

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 1 July 2024

PRESENT – Councillors, Councillor Ashley Whalley (Chair), Ali, Fielding, Khan, Khan Z, Marrow and Patel S.

ALSO PRESENT – Councillor Quesir Mahmood, Martin Kelly, Martin Eden, Simon Ross and Phil Llewellyn.

RESOLUTIONS

1 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors Stephanie Brookfield, and Shaukat Hussain.

The Chair commented that the focus of the Committee should be on Borough-wide issues, rather than individual ward issues, and on choosing one main topic per meeting to scrutinise. The Chair also referenced the potential change of Government and the focus on Growth that could result. Additionally, the Committee needed to look at what the Council was doing, in terms of policies and actions, and its anticipation of emerging issues. The recent portfolio changes were also noted.

2 **Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as correct record.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

4 **Work Programme 2024/25**

The Committee received presentations on the priorities and objectives for Growth & Development and Environment and Communities portfolios.

In terms of the Growth & Development portfolio, the following key Growth & Development Priorities for 2024/25 were highlighted:

- Delivery of Growth & Infrastructure Programmes & Projects
- Strategy Development & Partnerships
- Lancashire Combined County Authority & Devolution Opportunities
- Development & Delivery of the Council's Asset Review/Strategic Asset Management Plan
- Climate Change
- Place-marketing
- Highways
- Service Delivery

- Cross Service Opportunities

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions and made comments on areas highlighted in the presentation, with Cllr Quesir Mahmood and Martin Kelly providing responses, the main points raised being, the impact of a change of Government and what this could mean for the Long Term Plan for Darwen, the need for the Climate Emergency Action Plan and approach to be proactive rather than reactive, the need to utilise recent funding to improve bus lanes and priorities at traffic lights. In terms of weaknesses, it was acknowledged that pressures on staff had resulted from the cuts over the years, and there were capacity issues, additionally risks needed to be managed in terms of Asset Management.

Additionally, it was noted that the Council had a strategy relating to Cyber Sector growth, and also in terms of a strategy for Green Growth, there was ongoing work with the Chamber of Trade and Sheffield University, and an approach to achieving carbon neutral and innovation with local businesses such as Perspex.

The Executive Member and Director of Growth & Development were thanked for their presentation and left the meeting.

The Director of Environment & Communities then presented the priorities and objectives for the Environment & Communities Portfolio as follows:

- Delivery of the Tree and Woodland Strategy Action Plan to support Climate Change targets
- Purchase of electric and alternative fuel vehicles and develop fleet strategy for alternative fuels
- Continue to work with residents to increase recycling and to reduce food waste
- Develop a plan for the introduction of food waste collections from 2026
- Continue to tackle fly tipping and littering across the Borough
- Undertake regulation and enforcement within the top 25 most fly-tipped areas of the Borough
- Deliver investment in Corporation Park and redevelopment of major play areas at Whitehall Park and Bold Venture Park
- Continue to increase volunteering opportunities for residents of the Borough
- Submit further bids to Sport England to provide programmes to increase opportunities for residents to undertake physical activity
- Increase attendances at the 3 Council owned leisure centres, Blackburn, Darwen & Witton Park
- Produce and embed a commercial strategy to increase income and reduce costs across a range of services

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions and made comments on areas highlighted in the presentation, with Martin Eden providing responses, the main points raised being, removal of trees at cemeteries as required – grave-owners to be written to, discussion on Food Waste, particularly use of Allotments, Community Garden/Orchards, use of the Refresh service which provided 100 hours of free leisure provision for a £1 fee and more details were provided on investment in play areas.

The Committee thanked Martin Eden, who then left the meeting.

The Committee then discussed the three areas they would like to focus on in their Work Programme, with the Chair suggesting that the third area be selected at the next meeting, to give the Committee the chance to see the direction of travel under the new Government, this suggestion was agreed and potential Work Programme areas were then discussed.

RESOLVED –

That the following Work Programme areas be selected:

- September Meeting – **Food Waste Strategy** – Council’s plans and approach, including local food production, allotments, community gardens etc, raising the profile around food miles and the health benefits of own production.
- December Meeting – **Public Transport** – BSIP Funding, Bus lanes and coordinated traffic lights, connectivity and use of buses, Joined up ticketing and time-tabling.
- March Meeting – Work Programme area to be agreed at September Meeting.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed