



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

BURNLEY TOWN HALL

Wednesday, 11th March, 2020 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT

MEMBERS

Councillors A Tatchell (Chair), M Johnstone (Vice-Chair), H Baker, T Commis, D Ferrier, A Fewings, B Foster, G Lishman, S Lone, P McCann, L Mehanna, A Newhouse, L Pate, E Payne, A Royle and M Townsend

OFFICERS

Paul Gatrell	–	Head of Housing & Development Control
	–	
Imelda Grady	–	Democracy Officer
	–	

IN ATTENDANCE

68. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

69. Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings

It was noted that the following items which had been requested by Scrutiny for inclusion on the agenda for this meeting had slipped to a later Executive and were not available for scrutiny;

Contact Centre Dilapidations
Single use plastics
Review of Burnley's Play Strategy 2017-2026
Queens Park pavilion café

Councillor Baker said that whilst there was a 28 day notice of decisions to be taken by the Executive, the actual reports regarding the items were not available for Scrutiny until one week before the scrutiny meetings. He said that this did not give Scrutiny enough time to consider matters before the Executive took a decision on them. He asked that the

Governance Review Group consider this and be asked to look at the sequencing and timing of Scrutiny and Executive meetings.

IT WAS AGREED

- (1) That the 28 day Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings be noted; and
- (2) The Governance Review Group be asked to look at the sequencing and timing of meetings.

70. State of the Local Economy

Adam Holden present the report which provided an update to a number of key statistics which indicated the state of the local economy.

He highlighted some key points from the report in relation to the employment and earning figures, the sectors represented and the number of businesses in the Borough. He also detailed work being done to support businesses through the Business Growth Programme, BOOST Lancashire and the Inward Investment Service. He informed members of the successes of the eighth Burnley Business Week which had been sponsored by UCLan and the Burnley Business Awards organised by the Council and Burnley Bondholders. He also informed members that the number of apprentices in Burnley was 880 and that this was the highest figure across Lancashire.

Members made the following comments:

- Had any reason been identified for the dip in employment rates
- More advance notice of Burnley Business Week was required for businesses to make arrangements to attend
- What was the apprentice retention/drop out rate
- The need to have an Arts Strategy in Burnley in order to bid for funding
- The need for the report to give more information on earning comparisons across the County and where residents leaving the borough were going
- Possible joint working with UCLan on business development
- When could members have sight of the Annual Monitoring Report
- Was there any effect on the Local Plan regarding the negative trend in job levels
- Is more resource needed in the Economy and Growth team
- Was the 8% pay increase since 2017 accurate, there had been a loss of high end skilled jobs, were any more at risk
- The need for the report to reflect the current situation, and include forward target, the information is dated
- A positive position on Burney Bondholders being 10 years in operation

Adam Holden responded that the figures did not provide a comprehensive picture due to delays in releasing statistical information. In relation to business partnerships with UCLan he said that UCLan would be delivering a number of small workshops over the next 6 months. In respect of employment he said that his team were working with companies regarding any possible redundancies and assisting them with succession planning. He took on board the comments of members regarding the content of future reports and would feed this back to the Head of Economy and Growth.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

71. Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy

Paul Gatrell presented the report on a revised B-with-us Allocations Policy which would ensure the Council was operating a policy that was fully compliant with the legal and regulatory framework for the allocation of social housing.

Members discussed the issue of people in debt and rent arrears and how they were covered within the policy. Paul Gatrell said that whilst there had to be a threshold within the policy, circumstances were always taken into account and some discretion could apply.

Members also commented that the housing shortage would not improve without investment in social housing.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be recommended to the Executive for approval.

72. Homes England Investment Partner Policy

Paul Gatrell presented the report which sought Executive approval for the Council to apply to Homes England to become an Investment Partner and a Registered Housing Provider and submit a bid for grant funding.

Members asked if the 10 units referred to in paragraph 14 of the report were in addition to the current Empty Homes Programme. Paul Gatrell said that this was the case but at present staff resource restricted the number of CPOs that could be achieved and 10 properties was considered an achievable target for the scheme in one year. He explained that income generated from these properties could be utilised to increase staff resources in the team to increase the number of properties dealt with.

Members discussed the possibility of ring-fencing the income to the empty homes programme but agreed that the Executive should be recommended to provide that the housing team had first call on the revenue generated should extra capacity be needed and that the balance be retained in the housing programme.

IT WAS AGREED

- (1) That the Executive be recommended to provide that the housing team had first call on the revenue generated should extra capacity be needed and that the balance be retained in the housing programme;
and
- (2) Subject to (1) above the report be recommended to the Executive for approval.

73. Scrutiny Review Groups

Consideration was given to Scrutiny's current and future reviews.

a. Manchester Road Railway Station Review - report to the Executive

The final report of the Scrutiny Review Group in relation to Manchester Road Railway Station was presented for approval.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be submitted to the Executive for approval

b. Housing Repairs Scrutiny Review

Following a review group meeting held in February Members received a response from Calico on the process for reporting housing repair issues and received a copy of Calico's repairs policy and also a copy of the Customer Insight Report for July to September 2019.

Members of the review group did not feel that Calico's response was what had been agreed at the review group meeting in February and asked that members gather evidence over the coming months to present to a future review group meeting on this issue.

IT WAS AGREED

That the Housing Repairs Scrutiny Review be carried over into the 2020/21 Scrutiny Work Programme.

74. Future reviews

As this was the last meeting in the 2019/20 municipal year consideration was given to future reviews and also the process by which reports to the Executive were brought to Scrutiny. It was noted that community skips had been dealt with at the last meeting and should be taken off the review programme.

Members commented on the delay at starting reviews at the start of the municipal year due to the time-tabling of meeting and suggested that review group dates should be programmed into the calendar so that an earlier start could be made on them.

IT WAS AGREED

That the reviews on the following be deferred to the first Scrutiny meeting of the 2020/21 municipal year

- a. Housing Repairs
- b. Contributions Supplementary Planning Document
- c. Gyphosate
- d. Alleygates
- e. Flood defences

75. Work Programme 2019/20

The work programme was noted.

A vote of thanks was made to the Chair, Councillor Andy Tatchell for his chairmanship over the past 5 years , as this was the last meeting before he stood down from office.