

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