

**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

HELD: Thursday, 16 September 2021

Start: 7.00 pm

Finish: 8.40 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: D West (Chair)

Councillors: J Finch (Vice-Chair) Mrs M Blake
C Dereli Fennell
J Gordon S Gregson
K Mitchell Turpin
Upjohn

In attendance: Jason Grice (WLCL) – Agenda Item 10
Mark Snaylam (WLCL) – Agenda Item 10
John Nelson (WLCL) – Agenda Item 10

Officers: Fiona Graham, Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Alison Grimes, Partnership & Performance Officer
Carl Wallace, Financial Inclusion Team Leader
Adam Spicer, Assistant Solicitor
James Crowley, Strategic Partnership Development Manager
Dan Massey, Head Ranger
Julia, Brown, Member Services Officer

14 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence received.

15 **MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no changes to Membership of the Committee.

16 **URGENT BUSINESS, IF ANY, INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There were no items of urgent business.

17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

18 **DECLARATIONS OF A PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of Party Whip.

19 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no items under this heading.

**21 ITEMS FROM THE MEMBERS' UPDATE INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA AT THE
REQUEST OF A MEMBER**

There were no items under this heading.

22 MEMBERS ITEMS / CCFA (COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION)

There were no items under this heading.

23 WEST LANCASHIRE LEISURE (WLCL) ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a presentation from representatives of West Lancashire Community Leisure Trust, which was supported by a series of slides.

The presentation included reference to:

- The Trust's Vision "the creation and maintenance of a first-class range of healthy and recreational activities to serve all parts of the community of West Lancashire"
- The original contract ended 31 March 2020
- The current contract is on the second contract extension and expires on 31 March 2022.
- Expenditure on the contract has been carefully managed owing to the impact of covid on business
- Covid-19–Fundamentally effected business –all sites closed March 2020
- Beacon Park re-opened May 2020 under a number of restrictions
- All Sites re-opened July 2020 under significant restrictions
- All sites closed for a second time in November 2020
- December 2020 – Lancashire on 'Tier 3' with restrictions in place
- January-March 2021 – All sites closed to reopen on 12 April 2021
- Covid-19 – During closure Direct Debit payments 'frozen'
- During the course of closures – Membership reduced 30% (recovered 75% of pre-pandemic levels in 2021)
- Swimming lessons decreased by 25% (currently 102% of pre-pandemic usage)
- Community activities in 2020 included: use of Burscough Sports Centre as food distribution hub; furloughed staff volunteered to deliver medicine to citizens of West Lancashire; worked in close partnership with WLBC to deliver Lateral Flow Testing Programme across West Lancashire
- Covid-19 Financials
- Beacon Park – Re-profiling
- Banks Community Leisure Centre – transfer to CIC on 18 June 2021 – all staff redeployed into leisure contract

- The way forward:
- Grow the business and work with partners to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic
- Rebuild the business post Covid
- Develop the Team
- Working with partners to provide community engagement
- Future of the Partnership—unlikely the Trust will extend the Partnership arrangement and will cease trading at the end of the current extension
- The Council will need to determine how to manage facilities beyond this date
- The Board will support the Council and partner 'Serco' in any transition, particularly regarding protection of employment of staff and delivery of service

Comments and questions were raised in respect of the following:

- Membership levels pre-covid / contacting previous subscribers
- Promotions / incentives to keep patronage
- Recruitment of staff / kickstart / training with West Lancashire College
- Swimming lessons increased – more demand than can accommodate
- Park Pool highest achiever in contract and exceeded targets
- Lack of investment to fitness suites/ buildings

The Strategic Partnership Development Manager informed The Committee that a report in respect of reviewing options would be presented to Members in Autumn 2021.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked representatives from the Leisure Trust for their attendance.

RESOLVED: That the performance of West Lancashire Leisure/Serco for the previous 12 months be noted, and the representatives be thanked for their presentation and attendance.

24 **FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY - REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Transformation as contained on pages 89 to 94 of the Book of Reports, which reported on the progress made since the conclusion of the 'Financial Inclusion Strategy' review.

The Financial Inclusion Team Leader Informed Members that the Financial Inclusion Strategy started in April 2021, with multiple actions to complete during the period up to March 2022.

He updated the Committee with the progress made to date:

- Recruitment of one FTE Money Advisor. Post started 1 April 2021
- Providing money advice service for Covid related issues - Post started

December 2020 (may be extended to March 2022)

- 'Get Money Fit' launched 6 September 2021 including distribution of leaflets, posters, and banners
- Launch of 'Service Directory' on Council Website and promoted widely in public areas
- Ensuring wrap around support for moving people back into employment – working with 'more positive together'
- Making outbound contact to tenants to support them with applications for Council Tax Support
- Support for residents with Council tax debts - referrals should start from October 2021
- Working with partners to remove barriers to banking and supportive Financial Inclusion services
- Regular stakeholder sessions held bi-monthly to discuss services and address any 'gaps'
- Develop and promote financial health checks linked to borough wide community engagement events
- 'One door approach' for multiple referral applications including debts, benefits, budgeting, mental health using the 'Refernet' on-line platform (to action asap)

In discussion comments and questions were raised in respect of the following:

- Delivery and operation of the 'Refernet' system
- Access to services for customers with no digital access
- Mental Health / Identifying and Signposting

It was also suggested by a Member, if it may be possible to send an e-mail to customers through 'Service Now' with information detailing the 'Service Directory' and 'Refernet' from the Money Advice Service. The Financial Inclusion Team Leader explained that there may be GDPR implications and would undertake to speak to the relevant Officer to explore if this may be a possible option. A Member also suggested that the Services could be advertised in the Champion Newspaper and also through School Newsletters. The Financial Inclusion Team Leader informed the Committee that he would approach Local Schools to see if this could also be possible.

RESOLVED: A. That the progress and outcomes on actions undertaken since the completion of the 'Financial Inclusion Strategy' review be noted.

QUARTERLY COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE DELIVERY PLAN - Q1 2021/22

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Transformation and Resources as contained on pages 95 to 126 of the Book of Reports, which presented the performance monitoring data for the quarter ended 30 June 2021.

The Partnership and Performance Officer explained that the report is now presented in a new format, detailing a summary of the actions supporting delivery of the

Council Plan and Key Performance Indicators. This includes Performance Plans for any below target 'red' Performance Indicators. She also informed Members that the report will now be presented to the Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee prior to Cabinet.

She provided an update on performance including:

- Continuously develop, find better ways to do things and embrace technology – Launch of 'EntitledTo' benefit calculator
- WL132-c19 FTE working days lost due to sickness absence per average FTE (COVID Inclusive) – sickness absence data will now always include Covid data
- Develop the market offer and reinvigorate Ormskirk's Eastern Gateway – More work now undertaken in respect of this priority - Staff had been working on Covid Safe related work
- Deliver our Financial Inclusion Strategy – Launch of the 'Service Directory' and 'Get Money Fit' publicity campaign

RESOLVED: That the Council's performance against the Council Plan for the quarter ended 30 June 2021 be noted.

26 ACTION ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY - REVIEW

Consideration was given to the following 3 items in relation to the review undertaken by the Committee entitled 'Action on Climate Emergency Review'.

27 ACTION ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY - UPDATE

The Head Ranger provided the Committee with an update on the outstanding actions arising from the Climate Emergency online Consultation and presentation from the previous meeting of the Committee.

- I. Information regarding the Green Homes Grant has been sent to all residents who requested it, with links to the Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHIL) website for further information and an online application form.
- II. An invite to the NW Energy Hub event in June was forwarded to all who expressed an interest.
Another similar event has just been announced by Electricity Northwest (ENW) 'Powering our Communities' which launches a Fund to support community and local energy groups to develop and grow. This has also been circulated.
Early conversations are underway with NW Energy Hub regarding an application to the Rural Community Energy Fund, with possible partners Paul Cotterill and Edge Hill University. The intention is to community fund a solar PV project on large scale building/s in Skelmersdale occupied by a high energy user to purchase the power (this could be a Council owned commercial building with a high user tenant). The income generated could

then be reinvested to fund a further project or offered back to investors, depending on the community model used.

Representatives from both NW Energy Hub and ENW have been approached and would be happy to speak at a West Lancashire community energy event, however they had no capacity over the summer (term time working). Might now be best to await the outcome of a RCEF fund application, then we can approach with funding to get started.

- III. A case study of the performance of solar PV installed on Council housing has been developed and will be made available on the Council website.
- IV. To investigate a community/group purchasing project for Solar PV is currently outstanding.
- V. A 2nd bid has been submitted to OLEV for their consideration. This includes 32 charge points at 16 locations, the majority of which are in communal parking areas on housing estates in Skelmersdale, to ensure those living in properties without off-street parking have access to a convenient charging network. Should the project go ahead, it would attract £374,709.01 investment, at nil cost to the council.
- VI. Sites identified for tree planting, working with the Lancashire Woodland Connect Project include 2-3 hectares at Fairy Glenn for the Queens 'Green Canopy Scheme'; 2-3 hectares at Tawd Valley Park with the assistance of the 'Friends of Tawd Valley Park'. Staff are working with Westend School on a Community Orchard at Whittle Drive, Ormskirk. Suitable areas have been identified areas for hedgehog gardens at the Halsall Lane site, where the Schools will be getting involved. Discussions have taken place in respect of the housing environmental improvement fund to plant trees, the possible suitability for these areas would be ornamental as a or fruit varieties.
- VII. The investigation into an alternative/reduced mowing regime was progressing slowly.

Questions and comments were raised in respect of the following:

- Sites identified for Hedgehogs – work ongoing with Ranger and Schools / contact to be made with resident that put topic forward
- Mowing Regimes / Verges / timings of cuttings
- Work curtailed by Covid and staff resources
- Potential Projects on Waste; Reduce Reuse Recycle; Food waste bins
- Commitment to ongoing Climate Strategy
- Communication to give to residents
- Businesses recycling – Investigate, encourage and assist
- Changes in behaviour

RESOLVED: That the update on the actions be noted.

to consider the Committee's draft report as set out in the Appendix to the report.

The Member Services Officer outlined the report detailing the background, key aims and objectives and recommendations to be considered by the Committee.

In discussion it was felt that the work to date has been fantastic, although this has been curtailed by the Covid pandemic and key staff positions in this service area that have become vacant during the review.

It was expressed that it was important to continue work on the 4 key objectives and for Members to become involved and engaged and liaise with the community, businesses, and individuals across all sectors of the Borough.

Members also discussed the possibility of investigating / exploring how our Businesses could be assisted with their recycling.

The Head of Housing and Regulatory Services explained that the vacant posts will be replaced imminently. She also informed that the ongoing work on the wider 'Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2030' will address the issues raised, including the Waste Strategy and Drainage Project, she added that Members will receive updates in respect of these.

RESOLVED: That the Committee consider and agree the final recommendations to be included in the review report on the Action on Climate Emergency Review for submission to Cabinet on 25 January 2022, as set out in the Appendix to the report.

That Members receive frequent updates in respect of the 'Action on Climate Emergency Strategy and Action plan to 'flag up' the work to be continued.

29 PROJECT PLAN - ACTION ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Draft Project Plan as circulated on pages 139 to 144 of the Book of Reports was considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Project Plan be noted.

30 WORK PROGRAMME OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the 2021/22 Work Programme of the Committee be noted.

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Chairman