



# SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

BURNLEY TOWN HALL

Wednesday, 26th June, 2019 at 6.30 pm

## PRESENT

## MEMBERS

Councillors A Tatchell (Chair), M Johnstone (Vice-Chair), H Baker, B Brindle, T Commis, A Fewings, S Khan, G Lishman, S Lone, T Martin, L Mehanna, A Newhouse, E Payne and A Royle

## OFFICERS

Rob Dobson	– Head of Policy and Engagement
Asad Mushtaq	– Head of Finance and Property
Amy Johnson	– Principal Accountant
Imelda Grady	– Democracy Officer

## IN ATTENDANCE

### 9. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Bea Foster.

### 10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

In accepting the minutes Committee members requested that more detail be included in future minutes to reflect debate and the reasons for decisions. This was duly noted.

### 11. Exclusion of the Public

## IT WAS RESOLVED

That the public be excluded from the meeting before discussion took place on item 15 of the agenda in 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.

Item 15 contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

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

### **IT WAS AGREED**

That the notice of key decisions and private meetings be noted.

## **13. 2018/19 Final Capital Outturn Position**

The Head of Finance and Property presented a report on the performance of the 2018/19 capital investment programme and the financing of capital expenditure incurred in that period. He further highlighted the revised capital budget for 2019/20 totalled £19.625m.

- Councillor Baker referred to the building infrastructure works and asked what the current budget proposal was, how it was being financed and what the forecasted cost of this would be. He also asked why a decision had been taken by the Chief Executive using urgency powers.

The Head of Finance and Property explained that there were significant works required to the Town Hall which had required a revised capital budget and that the Chief Executive had used urgency powers to prevent further costs being incurred and that this had been sanctioned by the Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

- Councillor Johnson asked about the delay in funding for the NW Burnley Growth Corridor.

The Principal Accountant said this was external funding from the Environment Agency and this had been slipped into the 2019/20 budget. The Strategic Head of Economy and Growth would report back on this in due course.

### **IT WAS AGREED**

That the report be noted.

## **14. 2018/19 Final Revenue Outturn Position**

The Head of Finance and Property Management reported on the Council's final revenue outturn position for 2019/20.

- Councillor Gordon Lishman said that it would be helpful to see the figures used to achieve a balanced budget

The Head of Finance and Property referred to paragraph 5 of the report and the variances on the redundancy and pension strains for each service area which had to be met. He agreed that in future a further column could be added to the table at paragraph 5 to detail a breakdown of the figures and how they were spread out across the service areas.

### **IT WAS AGREED**

That the report be noted.

## **15. Annual Treasury Management Report**

The Head of Finance and Property presented the Council's treasury management activity during 2018/19 and reminded members of the all member workshop which would be held in December and which would explain how local government finance works and would help their understanding of the monitoring reports.

### **IT WAS AGREED**

That the report be noted.

## **16. Update on the Council's Aspiration Strategy-**

The Head of Policy and Engagement presented an update on the borough's Aspirational Strategy. He highlighted the coordination and establishment of a group of professionals to drive forward the strategy and the work being done on preparing the younger generation.

Members discussed the following;

- The need for a baseline to understand the issues around educational attainment and indicators to measure whether initiatives were working
- Concerns about the lack of involvement of the education authority
- The implications of parental aspirations and children being taken out of the borough for their education
- The 'market place' approach to school placements
- Aspirations after GCSE's and reasons why young people might not continue with further education
- Care leavers and the lack of foster parents
- The impact on the most vulnerable of the withdrawal/lack of funding for mental health and wellbeing initiatives
- The need for better integration between the primary and secondary schools in Burnley so that primary school children could experience the quality of the offer provided at secondary level

Members welcomed the placement of a mental health worker in each of the secondary schools and reported that the Children's University was being well received by primary school children and helping in raising their aspirations.

Rob Dobson said that it was difficult to provide a baseline to work from as currently the only statistics available were GCSE attainment figures. It would be many years before the positive impact of the activities/outcomes could be demonstrated but the anecdotal feedback from the teachers in schools was encouraging.

### **IT WAS AGREED**

That the report be noted.

## **17. Year end performance report 2018/19**

The Head of Policy and Engagement reported on the Council's year end performance results for 2018/19 and said that overall it had been a solid year. He highlighted the sickness absences were the lowest in Lancashire and that the investment in empty properties had brought back 84 properties back into use against a target of 40. He further reported that the business rates collection had narrowly missed its target but that this was a trend across the County.

Members discussed in some detail the following points:

- Whether the telephone calls answered with the target time actually dealt with the customer queries effectively
- Why the target figure for empty homes had been set so low

Rob Dobson said that Liberata carried out customer satisfaction surveys on how they felt they had been dealt with and that the Council did so every two years and that he would speak to the Head of Housing and Development Control regarding the empty homes target..

### **IT WAS AGREED**

1. That the Head of Housing and Development Control be invited to the September meeting to explain how the empty homes programme worked; and
2. That the report be noted.

## **18. Scrutiny Review Groups**

The Chair asked members to complete a Scrutiny Review form if they had suggestions for future reviews and return them to the Democracy Office by 1<sup>st</sup> August. The forms would be presented at the September meeting for discussion and prioritisation.

He then referred to the 2017 scrutiny review of Burnley Manchester Road Railway Station and suggested that this should be revisited to see if the recommendations had been actioned. Councillor Baker suggested that David Heginbotham be co-opted onto this review for his expertise.

Councillor Lishman suggested cross party working that cut across Executive and departmental responsibilities would be an effective way of working and that social determinants of health were becoming increasingly important. He also suggested looking at the Council's processes for consultation and engagement with the public to see if they could be made more effective.

## **19. Work Programme 2019/20**

The Work Programme was noted with the addition of the Empty Homes presentation and the scrutiny review programme to the September meeting.

## **20. Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure**

The Head of Policy and Engagement presented a report on a joint procurement exercise with other Lancashire Councils to utilise grant funding to deliver electric vehicle charging points across six boroughs.

Members made the following points;

- Would technological advancements affect the longevity of the charging points
- The need for fast charging points rather than ones that take 8 hours to charge
- If the costs overrun the grant allocation would the Council have to fund the shortfall?
- Intervention should be made through the planning process to install charging points on all new housing

The Head of Finance and Property said that a report on funding would have to be brought to Council if there was a shortfall in the grant allocation.

### **IT WAS AGREED**

That the report be noted.