

Lancashire County Council

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Friday 22 April 2022 at 10.00am in Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor David O'Toole (Chair)

County Councillors

J Shedwick	S Holgate
J Berry	T Hurn
A Fewings	S Smith
S Hind	R Woollam
A Hindle	

County Councillor Julia Berry replaced County Councillor John Fillis for this meeting only.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillor Erica Lewis.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 4 March 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Single-Use Plastics Policy - Update

The Chair welcomed Mike Kirby, Director of Strategy and Performance and County Councillor Shaun Turner, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, who provided the committee with an update on activity undertaken to reduce single-use plastics following the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group in 2019, whilst recognising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was highlighted that the report included a draft policy statement. The final policy would be accompanied by an action plan, which would set out timescales and responsibilities in more detail.

Comments and queries from the committee were as follows:

- Members commented that they had been working with the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service to ban the use of Chinese lanterns.
- On initiatives to work with schools to reduce single-use plastics, information was published to the school's portal for schools to take forward. The county council had the ability to work closely with both academies and maintained schools through platforms such as the school's forum.
- It was suggested that there should be a designated officer for schools to contact about engaging with the county council on reducing single-use plastics. Officers would look into providing this, but in the meantime the best person to contact was Debbie King, Environment and Climate Change Manager.
- Regarding the task group's recommendation "*Invest in moveable signs that can help deter the public from littering from their cars and reminding them to be responsible with their waste*", it was clarified that concerns had been raised and therefore this recommendation had not been taken forward; however, this would be kept under review. Concerns included the capacity of county council staff to revisit sites to move signs, the possible requirement of advertising consent in some locations, the work required to understand where there was a local perception of a problem, and that consideration needed to be given to the government guidance about the use of signs which could become a distraction to drivers.
- It was recognised that the policy could have consequences for some residents of Lancashire, such as those with disabilities. Rather than looking at alternatives to single-use plastics such as bamboo, which could become contaminated by food and could not be recycled, re-usable alternatives would be preferred.
- Members suggested that the policy should include facts and figures on the county council's position in 2018, its position now, and where the authority aimed to be, in order to provide quantifiable and measurable data. It was noted that there were no baseline statistics available when the task group met, however, officers were looking to include baseline statistics or key performance indicators in the action plan (where possible) to increase transparency.
- Regarding the financial risk management included in the report, it was explained that the small increases in cost had been incorporated into the purchase price, leaving no impact on the taxpayer.
- More detail could be provided on how the county council exerted influence on the supply chain through its procurement activities. It was generally successful at influencing its suppliers in relation to products such as plastics.
- The use of re-useable cups and other materials at county council facilities was being investigated and had been used previously.

- The committee recognised that the county council's work with communities, district councils, public sector colleagues, and businesses was vital to the policy's publicity and success.

Actions:

- A county council officer or team contact for single-use plastics queries to be shared with members, which could also be provided to schools.
- Measurable targets to be included in the final Single-Use Plastics Policy and action plan.

Resolved: That the update report and draft Single-Use Plastics Policy be noted.

5. Economic and Social Recovery Post Covid and the Way Forward

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Phil Green, Acting Executive Director of Growth, Environment, Transport, and Community Services and Joe Mount, Data Analyst for the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub.

The committee considered a report on the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the national and local measures put in place to aid recovery. It was highlighted that the sectors hit hardest by the pandemic were Lancashire's most important sectors, and that the evidence gathered on the challenges facing Lancashire had been relied upon during discussions with the government about future policies, including the recent Levelling Up White Paper.

Comments and queries from the committee were as follows:

- On upskilling Lancashire's residents to fill local economic opportunities, such as the National Cyber Force at the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone, officers were working closely with the government, the National Cyber Force, and other partners. An existing skills and employment framework was in place and conversations were taking place to adapt the framework so that the county council could work with organisations, including schools, to train residents in the skills needed. Initially, a number of people would move to Lancashire to support the launch, which would create up to 2000 jobs. It was noted that the skills needed for this project were adaptable and transferrable to most types of business.
- Members were concerned that the arts and culture sector was often overlooked. It was acknowledged that the pandemic had caused significant losses in this sector. In Lancashire, £26m had been lost in gross value added (GVA) per month for each month the sector remained locked-down. It was noted that the Levelling Up Fund could support the arts and culture sector.
- It was recognised that investment in capital infrastructure was a traditional response to economic downturn. Lancashire needed to continue investing in this way, with a focus on improving east-west connectivity which had been highlighted as a weakness and currently limited people's access to

job opportunities. The county council's strategy would involve working with district councils, the NHS, and partners to tackle barriers into work and help residents benefit from these opportunities.

- Members highlighted the importance of investing in renewable energy to support future jobs and make the most of Lancashire's strengths, particularly in manufacturing. It was acknowledged that the county council needed to respond to the government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution. Members were informed that the Local Government Association (LGA) had carried out research to forecast jobs in low-carbon and renewable energy across different local authorities in England. By 2050, the LGA expected Lancashire to have the highest number of low-carbon jobs per head, and to have the fourth-highest total number of jobs in the sector. South Ribble was forecast to have the highest number of local green jobs out of all 350 local authorities reported on.
- With regards to supporting businesses with carbon reduction, the report referred to a £12.8m local economic recovery and growth programme. The programme offered grants to businesses to decarbonise and improve their environmental efficiency. This was a pilot programme and, if successful, the county council would look to gather further resources and include it in a future devolution deal. The committee requested an update on this programme, to be considered during the work planning process for 2022/23.
- As demonstrated by Figure 4 in the report, it was observed that Lancashire had a better pre-COVID employment rate than both the North West and the rest of the UK. However, this had decreased during the pandemic and Lancashire now sat below the national rate. In part, this was due to Lancashire's most important sectors being hit hardest by the pandemic. The county council was optimistic that, in the long-term, Lancashire's employment rate would recover, especially as a result of large projects like the National Cyber Force. The data would be monitored closely, including the number of residents claiming Universal Credit.
- Members commented that the move to homeworking during the pandemic had influenced where people now lived and worked, particularly with many London-based companies offering remote-working packages. It was noted that it was too early to comment on the long-term effect of COVID-19 on the employment market, but it was hoped that the value and culture on offer in Lancashire would attract people to move to the county.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report and analysis on the economic and social impacts of the pandemic in Lancashire be noted; and
- ii. An update on the county council's economic recovery and growth programme, particularly its support to businesses to decarbonise, be included on the Work Programme for 2022/23.

6. Work Programme 2021/22

The committee considered the work programmes for the Internal Scrutiny Committee and other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair advised that members should contact either himself or Hannah Race, Senior Democratic Services Officer if they wanted an item to be included on the work programme.

It was noted that the External Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the Community Safety Agreement 2022-25 had been cancelled. Members were keen to ensure the proposed agreement did come to scrutiny for discussion.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes 2021/22 be noted.

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted the next meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee would take place on Friday 8 July 2022 at 10:00am in County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston