



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

BURNLEY TOWN HALL

Wednesday, 8th March, 2023 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT

MEMBERS

Councillors H Baker (Chair), G Barton, G Birtwistle, S Hall, A Hosker, M Ishtiaq, L Khan, J Launer, G Lishman, S Lone, J McGowan, C Sollis and D Whitaker

OFFICERS

Paul Gatrell	– Head of Housing & Development Control
Gerard Vinton	– Chief Executive, Burnley Leisure
CJ Walmsley	– Democracy Officer

107. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lewis and Royle.

108. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to an amendment to minute 97, replacing LCC Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee.

109. Additional Items of Business

There were no additional items of business to be considered.

110. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

111. Exclusion of the Public

Exclusion of press and public was as set out in the agenda.

112. Public Question Time

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

113. Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings

Members were asked to note the Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings (NKDPM) published on 14th February 2023.

It was highlighted that there were two items scheduled to be submitted to the April meeting of the Executive, namely Allotment Review 2023 and Empty Homes CPOs and Facelifting, however there wasn't a scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to consider these. It was suggested that Committee Members could speak with the relevant Executive Members upon publication of the reports, rather than calling a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

As the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing was present the Chair invited Councillor Lishman to provide an overview of what was to be reported as part of the Allotments Review. It was reported that Greenspaces were undertaking a clean up of the waiting list and work was being done to increase the number of available allotments. Community allotments had also been identified at various sites. Arrangements were being made for spare produce to go to the community shop and food bank.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development Control and the Head of Housing and Development Control received questions on Empty Homes CPOS and Facelifting.

Concerns were raised in respect of signage in the Standish Street area. Due to current works, clearer signage was needed to highlight that the businesses in that area were trading as usual. Paul Gatrell agreed to look into the issue.

It was queried if there would be facelifts for the buildings from Yorkshire Street up to Belvedere Road included in the Town to Turf development. It was reported that it wasn't under the scheme as it stands but different funding streams were being explored.

RESOLVED – That the NKDPM of 14th February 2023 be noted.

114. Burnley Leisure Trust Annual Report

A presentation was given on Burnley Leisure Trust (BLT) achievements and performance, alongside the report of the trustees and audited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2022.

It was explained that 2021/22 business plan had focussed on recovery from the pandemic and continuing to work in partnership with Burnley Together, delivering volunteer programmes and engaging in community support. This year was about consolidating their position, financially and usage and looking to refresh the agreements with the Council, producing a new 3-year strategy that tied into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and provide a framework for annual business plans.

Concerns were raised in connection with Burnley Leisure not attracting entertainment like other areas in Lancashire, and the long-term strategy was questioned. Discussions had

taken place but there remained a problem with theatres having a deficit despite increased capacity. However, linking in with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council had helped with the buying power to attract some acts. It was also reported that a Cultural Strategy Manager had been appointed in recent months and work was being undertaken with the Council regarding next steps. There had been conversations with the Arts Council with regards to festivals, but funding was still limited. There would be an update to the BLT Board in April.

The report format was questioned in terms of details and being representative of the organisation. It was explained that the report was condensed and to the point to meet the requirements of Companies House. Assurance was given that the next annual report would be more tailored for Scrutiny.

A query was raised in respect of the pension deficit, which had transferred from the Council and was part of the LCC scheme. An agreement was in place to deal with it, but it now comes under BLT accounts.

It was queried what the 'raising funds' category in the financial statement encompassed. Gerard Vinton advised that it was an accounting technique that the auditors/accountants determine against strict submission guidelines. Gerard Vinton would ask the auditors to provide a breakdown of figures.

It was reported that there were exciting times ahead in terms of growing the business and looking for opportunities. Refurbishment work was planned for the gyms at Padiham and St. Peter's at the end of the year. They had also been successful in winning the rotunda contract at Towneley Park. New programmes were being looked at, tying in with the health service, such as weight management, fitness, and smoking cessation.

Councillor Whitaker raised a question on what the business and technical support of the Governance and Support costs related to. Gerard Vinton would get the answer from the auditors and forward on the information.

A query was also raised on trade debtors and Members were informed that this was a snapshot at the end of the financial year and monies had come in over that last 12 months. Up to date figures were provided to the Executive on a quarterly basis.

It was highlighted that the amount the Council gives to the Leisure Trust had increased due to the pandemic. As a result, the following questions were put: -

- Were any future pitfalls expected or anticipated?
 - BLT membership numbers were continuing to rise, with a focus on being competitive with pricing, providing new equipment and placing emphasis on growing the numbers.
 - With regards hospitality, the current cost of food was presenting challenges, however BLT still felt well positioned to deal with impact.

- Was St. Peter's leisure facilities at full capacity?
 - It was reported that the building was split into two parts, namely Leisure and Health Services. The Leisure side of St. Peter's was heavily used, however the health side had vacant spaces.

- Was the Council's contribution to BLT to be reduced?

- A commitment to this couldn't be given for this financial year due to the cost-of-living crisis. There was a dependence on factors and other services to offset costs. Other contracts were being looked into to bring costs down, but the current situation was a challenge. Initial contracts were 15 years and currently in year 10, therefore negotiations needed to start.
- Will BLT stand on its own?
 - Not in the next 5 years.

A discussion took place regarding the business and marketing strategy. It was suggested that there be an analysis of what the competition was and the intended response.

It was questioned why funds set aside for arts development and cycling hadn't been touched, and it was reported that due to Covid these projects hadn't been pursued. There was an emphasis on being a viable business and would be picking up projects to generate income.

The Committee voiced its frustration on the lack of information relating to questions and requested that alongside the type of report submitted, there needed to be a report on the strategic plan. It was also felt that the report needed to be timelier. It was agreed that this would be incorporated in future years, submitted earlier, and a financial officer would also be present to answer any questions.

RESOLVED – (1) That the presentation and report be noted; and
(2) That future reports be timelier and more detailed.

115. Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL)

A report was submitted that sought approval from the Executive for the Council to extend its membership of the Cosy Home in Lancashire (CHiL) consortium for a further 4 years from April 2023; sign a contract with the appointed delivery agent for the provision of CHiL; and adopt a Lancashire wide Statement of Intent so that residents can access Energy Company Obligation (ECO 4 LA flex) funding.

Reassurance was given that the contract had been out to tender, was timely, and there were no foreseen issues with regards to a gap in service.

It was explained that exemplar model was a different approach to that of private companies, insofar as it took a whole house approach, not just one element.

Councillor Barton queried how many referrals were received from doctors/GPs. The Head of Housing and Development Control would forward on this information.

It was further reported that the Home Improvement Agency in Housing was working alongside the hospital discharge team, examining properties and identifying what needs to be done and linking in with health services.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

116. Ex-Offenders Government Support Grant

A report was submitted that sought approval from the Executive to accept the funding award from the Accommodation for Ex-offenders (AfEO) Programme to allow for the continuation of an East Lancashire wide programme of services targeted at reducing repeat offending by accessing settled accommodation and providing support.

It was clarified that though this was separate to mental health support, it did link in and the provision of 2 AfEO Officers would support this.

It was also reported that additional funding of £95k had been awarded as part of the AfEO fund to provide incentive packages to private sector landlords to assist and support clients into private rented accommodation.

Councillor Whitaker queried how many veterans had been assisted through the programme. The Head of Housing and Development Control would provide this information.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

117. Work Programme 2022/23

It was clarified that with regards to the Queensgate review, evidence was being gathered and there would be an update submitted to the June meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the work programme for 2022/23 be noted.