. Mr Blackett explained that the core purpose of the Development Team would be to support the other teams within Cultural Services (Libraries and Heritage). The team would also provide advice on policy and strategy matters as well as providing administration duties including; business support, finance training, performance management, project planning, human resources and health and safety matters. The team would also be responsible for co-ordinating projects, events and any preparatory work for learning activities.

Julie Bell, County Libraries Manager, gave a brief introduction to the restructured Library Service. Members were informed that the service co-ordinated the operation of 74 libraries, five prison libraries, the management of the school library service along with the mobile service which had recently been reduced from 11 units to nine units. In 2008, the Library Service had already undergone a substantial restructure in which the service for the county was divided into three distinct areas; north, east and south. An area manager was assigned to each area along with an overall manager who was responsible for assembling the service into a unified operation. Underneath, the area managers were four district library managers. One of the key functions of the district library managers was to focus on matters relating to their respective locality agendas and to inform the Cultural Services Team on the whole.

The effect of the previous restructure meant that the Library Service was now in a strong position despite recent cuts and that it was hoped the service including the school library service would continue to strengthen.

A question was asked in respect of how volunteers fitted into the restructure of the service. The Committee was informed that there were currently a thousand volunteers supporting the work of the Cultural Services Team of which 357 were based in the Library Service. Their role was only to enhance the service – not to take over the staff.

Resolved: That the Committee noted the report.

5. Extending Access and Public Use of Lancashire Museums Service - Executive Response

County Councillor Smith introduced the Executive response on extending access and public use of Lancashire's Museums Service. He said that the task group had carried out an excellent and much welcomed piece of work and produced a good report. His own assessment was that the Museums Service needed flexibility in its approach to succeed and achieve increase public usage. Getting the branding and marketing of the service right was crucial, but there was perhaps a danger that current corporate communications policy made this more difficult to achieve.

Mr Jackson reported to the Committee that visitor numbers had exceeded the target of 250k for 2010/11 and that it was hoped visitor numbers would continue to rise during 2011/12.

County Councillor Craig-Wilson commented on the final report. In particular, County Councillor Craig-Wilson maintained her concerns with regard to branding in that she felt separate branding from that of the County Council's would improve visitor numbers to the Museums Service.

County Councillor Craig-Wilson also expressed concern regarding the lack of joined-up services. She felt that the Museums Service should work with other organisations, to share and possibly go into partnership in order to make the museum "offer" more enjoyable for families.

Members raised a number of comments and questions. The main points of which are summarised below:

- Members felt that the County Council should draw on expertise from other organisations on branding and marketing the service. It was also felt that as a consequence of a recent restructure of the Communications Service, officers in the Museums Service should be enabled to draw on past expertise who had been moved on to other areas of work within the Communications Service.
- Members expressed an interest in seeing the results of free admission to the Museum of Lancashire.
- Mention was made of Lancaster Castle and whether enquiries had been made with the Duchy of Lancaster to use the space as a possible museum site.

In response, Mr Watson commented that it would be useful to see what the outcomes would be from the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee when it receives a report from the Head of Communications.

Since the closure of Lancaster Castle, it was discovered that since its closure, there was a clause which stated that it must be restored to its original condition after three years following its closure. However, it was reported that Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council and the Duchy of Lancaster had begun to discuss the restoration and future use of the space.

Mr Jackson raised further points in relation to the responses to the recommendations from the task group on:

- Recommendation 2: It was suggested that the service would benefit from establishing a 5-10 year vision as well as producing a business plan year on year.
- Recommendation 5: There was a clear need to balance conservation work between partner collections and externally funded conservation work. However, officers did not want to push on the matter of selling stock.
- Recommendation 6: The service had identified the need for a post within the Development Team to have dedicated responsibility for income generation of all types.

Resolved: The Committee noted and endorsed the proposed actions as set out in the report.

6. Lancashire Record Office

County Councillor Smith introduced the report stating that the Lancashire Record Office (LRO) was a 4-star service rated highest in the region. However, the Committee was informed that further decisions were yet to be made regarding service provision which could affect its current rating. However, County Councillor Smith was positive and recognised that the action plan had been compiled well and spoke in favour of the service.

Mr Jackson raised a number of points in relation to the actions from the plan which were as follows:

- 5.1.1 – The Committee was informed that the LRO was currently reviewing its joint arrangements with Blackpool Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and that discussions had taken place with Blackpool Council in drafting a new agreement.
- 5.1.4 – The replacement of plant to improve climatic conditions of archive storage areas would take approximately two to three months over the coming summer to carry out and that the offices would be closed to the public during that period.
- 5.1.6 – It was reported that substantial progress had been made in developing capacity for digital preservation and that the pilot study on the use of the Corporate Electronic Records Management System (CERMS) had been completed. However, the matter was now being looked into further by the Strategic Partnership.

The Committee was also informed that the LRO also provided its services to all the District Councils in Lancashire.

Officers were asked about how confident they felt in achieving the actions set out given the current financial constraints. The Committee was informed that there might be a possibility of sourcing additional funding from the County Council. However, officers suggested that it could take between two to five years before they could anticipate any further funding streams given the current financial climate.

Resolved: The Committee noted and endorsed the proposed actions as set out in the report.

7. Task Group Updates

The Committee received an update on current task groups and their proposed completion dates.

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

8. 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.

9. Workplan 2010/11

The workplan for the committee was presented for noting and comments. The Chair informed the committee of possible future issues for future consideration. These included matters relating to street lighting, domestic violence, the youth offending team, trading standards and the Highways Agency.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Friday 13 May 2011 at 10am at County Hall, Preston. However, it was brought to the attention of the Committee that the meeting scheduled for the 8 July was no longer a suitable date and the Chair suggested that the meeting be moved to the 15 July at 2pm.

Resolved: That final confirmation of the revised arrangements for the July meeting be emailed to Members in due course.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston