



# SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

BURNLEY TOWN HALL

Thursday, 7th July, 2022 at 6.30 pm

## PRESENT

## MEMBERS

Councillors H Baker (Chair), Barton, A Royle (Vice-Chair), G Birtwistle, A Hosker, M Hurt, M Ishtiaq, Launer, Lewis, S Lone, J McGowan, E Payne, Sollis and D Whitaker

## OFFICERS

Lukman Patel	– Chief Operating Officer
Rob Dobson	– Head of Policy and Engagement
Paul Gatrell	– Head of Housing & Development Control
Kate Ingram	– Strategic Head of Economy and Growth
Amy Johnson	– Finance Manager
Kieron Roberts	– Parks Development Manager
Eric Dickinson	– Democracy Officer

## IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Sue Graham- Executive Member for Resources and Performance  
Councillor Scott Cunliffe

### 14. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Sarah Hall and Gordon Lishman.

### 15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 16. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Martyn Hurt declared an other (non- prejudicial) interest in Item 14 Housing Review Group 2021-22 Summary.

## **17. Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings**

Eric Dickinson reported on the Notices which had been published since the last meeting regarding Key Decisions and Private Meetings of the Executive, relating to the 28-day Notices published on 28<sup>th</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022, and the Urgent Notice relating to Town Hall Repairs published on 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

He highlighted the Special Meeting of the Executive on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022 which was scheduled to consider the Rough Sleeping Programme, Youth Investment Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund as set out in the Notice

He stated that the Chair had called a Special meeting of Scrutiny on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022 to consider the Shared Prosperity Fund, as well as the other items based on Members previous requests to consider them

He also indicated that the next ordinary Executive was on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2022 and that if there were any Executive items for that meeting which Scrutiny Members wanted to consider, based on the next 28-day Notice due to be published on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022, then an additional Special Scrutiny meeting may be called by the Chair in August to precede Executive with the date to be confirmed.

He explained that the additional Scrutiny Committee in August 2022 would be Special because within a 12-week Full Council cycle there would normally only be one Scrutiny Committee in the latter half of the cycle.

### **IT WAS AGREED**

That Members agreed with the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022 Special Scrutiny Committee and the items outlined to be considered, and that a date in August 2022 would be confirmed if needed for an additional Special Scrutiny Committee to precede the 17<sup>th</sup> August 2022 Executive.

## **18. Play Strategy Review**

Kieron Roberts reported on a Play Strategy Review, and highlighted that following the review Burnley would still have a high ratio of play areas for its population.

Members made the following points;

-what was the disability provision?

Kieron indicated that Disabled Facilities Grant were being used to make play provision more inclusive at existing play areas

-regarding Kiddrow Lane how long would the Private Management Company (PMC) arrangements continue for?

Kieron confirmed the involvement of the PMC but was unsure of the timescale

-Ward locations for Kiddrow Lane, Kibble Bank, and Healey Wood

should be checked, and if any play area was on a border consideration be given to involving all relevant Ward Members

-regarding Lancaster Drive and Melville Avenue, why have they been overlooked  
Kieron would get back to the Member asking the question

-regrading pump tracks and wheeled sports collaboration with Hapton Parish Council (HPC) was highlighted  
Kieron confirmed meetings with HPC and that there was ongoing work on a scheme with an old pump track identified

-what is the position with Hapton Park football club and 50k funding promised?  
Kieron would get back to the Member asking the question

-regarding Clifton Street Park residents had been assured that work would be done before the College work started, so residents wanted an update on start and completion timescales over the next few years  
Kieron indicated the work on the park would be done at the first stage of the projects and at the same time regarding any parks involved

-regarding Partidge Hill safety concerns were raised  
-regarding a previous play area at Lakeland Way which was moved about 10 years ago but was covenanted to be a play area, could this be reinstated?

-the merger of Jessies Park and Piccadilly Park was supported, but there was a sense of local entitlement currently reflecting in actual hostility to new users especially disabled children who needed to feel safe  
-if play areas were closed and concerted over what would happen to those areas and would this be reflected in the Local Plan?

Kieron stated that landscaping would be carried out, such as recently a Peace Garden being established

-regarding Memorial Park would the Greenway Bridge affect this?  
Kieron stated it would not affect current schemes as they had funding in place and would only potentially affect a future Youth Shelter although work on this by Sustrans was already planned in the next few months

-regarding Pop up or Pocket parks in Daneshouse and Stoneyholme how was this funded regarding resources needed?  
Kieron stated this was funded by the Government using 25k and some local capital altogether 41k in total, with a friends of Stoneyholme Gardens set up and an outdoor gym for Asian females

-the mix of doorstep parks and mixing with others further way, subject to the 800 metre distance, was highlighted especially the concern of parents wanting to keep local parks separate such as Jessies Park and Piccadilly Park for safety reasons e.g. alcohol consumption

-the geographical position of children in the Borough may help the appropriate provision of play areas

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted

## **19. Revenue 2021-22 Outturn**

Amy Johnson reported on Revenue 2021-22 Outturn

Members made the following points;

-they considered ring fencing the Market Hall underspend, but concluded it should remain in General Reserves

IT WAS AGREED  
That the report be noted.

## **20. Capital 2021-22 Outturn**

Amy Johnson reported on Capital 2021-22 Outturn.

IT WAS AGREED  
That the report be noted.

## **21. Annual Treasury Management Activity 2021-22**

Amy Johnson reported on Annual Treasury Management Activity 2021-22.

Members made the following points;

- provision should be made for inflation forecast to reach 11% and an economic downturn

Amy indicated that provision was made with Utility Reserves

- inflation impacts the poorest more due to disproportionate increases in the price of cheaper products

IT WAS AGREED  
That the report be noted.

## **22. Performance Review 2021/22**

Rob Dobson reported on Quarter 4 Performance 2021-22 and highlighted strong performance relating to strategic objectives in particular environmental prosecutions, new business assists and on the empty homes programme.

He also highlighted off target performance on telephone answering, it being partially due to longer telephone calls, that feedback from Members had been received about it and that following discussions with Liberata more staff had been recruited as well as action to reduce sickness absence. He indicated an intention to bring a further performance report to the September meeting of Scrutiny including the potential involvement of Liberata's Contact Manager Simon Miller.

Members made the following points;

- how many staff work from home?

Rob stated it was a mixture at Liberata, with new staff were working at the Contact Centre, although for senior staff there was no difference in performance working from home. He also stated Liberata acknowledged that there was significant understaffing to deal with recent queries about cost-of- living rebates and this had affected the Council's contract performance.

- there had been an experience of much better telephone responses recently, including getting back the next day with an update on action taken

Lukman Patel stated that service credits had been applied to Liberata for more than a year notwithstanding the pandemic, where response was below the requisite KPI without justification allowed by the contract. Regarding working from home Liberata had a different policy from the Council's which was currently for staff to work in the office for a minimum of 3 days. He indicated that Liberata had advised that the customer service market was

moving towards working from home and that the issue of recruitment and retention in this sector was a factor for Liberata, and that the Council was only able to mandate in its contract with Liberata on outputs.

-concern about the increased length of calls was expressed

Rob stated that calls were based on the local area rate, that abandonment was at 5% which compared favourable within the call centre environment, and that further information on telephone issue would be reported in September.

-were fines paid on Streetscene issues, how was payment managed, did the fines make any difference, and who was being fined?

Lukman indicated that fines went through an enforcement and court process, that further information could be provided by the debtors team. Press releases were issued by the Council to state that such behaviour would not be tolerated and would result in fines. He indicated that the Council was amongst the most prolific nationally for issuing dog fouling fines.

Rob indicated that fines had been consistent year on year with more resources brought into enforcement and that fines for flytipping were higher than all other Lancashire Districts combined.

-Members stated that Streetscene worked hard to tackle repeat offenders and carry out enforcement

-why were planning targets only set at 60%?

Paul Gatrell indicated that 60% relate to a minimum performance level which could then lead to sanctions or special measures and that it was not a target which Planning was aiming for, with major applications currently achieving 100%.

-was the Council safe from special measures in planning, and what is the performance on turnaround time and capacity?

Paul stated that targets were different for different types of application for example for household applications there was an 8-week target being met in 84% of cases and that there were various reasons for this being achievable such as negotiations or applicant issues. He confirmed that there was now a full complement of staff in planning and that he was comfortable there was no danger of the planning service at the moment going into special measures.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted, and that a further report be brought to the September meeting with an invitation for Simon Miller from Liberata also to attend.

## **23. State of the Local Economy**

Kate Ingram reported on the State of the Local Economy and indicated that the data produced lagged 12-18 months behind, there were not job losses expected, the number of employees had increased, that vacancies had increased, and that the town centre was one of the better ones in the country.

Members made the following points;

-was there gender data available?

Kate indicated the report was about numerical data and did not include gender breakdown

-was there data about foodbanks?

Kate stated this was not generally measured but the report focussed on businesses and workforce information rather than on individuals.

Lukman indicated that Burnley Together has been collecting localised foodbank data.  
-high wage highly skilled jobs in manufacturing especially engineering were currently affected by material costs and lack of popularity in the labour market  
-some foodbanks were not now able to be provided with food for distribution  
Rob stated that part of the Household Support Fund was now allocated by the Executive to food to provide a Safety net  
-was the fixed Pioneer Place contract resilient in view of the current market pressures?  
Kate indicated that as set out in the contract and allowance was built in for the developer and contractor to absorb any issues

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted

## **24. Housing Review Group 2021-22 Summary**

Councillor Royle reported on the Housing Review Group 2021-22 Summary, and stated that a further meeting with Calico was scheduled for September or October to allow for work to be done.

Members asked the following points;

-how repairs could be established as having been done to a high standard?

Paul Gatrell stated that issues of quality and not just speed had been identified and needed to be addressed.

IT WAS AGREED

That the Sub Group meet with Calico in the autumn and that a report be brought back subsequently to the Committee.

## **25. Scrutiny Review Groups-Proposals for 2022/23**

Members discussed the following Scrutiny Review Groups proposals for 2022/23;

### Finsley Gate

Members made the following points;

-what is happening with the site?

Lukman stated that work was ongoing with the new owner to make progress

-the important intervention made by the Canal Trust on part of the site was highlighted.

Kate indicated that Homes England brownfield site funding maybe available in the future.

IT WAS AGREED

This was not suitable for a Review Group, but to receive an update on progress with the Finsley Gate site in January 2023.

### Empty Buildings

Members made the following points;

-the request for Members to identify 2 building per Ward related to commercial and residential properties

Paul Gatrell stated that about 1800 residential properties were empty and that they were being actively targeted based on the problems they were causing and benefit of return, and that a list compiled for action was being worked through with a report to the 13 July 2022 Executive setting out a number of domestic properties and CPOs.

He stated that commercial buildings were more challenging but that the Housing and Development Control and the Economy and Growth Service Units were working together on them.

He welcomed Members bringing any properties of concern to the attention of Officers.

-Members being aware of the process involved in dealing with Empty Buildings would improve their knowledge in this area.

-can more be done by providing more resources from reserves to this area of work?

Lukman stated that long term empty homes had reduced in Burnley from over 2500 to lower than 1800 over the last 7 years.

IT WAS AGREED

That this was not suitable for a Review Group.

### Green Energy

Lukman Patel indicated that the Council's current Climate Change Strategy and its Action Plan would be performance reviewed around June 2023.

Members made the following points;

-Partnership work with an energy supplier could be considered

-Local Area Energy Plans may be worthy of some consideration

IT WAS AGREED

That this was not suitable for a Review Group, but that a report on a performance review of the Climate Change Strategy and its Action Plan could be considered in June 2023.

### Queensgate

Members made the following points;

-the Scrutiny Review should focus on 2 main areas being selective licensing and anti- social behaviour caused by gangs

- traffic problems also existed despite visits by LCC Officers

-solutions for ASB needed to be sustainable by including provision for young people

-HMOs are now increasingly dominant in the rented sector

Lukman stated that HMOs is currently on the Executive workplan for a 12-18 month review due to the statutory nature of this area of work

IT WAS AGREED

(1) That a Queensgate Review Group be formed comprising Councillors Barton, Birtwistle, Hosker, Ishtiaq, Lone, Hurt and Royle;

(2) That it scrutinises Selective Licensing and ASB by gangs in the Queensgate Ward;and

(3) That the Review is supported by Officers from Streetscene, and from Housing and Development Control.

### Telephone Answering-Liberata

IT WAS AGREED

That this was not suitable for a Review Group, but can be addressed by continuing consideration of performance review reports by Scrutiny Committee as proposed for September 2022, including the proposed attendance of Liberata's Contract Manager Simon Miller.

## **26. Work Programme 2022/23**

Eric Dickinson reported on the Work Programme 2022/23

IT WAS AGREED

- (1) That the Homelessness Update carried forward from 2021-22 continues to be provided and is next due in September 2022;
- (2) That the Pensions Fund arrangements item carried forward from 2021-22 be delivered by way of a Members briefing by Finance and Property;
- (3) That a Performance Review 2022/23 report be included for September 2022, including an invitation to Liberata for them to be included;and
- (4) That the continuing Housing (Calico) Review Group report back in November 2022.

## **27. Exclusion of the Public**

Members determined to exclude the public from the meeting before discussion took place on the item of business relating to Minute 28 (Towneley Hall Repairs) on the grounds that in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted if the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information within the meaning of Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **28. Towneley Hall Repairs**

Lukman Patel reported on Towneley Hall Repairs

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted