

## **Lancashire County Council**

### **External Scrutiny Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 5th March, 2019 at 10.30 am in Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

#### **Present:**

County Councillor Edward Nash psc (Chair)

#### **County Councillors**

D Stansfield	Mrs L Oades
A Ali	G Oliver
A Cheetham	J Rear
C Crompton	J Shedwick
D Foxcroft	C Towneley
J Gibson	

County Councillor Julie Gibson replaced County Councillor Tony Martin for this meeting only.

#### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

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

None were disclosed.

#### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 October 2018**

**Resolved:** That the minutes from the meeting held on 16 October 2018 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Electricity North West: Investment, customer service and low carbon technology**

The Chair welcomed Helen Norris, Stakeholder Engagement and CSR Manager; Mike Taylor, Customer Engagement Manager and Strategic Projects; Jonathan Booth, Asset Management; and Ebrahim Hajat, Investment Manager, to the meeting.

The officers delivered a presentation which provided the committee with:

- An introduction to Electricity North West.
- Information on investments in Lancashire, customer service and support partnerships for vulnerable customers.

- Information on supporting strategic projects and low carbon technologies.

On investments in Lancashire, it was noted that Electricity North West's assets were installed during the 1950s/60s and there was now a requirement to change these assets to enable new ways of delivering electricity and managing reliability. The Committee was informed that behaviour changes of people affected the network and whilst Electricity North West ensured power cuts were minimised it was now looking at smarter ways of working such as installing new technology to become efficient, resilient and responsive to people's needs as well as to help identify any faults.

It was noted that the average time a person could expect to go between experiencing a power cut was 3.3 years. As such, power cuts for most parts of the county were considered rare occurrences, whereupon it was intimated that some people were perhaps not as prepared for such events as others. Power cuts were more likely to occur in West Lancashire and Ribble Valley districts. Electricity North West was currently replacing overhead lines in Ribble Valley with underground cable. It was noted that approximately 80% of the network was underground.

In referencing Greater Manchester's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2038, it was noted that Electricity North West would welcome working with the county council on its carbon plan and aspirations. Officers also made reference to a Lancashire Energy Strategy which was produced during 2018. However, no further action or confirmation of its endorsement had been communicated.

With regard to vulnerable customers it was highlighted that when faults occurred on the network, for some people it was a considerable inconvenience and in some cases life-threatening i.e. people who are medically dependent on electricity. There was a need to look at alternative ways of providing electricity. It was reported that Electricity North West maintained a Priority Services Register (PSR) and worked with a number of organisations to support vulnerable customers including Citizens Advice. The Committee was informed that as well as providing debt advice, Citizens Advice also provided energy advice.

In addition to this Electricity North West was trialling its industry leading data sharing with United Utilities in its "Tell us Once" initiative. With consent from a person, it could share data with United Utilities and was hoping to roll this out with other utility companies. Electricity North West was also in the process of identifying areas of fuel poverty.

On emerging issues the Committee was informed that in November 2018, Electricity North West had published a report on 'Distribution Future Electricity Scenarios (DFES) and Regional Insights across the North West' including Lancashire. A copy of which is set out on their website. A webinar (online seminar) event was to be held on 28 March 2019, which aimed to provide participants with the opportunity to find out more about how levels of demand and generation were anticipated. The Committee was also informed of the Manchester Green Summit that was to be held on 25 March 2019. Electricity

North West was also supporting the Climate and Environmental Emergency Conference in Lancaster on 29 March 2019.

Given the duration passed in considering this item, it was;

**Resolved:** That the formulation of recommendations be considered under item 7 - External Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19.

## **5. Community Safety Strategic Assessment and Community Safety Agreement 2019**

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Peter Buckley, Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services; Debbie Thompson, Public Health Specialist, Lancashire County Council; Angela Harrison, Director of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner; Robert Ruston, Partnerships Officer, Police and Crime Commissioner's Office; and Lee Sculpher, Senior Partnership Analyst, Public Health, Lancashire County Council, to the meeting.

The report presented provided an overview of the Strategic Assessment, which in Lancashire was produced on a three yearly cycle, with an annual review of key findings. Members raised concerns that knife crime had not been included in the Community Safety Agreement for 2019-2022, given recent events both locally and nationally. Members also suggested if work could be done in schools to help reduce knife crime. Officers felt they would welcome the opportunity to work with schools and youth forums. It was reported that the Community Safety Agreement was a high-level document of key issues and that detailed work would happen in local areas.

The Committee noted that Lancashire County Council could not instruct what each of the Community Safety Partnership's priorities should be. It was also noted that the information used to inform the Agreement was gathered 12 months ago.

A question was asked regarding when, how and from whom the Living in Lancashire Survey was sent out to. In response it was reported that the officers in attendance didn't have the information with them at the meeting but agreed to contact Lancashire County Council's Communications team to obtain and circulate it to the Committee. A copy of the response is set out in the minutes.

Members fed back on the concerns of their residents. The committee felt there was a loss of connectivity between police and the communities. Concerns were raised about the lack of PACT (Police and Communities Together) meetings. Engagement with communities was different across the County and in some instances was through a virtual online PACT. The Committee was informed that three Engagement Officers had recently been appointed to work with each of the Base Command Unit areas. However, there was a consensus from members that they wanted to see more policing in their areas.

The Committee was informed that over the next four months a review of Community Safety Partnership working and Governance arrangements would be

undertaken. It was suggested that the outcome of the review be presented to the Committee in five months' time.

**Resolved:**

1. The Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services consider the inclusion of knife crime in the Community Safety Agreement for 2019-2022, before it takes effect from 1 April 2019.
2. An update on the review of Community Safety Partnerships be presented to the External Scrutiny Committee in five months' time.

**6. Chair's update**

The Chair provided a verbal update to the Committee on progress that had been made since the Committee last met.

- The Committee awaited a response from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government with regard to water companies not being statutory consultees on all planning applications. The deadline for the response was 22 October 2018.
- The Chair and the Deputy Chair had met with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire to request evidence in relation to police officer time being taken up by responding to issues defined as non-crime. This was currently awaited.
- The Chair and Deputy Chair had met with Helen Norris from Electricity North West to discuss ways of working together and in preparation for today's meeting.
- A request was made by County Councillor Foxcroft to review the quality of reinstatement work on highways by utility companies. Evidence had been requested from the Council's Highways Team and was awaited.
- The Strengthening Flood Risk Management and Preparedness in Lancashire Task and Finish Group met on 31 January 2019. Two further meetings had been scheduled later in March. It was hoped that the report of the Task and Finish Group would be presented to the Committee at its meeting in October 2019.
- An informal meeting for members of the Committee to conduct work programming for 2019/20 would be arranged for some time around May/early June. Details would be circulated in advance of the meeting.

**Resolved:** That the Chair's update be noted.

**7. External Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19**

The report presented set out the External Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for the municipal year 2018/19.

County Councillor Gillian Oliver presented her findings from the Bite Size Briefing on Universal Credit held for members on 30 October 2018. A copy of the findings is set out in the minutes.

In considering the recommendations set out in the report at item 4 – Electricity North West: Investment, customer service and low carbon technology, the following suggestions were raised by members of the Committee:

- Representatives from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to present on the Lancashire Energy Strategy.
- Ask the Director of Public Health to identify ways to partner with Electricity North West.
- A report be presented to the Committee on the Lancashire County Council's Green Energy Fund and how this was being utilised.
- A task and finish group be established.
- Appoint a rapporteur to see how the Lancashire Energy Strategy can be progressed.

**Resolved:** That;

1. The report be noted.
2. The Chair of the External Scrutiny Committee, County Councillor Ed Nash psc be appointed to act as rapporteur to determine how the Lancashire Energy Strategy can be progressed.

## **8. Urgent Business**

There was no Urgent Business.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the External Scrutiny Committee would take place on Tuesday 16 April 2019 at 10.30am in Cabinet Room B (The Diamond Jubilee Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

L Sales  
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall  
Preston



## **Response re: Living in Lancashire Panel/Survey from Debbie Thompson, Public Health Specialist, Lancashire County Council**

The Living in Lancashire (LiL) panel brings local views and opinions to the centre of the decisions that are made. The panel consists of over 2,000 Lancashire residents from all walks of life right across the county. They tell us about what is needed in their area, what is going well and where we can improve. Panel members can leave the panel at any time. Every so often panel members are randomly removed so that the panel remains fresh and represents the general views of people in Lancashire. If this happens, panel members are contacted to let them know about changes to their membership.

Living in Lancashire members receive up to four questionnaires a year which should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Each questionnaire focuses on a couple of important issues. The topics covered reflect all aspects of life in Lancashire and these have previously included:

- Road and pavement maintenance and repairs.
- Priorities for social care services.
- Community based health services.
- GP and hospital services.
- Budget and council priorities.
- Satisfaction with the council.
- Crime and community safety.
- Community and voluntary sector.
- Economy and regeneration.
- Road safety.

Questionnaires can be completed online or through the post. Panel members may also be invited to take part in interviews or local discussion groups. These activities are optional. Panel members don't get paid to be a member but if they attend some of the optional research activities, for example local discussion groups, payments may be made to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

### **Living in Lancashire – Wave 52 (community safety)**

This wave of Living in Lancashire asked a number of questions about community safety.

- The fieldwork began on 12 January 2018 and was sent by email or post to all 2,916 members of the panel
- A reminder was sent on 26 January 2018 and the fieldwork ended on 16 February 2018
- In total, 1,991 questionnaires were returned giving an overall response rate of 68%
- The Wave 52 survey contained 16 questions compared to the 29 questions in Wave 48 (2015)
- There were seven questions repeated from the Wave 48 survey in the Wave 52 survey

In early 2020, and subject to capacity, Lancashire County Council's Business Intelligence team is planning to produce a report analysing the Wave 52 community safety results in full. The report will be published on Lancashire County Council's website. The findings from all past LiL surveys are available on the research and consultation database here:

<http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/consultation/responses/responses.asp?siteid=5140&pageid=29455&e=e> They can be found by selecting "Life in Lancashire panel" in the "Consultation with" field.

The recent Strategic Assessment and individual district profiles were produced by the Lancashire Constabulary Analyst Team using the raw data obtained from the Living in Lancashire Wave 52 survey and these findings will be included in the final report.



## **Rapporteur report on Universal Credit**

**Author: County Councillor Gillian Oliver**

**Date: 5 March 2019**

I'm referring to a Bite Size Briefing broadcast from 30<sup>th</sup> October last year, which was to brief councillors on the implementation of Universal Credit in Lancashire. This report sets out my findings from that event.

Whilst it is recognised this briefing was held a long time ago and that a lot may have changed both locally and nationally since the broadcast, I was looking for the flagged issues which relate to this committee in terms of "what implications for the county council might exist in Universal Credit not being properly applied" and this broadcast brought these issues to the fore.

The briefing was presented by Joanne Barker, our own Welfare Rights Officer as I understand under Clare Platt's department as Head of Health Equity, Welfare & Partnerships.

On Universal Credit going from paper to digital, Joanne stated that across Lancashire:

- Households with no internet access was 27%.
- Residents with no basic online skills was 30%. This is for Lancashire as a whole, not service users.

Often people who don't have the skills to represent themselves to get the benefits to which they're entitled, bring in an appointee, who might be an elderly relative and who often don't have the skills either. At the briefing one councillor asked whether the county council had increased its Welfare Rights team to help those people who could become isolated due to Universal Credit going digital.

In addition to this, Joanne identified that there could be an unintended consequence for the county council's libraries in that people would need to gain access to them to use a computer. If the National Government is not getting income to people then people can't then transact with the county council to get their care packages. So there's an issue for us.

Organisations that we directly relate to over Universal Credit, which we may want to invite are; Citizens Advice and the Department for Work and Pensions who run a visiting service for people and vulnerable groups.

Finally I would like to point out that the county council, runs a Crisis Support Service providing furniture, food and fuel to people in hardship, which ends according to the broadcast I watched, at the end of this month.

