

Meeting of the Full Council – 21 May 2015

Report on the Scrutiny Committee Meetings held on 13 February, 13 March and 17 April 2015

Chair: County Councillor Bill Winlow

The agenda and minutes of the meetings may be viewed on the County Council's web site at the following link:

<http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=120>

13 February 2015

Environment Agency: Bathing Water and Alt-Crossens Land Drainage

Officers from the Environment Agency (EA) attended to discuss the role and responsibilities of the EA, particularly in reference to bathing water quality and land drainage in the Alt Crossens Catchment.

It was recognised that there was much positive partnership working taking place involving the EA, and that important steps had been made in addressing some of the issues in Lancashire connected to flood risk management, with the full involvement of the EA. It was also recognised that the EA, was, like the council and other public sector organisation, under significant resource pressure and was having to make difficult decisions in line with the priorities set for it by Defra.

It was agreed that,

- i. The Environment Agency provide full data on water quality across the Lancashire coast.
- ii. Real time monitoring of sewage discharge be introduced all along the Fylde Coast
- iii. A Bite Size Briefing for members on flood risk management arrangements be held, in particular on the "Making Space for Water" arrangements and other partnership groups involved in the process.
- iv. Work by districts to incorporate sustainable drainage considerations in their local plans be supported and encouraged.
- v. The proposals to switch off the pumping stations in the Alt Crossens catchment be withdrawn
- vi. The EA work with the council and other partners to develop revised terms of references for the advisory board, with a view to strengthening its influence and public accountability through greater involvement of locally elected representatives; and that consideration be given to a Lancashire wide advisory board to reflect the recurrence of similar issues across other Lancashire catchments.

Work Plan and Task Group Update

A report was presented summarising the work to be undertaken by the Committee in the coming months, including an update on task group work.

13 March 2015

Lancashire Enterprise Partnership - Assurance Framework

The Committee received a presentation on the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Assurance Framework.

It was reported that Lancashire County Council is the accountable body for the LEP, and is therefore required to sign off the LEP's Assurance Framework. The Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis, and it was confirmed that the Scrutiny Committee would be involved in that process. It was emphasised that Government have directed local growth funding resources through local enterprise partnerships, with the LEP now managing the Enterprise Zone, City Deal, Growing Places Fund and Business Boost Lancashire. Lancashire's LEP is one of the largest in the country with £250m of local growth fund resources being made available up until 2021.

It was agreed that,

- i. In relation to the membership of the LEP Board itself,
 - a. The Framework should clearly explain how the membership of the LEP Board is determined, with reference to any government guidance and local determinations.
 - b. The Framework should set out how Board members are appointed, how they are held to account for their actions, and how their membership of the Board would end or could be terminated.
 - c. Consideration should be given to increasing the number of locally elected representatives on the Board. It was noted that the current composition of the LEP was smaller than the permitted maximum, and that therefore there was room for further places to be given to local councillors.
- ii. Consideration should be given to how locally elected politicians could be involved in the monitoring of complaints made against the LEP.
- iii. Paragraph 4.10 on Independent Scrutiny will, in time, need to be developed further to ensure that local Overview and Scrutiny arrangements are in line with wider local authority engagement to be set out in Section 2. The committee recognised the advantages of joint scrutiny, formal or informal, between all 15 local authorities in the LEP area.

- iv. There should be clarity about the powers of the independent person(s) in conflict resolution (paragraph 4.9), and whether the LEP and the local authority should be bound to accept any ruling or recommendation of the Independent person(s).
- v. Consideration should be given to ensuring that the Framework is clear throughout on the assurance measures in place in relation to the allocation of funding through any of the funding streams under the control of the LEP. The Committee was keen to ensure that the assessment of organisations and projects in receipt of public money was seen to be extremely robust, and that this should therefore be fully reflected in the Framework document.
- vi. In relation to the Skills Board, the Framework should be clear on how possible conflicts of interests have been, and will be in the future, avoided in the allocation of funding, especially where those bodies potentially in receipt of funding are represented on the decision making body.
- vii. On the Local Funding Contribution for transport schemes, it was felt that it should be made clear that the 10% minimum contribution could not be waived in any circumstances
- viii. A series of "Bite Sized Briefings" be arranged on LEP related matters, with ESIF and skills funding being particularly identified as areas where councillors would benefit from increased understanding.

Work Plan and Task Group Update

An update was provided on the Committee's work plan and current task groups.

17 April 2015

Bathing Water Quality and Alt-Crossens Land Drainage

The Committee considered a report setting out responses from United Utilities and the Environment Agency in relation to bathing water quality on the Fylde coast and the proposals for the Alt Crossens secondary pumping stations. These responses followed the Agency's attendance at the Committee meeting on 13 February 2015 to discuss these matters, together with a letter from the Chair of the Committee to the Agency setting out the Committee's concerns.

It was agreed that:

- i. The Committee writes to United Utilities requesting a firm commitment towards the implementation of the real time spill warning system across all eight bathing waters on the Fylde Coast for the 2015 bathing season, in order to alleviate issues with bathing water quality and effluent contaminating its coastlines.

- ii. The County Council gives further consideration to being represented on the recently established Alt-Crossens Intermediate Drainage Group.
- iii. A Notice of Motion for Full Council be drafted requesting that the Chief Executive writes to DEFRA;
 - a. Outlining the County Council opposition to the proposals to switch off the secondary pumping stations at Alt-Crossens and to request that DEFRA revises the remit of the Environment Agency in respect of flood risk management priorities to include the protection of agricultural land where it contributes significantly to the economy of the area.
 - b. To express to DEFRA the Committee's concerns regarding the role of United Utilities in relation to the management of surface water.
- iv. In the meantime, the Committee writes to DEFRA outlining its concerns as set out at (iii) above.

Lancashire Enterprise Partnership - Assurance Framework Responses

The Director of Economic Development, attended and responded to the comments of the Committee in relation to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Assurance Framework. Reference was made to the document being reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis

It was agreed that:

- i. The Committee note the LEP's response to its recommendations.
- ii. Consideration be given to further representation from non-education sector representatives on the LEP Skills Board.
- iii. Quarterly update reports be submitted to the Committee, and that representatives of the LEP Board be invited to attend Committee meetings, as appropriate.
- iv. Martin Kelly discuss the wording relating to conflict resolution in section 4.9 of the Assurance Framework with the Director of Governance, Finance and Public Services.

Work Plan and Task Group Update

An update was provided on the Committee's work plan and current task groups.