Lancashire County Council

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 10th July, 2020 at 10.00 am in Skype Virtual Meeting - Skype

Present:

County Councillor David O'Toole (Chair)

County Councillors

M Salter	E Nash
C Crompton	P Rigby
J Fillis	P Steen
S Holgate	D Whipp
E Lewis	G Wilkins
S C Morris	

County Councillor Stuart Morris replaced County Councillor Tim Ashton for this meeting.

1.   Apologies

There were no apologies.

2.   Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3.   Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 March 2020

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on 13 March 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4.   Redefining Lancashire: Our Approach to Recovery

The Chair welcomed Stephen Young, Executive Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, to the meeting. An update was presented to the committee on how the county council was Redefining Lancashire: Our Approach to Recovery, looking at Lancashire and its recovery from Covid-19, in particularly the economic impact the pandemic had on the county.

Lancashire County Council was expecting the county's economy to drop by 20-25% over the last three months. The county council had to be proactive in its response and put Lancashire on the map with a strong and ambitious plan. The county council wanted a strong evidence based conversation with the Government underpinning the county council's key asks.

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There were three key asks to Government:

- Opening up Lancashire safely, particularly businesses in town centres and tourism.
- Backing for major industries badly hit by Covid-19, particularly the aerospace industry.
- A strategic infrastructure request, particularly around road and rail and a strong Broadband and IT infrastructure.

The next step was to develop the Greater Lancashire Plan for Government as well as having an industrial strategy for the county. There had to be continued dialogue with Government.

A number of issues were raised by members and the following was noted:

- There was a Skills Swap Initiative in Lancashire were business could contact a central hub explaining what surplus skills they had and other businesses could contact the hub stating what their skill needs were. In supporting staff, a one stop website had been developed with over 50 organisations with different areas of skills and expertise had come together. They were talking to furloughed staff and staff at risk of redundancy about reskilling and retraining. They were also providing support to people starting small businesses. The county council was also supporting young people who had been hit hard by the closure of schools.
- The county council was working with experts in the industry around staff working from home and the impact this would have on the local economy and small businesses nearby offices.
- The committee felt there were opportunities to be had following the pandemic. There could be focus on the production of clean and green energy and other environmental initiatives. This was a key part of Lancashire County Council's thinking. It was looking at a scheme to produce green renewable energy. It was also looking at the use of logistic parks.
- Members were informed that the Greater Lancashire Plan would set the county's priorities and the things that Lancashire wanted to achieve.
- The document that had been sent to Government was basically an 'ask of money' from Government. The committee enquired how the county council could be certain it had engaged with local people in producing this plan. Due to the extremely tight deadlines involved the document produced was the best that could be created in the timeframe available.
- Advanced manufacturing and the tourism industry had been badly hit by the Coronavirus crisis and this was one of the main aspects of the plan.
- In terms of the number of people on furlough, Lancashire had similar rates to other industrial areas. There was a higher number of people that had been furloughed in advanced manufacturing and the hospitality trade.
- The county council was working together with district councils in pulling together a comprehensive list of schemes regarding Lancashire's transport

infrastructure, they wanted to see going forward. This list would be shared with Government.
- There were support schemes in place from Government regarding small businesses affected by the tourism industry disrupted by the Coronavirus crisis. Lancashire County Council was working with district councils as well looking at potential support schemes.
- One request to Government was for investment into the monitoring of vehicle movement and measuring the influx of traffic in the Fylde Coast, Ribble Valley and other tourist areas.

Resolved: The Internal Scrutiny Committee thanked Stephen Young, Executive Director of Growth, Environment and Transport and noted the update presented.

5. Highways Service COVID-19 Response

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Keith Iddon, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport; Phil Durnell, Director of Highways and Transport; John Davies, Head of Service Highways; Ridwan Musa, Highways Service Manager - Operations; and Marcus Leigh, Highways Service Manager - Infrastructure to the meeting.

Committee members were presented with an update on how the Highways Service had responded to the impact of Covid-19.

The lockdown had caused significant disruption to all elements of the Highways Service during which the Highways operations were only delivering emergency responses. All other elements of the service had to adapt to an immediate new way of working and there had been a professional and positive attitude from staff.

At the start of the lockdown highways officers were unable to visit any sites but teams identified as key workers were allowed site visits within one week.

It was pointed out to members that flooding had not stopped during the Covid-19 crisis. The Flood Risk Management Team work immediately adapted to working remotely. The team was able to work with partners using conference calls.

With regards to Parking Services, from the start of lockdown there was an initial reduction in enforcement and only primary routes were covered. As lockdown eased enforcement had increased. By the end of July the service would be back to pre-lockdown levels. The Government guidance in terms of providing free parking for NHS staff, health and social care workers and NHS volunteers was still being followed.

In terms of the Highways Safety Inspections Team, at the beginning of lockdown there had also been an initial reduction in service, with the team concentrating on dangerous defects. Normal levels of inspection were now being achieved.

Regarding Highways Regulation, there had been a large drop off in demand from utility services in the first week of lockdown. This quickly increased as utility

works were classified as essential. Utility firms took advantage of reduced traffic at problematic sites. Normal levels of demand on the service were being managed with remote working.

The Road Safety Engineering Team had adapted well to working from home and had operated normally throughout. The team was now involved in the restart initiative.

The workload of the Road Safety Education Team had stopped as schools had closed. The team was redeployed to Covid-19 duties. The workload of the Schools Crossing Patrol Service had also stopped due to the closure of schools. The Traffic Signals Team had continued to work normally throughout the pandemic remotely. The Traffic Monitoring Team had monitored traffic flows throughout lockdown and was supporting the Travel Restart initiatives.

The Highways Service Operations Team had a three phased return to work plan to get back to the new normal. As part of Phase 1, as soon as lockdown was announced the primary concern was to make all the sites safe and send all the operatives home to ensure the Government's guidance was being followed. The biggest challenge was the availability of masks and social distancing. A small number of the Operations Team returned to work on a rota basis for emergency works only and there was single person vehicle usage.

In Phase 2 the Operations Team had to comply with the Government's updated guidance. More of the team's smaller teams returned to work and there were staggered start and finish times. Grass cutting functions resumed.

More updated Government guidance was complied with in Phase 3. All teams returned to work and all revenue and capital schemes resumed. Space was provided for contractors where they could set up their own welfare pods. All training had commenced again, although with limited numbers. The team had assisted with the reopening of Household Waste Recycling Centres.

The Highways Service Operations Team was still facing continuous challenges during the Coronavirus crisis.

A number of issues were raised by members and the following was noted

- There had been some benefits to working practices during the crisis. Staggered start times had worked well. This was also a benefit to the network as people were not travelling at the same time and were not all on the road at the same time.
- In terms of activity levels, all the teams were now back up and running.
- Members were informed that there had been a reduction in the reporting of defects and customer enquiries in the first couple of months of lockdown but these numbers were almost back to normal levels as people were now using the reporting system and Customer Access.

- Regarding free parking for NHS staff and care workers in the future, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport would look into this.

Resolved: The Internal Scrutiny Committee thanked the Highways Service Team for its response to the Covid-19 crisis and noted the update provided.

6. Work Planning 2020/21

The committee was informed that a single combined work programme for all of the county council's scrutiny committees was currently being formulated. A draft copy of the work programme was set out at Appendix 'A' of the report.

The topics included were identified at a work planning workshop for members of the Internal Scrutiny held on 29 May 2020.

There was a request for all scrutiny committees to look at devolution and the impact it would have going forward.

There was also a request to look at making better use of the new ways of working especially regarding virtual meetings.

Resolved: That the Internal Scrutiny Committee:

i.   Note the single combined work plan presented.
ii. Note the additional topics for potential inclusion in the work programme.
iii. Delegate to the scrutiny officers the development and delivery of this programme, identifying appropriate methods of scrutiny, in consultation with the Chairs and with input from any member.
iv. Temporarily suspend the current Internal Scrutiny Committee work programme (2019/20) and for this to be kept under review.

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next virtual meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee would take place on Friday 11 September 2020 at 10.00am.

9. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as indicated against the heading to the item.

10.   Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000: Annual Report

(Not for Publication - Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information).

An annual update report was presented on the framework provided by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Resolved: That the Internal Scrutiny Committee:

i.   Note the report presented.
ii.   Approve, with immediate effect, the updated corporate policies on:
     1.   RIPA surveillance.
     2.   Non-RIPA surveillance.
     3.   The use of Social Media and the Internet in investigations.
i.   Note the outcome of the recent IPCO inspection.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston