

## Lancashire County Council

### Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 8th April, 2016 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

**Present:**

County Councillor Bill Winlow (Chair)

#### **County Councillors**

A Barnes	C Pritchard
L Beavers	J Shedwick
Mrs F Craig-Wilson	V Taylor
C Crompton	D Watts
S Holgate	G Wilkins
Mrs L Oades	

County Councillor Lorraine Beavers replaced County Councillor Ron Shewan, County Councillor Fabian Craig-Wilson replaced County Councillor David O'Toole and County Councillor Stephen Holgate replaced County Councillor Miles Parkinson for this meeting.

#### **1. Apologies**

None were received.

#### **2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None were disclosed.

#### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 February 2016**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Cabinet Member response to the Fire Suppression Measures Task Group**

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, Martin Cooper, Property Asset Manager (Capital Programme), and County Councillor Jackie Oakes, Chair of the Fire Suppression Measures Task Group, to the table.

The final report of the Fire Suppression Measures Task Group was presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2015. Following the meeting the report was provided to County Councillor Tomlinson to respond to the recommendations.

County Councillor Tomlinson informed the Committee that he had discussed the recommendations with officers and about two dozen head teachers. These two dozen head teachers would not want to have a sprinkler system in their school and would be more interested in other methods of fire suppression. These head teachers were concerned about three elements:

- Cost of a sprinkler system
- Risk of sprinkler system being accidentally set off
- Maintenance of sprinkler systems

He asked the Committee to agree to two minor amendments to the report so as he could accept the report in full. His problem with the report was the element of compulsion. He felt it compelled LCC, head teachers and governors to agree to the fitting of sprinkler systems. These decisions he felt should be taken on a case to case basis taking into account the risk and cost.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) had stated there would not be any money in the fund for sprinkler systems because it did not see it as a priority.

County Councillor Tomlinson's amendments were regarding Recommendation 1 of the Task Group's report. His suggested alteration was:

"All brand new schools developed by LCC shall have a sprinkler system *considered* (rather than "installed") as part of their safety strategy. With regard to the extension of an existing school, where the capacity of a school is to increase by 50% or more, based on pupil numbers, then a sprinkler system shall be *considered for* (rather than "installed into") the resultant new facility (both the new and existing elements).

County Councillor Jackie Oakes stated that the report was completed with the evidence that the Task Group had been provided with and with the principal that the LCC standard should be the one aspired to and that a majority of the Task Group did not agree with the amendments.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the report, a summary of which is provided below:

- Members enquired if when circumstances merited a sprinkler system then one would be fitted. If the amendments were made to the report then it would give Members reassurance that the fitting of a sprinkler system would be considered.

- The Task Group felt that if the fitting of sprinkler systems was considered then the financial consideration became very important. The Task Group was concerned that finances should not be the important element of a decision of this nature.
- The question of are fire drills was raised. Were fire drills being done at schools and was there a register of these drills? There was no central log of fire drills but each school should have their own register. County Councillor Tomlinson informed the Committee he would speak to governors about putting general information and updates on fire drills into the Yellow Book which was issued after every term.
- Members were informed that finance was not the final arbiter in whether a sprinkler system should be installed or not. If it was deemed necessary to fit a sprinkler system on a health and safety risk assessment then one would be installed.

**Resolved:** That

1. The Committee note and comment on the response provided by the Cabinet Member
2. The Committee accept the Task Group report with amendments.

## **5. Supporting Young People**

The Chair welcomed Pam Goulding, Head of Service for Skills, Learning and Development, and, Sue Procter, Director for Programmes and Project Management to the table.

A report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee providing an update and overview of the support provided to young people by the Employment Support Team within Skills, Learning and Development. This enabled and assisted young people on their pathway in to further education/employment and also promoted sustainable employment for young people.

The report gave a review of the support that had been provided through the Professional Apprentices Programme, the mentoring programme and the work LCC did towards its internal apprentice programme.

Since July 2015 the service had provided support to Children's Services, specifically to support Children Looked After and Care Leavers, where they and their social workers opt in to the services available. There is a current case load of 47 young people of which 16 are actively engaged on an employment programme and 31 working towards being placement ready.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the report, a summary of which is provided below:

- Members enquired when the initial programme was expanded from years 9 – 11 to include years 7 – 8 and what benefits they had gained from it. To include years 7 – 8 had been a request from the schools because they felt there were some children in these years that needed mentoring and guidance to prevent them heading down the wrong path.
- Regarding the charge the Government put on employers last year for apprenticeships, Members enquired how this had impacted on LCC and its budget. They were informed that the apprenticeship levy would come in to effect in April 2017 and the Skills, Learning and Development Team would be coming back to Management Team with a clear view of how they saw this working. In the public sector the expectation was there would be up to 2.3% expected of LCC to bring in apprenticeships. A further report was requested when this levy came in.
- Apprenticeships had been relatively successful with a majority of apprentices gaining full time employment with LCC.
- Councillors were concerned about the downward trend of apprenticeships over the last few years. One of the reasons for this was the transformation process within LCC. The budget situation at LCC had also had an effect. Hopefully with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017 there would be a rise in apprenticeships.
- Members enquired about the employment prospects of children leaving care from private homes. They were informed that the Employment Support Team looked after children leaving LCC care homes. Members were reassured that their concerns would be taken back to Children's Services.

**Resolved:** That the Scrutiny Committee note the report.

## **6. The Superfast Broadband Lancashire Programme - Phase 1 and Phase 2 (Extension) Update**

The Chair welcomed Gemma Johnson, Superfast Lancashire Project Manager, and, Richard Hothersall, Head of Service Programme Office, to the meeting.

The report outlined the outcome of Phase 1 delivery and the planned implementation of the Superfast Broadband Extension Programme (SEP)

Phase 1 would address 21% and SEP would now go on to address a further 2%, leaving 1% as the hardest to reach areas that had no Superfast Broadband (SFBB) plans. Phase 1 had been funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), BT, LCC and Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK).

Coverage of SFBB would have reached 136,051 premises by completion, and provided access to over 9,000 ERDF eligible SMEs. Over 900 structures had been built to deliver the SFBB across the white areas of Lancashire. The contract with BT measured speeds of over 24mbps to be deemed 'Superfast Broadband'. Various technologies had been deployed to provide value for money.

One hundred plus priority business sites now had access to SFBB including enhanced connectivity at the Enterprise Zone sites. The £3m Business Support Programme targeted 355 SMEs to receive minimum of 12hours intensive business support. This target had been exceeded to 507 businesses.

The Superfast Extension Programme (SEP) would be worth a maximum of £7.68m and would be funded on a 50:50 basis by BDUK and LCC. There were three phases of delivery, each lasting 12 months, staggered to commence at 6 monthly intervals. Address level coverage would only be known once build was completed. The website management was to move from BT to LCC. A communications plan was also being developed.

The Satellite Broadband Subsidy Scheme was managed by BDUK and LCC to fund those premises which could not access an affordable broadband service (at least 2Mbps) and were unlikely to benefit from the current plans. Applicants applied online, and if eligible, once accessed by LCC, were awarded the subsidy towards the cost of equipment and installation of a satellite broadband connection. The purpose of the scheme was to keep customers costs below £400 for the first year of service. The customer would have a choice of ten Satellite providers (approved by BDUK for the scheme) to choose a service from, and would take out a minimum twelve month contract.

Regarding future activity, Superfast Lancashire was building on the success of Phase 1 and learning from it. It was exploring European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-20 and European Agricultural, Farming and Rural Development Fund funding options, and, cross programme working with Lancashire Growth Hub. As part of the publically funded rollout BT had signed up to a Gainshare mechanism whereby, an element of their revenues from Superfast Broadband take up could be invested in the white areas in Lancashire to further improve coverage.

Superfast Lancashire had been exploring options to deliver to the final 1% and had been in contact with the Independent Network Cooperative Association (INCA) whose members supported the development of independent digital

networks and infrastructure, specifically that which is shared by different operators and providers, was open for use by competing operators or service providers or was owned by the communities or businesses that use it.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the report, a summary of which is provided below:

- Regarding Enterprise Zones councillors enquired what the timescale was for Superfast rollout. They were informed that the deployment plan was still being worked on with BT. There were some priority sites one of which was Hillhouse Enterprise Zone. As soon as the plan was available Scrutiny Committee would be updated.
- The Committee was informed there had been some damage caused by the recent floods. The flooding had caused a delay to the project. This was twofold. Some of the ducts that had been built had been saturated by the water. There had also been a delay in receiving power as Electricity North West had been involved in other flood damaged areas.
- BDUK and LCC had invested £8m in the scheme. Barring the satellite option, which was £400, it was put to the Superfast Lancashire Team if this fully covered the installation costs. The cost for the customer should not exceed £400. The subsidy cost of £100 should cover the installation.
- Members were informed that the 1% who had not got any build plans at the moment were the very rural elements but they were in the programme. There were about 7000 of these premises. More and more providers had come forward offering wireless or satellite functions. The Team were now looking at doing smaller bite size tender packages.
- It was noted by the Committee that the Government had made a commitment to provide every home and business in the UK with access to a basic broadband service, at least 2Mbps download speed. Of the 1% who had not any build plans Members enquired how many were businesses. They felt we had to focus on the opportunities for businesses. They also felt that maybe it would be cheaper for these businesses to relocate. There were about 9000 ERDF eligible businesses. There were also another 3000 eligible businesses that were not on the footprint when the ERDF money was available. A quarter of these were now in the final percent. The Superfast Lancashire Team could only target ERDF eligible businesses because of the funding at the time. The Team promised to come back to the Scrutiny Committee with more details on the businesses.
- Members were informed that all County Councillors were invited to the INCA event in October which might be held at County Hall. Details would be provided for them.

**Resolved:** The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the contents of the report.

## **7. Report of the Planning Matters Task Group**

The Chair welcomed Andrew Mullaney, Head of Planning and Environment, to the meeting.

The Task Group had presented an interim report to the Scrutiny Committee in February. The Task Group had been formed at the request of County Councillor Liz Oades after concerns had been expressed by some district councils regarding the scope, content and timeliness of Lancashire County council consultation responses particularly regarding education, highways and flood risk management.

The scope of this review was limited to the County Council's consultation responses to district councils and did not include wider planning matters.

The Task Group had undertaken a review and had prepared a series of recommendations. District Councils were consulted on the draft recommendations, which had been subsequently modified following feedback.

The Task Group's recommendations were now presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the report, a summary of which is provided below:

- Regarding the changing roles in the Environment Agency at LCC and the reporting back on flood risk, the Committee was informed that a lot of the responsibility had transferred to LCC's Flood Risk Authority. LCC's main role now was as a statutory consultee to district councils to provide advice on local flood matters.
- The question of whether LCC was a statutory consultee regarding education contributions was raised. It was a statutory consultee where education contributions had been agreed as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (CIL), and amendments. It was Government policy to encourage LPAs to participate in CIL but in Lancashire the take up was fragmented.
- Members were informed that where the education contributions were part of CIL, then the LPA should consult the Education Authority to help it discharge CIL. In other areas where CIL did not apply, consultation with the Education Authority was discretionary.

- As it was not always clear that the LPA should consult the education Authority, LCC scanned the weekly lists of planning applications in all districts for schemes involving 10 or more dwellings. These were then brought to the attention of education colleagues who then decided whether to seek a developer contribution using their school provision model.
- On the subject of phased development the Committee was informed that the Authority could only consider the application brought before it, not what it might become.
- The Committee was not satisfied with the planning system as it was and Members felt that LCC should work along with the Planning Authority for a better infrastructure and there should be full infrastructure surveys. There should be better master planning and better infrastructure planning. There was no funding from developers to put an infrastructure in place. This was having an adverse effect on communities.
- It was felt that something should be put in writing for the Committee to approve and send off to Government.
- Regarding the response from Chorley Council: "Supportive of proposal to send comments to LCC Councillors and standardised conditions, provided they had been drafted in conjunction with LPAs." Members enquired what exactly the statement meant. Standardised conditions would streamline and free up officer time. Chorley planners wanted to proof check the conditions before they were standardised and did they meet the 3 tests in the National Guide.
- The Committee enquired if the County Council was trying to get a blueprint in place for infrastructure planning. The ultimate solution for this was to get much better joined up and timely land use planning and transport planning. There needed to be a strategic planned approach to housing provision, business provision and transport provision.
- LCC needed to be encouraged to look into enforcement and provide the resources to put into practice the restrictions that the developments should have. Maybe there should be ring fencing on housing application fees.
- Members would be updated on the process of the County Council and district councils working together regarding the Section 38 agreements at a later date.
- A lot of district councils did not have local plans in place and inappropriate development was taking place.



**Resolved:**

1. The Scrutiny Committee approve the recommendations of the Task Group
2. Request a response from the appropriate Cabinet Members for the July meeting of the Scrutiny Committee
3. Prepare a letter for the Scrutiny Committee to approve and send to the DCLG.

**8. Work Plan and Task Group Update**

The Work Plan was presented to the Committee regarding upcoming topics and future topics not yet scheduled as well as an update on ongoing Task Groups and Task Groups that had recently been established.

County Councillor Crompton requested that counter terrorism be included with the Community Safety item to be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

Wendy Broadley, Scrutiny Officer, had sent out a meeting request to Scrutiny Committee Members for a work planning session taking place after the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May.

**Resolved:** That the Scrutiny Committee note the Work Plan and Task Group Update report.

**9. Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will take place on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 10.00 in Cabinet Room B (The Diamond Jubilee Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

I Young  
Director of Governance, Finance  
and Public Services

County Hall  
Preston

