

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT TEAM
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, NELSON
ON 15TH NOVEMBER, 2016**

PRESENT –

Councillor K. Turner – Chairman (In the Chair)

Councillors

*W. Blackburn
N. McCollum*

*D. Whalley
S. Wicks*

Officers in attendance

*P. Mousdale Corporate Director
V. Green Financial Services Manager
L. Rowland Committee Administrator*

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Adam, S. Cockburn-Price, K. Hartley, N. McEvoy and S. Petty.)

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34. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded of the legal requirements concerning the declaration of interests and that whipping declarations were also required.

35. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

36. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th September, 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37. REVIEW PLANNING

(a) Impact of upper tier authorities on planning matters

Following concern regarding the scope, content and timeliness of Lancashire County Council's (LCC's) consultation responses with regard to planning applications it had been agreed to include a piece of work in the Team's 2016/17 work programme.

A recent similar review had been carried out by LCC's scrutiny team, details of which were provided in a briefing note to the Team. LCC's work had included investigating the processes surrounding the submission of planning applications; the determination of planning applications; and understanding the responsibilities of various organisations in the planning process.

On conclusion of their investigation, the recommendations had been sent to various consultees for comment, of which Pendle Council was one. The recommendations sought changes to county council and district council practices and had generally been acceptable to Pendle Council's Planning, Building Control and Licensing Services Manager.

However, it was acknowledged that the lack of LCC resources to address specific questions had caused delays in nearly every application that they had to be consulted on. This was having an impact on delivering development. It was felt that the recommendation to reduce the number of minor applications upon which highways advice was requested would not address this problem.

The lack of local knowledge and expertise was also deemed to be an issue. It was believed that many of the comments did not reflect reality and that the public had no confidence in the highway comments on which we based our decisions.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the work of Lancashire County Council's scrutiny team be noted.
- (2) That Lancashire County Council be advised of this Council's concerns with regard to its lack of local knowledge and expertise when commenting on highway related matters in respect of planning applications.

(b) Littering

Further to a light touch review of littering being included in the Team's work programme, Members considered a briefing note of the Community Protection Coordinator and Senior Environmental Crime Officer.

Taking into account extensive work on two past reviews of litter and dog fouling it had been agreed to concentrate this piece of work on the enforcement of littering offences.

It was explained that littering by an individual dropping or throwing an item of rubbish was dealt with by the Council's Environmental Crime Officers (ECOs) who issued Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) after observing or taking evidence of an offence. During the last financial year the number of ECOs had increased from two to four and they had issued a total of 133 notices. So far this year, 91 FPNs had been issued.

Businesses that allowed its customers or others to leave litter in or around the curtilage of the business premises were liable to enforcement action using Community Protection Notices (CPNs). To date, no one particular business had been associated with litter so persistent, or the business itself so unresponsive, as to warrant the initial warning letter.

However, it was noted that there were situations where a number of businesses together could be held responsible for litter in their locality.

It was reported that the Environmental Crime Team had been involved in a Keep Britain Tidy high profile poster campaign to deter littering from parked vehicles. They had also been targeting town centres vulnerable to littering.

It was acknowledged that volunteers played a large part in helping keep the streets tidy and a discussion was held about ways in which this could be recognised. It was understood that some

town and parish councils had an annual volunteer award scheme and it was felt that this should be encouraged.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, in view of the additional posts created and the significant number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued, the Team is satisfied with the work of the Environmental Crime Team on the enforcement of littering offences.
- (2) That clarification on existing volunteer award schemes be sought from the town and parish councils of the borough.

38. DISABILITY BUDGET CUTS

Further to the decision at the last meeting, the Liberatora Revenues and Benefits Manager submitted the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Policy and information on the promotion of DHP.

The Team asked a number of questions relating to the period of the award and the fact that it was deemed a short-term emergency fund.

A copy of the DHP application form was also submitted, for review.

Although the application form was shorter than originally thought, at just six pages, Members felt that a number of questions were unnecessary and/or over facing. However, it was acknowledged that the Contact Centre staff were fully trained on this topic and offered help and support where needed.

A discussion was held with regard to future plans to introduce an online claim system, in line with Council proposals to become digital by default. It was explained that support would still be available to those who were unwilling and/or unable to complete the application form in this way. Nevertheless, the proposals caused concern for Members.

RESOLVED

That the Financial Services Manager be asked to meet with a representative of this Team to discuss the specific areas of concern with regard to the DHP application form.

39. EQUALITIES UPDATE

The Housing Needs Manager submitted an update report on the work of the Corporate Equalities Steering Group (CESG) towards meeting the Equality Objectives as set out in appendix 1 to the report.

It was reported that a review of translation provision had been carried out and procedures on how to deal with requests had been included in a new 'Communicating With All Our Customers' leaflet. The leaflet was a short document which contained guidance on communications and replaced the 'Communication With All Our Customers' manual. A copy of the leaflet was provided at appendix 2 to the report.

40. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

The draft minutes of a meeting of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel held on 18th October, 2016 were submitted for information.

41. SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Team considered progress against actions in the Overview and Scrutiny Improvement and Communications Plan.

42. WORK PLAN

The Team's work plan 2016/17 was submitted for information.

At the last meeting of the Team, Members agreed to carry out an annual review of the Council's Promoting Pendle Action Plan. It was noted that an annual update on the Council's Cycling Strategy was due to be considered at the Team's March, 2017 meeting and it was suggested that the two be looked at together.

RESOLVED

- (1) That an update on the Promoting Pendle Action Plan be added to the Team's work programme, for consideration at the March, 2017 meeting.
- (2) That the Executive Member for Tourism and the Cycling Member Champion be invited to attend the March, 2017 meeting.

43. EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME/FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Work Programme and Forward Plan for the four month period commencing 1st November, 2016 was submitted for consideration.

Members were asked to note that the next meeting of the Executive was to be held on 8th December, 2016.

CHAIRMAN _____