
SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12th September, 2023

Present: Councillor Josh Allen (in the Chair),
Councillors Noordad Aziz, Mike Booth, Melissa Fisher and
Carole Haythornthwaite and Danny Cassidy
In Attendance: Co-optees: Noordad Aziz, Mike Booth, Melissa Fisher and
Carole Haythornthwaite
Councillors Marlene Haworth and Mohammed Younis

Apologies Dominik Allen

124 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Dominik Allen. Councillor Danny Cassidy substituted.

125 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

The Chair stated that he wished to declare a conflict of interest in agenda item 7 – Events Update. The conflict is due to his voluntary role as a member of Accrington Community Events. The Chair said he had taken advice and although this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he felt that in the interest of transparency he should declare this conflict of interest and would take no part in the agenda item.

As the Vice Chair had sent apologies, the Chair announced that the Committee must appoint a Chair for when he leaves the meeting at agenda item 7.

Resolved - That the Committee appoints Councillor Danny Cassidy to Chair the meeting for agenda item 7.

126 Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting on 24th July 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

Councillor Noordad Aziz asked for clarity on his proposal to amend the terms of reference for this committee to include Scrutiny of other townships. The Chair said he would provide a brief update under the next agenda item.

Councillor Mike Booth asked if the Committee could request some information from the Executive Director (Environment) about how the Council plans to incentivise market traders to come back to the Market Hall when it reopens after Levelling Up works are completed.

Resolved - That the minutes from the Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 24th July 2023 are received and approved as a correct record.

127 Update on Previous Recommendations from the Committee

The Chair announced that h would give a short verbal update on a couple of matters. Last year, the Committee made some recommendations to LCC regarding a request to review parking and traffic flow in Accrington Town Centre. LCC are now considering this and will respond to the Council in due course.

In addition, at the previous meeting, Councillor Aziz recommended that Council consider extending the remit of the Committee to include other town centres to allow the Committee to carry out a review. That recommendation will be submitted to the next meeting of the Council and I will inform the committee of the response.

Councillor Aziz said he was concerned over the length of time required to approve the recommendation. The Chair responded that in order to change the terms of reference of a Committee, it requires a Council decision and that recommendation will be put to Council at its next meeting.

128 Devolution

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive, David Welsby to the meeting to present this item. David thanked the Committee for the invite and said the aim of his verbal report was to provide members with the most up to date information currently available to him.

The UK Government's devolution proposals over the last 10 years have focused on devolving powers and funding to local government in England. This has been motivated by a desire to give local leaders more control over their own affairs and to boost economic growth in the regions.

In 2014, the Government launched a process of negotiating bespoke devolution deals with groups of local authorities. These deals typically include the devolution of powers over transport, skills, housing, and economic development. The first devolution deal was agreed with Greater Manchester in 2015, and since then 10 further deals have been agreed, covering all of England outside of London. 5 additional deals are currently going through due process and are expected to be completed.

In addition to devolution deals, the Government has also introduced a number of other measures to increase local government autonomy. These include the introduction of mayoral combined authorities, which are directly elected bodies with responsibility for a range of local services. The Government has also provided local authorities with more control over their own finances, including the ability to set their own council tax rates.

Discussions have taken place over a number of years in Lancashire. Previously, District Councils were actively involved in discussions. However, under previous rules, all Councils in an area had to come to a consensus and this proved difficult. Discussions between Councils did not present a way forward. Mainly, the requirement for a single Elected Mayor with decision making powers was the stumbling block.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration White Paper, published in February 2022, made a number of significant changes to the rules for devolution in England.

- New devolution mission: The White Paper set a mission for every part of England that wants one to have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, and a simplified, long-term funding settlement by 2030.
- More flexibility for local areas: The White Paper introduced a new 'pick n mix' devolution model, which allows local areas to choose the specific powers and

- funding that they want to devolve. This is in contrast to the previous 'fixed menu' approach, which offered a limited number of pre-set devolution deals.
- New funding for devolution: The White Paper announced £1.75 billion of new funding for devolution over the next three years. This will help local areas to invest in the priorities that matter most to them.

Crucially, the new rules allow for a deal without the requirement for an elected mayor, and applications can only be made by Upper Tier and Unitary Authorities. As a result of this, talks in Lancashire have been resurrected although now with very little District Council involvement.

David described what he does know about progress in Lancashire, who are proposing a Combined Authority with no elected mayor. This is what is known as a level 2 deal, which is expected to be much more modest than a Level 3 deal involving an elected mayor. This will be an agreement to collaborate on transport, skills and employability. No Level 2 deals have yet been made in the country so there is some degree of the unknown.

Hyndburn Borough Council is not party to current negotiations. Negotiations will be requesting money to set up a Combined Authority, which will likely have 2 County Councillors and the Leaders of the 2 Unitary Authorities as the Decision Makers. There may be District Council representation as non-voting members.

There will be a period of consultation, in which Hyndburn Borough Council will be a consultee and will be asked to support the proposals. We will have no power of veto as was under previous arrangements. It is likely that a Combined Authority will be established by late Autumn 2024.

The Chief Executive invited questions from the Committee and responded to the following:

- Councillors were under the impression that Hyndburn had a say in discussions – David said this was the case until the White Paper was published in February 2022 which changed the rules
- Definition of a modest deal – David said this was difficult to be specific as there are no examples of level 2 deals being agreed as of yet so there is no history to compare to, however, the Government preferred model is that of an elected mayor and this is incentivised with additional funding
- The Lancashire 2050 Framework – David said this strategy remains in place independent of any Devolution deal, however, it is dependent on resources in order to deliver the strategy.

The Chief Executive ended by saying he was happy to come back to the Committee at a later date as things progress.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for reporting to the Committee.

129 Culture and Heritage Update

The Chair welcomed Councillor Mohammed Younis, Portfolio Holder, Kirsten Burnett, Head of Policy and OD and Lucy Dugate, Head of Culture and Heritage to present this report.

Kirsten had submitted a written report which was included in the agenda, and said that she wished to draw attention to the following highlights:

- The successful UKSPF bid which included a package of measures to support the arts, culture and heritage with a value of over £1.2million
- The establishment and work of the Culture and Heritage Investment Panel (CHIP)
- The Broadway building wrap/banner replacement
- The Culture and Heritage Strategy, for which the tender process has now closed and a decision on the appointment of an organisation to deliver this is imminent
- Design and feasibility studies and business plan budgets for Market Chambers Arts, Culture and Heritage Centre
- Levelling Up places services
- Capital works budget for Market Chambers Arts, Culture and Heritage Centre

Lucy Dugate, Head of Culture and Heritage, provided a presentation. She covered the following:

- The wider Levelling Up and UKSPF plans
- Accrington regeneration – creating a thriving town centre for all
- Examples from other towns and cities
- Hyndburn's positioning within Pennine Lancashire
- Testing cultural events to inform the long term strategy
- Cultural programme events for all seasons
- Oakfest
- Resident consultation
- Market Chambers plans
- Our UKSPF objectives

Officers responded to questions from the Committee on the following:

- Confidence in Heritage Lottery Bid and contingencies in place if the bid is unsuccessful
- How the Culture and Heritage Strategy will reflect other areas outside of Accrington Town Centre
- Possibilities of spreading events around different areas of Accrington
- Concerns with low footfall due to numerous shop closures
- Costs of Oakfest and if this was successful in driving footfall into Accrington Town Centre
- How to create an anchor in the town centre using tried and tested methods
- Short term funding in the arts and culture sector

Councillor Younis said he welcomed the report and he was pleased with the ambition. Levelling Up puts the Council in a very strong position to submit other funding bids if required. He hopes that the work being carried out will eventually lead to Hyndburn being a flagship area for Arts, Culture and Heritage.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and Officers for the attendance, report and presentation.

The report was noted.

130 Events Update

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Marlene Haworth and Victoria Tindall, Business and Marketing Coordinator to present this report.

Victoria presented the report and drew attention to the following:

- Member Events Panel requested changes to the RFP

- Jubilee Events including an additional one off budget
- New budget for additional Christmas activity in Accrington Market Hall for 2022
- King's Coronation Celebration events and membership of the working group
- Themes and budget allocation for 2022/23
- Commissioned events for 2022/23
- Additional costs to facilitate the events programme
- The 2023/24 events budget and commissioned events

The Leader of the Council added that she was pleased with the success of many of the events commissioned in 2022/23 and the increased footfall they brought to the town centre. She also said that the team had applied learning of what works well to plans for the current year.

The Leader and Officer responded to questions on the following:

- Marketing of events
- Funding of events outside of Accrington Town Centre, for which the Leader confirmed had been made available for organisers from any township as long as the event could be seen to benefit the town's high street.
- Additional time required for event organisers from funding decision to event date, for which the Leader confirmed that this had been addressed to allow additional time for bids
- Lessons learned from the 2022/23 programme and how these have been applied to this year

The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council and the Business and Development Coordinator for the report.

The report was noted.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed