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# SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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**Monday, 24th July, 2023**

**Present:** Councillor Josh Allen (in the Chair),  
Councillors Noordad Aziz, Mike Booth, Carole Haythornthwaite and  
Bernard Dawson

**In Attendance:** Co-optees: Shahed Mahmood  
Councillors Mohammed Younis and Zak Kahn

**Apologies** Melissa Fisher

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## **83 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

There were apologies from Councillor Melissa Fisher. Councillor Bernard Dawson substituted.

## **84 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

There were no declarations of interests or dispensations.

## **85 Minutes of the last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

Shahed Mahmood asked for a correction to the minutes. Minute 351 indicated that he supported a proposal from the Chair for officers to consider the use of shipping containers to home market stall traders during the refurbishment which he said was not correct and proposed the minutes be amended to reflect this.

**Resolved - That the minutes from the Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 be approved as a correct record with the above mentioned amendment.**

## **86 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes**

The Chair invited the Scrutiny and Policy Officer to present this item. The Officer informed the committee of the process for producing the draft work programmes for all three scrutiny committees, which were included in the appendix to the report. The process included:

- Suggestions from Councillors
- Suggestions from Service Managers
- Suggestions from members of the public
- Meeting with Scrutiny Chairs and Cabinet

The Officer explained that all suggestions had been considered, and most had been accepted as part of the work programme. As ever, scrutiny work programmes are flexible

and can be added to in year. The role of this committee is to approve its own work programme, as outlined in section 2 of the report.

Cllr Aziz proposed that devolution be added to the work programme, possibly for the September meeting. This was approved by the Committee.

Cllr Aziz proposed that the Committee forms a task and finish group to scrutinise levelling up options for other town centres across the borough. The Scrutiny and Policy Officer informed the Committee that this would require a change to the terms of reference of the committee, which is a Council decision.

Cllr Aziz then proposed that the committee recommends to Council a change to the terms of reference of the Special Scrutiny Committee to include other town centres to enable the committee to carry out the above review.

**Resolved -**

**The Committee approves the 2023/24 Work Programmes for the Special Scrutiny Committee as outlined in the report with the addition of an item on Devolution.**

**That the Committee recommends to Council a change to the terms of reference of the Special Scrutiny Committee to include other town centres.**

## **87 Levelling Up Funded Projects Update**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Mohammed Younis, Portfolio Holder, Steve Riley, Executive Director (Environment) and Gretta Starks, Project Director from Rider Levett Bucknall to present this report and accompanying presentation.

Councillor Younis provided a brief summary which was included with the agenda and then invited Gretta to present to the committee.

Prior to presenting, Gretta introduced herself to the committee and spoke briefly on her experience and role with the project. Gretta is the Council's appointed Project Director for the levelling up funded projects in Accrington Town Centre and is supported by a team of experienced consultants in their field. Gretta was not involved in the bid, but appointed once funding was approved. The early appointment was vital due to the extremely tight LUF funding deadline set by Government. Gretta presented and highlighted the following work undertaken in RIBA2 and work now underway in the RIBA3 phase:

- Mobilisation and RIBA2 refresh including operator model and procurement, communications, design readiness, social value and benefits, project controls and team assembly
- RIBA3 enabling and operator procurement stage including design, planning application, enabling works, operator procurement, land assembly and vacant possession
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The project is current working through RIBA3 and Gretta highlighted the following work streams:

- Expert consultants have been appointed to test the market and attract the best operators for the shared workspaces and market. There has been good interest in the projects. The Consultant's report set out a procurement process and recommended the most advantageous contractual arrangement between the Council and operator/s.
- Shared workspaces have been successful in other towns and this will be replicated in Accrington. There is a possibility however that original design set out in the bid

submission for Burtons Chambers, may be too big for the area, (being the first) and discussions have taken place about not creating the roof extension and instead adding PV array, which will help attract operators if the project is de-risked due to improved sustainability and viability.

- The report also recommends the Council produce a parking strategy as this is something other shared workspace facilities have available.
- A detailed analysis has been carried out comparing the Market Hall in terms of size to similar towns. This is challenging and a number of options were highlighted in the report for some flexible space for complimentary offerings should be considered. Any decision will be made to not only attract footfall but to keep people in the area for longer and increase spending.

Gretta and Steve also responded to questions on the following:

- How much if any deviation is allowed from the original plans?
- Parking capacity to accommodate increased footfall
- Sustainable transport
- Expressions of interest for the management of the buildings
- Possibility of slippage and implications for funding
- Risks
- CPOs and negotiations with current leaseholders
- Planning requirements
- Use of local contractors
- Pre-construction works
- Communication with members of the public and market traders including the new public information unit in the Market Hall
- Ensuring market traders are encouraged to come back once work is complete
- Timescales for each RIBA stage
- Audit
- Accessibility of town square, particularly for events, during construction

There was in-depth discussion regarding local supply chain, with committee members keen that money was spent locally where possible and local contractors and interested groups were encouraged to get involved. Gretta explained that that project was bound by public sector procurement rules however, as part of our social value plans, any main contractor would be encouraged to use local contractors in terms of sub contracted works and supply of materials etc. There are several methods in which they will aim to achieve this, using tools such as "local supply chain" and creating a "social Value portal". Committee members suggested contacting other local authorities including Preston and Burnley for advice as they had recently had success with models to encourage local spend on large scale projects.

Steve Riley ensured the committee that consultation was taking place with experienced consultants in their field and highlighted Gretta and the project team's expertise working on large scale projects, which is exactly why the Council had appointed Gretta. Gretta confirmed the project team of experienced consultants would include:

- Project managers, cost managers, architects, M&E Engineers, Structural Engineers, technical specialists, consultant is undertaking surveys and investigations
- Operator procurement consultants, including legal and consultancy services
- Other consultants which may be needed as the project progresses
- Operators once selected
- Main Contractor/s and sub-contractors

Gretta finally explained the project governance and accountability structure for the project.

**Resolved -**

**That the report and presentation be noted; and  
That Councillor Younis, Steve Riley and Gretta Starks be thanked for the thorough  
report and engagement with the Committee.**

Signed:.....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
At which the minutes were confirmed