

Lancashire County Council

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 12th July, 2019 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor David O'Toole (Chair)

County Councillors

M Salter	E Nash
S Clarke	P Steen
C Crompton	C Towneley
B Dawson	D Whipp
J Fillis	G Wilkins
E Lewis	

County Councillors Stephen Clarke and Bernard Dawson replaced County Councillors Paul Rigby and Steven Holgate respectively.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Constitution: Membership; Chair and Deputy Chair; and Terms of Reference

The report presented set out the constitution, membership, chair and deputy chair and terms of reference of the Internal Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

Resolved: That the following be noted:

- i. The appointment of County Councillors David O'Toole and Matthew Salter as Chair and Deputy Chair of the committee for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year.
- ii. The new membership of the committee following the County Council's Annual Meeting on 23 May 2019.
- iii. The Terms of Reference of the committee.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 May 2019

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on 17 May 2019 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

5. Impact of the Reduction of Winter Maintenance Trigger Levels from 1.0 to 0.5 Degree Celsius for the 18/19 Season

The Chair welcomed Phil Durnell, Director of Highways and Transport and Harvey Danson, Area Highways Manager to the meeting.

The report presented set out the results of the Cabinet approval last year to reduce the road surface temperature at which gritting was instructed on the highway network in Lancashire.

The overview, impact and results of the change were also presented along with the end of season report from Lancashire County Council's forecast provider. During 2018/19 the threshold was cut to 0.5 degrees. Members were informed that the 0.5 degree threshold provided a further buffer to offset the risk of an inaccurate forecast.

The change of policy meant that 312 fewer individual treatments had been carried out than would have been the case if the previous intervention level had been maintained. Members were informed that this had resulted in a saving of £82,000 being achieved.

It was pointed out to the committee that there was no difference compared to previous winters in the proportion of inaccurate forecasts with the potential to incorrectly influence decisions about whether or not to send out the gritters. As last winter was mild, this had led to more marginal forecasts about whether temperatures would stay above freezing. This had put the new policy to the test.

The committee was satisfied that previous concerns about the possible effects of the policy change had not occurred but wanted to know if isolated areas had benefited from the new way of working as requests had been made for greater emphasis on the secondary routes and priority footways through the use of some of the savings to permit the secondary routes and priority footways to be treated. They were informed that as last winter had been relatively mild there had been little need to treat more minor routes. It was also noted that there had been a very good sign up from agricultural contractors to cover the gritting of secondary routes as well as working with the district councils to cover priority footways as well.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report and recommendation to continue winter service provision with an intervention level of +0.5 be noted.
- ii. The treatment of secondary routes be monitored going forward.

6. Statement of Priorities for 16-19 Education and Skills Report

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Phillippa Williamson, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools and Ajay Sethi, Head of Learning Services and Skills to the meeting.

The report presented the Lancashire Statement of Priorities for 16 – 19 Education and Skills for consideration. The document provided a strategic overview of the education and training provision being accessed by Lancashire residents aged 16 – 19 and those aged 19 – 24 who had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and were accessing provision at college, SSF, academy or apprenticeship provider.

In terms of the local context, Lancashire had 8 colleges, 2 Foundation Learning Providers, 9 School Sixth Forms (SSF) and 10 Academies. In 2017/18 the national achievement rate tables showed that, for 16-18 year olds achievements, five Lancashire colleges were in the top 10% of all General Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges in England.

Members were informed that the document was shared with colleges, key apprenticeship providers, school and academy sixth forms, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Ofsted, Blackpool Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Leaders and Chief Executives of district councils.

It was reported that the Statement of Priorities informed individual conversations with college principals and senior management teams to understand how they could contribute towards priorities. There had been positive feedback from colleges on the use of this document to inform their strategy and curriculum planning. They had been used internally to inform decision making and development.

Figures presented to the committee showed that between December 2018 and February 2019, an average of 519 young people aged 16 and 17 were found not to be in education, employment or training (NEET). This amounted to 2.1% of all residents in that age group. Identifying these young people was a huge challenge in Lancashire. One of the challenges was around data sharing. Schools had a duty to provide information and guidance to pre-16 aged pupils about their next step. Sixth form and further education colleges had been reminded of the need to help the county council track their students' progress. The Tracking Participation Guidance Document had been reissued to schools and colleges. As a result, members were informed that the figures of the unknowns was already reducing.

The committee was informed that Lancashire was in a good position in terms of the further education opportunities on offer, with some of the highest rated colleges in the country and a network of enterprise advisers linking up students and employers. It was also noted that further education providers were co-operating with the council to ensure there was a broad range of courses on offer to encourage teenagers to continue studying. Young people learned in different

ways, so having qualifications that were academic, vocational and occupational, supported different learning styles.

Members were advised that there were council officers in place, dedicated to providing post-16 options advice to young people who had been in council care or had special needs and disabilities.

The NEET rate for young people who were in council care was higher than that for all Lancashire 16 – 17 year olds. The proportion of unknowns in that age group was slightly lower than the general population. For young people with special education needs and disabilities, the known NEET rate was broadly similar to that of all students in the relevant age range, while the unknown rate was much lower than the general population.

The committee enquired on the reasons behind the closure of sixth form colleges. Members were informed that this was in part due to financial liability. And the quality of colleges and the student experience was also taken into consideration. Cross border education was not uncommon. Students were prepared to travel for a better quality of college.

The committee enquired about the provision of further education from the authority to the rural community. It was reported that a lot of young people moved to urban areas for their education.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report presented be noted.
- ii. Suggested improvements and amendments for the next version of the Lancashire Statement of Priorities for 16 – 19 Education and Skills be considered.

7. Report of the Budget Scrutiny Review Panel

The report presented an overview of matters presented and considered by the Budget Scrutiny Review Panel at its meeting held on 11 April 2019.

Resolved: The Internal Scrutiny Committee receive and note the report of its Budget Scrutiny Review Panel.

8. Internal Scrutiny Work Planning Session 25 July 2019

The Internal Scrutiny Committee was informed of its Work Planning Session on Thursday 25 July 2019, at 1:00pm in the John of Gaunt Room (former County Mess), County Hall, Preston.

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee would take place on Friday 27 September 2019 at 10.00am in Cabinet Room B (The Diamond Jubilee Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston